

Merton Council Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Date: 25 January 2024

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: Committee Room BCD, Civic Centre, SM4 5DX

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel membership

Councillors:

Usaama Kaweesa (Chair)
Chessie Flack (Vice-Chair)
Max Austin
Michael Butcher
Caroline Charles
Jil Hall
Billy Hayes
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:

Sheri-Ann Bhim
Jenifer Gould
Edith Macauley MBE
Robert Page
Andrew Howard

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. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

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

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

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

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

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Agenda Item 3

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 27 NOVEMBER 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.50 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Usaama Kaweesa (in the Chair),
Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Michael Butcher,
Councillor Jil Hall, Councillor Billy Hayes,
Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Linda Kirby,
Mansoor Ahmad and Roz Cordner

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (Assistant Director for Education and Early Help), Octavia Lamb (Policy and Scrutiny Manager), Jane McSherry (Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families), Asad Mushtaq (Executive Director of Finance & Digital), Tom Procter (Head of Contracts & School Organisation) and Keith Shipman (Social Inclusion Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies from Councillor James Williscroft, Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor Samantha Macarthur

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 approved with amendment to add Councillor Sally Kenny and Councillor Brenda Fraser in attendance.

4 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN (ROUND 1) (Agenda Item 4)

Cllr Christie introduced the draft budget and business plan.

Asad Mushtaq – budget reflects an update of MTFS since June Cabinet. Changes since June include the pay award which represents a significant cost since earlier in the year, high inflation throughout the year, investment income has been high and income rates have been held. Q2 budget monitoring - £8million net overspend with actions to mitigate. Budget engagement piece, details on council website, asking everyone to review and give opinions on council spend. This is running for a month.

Jane McSherry – savings proposal CLLF 148-9, increased income to reduce running costs - providing same services, growth proposal 47-48 re overspend on children's social care, feasibility study for own children's home, Capital proposals page 28. The Young Inspector and Youth Parliament members engaged with officers on details around foster care and the high spend on independent social care placements. There was also a discussion about contextual harm with JM giving details that the Council is now in second week of a joint targeted area of inspection of serious youth violence and working with partners like police, health and the community safety partnership.

Further discussion with the Members of the Panel about children in care, asking for specifics on numbers (133) and for reassurance around children being placed as close to Merton as possible if they do need to be placed elsewhere. The Council must statutorily report any children placed 20 miles+ outside the borough (currently 12). However, the Council never discharges its duty as corporate parents (this is unique to councils).

Regarding children's homes, there is work taking place for a pan-London plan for secure and specialist provision.

Regarding the overspend in CLLF most of it is due to children's social care placement cost, working hard to reduce agency staff and to convert agency to permanent.

Chair reiterated that this is a two-stage budget scrutiny process. The Budget Council is in March.

5 SCHOOL MEALS IN MERTON (Agenda Item 5)

Murray Davies introduced the report and summary of contracts.

A Panel member enquired about vending machines in schools. MD will action enquiry.

Chair – impact of inflation on cost of school meals but not much detail? How are schools coping? Central contract meant we could restrict increase for primary. Chair – MoL KS2 – MD – based on 90% take up.

6 YOUTH SERVICES (Agenda Item 6)

Keith Shipman introduced the report. Young Merton website (7k hits a year). Have to market directly to young people and also to parents. HAF is now available to book on an app. Wider youth service branding into family hubs.

Young Parliamentarians offered insight into their experiences including how different media work and are effective in keeping young people informed. The YPs and the Youth Inspector all said they feel the Council is very good at giving young people an opportunity to engage. It was suggested that there should be another way to express interest in joining the Youth Parliament as sending an email will immediately make a

lot of young people disengage with the process. They strongly advised disseminating information through schools.

Panel Members discussed the importance of diversifying the tools used for engagement, including written letters as well as phone calls and social media. They also suggested remembering to use local ward councillors as a tool of engagement. KS will think best how to do this.

Further discussion with Panel members regarding how long HAF will run for (current Cost of Living Support Fund allocation takes it up to May 2024). Regarding improvements to HAF for neurodiverse children, KS confirmed they have recently met with providers to discuss this. A questions about VAWG training engagement led to the suggestion from Councillor Brenda Fraser that Zoe Gallen be invited to a future CYP meeting. OL to Action.

7 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 7)

Jane McSherry introduced the report and ran through the inspections currently being undertaken. ACTION - will come back on the timescale for the serious youth violence inspection.

A Panel member asked about the CYP consultation “80% mostly or all the time safe” and where is the detail on this? SU confirmed that this is just quantitative data at the moment, qualitative is to come. Taking details to the Childrens Trust Board in December.

A Panel member asked about attendance records and having more detail. Chair suggested this go to the School Standards Report. ACTION OL to follow up. Joan henry – p244 – where have out of borough moved to and who is supporting them? This is “natural movement” and then the new LA takes over.

A Panel member asked for clarity around point 2.23 - 40% not completed in stat 20 weeks. This is due to a low number of therapists and SEND specialists, and often any process that is taking over 20 weeks is because the time is being taken to get it really right. This is being constantly monitored, looking to improve performance.

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 8)

Tom Procter introduced the report.

9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

Task group on self harm to Cabinet on 18th December

Feb panel – cancel, and shift agenda items to Jan and March – agreed

Jan – task group on youth funding

Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 25th January 2024

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report

Chair/Lead officer:

Aileen Buckton, Independent Chair, Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership
Jane McSherry, Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families

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

Contact officer: Sarah Slater, Policy & Partnerships Manager

Recommendations:

- A. To note the content of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) Annual Report for the period 2022-23.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) Annual Report which covers the period April 2022 to March 2023. The full report can be found in Appendix 1 alongside a visual summary in Appendix 2.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The MSCP is required to produce and publish a report annually on actions taken by statutory partners and relevant agencies to safeguard children and promote their welfare and outline how effective those arrangements have been in practice. The MSCP has commissioned a one-page visual summary poster to sit alongside the detailed report, in response to positive feedback from our Young Scrutineer and the partnership on the 2021-22 version.

3 DETAILS

- 3.1. Whilst there remained continued pressures on safeguarding systems following the pandemic and exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, safeguarding partners in Merton have worked together to continuously improve our safeguarding systems and strengthen the voice of the child in our Partnership.
- 3.2. During the reporting period, the partnership continued to be supported by our Young Scrutineer, Halima Mehmood, who worked in partnership with our Independent Scrutineer, Sarah Lawrence, and Independent Chair, Aileen Buckton. Our Independent Chair also chairs Merton Adults Safeguarding Board (MSAB) and both chairing roles were covered on an interim basis by Nicola Brownjohn during the report period, providing continuity during a period of sickness. Sharing an independent chair and holding our second Joint Safeguarding Conference in March 2023 has supported us to progress joint

working with adults' colleagues including around "Think Family" and embedding learning from local adults and children's learning reviews.

- 3.3. Our Executive Group remained stable during the reporting period. We have since welcomed Ian Cameron as our Met Police representative, replacing Andrew Wadey.
- 3.4. During 2022-23 work was progressed against our three thematic priorities; Early Hep and Neglect, Domestic Abuse and Think Family, and Contextual Safeguarding. The appended report provides further details about activity in these areas and the difference this has made to safeguarding practice locally. Our Independent Scrutineer and Young Scrutineer led a thorough piece of scrutiny on "What can MSCP do to prevent the adultification of black children in Merton?", which included focus groups with children and young people to hear directly about their experiences. The MSCP also further strengthened our training and audit programmes and followed up on actions from the previous year's Section 11 safeguarding audit.
- 3.5. During 2022-23, the partnership oversaw the publication of one local child safeguarding practice review (LCSPR) for Franklyn. In addition, the partnership undertook two further rapid reviews for Child M and Child O following serious incident notifications submitted to Ofsted. The MSCP annual reports sets out some of the steps the partnership has taken to respond to these reviews and how learning has been embedded across the Partnership.
- 3.6. Members may be particularly interested in exploring the learning from the MSCP's local child safeguarding practice reviews, partnership reviews, and audits, which are all available on the [MSCP's website](#)¹. Seven-minute briefings are available to be widely disseminated among all professionals working to safeguard children and young people in Merton.
- 3.7. Members may also be interested in the MSCP's training offer which is available free of charge to all MSCP member agencies, the voluntary sector and independent sector agencies working with children, young people and their families in Merton. Places can be booked via the following link: [Merton Safeguarding - Learning Management System](#).²

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. N/A

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. The MSCP annual report has had input from all statutory partners as well as local agencies and the MSCP sub-group chairs. The draft was considered by the MSCP Full Partnership in October 2023, the Strategic Safeguarding Group in November 2023 and received formal sign off from the MSCP Executive partners in January 2024. The MSCP's Independent Chair, Scrutineer and Young Scrutineer have had the opportunity to review and comment. The Annual

¹ <https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/>

² <https://training.safeguardinginmerton.org.uk/>

Report will also be considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 23rd January and Cabinet in February.

6 TIMETABLE

N/A

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None.

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. As outlined in the report.

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

9.1. As outlined in the report.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

10.1. As outlined in the report.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1. As outlined in the report and the MSCP's Business Plan 23-25, available on the MSCP website.

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

Appendix 1 – Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23.

Appendix 2 - Visual Summary Poster - Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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MERTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Annual Report 2022-2023



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Foreword

This report covers the work of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) during the period April 2022 to March 2023, a year which saw pressures on safeguarding systems from the Covid-19 pandemic reducing, albeit with other pressures developing for children and families and local services, such as the cost-of-living crisis. In this year, the government launched their Stable Homes, Built On Love proposal based on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the national review into the tragic murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and committed to reforms aimed at promoting children's welfare by supporting children's families and the loving relationships around them. Focus on addressing disproportionality and promoting anti-racist practice continued to be a priority, in response to the Child Q review in Hackney alongside many other local and national factors. Strong partnership working with schools continued to be important, particularly in response to Everyone's Invited and concerns around school attendance continuing to remain below pre-pandemic levels nationally.

During 2022-23, the MSCP saw a period of stability after recruiting to our independent posts and permanent business support unit in the previous financial year. The Partnership's Executive Group also remained consistent through the year. This allowed us to maintain a strong focus on delivering our priorities in the MSCP business plan, including further strengthening our multi-agency training programme, ongoing review of multi-agency datasets and delivering robust learning reviews and thematic scrutiny.

Within this work, we are pleased to have gathered the voice of children and their families in various ways and are keen to continue building on this important work going forwards. We were delighted to hear from our Young Scrutineer, Halima Mehmood, and Independent Scrutineer, Sarah Lawrence, during the year, with their holistic and

child-focused approach to scrutiny, including on the adultification of black children.

Our Independent Chair, Aileen Buckton, was unwell for a period and we were very grateful to Nicola Brownjohn for stepping in to provide interim cover and help maintain independent leadership of our partnership.

Through working closely together with the Merton Safeguarding Adults Board (MSAB), including sharing an Independent Chair and delivering a second Joint Safeguarding Conference in March 2023, we have been able to progress joint working with adults' colleagues including around "Think Family" and embedding learning from local adults and children's learning reviews.

We are immensely proud of the work of all our partners who work tirelessly with families to keep them safe and promote their welfare and wellbeing. We also remain highly ambitious for our children and families and hope the year ahead will bring further opportunities to improve how children and families experience our services.

Justin Roper

Director of Quality, SWL ICB on behalf of Gloria Rowland

Ian Cameron

Head of Safeguarding, Public Protection, Southwest BCU

Jane McSherry

Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families, London Borough of Merton

Introduction

The Children's Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 requires each Local Authority area to establish arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership fulfills this role for the London Borough of Merton. More detail on our local arrangements can be found in our [Partnership Agreement](#).

Every 12 months the safeguarding partners must prepare and publish a report on what the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies for the local authority area have done as a result of the local safeguarding arrangements and outline how effective those arrangements have been in practice.

This report provides an overview of the impact of the MSCP's work on the safety and wellbeing of Merton's children and families, as well as an update against the Partnership's key priority areas outlined in the partnership's business plan for 2021-23. These priorities are:

Strong Leadership and Strong Partnership		
Early Help and Neglect	Domestic Abuse and Think Family	Contextual Safeguarding

Under the first priority area, the report will also include how the Partnership learns from scrutiny, audits and learning reviews (local child safeguarding practice reviews) to embed a culture of continuous improvement in our local safeguarding arrangements.

Our Children & Young People

We have 51,985 children and young people living in Merton

41,350 CYP are in school or full-time education

36% school-age children have English as an additional language

2,446 children with an Education, Health & Care Plan at March 2023

1,229 children in need of help and protection at 31 March 2023*

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*Defined by Children Act 1989 as including children on child in need plans, child protection plans, looked after by local authorities, care leavers and disabled children.

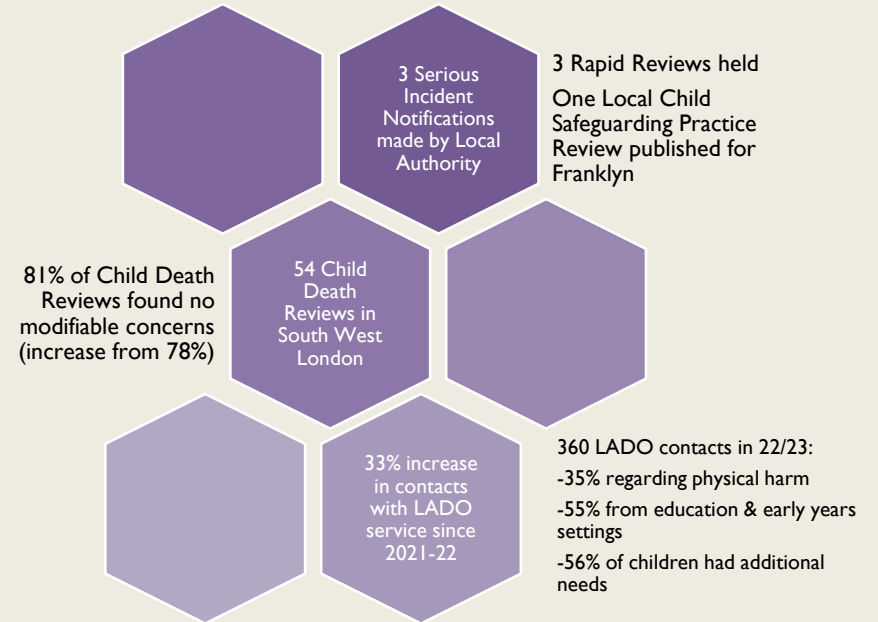
ETHNICITY OF MERTON CHILDREN



¹ Data sources: 2021 Census, Merton School Census 2023, Merton SEN dashboard March 2023, DfE Children in Need statistics 2023.

Data Overview

Below is a brief overview of the key data included in this report.



²

MSCP Training programme

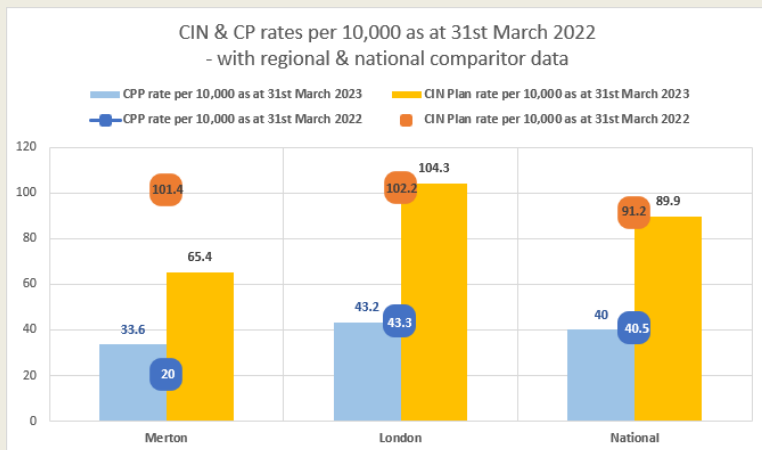
- 792 multi-agency delegates trained through delivery of 63 sessions of 36 separate courses/events
- Significant increase maintained from 222 delegates during the pandemic in 2020-21 and small increase from 760 in previous year 2021-22
- Attendance rate of 70% of the total bookings made (1,125)

² Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) manages concerns and allegations against professionals and volunteers working with children in Merton

Children's social care

In 2022-23, **Merton remained below London and national averages for the below children's social care indicators.** Compared to previous year (2022), Merton saw a:

- Reduction in the rate of children with a child in need (CIN) plan from 101.4 to 65.4 per 10,000 children at 31 March. This relates to a reduction from 484 children to 312 children with a CIN plan between March 2022 and March 2023.³
- Increase in the rate of children subject to child protection plans (CPP) from 20 to 33.6 per 10,000 children at 31 March. This relates to an increase from 94 children to 158 children with a CPP between March 2022 and March 2023.
- 26 of every 10,000 children in Merton are in care, in line with previous year and lower than the rate nationally (70) and across London (52). This relates to 122 children in care in Merton at March 2023.



Re-referrals to Merton children's social care were 18.3% during 2022, in line with London average (18%) and remaining below national (21.5%).

³ CIN plan reporting for CIN census is currently experimental statistics- local data provided here. Work is ongoing to ensure data accuracy.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

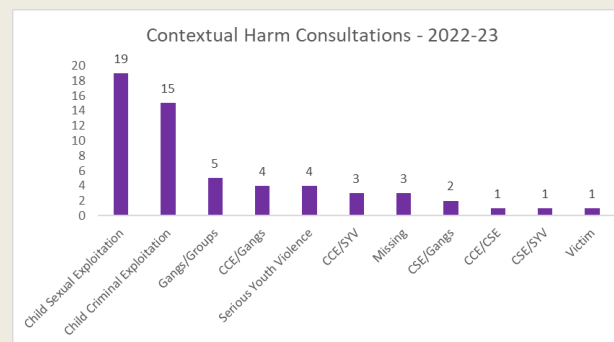
In 2022/2023 the MARAC discussed **592** high risk and complex cases involving domestic abuse, **564** children were identified as part of these discussions. This is in line with an increase in the number of cases discussed at MARAC since the pandemic started in 2020.

Figure 1: An overview of MARAC cases 2019/20 – 2022/23

Year	Number of Cases Discussed	Number of Repeat cases	% repeat cases	Number of children in the household
2020-21	576	234	41%	557
2021-22	636	301	47%	639
2022-23	592	259	44%	564

Contextual Harm consultations

During 2022-23, **58 contextual harm consultations were completed** as per the pathway into the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel (28 females and 30 males).



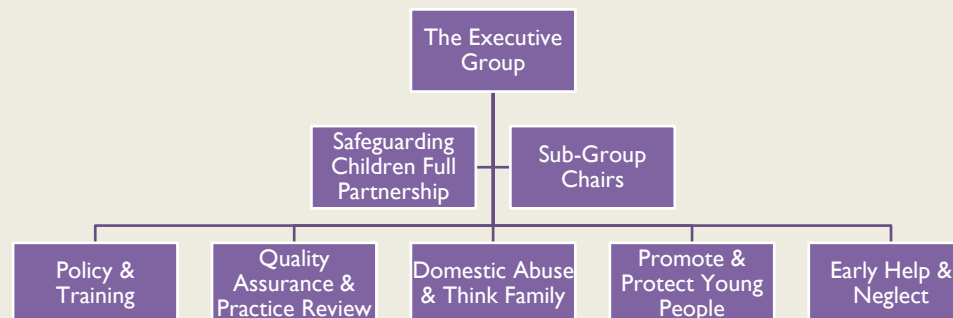
Strong Leadership and Strong Partnership

Governance and Oversight

The MSCP has two key documents, our Partnership Agreement and our Business Plan⁴, which provide an overview of the partnership's agreed priorities, and the governance and oversight established to oversee delivery of them.

Changes to governance implemented in 2021-22 are now well embedded, and partners fed back during consultation on the business plan for 2023-25 that structures, as outlined in the diagram below, were working well. This includes a monthly Executive of the three statutory partners for agile decision-making, a termly Full Partnership meeting including wider partners such as schools, providers and so on, and five subgroups meeting quarterly to drive forward workplans based on the partnership's statutory duties and agreed priorities. Sub-group chairs also meet monthly to ensure that the work of sub-groups is coordinated and support with strategic updates to the Executive.

Agency engagement has been strong overall, and strong multi-agency engagement in the delivery of statutory and non-statutory processes demonstrate continued commitment from partners. The chairing of subgroups is shared across the three statutory partners and there has been a strong commitment to ensuring all relevant agencies are represented within these meetings.



The Partnership also has three independent posts to support with our core duty to promote the welfare of children and monitor the strength of partnership working.

- An Independent Chair
- An Independent Scrutineer, and
- A Young Scrutineer

An Independent Chair, Aileen Buckton was recruited during 2021-22. Nicola Brownjohn provided sickness cover from January 2022 – March 2023 within the year this report refers to. Aileen and Nicola have provided independent challenge to our Partnership when chairing the Executive and the Full Partnership. Aileen, and Nicola whilst in post, also chaired the Merton Safeguarding Adults Board, facilitating stronger working relationships between the two safeguarding partnerships, including effective delivery of our second Joint Annual Conference in March 2023, themed on Domestic Abuse Safeguarding: “Learning from the Lived Experience of Trauma from Child to Adult”.

⁴ Dec 2021 Partnership Agreement and MSCP Business Plan 2021-2023 are available on request. Both documents have since been refreshed for 2023-24, and therefore MSCP website reflects the updated versions.

Sarah Lawrence has been our Independent Scrutineer since February 2020, and Halima Mehmood has been our Young Scrutineer since May 2021. Both have developed strong working relationships with partners in Merton, enabling robust and informative scrutiny of key themes to help the MSCP embed improvements to safeguarding practice.

Our Young Scrutineer role places us within the 29% of local safeguarding partnerships nationally, who involve young people in a scrutiny role⁵.

"As the outgoing Young Scrutineer, I'm really pleased that the MSCP has both developed and matured in youth voice inclusion. It is crucial to maintain this through improving accessibility, specifically for disabled and marginalized children across the Borough, as this ensures that we continue to provide informed insights on children's safeguarding concerns. I am grateful for the time I have spent working with the MSCP and Sarah Lawrence, the Independent Scrutineer, and proud of the work we have achieved."

Halima Mehmood, Young Scrutineer, MSCP

Business Plan refresh

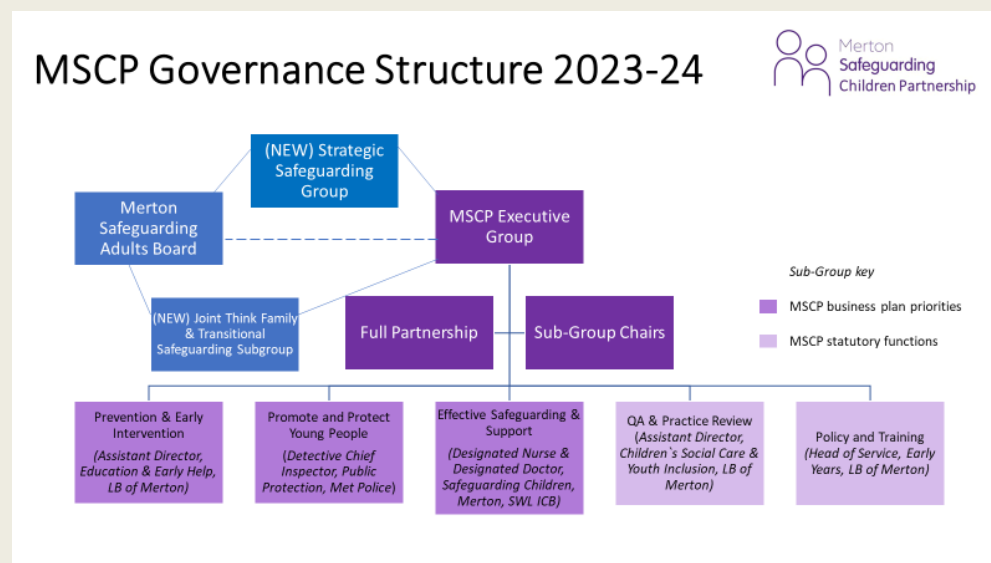
During 2022-23, work began to refresh the MSCP business plan for 2023-25. The positive feedback on existing governance structures was considered and therefore, although priorities have changed slightly and a set of cross-cutting themes have been introduced, the above governance structures have remained with small tweaks to

⁵ [Independent Scrutiny and Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements](#)

the focus of the three thematic subgroups (and their titles alongside this).

To further build on joint working with the Merton Safeguarding Adults Board (MSAB) and ensure effective senior leadership oversight from the statutory partners of both partnerships (local authority, integrated care board and police), a new Joint Strategic Safeguarding Group will also be established during 2023-24. It is proposed the group will meet twice yearly and be chaired by the London Borough of Merton Chief Executive. There is also a proposal to establish a joint Think Family & Transitional Safeguarding subgroup which will be accountable to the MSCP Executive Group and the MSAB Board.

From April 2023, the MSCP governance has therefore been agreed as follows:



Scrutiny Activity

The MSCP's Independent Scrutineer and Young Scrutineer work to a jointly owned workplan and report regularly to the Executive. The workplan uses best practice models for Independent Scrutiny including the 'Checklist for Independent Scrutiny' published by Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) and the 'Six Steps to Independent Scrutiny'.

"What can MSCP do to prevent the adultification of black children in Merton?"

During 22-23, the Scrutineers undertook their annual thematic review based on the above question. This followed learning identified in the Child Q LCSPR in Hackney, national research and local work focused on disproportionality in the justice system by the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board.

Importantly, our Independent and Young Scrutineer spoke directly to young people living and learning in Merton to understand their experience of adultification and how to improve the Partnership's response to the issue. This included focus groups with children in secondary schools, special schools/colleges, conversations with children working with the Youth Parliament and Our Voice children in care council. Children told them about lots of examples of adultification and how this had negatively affected them, and other children:

"We are automatically labelled as aggressive for making a point"

"Whenever anyone mentions drugs they always look at us black children first..."

"In sports we are expected to be better, and get criticised if we aren't the best"

"You don't realise its racism because you're used to it"

The review also included a survey, and meetings with practitioners that work with children in the borough including those working in schools and colleges, police, health and local authority, including children's services and community safety.

At the MSCP's Full Partnership meeting in March 2023, our scrutineers presented the findings of their adultification scrutiny. Key themes identified were:

- Race and Racism
- Children's safety, children's rights and vulnerability
- Disproportionality & Bias
- Attitudes and Language
- Expectations and Pressure
- Trust in Services.

In follow-up, the Executive made a commitment to respond to the recommendations including a Task & Finish group and to build on existing work to address racism across the partnership. Going forwards into 2023-24, our Young Scrutineer will also lead the presentation of the findings to other forums, including the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board, Children's Trust and delivering workshops at the Race Equality in Schools Conference.

Recommendations from the scrutiny work continue to be incorporated into the Partnership's ongoing workplans. Some examples of these include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Developing and delivering adultification training to the partnership to raise awareness and help professionals to guard against it in their practice.
- Incorporating learning from the adultification scrutiny into the refresh of the substance misuse in schools' procedure.

- Incorporating learning from the sexual harassment and violence in schools & colleges scrutiny into the refresh of the harmful sexual behaviour policy.

Further Independent Scrutiny activity undertaken in 22-23

- Work with the Full Partnership and sub-groups to ensure focus on children's and families voices in all MSCP activity.
- Chairing an annual Section 11 (of the Children Act) peer review session of partner duties, to scrutinise partners progress in taking actions to improve from previous review.
- Research, feedback and challenge to partners on issues raised nationally – including learning from cases via the National Child Safeguarding Review Panel, and reviews such as the Care Review.
- Disseminating learning from previous scrutiny on sexual violence and harassment in schools and colleges, including via visual summary poster (see below).
- Presenting annual report to Overview and Scrutiny Panel, responding to debate and raising awareness of key safeguarding issues.
- Review and input to 21-22 MSCP Annual Report, ensuring a focus on assessing impact on children.



Reflections from Independent Scrutineer & Young Scrutineer

“Our joint work with children, practitioners and with the MSCP during this year has provided us with some very rich information enabling us to assess how well the partners work together to safeguard children in Merton.

In this year we heard from over 45 children about their lived experience of adultification and racism, how this impacted on their safety, and their ideas that can bring about change. Their insights were powerful and very hard to hear. Children gave many examples of the harm and negative impact of adultification – often complex and detailed, examples can be found in our findings document. What was striking to us, and a recurrent theme not only for Merton to consider, was the sense that racism and adultification happens to black children every day, in all aspects of their lives – in relationships, in school, in the community, at home. In one child's words;

“This is part of my 'normal life', it happens every day”

Children told us that their negative experiences are exacerbated where intersecting issues exist, for example because of their gender, special educational need or disability and / or their status as a care giver or young parent. For example;

“As a young black parent, I am treated like an adult, **no exceptions**. ... You are expected to know everything straight away”

Learning from our engagement with children has shaped the recommendations we made to the MSCP. We are aware of the next steps planned in response to the scrutiny locally and will be supporting this work and, with MSCP, will seek assurance of progress throughout the coming year. We want to take this opportunity to thank the children for their honesty and trust in us in this process. We also want to express our gratitude to the many practitioners that engaged with us in this work, including those that work with Our Voice, Youth Parliament and Merton schools and colleges for enabling independent and open engagement with children that they work with.

Our wider reflections on the MSCP, and local leadership of safeguarding services this year are predominantly positive. Attendance at strategic and political meetings has shown to us that safeguarding is a priority in the borough, and we are encouraged by the commitments made to develop safeguarding services at this high level. Partners demonstrated their ability to adapt to changing needs of families in feedback to each other at MSCP meetings. We therefore feel confident that MSCP can act on ‘stubborn’ safeguarding issues and has prioritised them in future planning for multi-agency work. While we have identified learning and improvement that is needed through scrutiny, including co production, accessibility, and engagement with children, we feel confident that the MSCP is a mature and developed safeguarding partnership that can continue to respond to ever present challenges that face children and families at this time.

Sarah Lawrence
Independent Scrutineer MSCP

Halima Mehmood
Young Scrutineer MSCP

Joint Work with Merton Safeguarding Adults Board

The MSCP continued to work closely with the Merton Safeguarding Adults Board (MSAB) during 22-23, including delivering activities together and attendance of key representatives to link the MSCP Exec and Full Partnership to the MSAB Board. The MSCP and MSAB continued to share an Independent Chair, including via interim cover, which further supported this.



The image shows the agenda for the Joint Annual Conference 2023, featuring logos for Merton Safeguarding Adults Board and Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership. The agenda is structured as follows:

Lead	Description	Time
Opening Address		
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicola Brownjohn: Interim Independent Chair for MSAB and MSCP Clr. Brenda Fraser: Cabinet Member for Children's Services Clr. Peter McCabe: Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care 	13:30 – 14:00
Part 1		
2. Keynote Speech: Trauma-Informed Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hayley Tuffin: Registered social worker and experienced psychotherapist with a particular interest in trauma 	14:00 – 14:40
3. Sandra's Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trish Stewart: Associate Director of Safeguarding, DASH (Reflections on a recent Safeguarding Adult Review) Loret and Karlyn: Speakers with lived experience 	14:40 – 15:30
10-Minute Break until 15:40		
Part 2		
4. Understanding Childhood Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zoe Gallen: Domestic Abuse and VAWG Lead, London Borough of Merton Claire Bowden: Senior IDVA, Victim Support 	15:40 – 16:10
5. Breakout Rooms and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What learning/actions can we take forward in our different agencies? 	16:10 – 16:45
6. Closing Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicola Brownjohn: Interim Independent Chair for MSAB and MSCP 	16:45 – 17:00



In March 2023, the MSCP delivered a second joint conference with the Merton Safeguarding Adults Board on Domestic Abuse Safeguarding: “Learning from the Lived Experience of Trauma from Child to Adult”. These themes were jointly agreed by representatives from the MSCP Policy and Training sub-group and the MSAB Learning and Development sub-group. The post-event evaluation highlighted the event was well received as per the above chart.

Feedback from participants included:

"Attending this event will help me be more professionally curious, listen to the voice of the child more, and think family and more systemically."

"Sandra story - having people with lived experience brings so much more meaning and learning - with them bringing a perspective and details that professionals can't possibly bring."

"That lead councillors attended and showed their passion for the work and what the council are working on to improve services for the residents of Merton."

The MSCP also commissioned training on Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty for children and young people, which was identified as part of joint work with MSAB around implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards.

As noted in the earlier governance section, plans have been agreed during 22-23 to further strengthen existing links between the two partnerships through establishing two new groups during 23-24:

Strategic Safeguarding Group

- Chaired by LB of Merton Chief Executive and co-chaired by SW BSU Chief Superintendent
- Provide senior oversight of the MSCP and MSAB, including annual reports, priority setting and key themes

Think Family & Transitional Safeguarding Subgroup

- Chair to be agreed
- Delivery of activity around key themes for both partnerships, including but not limited to Think Family, transitional and contextual safeguarding, housing conditions

Reviewing and Developing Practice

Learning Reviews

During 22/23, there were three serious incident notifications, one of which led to a local child safeguarding practice review (LCSPR) for Franklyn.

Given the publication of three LCSPRs (Jason, Baby Grace, and Ananthi), and two partnership reviews (Eddie, and SUDI review) during the previous year 2021/22, there was also continued focus on sharing and embedding the learning from these children's cases.

All our [learning review full reports](#) and [7 minute learning briefings](#) can be found on our website at the relevant webpages.

Review & link	Published	Themes
Jason LCSPR	Jun 2021	Contextual Safeguarding; Child Criminal Exploitation
Baby Grace LCSPR	Aug 2021	Non-Accidental Injury; Support with crying babies; Domestic abuse
Ananthi LCSPR	Nov 2021	Parental health; Impact of Covid-19 - health services and school closure; Use of interpreters
Eddie Partnership Review	Nov 2021	Contextual Safeguarding; CYP Mental Health/trauma informed approaches
SUDI Review	Feb 2022	Housing/homelessness, professional curiosity, safe sleeping
Franklyn LCSPR	May 2023	Trauma-informed practice; Clarity of services for families; Disproportionality; family voice; Commissioning care packages

Child L / 'Franklyn' – LCSPR

Franklyn was a baby born with a life-limiting disability and complex health needs. He died in hospital aged four-and-a-half months old, after suffering an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, in June 2022. At the time of his death, Franklyn had been subject to a Child Protection Plan for seven weeks due to concerns around domestic abuse and parental substance misuse.

The Franklyn review was approved in early 2023, and learning was shared within the partnership including at the March 2023 Full Partnership meeting. The final report was published in May 2023, following Police investigation concluding, allowing for lunch & learn and wider sharing of learning to take place during 23/24.

Rapid reviews

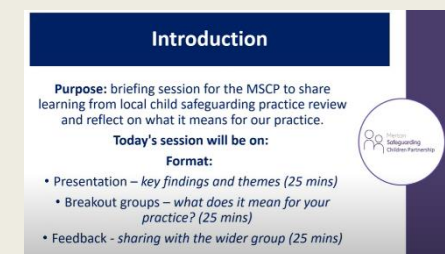
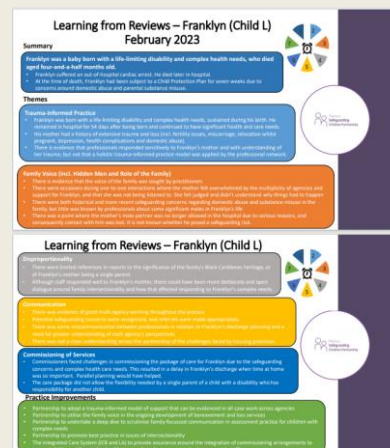
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There were **two serious incidents** which the rapid review panels concluded **did not require a further LCSPR** - for Child M and Child O⁶. Some of the themes raised within these reviews included: trusted relationships & attempts to achieve positive engagement; collaboration, child's voice in safety planning, timely information sharing and use of escalation processes; school attendance and creative approaches, and prioritisation of safeguarding first approach.

During 2022-23, the MSCP also **contributed to a Surrey rapid review** for a young person who had previously been open to Merton children's social care. This also did not proceed to LCSPR. Learning was shared with the MSCP networks.

⁶ Decision reversed for Child M following national panel feedback and review by our Independent Chair. LCSPR to be undertaken during 2023-24.

What we did in response to the reviews

The MSCP took a range of actions in response to the reviews outlined above. In addition to final reports for each review, the chair and lead author for each review helped **develop learning materials** for dissemination across the partnership, which are published alongside the full reports on the [MSCP website](#).



We continued with our well-received **'Lunch and Learn' events**, launched in 21/22, to share the learning from our reviews and audits. These provide an opportunity for report writers and practitioners to explore the themes and recommendations from the reviews and embed the learning into their future work and practice. The MSCP also worked with agencies to **embed learning from reviews into multi-agency and single agency training and events** such as delivering presentations at the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board, Strategic Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Panel (MACE) and Children Schools and Families' Practice Week and Learning & Improvement Board.

The MSCP's Section 11 audit 2021/22 identified that disseminating and embedding learning from reviews was a particular strength for the Partnership, demonstrating the impact of this work.

Learning from the practice reviews has also directly impacted on the strategic work of the MSCP and its training programme. During 22-23, the MSCP continued to implement its contextual safeguarding strategy and action plan, as highlighted in the below [contextual safeguarding section](#) to respond to issues raised in the Jason and Eddie reviews, as well as two rapid reviews during the current year.

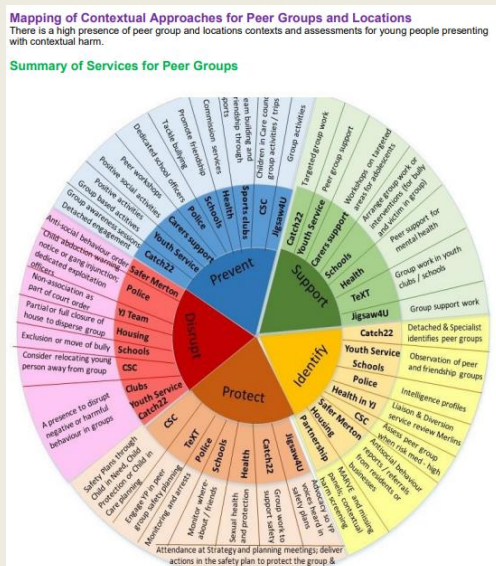


Image from MSCP contextual safeguarding strategy

The actions from the 2022-23 rapid reviews are being overseen by the Quality Assurance & Practice Review subgroup. In addition, due to contextual safeguarding and criminal exploitation themes, the Strategic MACE panel has embedded actions from one rapid review into their own workplan.

Local reviews continue to highlight the importance of trauma-informed practice (e.g., Franklyn), although positively there was evidence of good practice around this seen alongside areas for improvement. Multiple agencies have an internal offer around trauma-informed practice, however the MSCP has agreed to include a trauma-informed practice course as part of the core MSCP training programme to enhance consistency. The 2022-23 Joint Conference with MSAB included a keynote speech on trauma-informed practice.

Learning from Child O rapid review has been shared with Children Missing Education panel membership to ensure it is considered within panel decisions and actions, and secondary behaviour leads. There will also be a move towards strengthened attendance tracking based on DfE requirements during 2023-24.

In response to 2022-23 reviews, the Section 11 audit for 2023-24 will be amended to provide assurance from agencies around:

- Trauma-informed practice (Franklyn)
- Safeguarding First approach (Child O, Child M)
- Equality, diversity & inclusion policies (Franklyn, Child O)
- Think Family approach (Franklyn, Child M, alongside various Safeguarding Adults Reviews and LCSPRs from previous years)

The MSCP also delivered training to embed learning from reviews from previous years, for example:

- Baby Grace: the MSCP has commissioned and launched the ICON programme across the partnership, which shares important messages with new and expectant parents about coping with crying. More details are highlighted in the [Early Help & Neglect section](#). The MSCP also commissioned Inner Strength Network (ISN) to deliver multi-agency training on Having Difficult Conversations.
- Jason: No Recourse to Public Funds training was commissioned and delivered.

Learning from national reviews

There continued to be **considerable learning for safeguarding partnerships nationally**, following the 2022 publication of the Child Protection in England report on the tragic deaths of Arthur and Star. Work continued into 2022-23 including the **launch of two refreshed MSCP documents**: Bruising in Non Independently Mobile Infants and Children policy and Pre-Birth Protocol and Assessment Tool.

In March 2022, the concerning case of Child Q in Hackney reminded us of the **ongoing concerns around the adultification of Black children** and the **importance of professional challenge** across partnerships. The MSCP chose this **theme for the 2022-23 scrutiny** topic led by Independent and Young Scrutineers, alongside **commissioning training from Listen Up**, delivered in part during 2022-23. The training was commissioned jointly with Wandsworth and Croydon safeguarding children partnerships. Plans for 2023-24 include developing a local training course that can be delivered across the three partnerships routinely.

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Independent scrutiny 2022-23 – quotes from children



Merton has contributed towards and considered the recommendations of the **national review into safeguarding children with disabilities in residential settings**⁷. In Merton, the Phase 1 audit of two children that met criteria was completed by children's social care with oversight from MSCP Executive.

The review highlighted **good relationship-based practice** with the young people. All the professionals working with the young people knew them very well and had developed significant and meaningful relationships. No significant concerns were raised through this review however there were areas identified to strengthen practice as a multi-agency partnership, including **strengthening transitions pathways** between children's services and adults and **developing monitoring of children's placements**. Learning was shared with the QAPR subgroup with areas for improvement picked up by relevant services. A focus on **implementing the national recommendations from Phase 2** will be a key priority in 2023-24.

The relevant MSCP subgroups also considered learning from the national panel reports published on the **management of bruising in non-mobile infants** and **multi-agency safeguarding and domestic abuse**, including incorporating findings into relevant policies under review.

The national panel published their annual report detailing themes from LCSPRs alongside rapid review examples, which were reviewed by the QAPR Subgroup and the Full Partnership. The themes outlined in the report were considered during development of the refreshed MSCP business for 2023-25, to ensure that the MSCP was **focusing appropriately on nationally important themes alongside local priorities**.

⁷ [Safeguarding children with disabilities in residential settings - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/safeguarding-children-with-disabilities-in-residential-settings)

Child Death Overview Panel (Summary of Caseload 2022-23)

The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership works alongside the Child Death Overview Panel, which **reviews all child deaths in Merton**. A full report of activity of the Child Death Overview Panel can be found in the CDOP annual report. The Child Death Review process is a systematic process whereby the circumstances surrounding the death of a child under the age of 18 are reviewed and analysed to identify any actual or potential opportunities for prevention and improvement in health and other agencies to prevent similar deaths in the future.

The panel commenced reporting on feedback activity with the SW London Patient Safety Surveillance group in 2022-23 based on shared learning from SW London Child Death Overview Panel reviews as part of the CDOP's contribution to the organizational response to child deaths in the integrated care system (ICS).

As part of the upcoming National Patient Safety Strategy, the purpose is to provide professionals with a resource of learning and recommendations from child death reviews. Child death reviews can **contribute to collaborative learning**, for better health, public health, social care, and safety provision during the reporting year to reduce child deaths.

The report covers statistical information from the 6 South West London boroughs of Merton, Sutton, Kingston and Richmond upon Thames, Croydon, and Wandsworth. As of 1st April 2023, there were 64 new notifications of child death and 97 open cases. **Child death notifications have returned to pre-COVID-19 levels** of child deaths per annum. In 2021-22 there was a reduction of 16 deaths which was attributed to the social distancing and public health measures implemented by the regulations of the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. For the 2022-23 reporting year:

- **Fifty-four (54) Child death reviews** were completed.

- There were fifty-four local Child Death Review Meetings completed at SW London Hospitals, three at other tertiary level hospitals outside the local area, and eight Child Death Overview Panel Meetings under the new working arrangements for Child Death Reviews.
- In 2022-23, **81%** of child deaths had no modifiable concerns which was more than the previous year at **78%** of child deaths in SW London.
- For unexpected deaths notified across SW London during the 2022-23 reporting year, **twenty-six** Joint Agency Response (JAR) meetings were initiated.
- **48%** of child death reviews were completed in six months, with **52%** completed up to 12 months from notification. As a result of delays in obtaining post-mortem reports and coroners' inquests, **20%** were over one year old at the time of review.

Local Authority Designated Officer service (2022-23 overview)

The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership works alongside the LADO service. The service **manages concerns and allegations against professionals and volunteers working with children** in Merton. A full report of activity of the LADO can be found in the LADO annual report. The LADO post within Merton is a permanent role covered by one full-time LADO. Since February 2023, the LADO service expanded to include a part time LADO who covers 1.5 days per week.

- This **additional capacity** has enhanced the ability of the service to manage the increase in contact with the service which has risen by **33%**, from 271 contacts in 2021-22 to 360 in 2022-23.
- Early years and education settings have the most contact with the service, accounting for **55%** of all contacts.
- Concerns about physical harm continue to be the primary reason for contacting the LADO with **35%** of all contacts

relating to concerns about physical harm. This is a slight increase from last year's figure of **30%**.

- Children with additional needs are referred in high numbers (**56%**). This is a broad category and includes pre-school children, children with special educational needs and/ or disabilities, children looked after by the local authority and children subject to child protection and child in need plans.

Most consultations do not progress to allegations meetings which suggests that **advice is being sought around issues that could be dealt with as complaints or practice issues with LADO oversight**, rather than allegations against individual staff members.

The **establishment of a regular training programme** and work to **enhance the profile** of the role within Merton are contributing factors to the increase in contacts over the last year. The LADO continues to provide training via the MSCP, reaching 32 multi-agency delegates during 2022/23, and has **delivered bespoke training** to local settings. Awareness raising of the role and training remained a key priority for 2022/23.

The LADO has worked with the MSCP and another local authority to **produce a set of leaflets** aimed at schools, parents/ carers and after school provision. The leaflets are aimed at **keeping children safe in after school activities** and are being circulated across the borough (see [Safer After School campaign](#) on MSCP website).



The LADO continues to **liaise with regulatory bodies** and to **make referrals** when there are concerns about potential risk of harm and the suitability of that individual within the children's workforce.

The LADO service has **sought feedback** from a range of settings. The feedback has been positive however the responses have come mainly from the education sector. We need to ensure that our next evaluation includes more views from our colleagues in the wider statutory and voluntary sector. Some comments from referring agencies have been provided below.

What do you think we do that is good?

- "Being very quick to respond to concerns and to offer guidance and support every step of the way".
- "The outcome and advice was comprehensive and I was able to share with all parties easily".
- "LADO is easily accessible; happy to discuss concerns and offer advice"
- "Easy service to access, quick to respond and very knowledgeable" (Education setting). (Placement)

What do you think we could do better?

- "Perhaps offer more frequent training to community groups"?
- "Training/CPD sessions have been valuable; please can we have more of these please".
- "Timelines when outside agencies are involved such as police- this can be problematic".
- "Perhaps updates on ongoing situations although this was fairly good".

Learning from audit

During 22-23, the MSCP continued to establish the multi-agency audit programme aligned with its commitment to continuous improvement, and to ensure the MSCP meets expectations set out in Working Together 2018 to learn from multi-agency audits.

Section 11

The MSCP undertakes bi-annual Section 11 audits, in line with the Working Together guidance, to help organisations in Merton undertake their own quality assurance processes to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. More information on the previous 21-22 audit can be found in our Section 11 learning summary.

To ensure actions had been progressed and learning was being implemented effectively from the 21-22 audit, the MSCP held a **“One-Year-On” Peer Review session** in January 2023.

The 16 organisations who submitted an audit response were invited and this was chaired by our Independent Scrutineer and Young Scrutineer. Examples of progress included:

- To strengthen voice of the child strategically, Young Scrutineer attended the 5 sub-groups and the Full Partnership to explore this and share findings of the Young Residents Survey. Participation and the child's voice is further embedded into 2023-25 business plan with each subgroup required to agree activity for their workplans around this.
- Regular promotion of the Escalation Policy and several sessions held on having 'difficult conversations' to support with healthy professional challenge.
- Commissioned wider training opportunities on mental health and wellbeing, in particular self-harm and suicide, Kooth mental health resources.

- Scrutineers contributed to review of MSCP Learning and Development strategy.
- Child-friendly version of St George's Mental Health Trust safeguarding policy developed, and a section written by young people.

Multi-agency audits

During 2021-22, the MSCP developed a modest audit programme, with a rotating chair to share ownership across partners, and overseen by the QA sub-group. All audit briefings are published on our website to support dissemination of learning.

During 22-23, the MSCP led a **multi-agency audit on contextual safeguarding**, which concluded:

What is working well?

- Good inter-agency communication and information sharing.
- Voice of the child – routinely captured alongside voice of their family, even where engagement had been difficult to achieve.
- Evidence of work to build positive relationships.

Themes for improvement

- Information and decisions could have been shared more quickly after key meetings and across agency boundaries
- Although services championed the use of trusted adults, further support could be offered to help with building of strong, positive relationships between young people and professionals supporting them.

The **findings were shared widely**, including at the MSCP Full Partnership, relevant subgroups and the Strategic MACE panel.

Actions that have taken place as a result include:

- MSCP training programme reviewed by Policy & Training subgroup to ensure professional curiosity is picked as key theme across relevant courses.
- Development of relationship-based practice training for multi-agency audience, to build up knowledge of children's social care practice within the partnership (to launch in 2023-24)
- 2023-24 audit theme will focus on national review into murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson to further review core multi-agency safeguarding practice.
- Plans for a multi-agency roundtable to consider and propose approaches to improve information sharing following key meetings.

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Cross-boundary working is key theme within 2023-24 LCSPR for Child M with engagement from Sutton and Croydon where further learning will be explored on this.

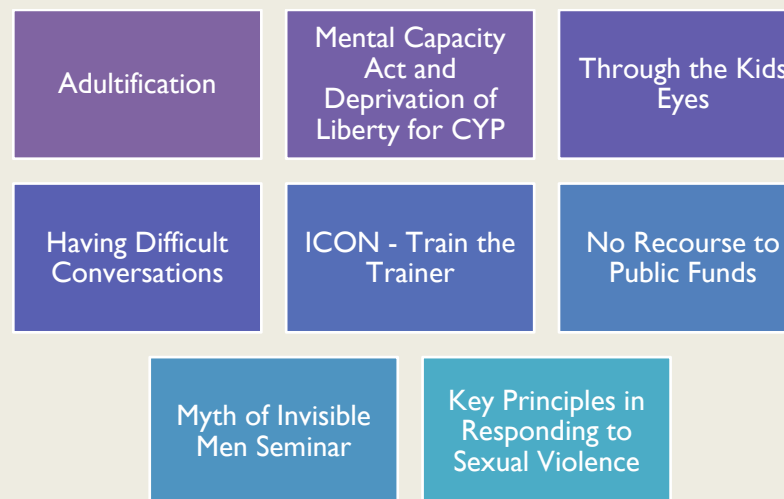
The recommendations from the audit are being overseen by the QAPR sub-group, and relevant actions have been added to the workplan for the PPYP subgroup which focuses on contextual safeguarding.

Learning and Development

Training Programme 2022-23

The MSCP training programme is overseen by the quarterly Policy and Training sub-group. The MSCP offered **63 sessions of 36 separate courses/events** in 22-23, **reaching 792 multi-agency delegates** through the year. Feedback indicated that the option to **access training remotely** enabled more partners to participate and therefore, the MSCP continued to deliver most courses virtually.

The training programme is mostly delivered in house, by a range of partners across the MSCP. Courses and training themes are derived from sub-group work plans and recommendations (via Policy & Training Sub-Group), as well as from learning from case reviews. The training programme for 22/23 included training modules on three of our thematic priorities (Domestic Abuse, Early Help via Effective Support for Families, and Contextual Safeguarding), as well as a range of core safeguarding training. It also included a wide range of courses to respond to ongoing or emerging concerns:

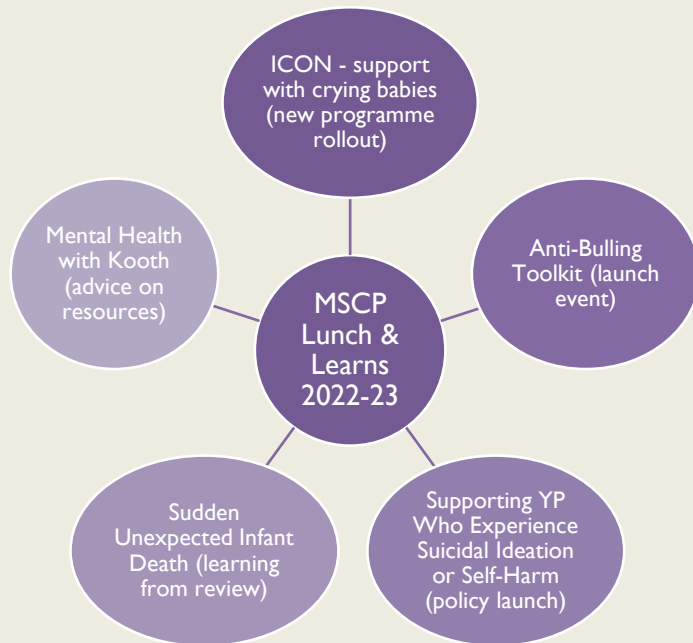


In the previous year, the MSCP introduced 'Lunch and Learns' to share bitesize learning from emerging themes from our learning reviews, which have continued to be successful in engaging higher numbers of delegates from a wider range of partners.

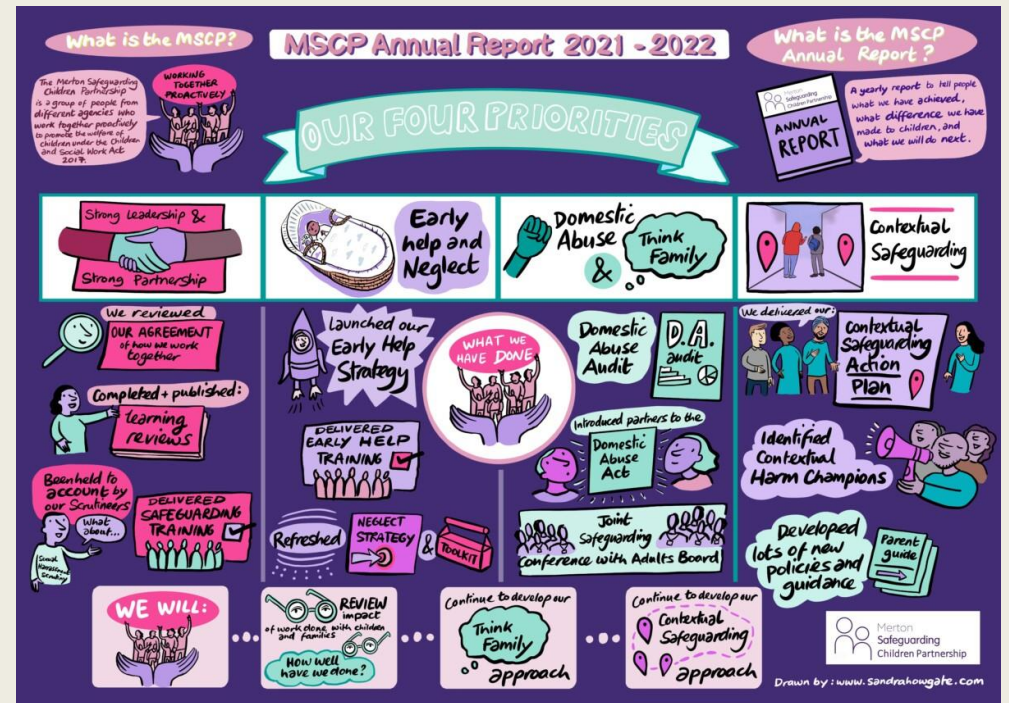
"I enjoy the lunch and learn sessions, they provide essential information and allow for multi-agency discussions."

This year we expanded this to pick up other key pieces of partnership activity, such as the launch of new guidance and toolkits, as highlighted in the diagram below:

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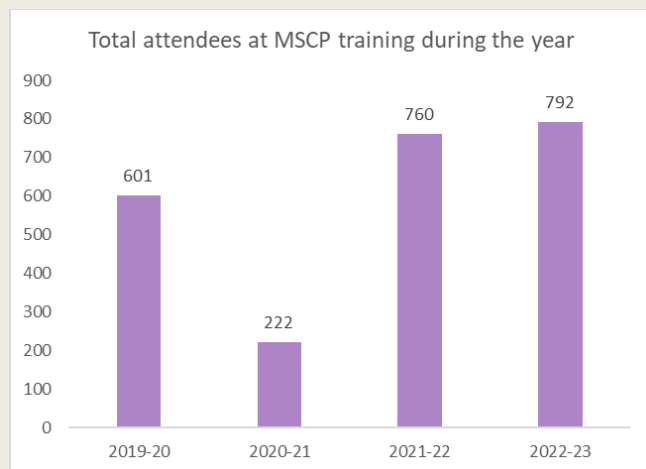
To support with **sharing learning and partnership updates with professionals and children, young people and families**, the Policy & Training subgroup approved funding of **visual summaries** of the 2021-22 annual report (see below) and the sexual violence in schools & colleges scrutiny (see [Scrutiny section](#)). These were positively received and it has been agreed to develop similar visual summaries in future.



Impact of our Training Programme

During the 2022/23 period, the MSCP offered 63 occurrences of 36 separate courses/events. We offered a total of 1,726 training places; we had 1,125 bookings and **792 attended**, an attendance rate of **70% of total bookings**. This has dropped slightly compared to last year's attendance rate of 74%. However, as the chart below

shows, there has been a small increase in total numbers since last year and has **continued to be above pre-pandemic training attendance.**



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The services with the highest number of attendees at MSCP training events during 2022/23 were London Borough of Merton Children Schools and Families (Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion), Education (Schools, Colleges & Nurseries), Central London Community Healthcare Trust, South West London St. George's Mental Health Trust (SWL STG MHT). Compared with last year, **attendance by SWL STG MHT has improved significantly. Attendance by Police colleagues has also improved**, increasing from 1 registered attendee last year, to 10 during 22-23. We are continuing to prioritise increasing this further. The Policy and Training sub-group monitors attendance at training by agencies regularly and follows up with agencies where take up is lower.

Evaluation

Improving the rate of return for evaluation forms was a priority during 2022-23. To date, **103 evaluation forms were returned** via the Learning Management System. This is a **significant improvement** from

last year (56 forms returned). The MSCP provides summaries of evaluation feedback to trainers, to **inform the development of the training programme.** It continues to be a priority to increase the evaluation response rate.

Feedback forms are distributed to participants via the Phew online platform. This year, feedback from participants resulted in the following average scores:

- How relevant to your current role do you think this topic is? (1, 'not at all', to 4, 'extremely') – **3.49 average, out of 4**



- The training facilitator's skills were... (from 1, 'poor' to 4, 'excellent') - **3.70 average**

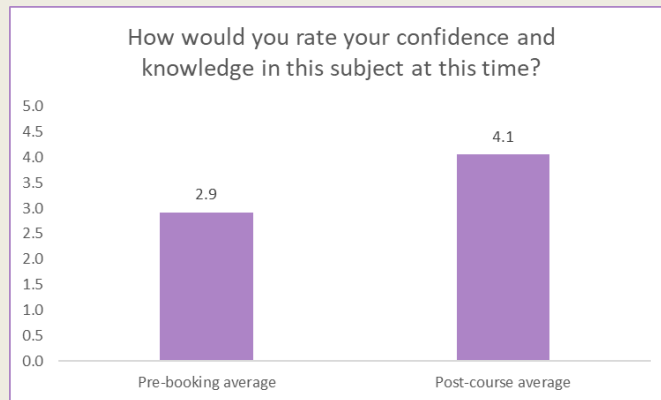


- Rate to what extent you agree that Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discriminatory practice were integrated (from 1, 'not at all', to 4, 'extremely') - **3.44 average, out of 4**



Although the average ratings were similar, there was a slightly lower score given for anti-discriminatory practice and equal opportunities (3.44). This is **fed back to trainers** to ensure they are sufficiently incorporating this in design of their course.

We also use pre-event and post-event forms. By asking the same questions before and after training, the MSCP assesses improvement in attendee knowledge and confidence. The two "**learning gain**" questions are assessed on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high):



The above chart highlights an **average “learning gain” increase** of 1.2, almost double last year’s increase of 0.66. This reflects an improvement in attendee confidence and knowledge.

Quotes from our training courses are shared throughout the report, including **highlighting the positive impact attendees felt the training will have on their practice with children and families.**

The **theme and content of the MSCP training programme and the sub-group workplans** is informed by multi-agency data and its analysis alongside the quality of multi-agency practice from audits and learning reviews. Each of the sub-groups conduct performance monitoring as standing items on their agenda to ensure that trends and themes identified are better developed, understood and responded to. Where training gaps are identified, the Business Support Unit works with the Policy and Training sub-group to source suitable courses.

MSCP-MSAB conference

The annual joint conference was **attended by over 160 multi-agency delegates**. It provided an opportunity to share practice between children and adults’ practitioners, particularly focused on **domestic abuse safeguarding (children and adults), trauma-informed practice**.

Two young people bravely **shared their lived experience**, after involvement in a Safeguarding Adult Review following their mother’s death, with powerful messages for all partners in attendance. Some of the feedback from delegates about the event and how it would support their practice can be found in the [MSAB](#) and the [Domestic Abuse & Think Family](#) sections.

Communicating with the Partnership

Alongside training and events, the MSCP continued to share learning and relevant updates with the wider Partnership during 22-23 through various routes. This has included:

- maintaining the MSCP website to ensure content for professionals is up to date, accurate and reflects best practice, including addition of new pages such as [ICON / Abusive Head Trauma](#) in response to local reviews
- A bi-monthly news bulletin to help share local, regional and national safeguarding news and best practice with partners, alongside promotion of the MSCP training programme.
- A mailing list to share relevant updates more quickly and encourage sign-ups to training programme where spaces remain available.

Partners have fed back that they find these methods helpful, particularly for keeping up to date with the MSCP’s training offer and to understand learning from learning reviews and audits.

Early Help and Neglect

One of the MSCP's priorities for 2022-23 was Early Help and Neglect. A dedicated sub-group, comprising a range of partnership agencies progressed actions to improve our early help offer and response to neglect.

What have we achieved this year?

After **launching our Early Help Strategy and Effective Support for Families Model** in 2021, focus continued on delivery and ensuring the new model was effectively embedded. Following a major focus on training and wider communications in 2021-22, we agreed a **core offer of quarterly training sessions** available to the multi-agency workforce.

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During 2022/23, a multi-agency task & finish group led the **rollout of the [ICON programme](#)**, chaired by the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children (SWL ICB), in response to Baby Grace LCSPR. ICON is a public health programme designed to help those caring for babies to cope with crying and reduce Abusive Head Trauma in infants. Development of materials, training and awareness raising took place in advance of and during the launch in December 2022, involving key agencies such as midwifery and health visiting alongside wider partners such as Children's Centres. Voluntary organisations, faith groups and Community Champions.

22

During 2022-23, the Insights to Intervention Project continued to be overseen by the Early Help & Neglect subgroup. Funding was secured from the Supporting Families programme towards **improving business intelligence and data maturity, to help build a more detailed picture of Merton's residents, better understand their needs and indicators of risk and vulnerability**. The project aims to support services to more easily identify emerging trends to support delivery of early help to improve outcomes for children and families and prevent escalation of risk and high-cost statutory interventions. From 2023-2024, the next phase will focus on developing data lake further and integrating a range of data sets including anti-social behaviour, children missing education and substance misuse data.

Activity to **increase school attendance** has been monitored closely by the Early Help & Neglect subgroup. An example of the work in the last school year was the **development of an excellent tool to support schools** to make sure that children with mental health issues affecting their attendance can receive help. A borough-wide plan is in place to improve attendance and a new national strategy will be discussed with the DfE at a challenge/support meeting in autumn 2023.

Merton Council was successful in **securing funding through national DfE Family Hub Transformation (TF1)** from November 2022 until March 2024. A Family Hub is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, whole-family, joined up family support services. Planning began quickly for Merton delivery against the three main requirements: More Accessible, Better Connected and



Relationships-Centered. This work will be overseen by the Prevention & Early Intervention Subgroup during 2023-24, alongside other key partnership forums in the early help space.

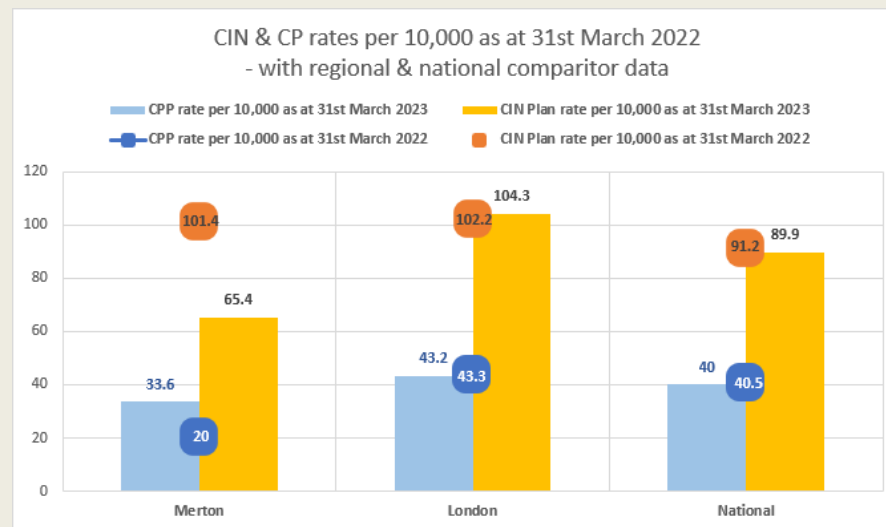
The MSCP commissioned a course on “**Introduction to support options for people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)**”, following our local child safeguarding practice review for Jason, which took place in February 2023. Attendance was targeted to leads across the multi-agency partnership to ensure messages could be disseminated back to relevant workforces. This included anti-social behaviour service and voluntary/community sector representatives.

LBM’s Head of Housing Strategy reported to the June 2022 Full Partnership meeting regarding **legislation around housing in the borough**. The housing presentation was shared with all partners and published online to continue to raise awareness. Housing and Children’s Services colleagues have provided assurances through ongoing joint working as presented in the above. Further training sessions for single agencies are being delivered on request by Housing following their offer to the partnership. Housing were also part of the targeted attendance at our No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) training commissioned noted above.

The **MSCP’s Neglect Strategy and toolkit** supports partners to identify and recognise neglect of children and young people. After launching in February 2022, the focus during 2022-23 was to raise awareness across the partnership and ensure the toolkit was being used effectively. Following exploration of internal offer with an external trainer, the MSCP has agreed to fund development of a Neglect training course during 2023-24.

What difference have we made?

During 2022-23, there was a **reduction in the rate of children with a child in need (CIN) plan** in Merton per 10,000 children alongside an **increase in the rate of children subject to child protection plans (CPP)**. For both indicators, Merton rates remained below London and national averages. Thresholds are scrutinised closely by the multi-agency partnership to ensure that they are being applied appropriately throughout the child’s journey.



Re-referrals to children’s social care were also monitored by the group which were 18.3% during 2022, in line with London average (18%) and remaining below national (21.5%).

Family Wellbeing Service (**targeted early help**) case audits findings were reported into the subgroup, with an overview of

actions in response to areas for improvement. The audit highlighted:

What's working well?

- Evidence of service users voice, wishes and feelings
- Family plans are clear and concise
- Timeliness at all points of the case work
- Consent across the multi agency network to gather and share information
- Initial contacts agree taking place in timescales (within 5 days of allocation)
- Provides context for data/performance

Areas for improvement

- Consistency around the audit process i.e 2 per month per managers
- Supervision frequency (varies across different managers)
- Closure summaries

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The Insights to Interventions project has helped **deliver SEND inclusion profiles**, which will be rolled out to schools in Merton during 2023-24 academic year.

In December 2022, we **rolled out ICON** across Merton with the support of over eight key partners, including Public Health, Police, Children's Social care, Voluntary Sector, Community Health services including Health Visitors, General Practitioners, CAMHS, Drug and Alcohol Services, Epsom & St Helier and St George's Maternity and Acute services, Merton Safeguarding Adults Board, Merton Libraries. We ran **two MSCP "Launch & Learn" events**, attended by 31 multi-agency partners, and delivered bespoke sessions for providers including Children's Centres (now Family Hubs). We **provided materials, including**

leaflets and posters, for partner agencies to display in their workspaces and use with expectant and new parents/carers. As a result of this training and awareness raising:

- **Over 200 professionals trained** in ICON to deliver the messages to new and expectant parents, including "Train the Trainers".
- **ICON message embedded** into Baby Early Learning Together 0-6 months and baby Massage course run by all children's centres (now family hubs).

School attendance in Merton is better than national and outer London comparators in Primary, Secondary and the Pupil Referral Unit. Attendance in our special schools is below national and outer London. However, attendance is 2-3% below pre pandemic levels of attendance and Persistent Absence (those below 90%) is double the level it was in 2019 (similar nationally). Therefore, **improving school attendance** remains a key focus for the partnership.

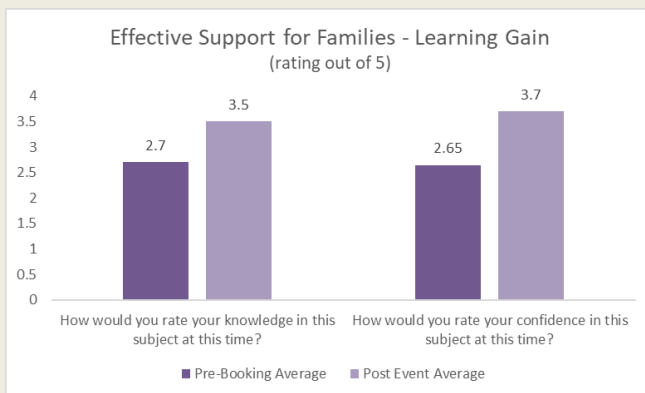
Highlights from the annual Children Missing Education (CME) report for 2022-23 include:

- There was a **significant fall in the number children in care who were vulnerable to CME**; a percentage drop of 2%.
- There were **no young people who had offended off roll** in the year and only 5 who were vulnerable to CME. This is the lowest this figure has been which is a significant achievement.
- **Ongoing rise in children with ECHPs identified as off roll** pending placement to 31 (from 16 in 2017-18), caused by a lack of specialist placements (locally & nationally).
- However, we have seen a fall in the number of children with EHCPs on roll who became vulnerable to CME from

80 in 2018-19 to 52 in 2019-20, whilst still a high number this a significant fall.

The **Children Missing Education (CME) Dashboard** compares performance to the previous year, which highlighted more children are now off roll and on roll but not attending school. This is in line with national data. However, work by the CME panel and partnership in Merton has led to improvements in the time taken to get children back into school - more children with “complex” cases are back in school within 140 days; this was previously 185 days.

We delivered 4 “**Effective Support for Families**” sessions to the Partnership, to 29 attendees from a wide range of partners. This reduction in numbers attending was expected, following 9 sessions with over 100 attendees in 2021-22 for the launch year. This continues to be monitored to ensure we are reaching the correct partners and delivering an appropriate number of courses through the year. Feedback from the course continued to be positive and encouraging, as highlighted below:



“I feel a lot more confident in my ability to signpost families and in my ability to assist families since the training.”

What will we do next?

Under the refreshed business plan, the Early Help priority will be overseen by the Prevention & Early Intervention Subgroup, and Neglect priority will be overseen by the Effective Safeguarding & Support Subgroup.

Priorities for 2023-24 will be:

- To continue to promote the Effective Support for Families Model and review alignment with pan-London threshold matrix.
- Refreshing and launching the new Early Help Strategy and corresponding multi-agency performance framework, aligned with Supporting Families Outcomes framework
- Strengthening promotion of the Neglect toolkit, including through adding a neglect course to our core MSCP training offer
- Continue to develop our multi-agency early help approach further, using resource secured through grant funding, e.g. Supporting Families, Reducing Parental Conflict and delivery of Family Hubs.
- Continue to develop our Data Maturity work through the Insights to Intervention Project.
- Continue to work with partners to improve school attendance, including implementing systems to achieve new government requirements.
- Continue to promote the ICON programme across Merton's safeguarding system and evaluate impact of first year.

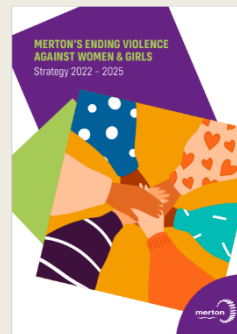
Domestic Abuse & Think Family

The MSCP's Domestic Abuse and Think Family sub-group has oversight of work on domestic abuse from across the Partnership. This includes regular reporting from representatives from the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Boards. Merton's multi-agency MARAC panel coordinates the partnership's response to the most complex/high risk domestic abuse cases using a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies.

What have we achieved this year?

The subgroup has continued to oversee:

- Communications around domestic abuse pathways and support services. Including **routine sharing of information from the VAWG & MARAC Lead with the partnership** via the mailing list and bi-monthly news bulletin.
- Driving **forward of actions from the MSCP's 'Baby Grace' LCSPR**, which featured learning on identifying and addressing risk of domestic abuse and promotion of Clare's Law.
- **Drafting of Think Family guidance** for raising awareness of the principles and how to apply to practice across the partnership. This will be finalised and shared in 2023-24.
- **Dedicated multi-agency performance dashboard** to monitor outcomes on a quarterly basis, including MARAC data.
- **Well-established Domestic Abuse multi-agency training**
- **New course** added to the core MSCP training programme: **Evidence Based Interventions to support Parents experiencing conflict in their relationships'** and delivered by Early Help Development Manager. This was offered three times during 2022-23.



In December 2022, Merton launched its [new strategy for 2022-25](#) to help **prevent all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and domestic abuse** in the borough. The partnership strategy brings in departments across the council as well as external partners such as the police. The strategy is formed of five key priorities as highlighted below and was informed by various pieces of work across the partnership, including the MSCP's sexual violence in schools and colleges scrutiny. Objective 5 has been a major focus following the murder of women such as Sarah Everard, Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry and Sabina Nessa in 2021, and a specific Women and Girls task group has been set up in the borough to look at this issue.

Merton Council **achieved White Ribbon accredited status** in November 2022, demonstrating the commitment in the borough to ending violence against women and girls by men and boys. As part of this, Bystander Training has been offered to partners and residents which is promoted by the MSCP. **Campaigns** have been led by Safer Merton **raising awareness** of Domestic Violence and Abuse and VAWG among our partners and the community – for example the 16 Days Against Domestic Violence and Abuse Campaign in November and December 2022 – which the MSCP has helped promote to children's safeguarding partners.



A **successful bid** was submitted to the Home Office for the **Perpetrator Programme**. This will involve 7-boroughs and each borough will have an attached Perpetrator Intervention Worker and IDVA. The IDVA will focus on the partner and children to ensure their

voice is heard. Perpetrator Intervention Workers will also work with the victims to ensure no escalation occurs in the home.

The DA Act Officer has compiled a **directory for child victims**, available on various websites. Training with MARACs took place around Clare's Law, and there are aims as part of the Police project to offer this across the partnership during 2023-24 via the MSCP.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 brought in some significant changes including a statutory definition of domestic abuse for the first time and explicit recognition of children as victims of domestic abuse. The MSCP has continued to work with Safer Merton to **raise awareness of the changes and implications for practice**, including a directory of services for children as victims and highlighted during training that children are victims in their own right.

The sub-group also identified **child and adolescent to parent violence and abuse** as a key area of focus through regular discussions on our performance data. This prompted partners to bid for funding from MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit to support families in the latter where CAPVA is present. In 23-24, we found out our bid was successful and will be taking this work forward in the coming year.

What difference have we made?

In 2022/2023 the MARAC discussed **592** high risk and complex cases involving domestic abuse, **564** children were identified as part of these discussions. There has been a **continued increase in the number of cases discussed at MARAC** since 2020 and during the pandemic we saw a 90% increase in cases being discussed. The rise in repeat cases being seen by MARAC across the three reporting years has also continued and we believe this was due to the pandemic where more domestic abuse was reported but also professionals and agencies have better identified repeat victims and survivors and referred them back to MARAC.

Figure 1: An overview of MARAC cases 2019/20 – 2022/23

Year	Number of Cases Discussed	Number of Repeat cases	% repeat cases	Number of children in the household
2020-21	576	234	41%	557
2021-22	636	301	47%	639
2022-23	592	259	44%	564

Independent Domestic Violence Advocates [IDVAs]

The work of Merton's IDVAs continued throughout 2022/23. Having **introduced a case worker within the Children and Families Hub** (previously MASH - Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) the three IDVAs in the community and Complex Needs IDVA have seen an increase in case referrals. This arrangement remains under review and reports regularly to the Domestic Abuse and Think Family sub-group.

The IDVAs role includes sourcing safe/emergency accommodation, referrals to Safeguarding and/or MARAC, accompanying service users to court, information provision around criminal justice system, signposting for legal advice including clients with no recourse to public funds, and emotional support. It is recognised that the **IDVA role plays a pivotal role in supporting and managing domestic violence issues**.

The **One Stop Shop confidential weekly drop-in service** for people experiencing domestic abuse has been re-opened since November 2021, after operating on a virtual basis during the pandemic. Numbers accessing have continued to rise.

The **IDVA service** received **626** referrals between April 2022 and March 2023 (compared to 769 the previous year), of which **256** were high risk. **54** of the total referrals came from Social Care services. In addition, the MASH DVA Caseworker (who took up post in June 2022):

Referrals during April 2022 to March 2023

Intensive support

The MASH DVA Caseworker provided 21 clients with 6 or more significant contacts e.g., appointments, joint appointments, telephone-based RIC and ISSP completion.

Medium support

The MASH DVA Caseworker provided 27 clients with 2-5 significant contacts. Single contact and advice provision was provided to 14 clients by the MASH DVA Caseworker.

Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme – Clare’s Law

Clare’s Law is a Police policy giving people the right to know if their current or ex-partner has history of violence or abuse. The aim is to help people to make a more informed decision on whether to continue a relationship and provide support when making that choice, or after separation. Learning from Merton’s Baby Grace review suggested that Merton would benefit from **increased promotion of Clare’s Law locally**. As a result, the MSCP has **delivered awareness raising activity**, promoting the law in our news bulletin as well as raising awareness of local training coordinated by the Police.

59 Clare’s Law requests have been made in Merton and of those **23** disclosures were carried out, the remaining numbers were either no DA history, disengaged or not authorised.

Operation Encompass

Following successful implementation at many schools in Merton, **Operation Encompass continues to inform school settings of incidents of domestic abuse involving children on roll**. This makes sure that Designated Safeguarding Leads and key staff are aware of this context when supporting and working with their children. However, a **recent DHR has highlighted that Op Encompass should be reviewed,**

to provide assurance that all schools are using the secure system to see notifications. This will be a priority during 2023-24.

Training

During 2022-23, the MSCP Training programme **delivered four Domestic Violence and Abuse training courses**, attended by 45 participants. This is an improvement compared to the previous year, with double the number of sessions, a jump in attendance from 14 attendees. Feedback from attendees was very positive, with all delegates saying they would recommend the course to a colleague.

“[The training] made me look at interactions and behaviour I have witnessed in my past from a different viewpoint and I hope that it will enable me to be more proactive should those situations reoccur.”

“The course was up to date with its information and included how technology can be used to track people, the difficulties that people face in leaving, and where people, both clients and professionals can access help.”

During 2022-23, the MSCP **delivered three Evidence Based Interventions to support Parents experiencing conflict in their relationships courses**, attended by 34 multi-agency participants. Positive feedback has been received within post-course evaluations and therefore the training will be continued in 2023-24.

“I can tell the different therapists in my service about this course which they could then communicate with health visitors / school nurses.”

The subgroup's **awareness raising around Think Family** helped lead to the joint conference focus alongside the proposal for a new Think Family & Transitional Safeguarding subgroup joint between the MSCP and Merton Safeguarding Adults Board.

Members of the sub-group **supported the planning of the Joint Conference**. The Merton Lead for DA/VAWG and a Senior IDVA **led a session on Understanding Childhood Experiences**. They provided an overview of key indicators of domestic abuse, the importance of professional curiosity and used a case study to help attendees explore “How does understanding Childhood Trauma or experiences help us better understand and support the person in front of us?”

- **91%** of attendees found this Extremely or Somewhat Useful (remaining **9%** chose Neutral).
- Attendees were also asked the below question in the, and many noted Think Family as a key take-away:

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“What difference do you think attending this event will make to your work with children, young people and their families?”

“Attending will help me be more professionally curious, listen to the voice of the child more, and think family and more systemically.”

“Encouraged re continuing to be holistic and to always consider family members with vulnerable adults.”

“Highlights the impact on the whole family and need to consider whole family needs .”

What will we do next?

Under the refreshed business plan, the Domestic Abuse Neglect priorities will be overseen by the Effective Safeguarding & Support Subgroup. Think Family will be a cross-cutting theme that all subgroups will be expected to deliver activities around, and the joint Think Family & Transitional Safeguarding subgroup with MSAB will provide further oversight.

In 2023-24, the Effective Safeguarding & Support sub-group will:

- Work with 6 boroughs to successfully implement Perpetrator Programme (led by Lambeth).
- Deliver multi-agency Clare’s Law training (led by Police).
- Implementation of grant funding for Child/Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA), including recruitment to new posts.
- Work to better capture the voice of the child and family on their experience of domestic abuse support and services in Merton.
- Support Safer Merton with White Ribbon, implementation of the new Merton Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy, including review of Operation Encompass and re-commissioning of Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service for July 2024 onwards.
- Continue raising awareness and knowledge around local thresholds and referrals pathways for domestic abuse and implications of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Contextual Safeguarding

The Promote and Protect Young People (PPYP) sub-group has led on the Partnership's approach to contextual safeguarding, to facilitate effective understanding and response to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families.

What have we achieved this year?

Following the launch of the multi-agency Contextual Safeguarding Strategy in the previous year, work included:

- Delivery of **regular training** on contextual harm to safeguarding partners through 2022-23 reaching 67 multi-agency delegates, and our annual CSE awareness day.
- Continuing to **develop and promote online safety** work, through training and promotion of our policy and resources.
- Oversight of our Catch 22 Risk & Resilience Service, an integrated substance misuse, child exploitation and missing from home service, focused on **mitigating risk and promoting resilience** in young people in Merton.
- A **new protocol** regarding [Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation](#) was developed and launched, with 2 training sessions held in October 2023 reaching 30 partners.

The subgroup also oversaw **publication of an Antibullying [Best Practice Toolkit](#) alongside [Guidance for Schools](#)**, with a launch event held in Q3. This incorporated best practice from national and local resources including case studies, alongside recommended tools and approaches.



The **MACE Panels in Merton** are based on the [Pan-London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol](#) and help to ensure swift identification of children at risk using screening tools. Plans are put together and cases reviewed by a panel of local subject matter experts (Pre-MACE) alongside supporting leaders locally to understand trends in the borough (Strategic MACE), which are regularly reported to the PPYP for oversight. Work includes:

- **Patterns of Exploitation & Early Intervention for younger children at early risk of exploitation:** the new contextual harm pathway explicitly recognises Early Help and Tier 1 and 2 aspects, and support can be sought from specialists for Tier 3 and 4 support in those early stages. This is clarified in the protocol pilot launch.
- **Pilot of joint Youth Integrated Offender Management/MACE panel** from September 2022 to ensure there is no duplication or gaps between the panels. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and this will be permanently embedded for 2023-24.
- **Promotion of multi-agency trigger plans** ensuring joined up responses to our children at times of crisis.
- **Identification of key spaces and peer groups** that are risky and supporting multi-agency responses to improve those spaces and disrupt or engage risky groups.
- **Supporting Child Exploitation training** in schools, businesses, licensed premises & hotels (under MAKESAFE protocol) and for professionals all year and during National CE awareness week.

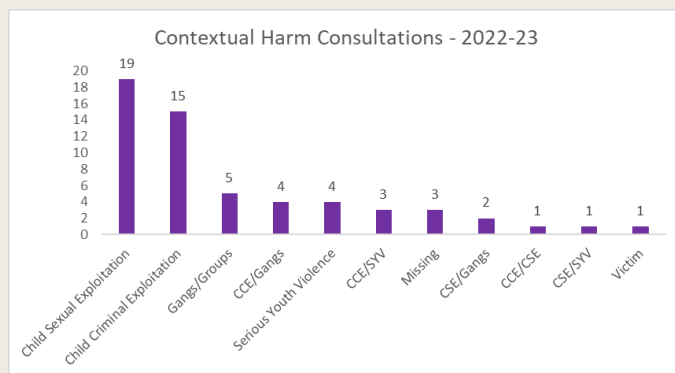
In early 2023, Merton's **multi-agency Missing Panel meeting** was reviewed to look at its effectiveness in assessing the risk for missing children. This included reviewing effective partnership working with key agencies. The panel moved from being online to key members attending in person and social workers giving feedback online. In addition to the Missing Panel itself, there is a **Pre-Missing meeting** agenda planning, where all missing episodes are reviewed and graded to ensure high risks are heard at panel.

The partnership continued to **respond to incidents and conflicts between groups and gangs in the borough and neighbouring boroughs**. This involved detailed individual safety planning with families, working in partnership with professionals across the network, including police, social workers, youth justice workers, youth workers, neighbouring boroughs, schools and colleges. Senior officers also met routinely, to agree joined-up communications plans for schools and the community and to ensure additional senior police representation at key strategic and operational meetings. This included weekly multi-agency meetings at points during the year, and **Police multi-strand activity focusing on all opportunities to disrupt, divert and safeguard**.

Merton's Youth Justice Service received the new **'Turnaround' grant** from the Ministry of Justice. The grant, which is offered to Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales, is available over three years, and has a **focus on early intervention and improving outcomes for children on the cusp of entering the youth justice system**. Work began in 2022-23 to implement the project and the grant requirements within Merton.

What difference have we made?

During 2022-23, **58 contextual harm consultations were completed** as per the pathway into the MACE panel (28 females and 30 males).

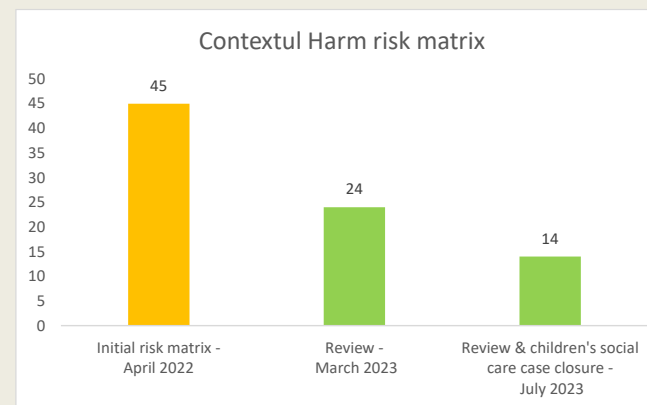


Case studies have **highlighted significant positive change** – for example, the young person highlighted below.

Case study

Reduction in risk for young male seen over persistent, partnership approach to support him and his family.

- Joined-up and relationships-based, trauma-informed support from partners including UTURN, Police Exploitation team, children's social care, Off the Record counselling, Redthread, youth justice service.
- Young person achieved employment, completion of youth justice order, accessed counselling and strengthened relationship with parents, who have also been engaged in safety planning and made progress in supporting and challenging him.



Score on CH Risk Matrix:

10-32 = Early Help (Emerging) – getting help/advice

33-64 = Targeted (Moderate) – getting more help

Catch's 22 [Risk & Resilience annual report 2022-2023](#) also highlights key achievement during the year **mitigating risk and promoting resilience in young people around substance misuse, child exploitation and missing from home**. Highlights include:

- **925** people reached. Of these: **174** were engaged in care planned interventions with SMART and achievable goals agreed, **95** successfully exited the service, and **76** remained engaged at year end.
- This year, the service achieved **97%** positive outcomes for the young people engaged in these interventions.
- **379** Return Home Interviews (RHIs) completed. **98%** offered within 24 hours of notification, and **82%** conducted within 72 hours where young person consented and was available. **55** missing from home “follow-on interventions” completed for young people where risk rating was red/amber.
- **96%** of young people under 18 (who completed treatment) had reduced their substance use and/or were drug free and met care plan goals at exit.

The **multi-agency MACE continued to enable partners to better understand practice and risk for young people**, identifying key themes and patterns including children and risk of being exploited, Locations, Cross-Border Working/Intel, Borough Intel, Missing young people, Group and Peer Mapping, and Best Practice. We have:

- Supported a dedicated multi-agency group working on identified group of young people at risk of exploitation and violence leading to multiple engagements, as well as arrests of linked adults.
- **Brought Clarion Housing into the MACE panel and engaging with their outreach work.** Through both Pre-MACE & Strategic MACE, with funding support from Clarion Housing (member of the MACE strategic panel), U-Turn (the council’s contextual harm team) were able to **offer a music project** in one of the hot spot areas.
- A **particular park in the borough was identified** as a key area of concerns for young people linked to robberies, violence and sexual offences. This generated a joint visit and inspection from the Contextual Harm Service, Designing Out Crime and Neighbourhood Policing and relevant property owners within the park. Youth outreach programme and proactive monitoring was put in place which has led to a **decrease in anti-social behaviour in the park.**
- Across all London Boroughs it was noted that there was a decrease in referrals for CSE, both male and female. **Following training refreshers there has been an increase in CSE referrals**, including CSE and CCE links, CSE and Gangs, and CSE and Serious Youth Violence. The above data reflects this.



The rapid reviews and contextual safeguarding audits undertaken during the year also identified good practice around contextual safeguarding as summarised earlier in the report.

“Every agency involved with Child O showed genuine care and concern about him, recognising his young age and vulnerabilities, and wanted to ensure that he was safe and well and wondered how he could be diverted away from the significant risks he was experiencing outside of his family home.”

“There have been, and continue to be, persistent efforts to support Child O and his mum by multiple agencies and services. At times, different professionals have been able to develop a positive relationship with Child O and his voice and his mother’s voice were heard clearly throughout the information supplied to the rapid review.”

“There was evidence of strong collaboration and information sharing across the partnership.”

Child O rapid review, February 2023

What will we do next?

Priorities for 2023-24 will be:

- Finalise & launch refreshed young people's substance misuse protocol and accompanying guidance for schools and community settings
- Contribute to pan-London MACE review, including development of consistent process for multi-agency work around peer group mapping and safety planning.
- Review & refresh multi-agency online safety policy
- Refresh multi-agency harmful sexual behaviour, missing from home and care and online safety policies and raise awareness with partnership workforce.
- Support the Adulthood Task & Finish group to develop and deliver actions in response to scrutiny recommendations, including rollout of multi-agency adulthood training.
- Maintain strong oversight of the MACE panels and ongoing review of effectiveness in reducing risk and protecting children and young people from exploitation.
- Planning for 2024 refresh of MSCP Contextual Safeguarding Strategy
- Supporting the effective implementation of the Serious Violence Duty in Merton

During the year, two Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) courses were offered (CSA Awareness and Intra-Familial CSA) and attended by 33 multi-agency participants in total. When asked “What difference do you think this training will make to your work with children, young people and their families?”, attendees noted:

“Greater awareness and being able to use the indicators tool.”

“I will feel more confident when speaking with a patient or their parent / guardian.”

Feedback from our Anti-Bullying toolkit launch included:

“As a newcomer to school social work, I feel I will be able to successfully complete work on restorative practice with children who are affected by bullying.”

Looked After Children and Care Leavers

When a child comes into care, the council becomes their 'Corporate Parent', the term means the collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children in our care. Children in Merton are less likely to be in care when compared to other boroughs. In 2022/23, 26 out of every 10,000 children in Merton are in care, which remains in line with the previous year, and lower than national (70) and London (52) rates.

Merton continues to buck the trend in increases of the number of children entering care nationally. The children-in-care population in Merton has been declining over the last five years. The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in our care, had been declining over the past few years, but increased during 2022/23. Close oversight is maintained on thresholds and practice to ensure children who need to come into care in Merton are doing so. This has highlighted strong relationship-based practice in place and effective work to support children on the edge of care to remain with their families.

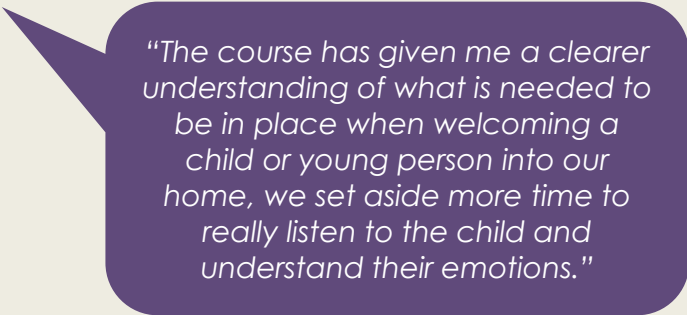
Provisional data shows there continues to be more boys in care than girls with no change in distribution from last year (55.7% vs 44.3%). We also know that proportionally more Merton children enter care at a later age when compared to London and national averages. Provisional data for 2022/23 also shows Black/Mixed children are over-represented in our care population. On 31st March 2023, the percentage of black/mixed-race is 46.3%; this compares with 24% of under-18s in Merton's general population. By contrast, only 7% of our children in our care are from an Asian background. This compares to just under 20% of Merton's under-18 population.

There are many reasons why a child may become looked after, in Merton for 2022/23, the main reasons for entering care are abuse or neglect. This has remained static for the last 7 years. Absent

parenting is the second biggest reason why a child became looked after in 2022/23.

For care leavers, provisional data shows, as at 31st March 2023, 91% of our care experienced young people between the ages of 19 and 21 were 'in touch' with the Local Authority; this compares with 92% nationally as of 31st March 2022. 89% of young people were in suitable accommodation at the end of 2022/23. Provisional calculations show performance remains in line with last year. 67% of our care experienced young people, according to provisional reports, were in education, employment or training during 2022/23.

During 22-23, the Corporate Parenting Board oversaw a refresh of [Merton's Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2022-24](#). This strategy offers an overview of strategic multi-agency priorities for children in care and care leavers. To support this work, the MSCP also commissioned "Through the Kids Eyes" training, which was delivered by a care leaver on experiencing the care system.



"The course has given me a clearer understanding of what is needed to be in place when welcoming a child or young person into our home, we set aside more time to really listen to the child and understand their emotions."

During 23-24, the Corporate Parenting Board will be reviewing and refreshing its approach, with the support of care experienced young people, foster carers and practitioners, beginning with an Away Day in July 2023. There will also be a focus on involving more young people with care experience in recruitment and training of professionals.

Annex 1: MSCP Budget and Spend 2022/23

MSCP Budget 2022-23 – Contributions by agency

London Borough of Merton	84,750
Merton ICB (previously CCG)	55,000
Metropolitan Police	5,000
Total	144,750

MSCP Spend 2022-23

		Spend	Budget	Variance
Staffing:	<input type="checkbox"/> Salaries	89,962	90,168	-206
	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent Posts	18,750	20,000	-1,250
Training		14,216	18,710	-4,494
Learning Reviews		4,000	3,890	110
Supplies and Services (Office costs)		4,768	11,982	-7,214
Total		131,696	144,750	-13,054

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What is the MSCP?

The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership is a group of people from different agencies who work together proactively to promote the welfare of children under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.



MSCP Annual Report 2022-2023

OUR FOUR PRIORITIES



What is the MSCP Annual Report?



A yearly report to tell people what we have achieved, what difference we have made to children, and what we will do next.

Strong Leadership & Strong Partnership

Early help and Neglect

Domestic Abuse & Think Family

Contextual Safeguarding

FREE SAFEGUARDING TRAINING ✓

Trained 792 multi-agency delegates

Delivered across many themes

Robust monitoring through our subgroups

Completed timely learning reviews & embedded actions

Been held to account by our Scrutineers

What can we do to prevent the adultification of black children?

Launched ICON programme for new parents

Babies Cry, You Can Cope!

200+ professionals trained

Activity to increase school attendance

MENTAL HEALTH TOOL FOR SCHOOLS

FAMILY HUB transformation

TRAINING & AWARENESS RAISING

"No Recourse to Public Funds"

"Effective Support for Families"

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Communication of domestic abuse pathways and support services

Clare's Law disclosure scheme

Directory for child victims

Secured funding for 2 new domestic abuse programmes

Perpetrator interventions

Joint Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Conference with Adults Board

Speakers with lived experience

Learning from the Lived Experience of Trauma from Child to Adult

Contextual Safeguarding audit

Improved response for young people facing risk outside their home

Peer group

Location mapping

Safety planning with Families

Developed new policies and guidance

Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation

Antibullying Best Practice Toolkit

WE WILL CONTINUE:

Reviewing the impact of our work with children and families and making continuous improvements

LEARNING CULTURE

STRENGTHENING OUR TRAINING OFFER & take-up

IMPROVING OUR DATA MATURITY

From Insights to Intervention project

Aligning our work with the Adults' Board

Think Family & Transitional Safeguarding

Drawn by Sandra Howgate

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Committee: All Scrutiny Panels

Date: January 2024

Wards:

Subject: Cabinet Papers 15 January 2024 - Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28

Lead Director: Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director Finance & Digital

Lead member: Cllr Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for finance & Corporate Services

Contact officer: Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director Finance & Digital

Recommendations:

A. Panels to note and discuss contents.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1.1 The report provides a general update on all the latest information relating to the budget setting process for 2024-28 and an assessment of the implications for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-28.

2 DETAILS

2.1.1 Cabinet papers dated 15 January 2024.

2.1.2 This report is one of the budget updates through the financial year and will be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Commission in January 2024 alongside the Member's Information Pack which contains details of growth and savings agreed by Cabinet in November 2023 and which was subject to the scrutiny process in the November 2023 round of meetings.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1.1 None

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1.1 None

5 TIMETABLE

5.1.1 None

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1.1 None

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1.1 None

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1.1 None

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1.1 None

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1.1 None

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

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12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. Members Information Pack

Department Approval	Name of Officer	Date of Comments
Legal		
Finance		
Executive Director		
Cabinet Member		

CABINET

15 January 2024

Agenda item: Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28

Lead officer: Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director of Finance & Digital

Lead member: Councillor Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Key Decision Reference Number: This report is written and any decisions taken are within the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules as laid out in Part 4-C of the Constitution.

Contact officer: Roger Kershaw

Recommendations:

1. That Cabinet agrees the proposed Council Tax Base for 2023/24 set out in paragraph 2.7 and Appendix 1.
 2. That Cabinet considers and agrees the second tranche of draft growth proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 (Appendix 5) put forward by officers and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in January 2024 for consideration and comment.
 3. That Cabinet considers and agrees the amendment to the savings 2024/25 with the removal of saving ECPC 2425 S02
-

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update to Cabinet on the Budget setting process for 2024-28 and in particular on the progress made so far towards setting a balanced revenue budget for 2024/25 and over the MTFS period as a whole.
- 1.2 At the Cabinet meeting on 16 November an update report on the budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28 presented the latest information available and set out a number of growth and savings proposals which were referred to overview and scrutiny panels and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in the November 2023 committee cycle for comment.
- 1.3 The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 was announced on 18 December 2023) and provides details on the grant funding for Councils together with information on how the Council Tax Referendum Principles will be applied. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement will be published late January/early February 2024.

- 1.4 The report provides a general update on all of the latest information relating to the budget setting process for 2024-28 and an assessment of the implications for the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-28.
- 1.5 The report also requests Cabinet to consider and agree the second tranche of draft growth proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 (Appendix 5) put forward by officers and refer them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in January 2024 for consideration and comment
- 1.6 This report is one of the budget updates through the financial year and will be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Commission in January 2024 alongside the Member's Information Pack which contains details of growth and savings agreed by Cabinet in November 2023 and which was subject to the scrutiny process in the November 2023 round of meetings.

2. DETAILS

Introduction

- 2.1 A review of assumptions in the MTFs was undertaken and reported to Cabinet on 16 November 2023. In addition, in response to growing service demands in an increasingly pressurised environment, some directorate growth proposals were considered and agreed and referred to overview and scrutiny panels and the commission. The total growth proposals, net of short term (temporary) growth which could be funded from reserves, are summarised in the following table:-

Growth - Priority Proposals Cabinet 16 November 2023	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Cumulative Growth 2024-28	2,839	4,995	4,500	4,438
Short term growth funded from reserves	803	638	100	0
Growth less funded from reserves	2,036	4,357	4,400	4,438

- 2.2 The funding of necessary growth will increase the funding gap in the MTFs and therefore in parallel with considering growth, it was also necessary to identify some savings proposals together with additional income generation from fees and charges.
- 2.3 Cabinet considered and agreed a package of savings and income proposals and these were referred to overview and scrutiny panels and the commission. The total savings and income proposals are summarised in the following table:-

Savings and Income Proposals Cabinet 16 November 2023	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Savings (cumulative)	1,701	2,513	2,823	3,210
Fees and Charges (cumulative)	458	585	585	585
Savings and Income (cumulative)	2,159	3,098	3,408	3,795

2.4 The overall MTFS budget gap reported to Cabinet in the November 2023 report was based on a repriced, standstill position and is as follows:-

(cumulative)	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Revised MTFS Gap including Growth and savings	(80)	6,117	5,632	10,414

2.4 Review of Assumptions

Since Cabinet in November, work has been continuing to review assumptions and analyse and assess any financial implications of any new information that has been received since then.

2.4.1 Provision for Inflation

The financial implications of the significant increase in the level of inflation since mid-2021 has resulted in significant pressures on council budgets including those for pay and prices. Although inflation rates have started to fall they are expected to remain above the government's 2% target until at least the second quarter of 2025.

Pay

For 2023/24 the final pay award was agreed in November 2023 but was in excess of the provision of 3% included in the MTFS agreed by Council in March 2023. The agreed pay award for 2023/24 is:-

- A one year (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024) pay increase of £1,925 (pro rata for part-time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC points 2-43 inclusive.
- An increase of 3.88% on all allowances (as listed in the 2022 NJC Pay Agreement Circular dated 1st November 2022).
NB: Due to London weighting, workers in the inner London area would receive a flat rate increase of £2,352, with those in outer London receiving £2,226).

The cost of the pay award is c. 6% for non-schools and c.8.2% for schools non-teaching and provision has been included in the MTFS for the additional cost .

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Additional Impact of 23/24 pay award	2,801	2,801	2,801	2,801

2024/25 and future years:

In respect of pay inflation over the MTFs 2024-28 the provision included in the MTFs agreed by Cabinet in November for the 2024/25 pay award is 3% with 2% for subsequent years.

It is considered that 3% may be insufficient and put service budgets under pressure and therefore it is proposed to increase the 2024/25 provision to 4% as follows:-

(Cumulative)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Pay inflation (%)	4.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Revised Estimate (cumulative £000)	4,231	6,347	8,463	10,579

Further details on the pay negotiations for 2024/25 and beyond, and the impact on the MTFs will be reported when they are known.

National Living Wage/London Living Wage

As announced in the Autumn Statement published in November 2023, from 1 April 2024, the National Living Wage will increase by 9.8% to £11.44 an hour with the age threshold lowered from 23 to 21 years old.

Prices

The draft MTFs 2024-28 reported to Cabinet in November 2023 included the following increases for price inflation and no changes are proposed at the current time:-

(Cumulative)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Price inflation (%)	3.0%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Revised Estimate (cumulative £000)	4,443	6,665	8,886	11,108

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose by 3.9% in the 12 months to November 2023, down from 4.6% in October. On a monthly basis, CPI fell by 0.2% in November 2023, compared with a rise of 0.4% in November 2022.

The Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) rose by 4.2% in the 12 months to November 2023, down from 4.7% in October. On a monthly basis, CPIH fell by 0.1% in November 2023, compared with a rise of 0.4% in November 2022.

The largest downward contributions to the monthly change in both CPIH and CPI annual rates came from transport, recreation and culture, and food and non-alcoholic beverages.

Core CPI (excluding energy, food, alcohol and tobacco) rose by 5.1% in the 12 months to November 2023, down from 5.7% in October; the CPI goods annual rate slowed from 2.9% to 2.0%, while the CPI services annual rate eased from 6.6% to 6.3%.

Core CPIH (excluding energy, food, alcohol and tobacco) rose by 5.2% in the 12 months to November 2023, down from 5.6% in October; the CPIH goods annual rate slowed from 2.9% to 2.0%, while the CPIH services annual rate eased from 6.2% to 6.0%.

The RPI rate for November 2023 was 5.3%, which is down from 6.1% in October 2023.

The latest inflation and unemployment forecasts for the UK economy, based on a summary of independent forecasts are set out in the following table:-

Table: Forecasts for the UK Economy

Source: HM Treasury - Forecasts for the UK Economy (December 2023)			
	Lowest %	Highest %	Average %
2023 (Quarter 4)			
CPI	2.6	5.1	4.4
RPI	5.2	10.0	6.2
LFS Unemployment Rate	3.5	4.6	4.3
2024 (Quarter 4)			
CPI	1.2	3.9	2.6
RPI	1.2	6.1	3.7
LFS Unemployment Rate	2.8	5.4	4.7

Clearly where the level of inflation during the year exceeds the amount provided for in the budget, this will put pressure on services to stay within budget and will require effective monitoring and control.

Independent medium-term projections for the calendar years 2022 to 2026 are summarised in the following table:-

Source: HM Treasury - Forecasts for the UK Economy (November 2023)				
	2023	2024	2025	2026
	%	%	%	%
CPI	7.4	3.0	1.9	2.0
RPI	10.2	4.4	2.2	2.6
LFS Unemployment Rate	4.2	4.6	4.7	4.8

Outlook for inflation:

The Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) sets monetary policy to meet the 2% inflation target and in a way that helps to sustain growth and employment. At its meeting ending on 13 December 2023, the MPC voted by a majority of 6–3 to maintain Bank Rate at 5.25%. Three members preferred to increase Bank Rate by 0.25 percentage points, to 5.5%.

In the minutes to the December meeting, the MPC state that “Relative to the assumptions in the November Monetary Policy Report, the fiscal measures in the Autumn Statement are provisionally estimated to increase the level of GDP by around ¼% over coming years. ... There remain upside risks to the outlook for wage growth, including from the possible effects of the recently announced increase in the National Living Wage.”

There is some optimism that there will be an improvement on the projections in the November report although there may be an increase in services price inflation although the MPC believe that “much of the downside news relative to the November Report reflected movements in components that may not provide a good signal of underlying trends in services prices and of persistence in headline inflation. CPI inflation is expected to remain near to its current rate around the turn of the year. In particular, services price inflation is projected to increase temporarily in January, related to base effects from unusually weak price movements at the start of this year, before starting to fall back gradually thereafter. The near-term path for CPI inflation is somewhat lower than projected in the November Report, in part reflecting recent declines in energy prices.”

The MPC note that “key indicators of UK inflation persistence remain elevated. As anticipated, tighter monetary policy is leading to a looser labour market and is weighing on activity in the real economy more generally. Given the significant increase in Bank Rate since the start of this tightening cycle, the current monetary policy stance is restrictive.... The MPC will continue to monitor closely indications of persistent inflationary pressures and resilience in the economy as a whole, including a range of measures of the underlying tightness of labour market conditions, wage growth and services price inflation. Monetary policy will need to be sufficiently restrictive for sufficiently long to return inflation to the 2% target sustainably in the medium term, in line with the Committee’s remit.”

In the November 2023 Monetary Policy report the MPC has used the following projections implied by current data trends:-

	Projections (Nov. 2023)			
	2023 Q.4	2024 Q.4	2025 Q.4	2026 Q.4
GDP	0.6	0.0	0.4	1.1
CPI Inflation(mean)	4.6	3.4	2.2	1.9
LFS Unemployment Rate	4.3	4.7	5.0	5.1
Excess Supply/Excess Demand	0.0	-0.75	-1.5	-1.5
Bank Rate	5.3	5.1	4.5	4.2

The conclusions that the MPC reach in the November 2023 Monetary Policy Report are supported by the following Key Judgements:-

Key judgement 1: GDP is expected to be broadly flat in the first half of the forecast period and growth is projected to remain well below historical averages in the medium term. That reflects the significant increase in Bank Rate since the start of this tightening cycle, subdued potential supply growth, and a waning boost from fiscal policy.

Key judgement 2: The margin of excess demand in the UK economy has diminished over recent quarters and an increasing degree of economic slack is expected to emerge from the start of next year. Unemployment is expected to rise further over the forecast period and exceed the Committee’s upwardly revised estimate of the medium-term equilibrium rate from the end of next year.

Key judgement 3: Second-round effects in domestic prices and wages are expected to take longer to unwind than they did to emerge. In the modal forecast conditioned on the market implied path of market interest rates, an increasing degree of slack in the economy and declining external cost pressures lead CPI inflation to return to the 2% target by the end of 2025 and to fall below target thereafter. The Committee continues to judge that the risks are skewed to the upside. Taking account of this skew, mean CPI inflation is 2.2% and 1.9% at the two and three-year horizons respectively.

In its November 2023 report the MPC include forecast quarterly CPI inflation rates over the next three years as follows:-

2023	2024	2024	2024	2024	2025	2025	2025	2025	2026	2026	2026	2026
Qtr.4	Qtr.1	Qtr.2	Qtr.3	Qtr.4	Qtr.1	Qtr.2	Qtr.3	Qtr.4	Qtr. 1	Qtr.2	Qtr.3	Qtr.4
CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI	CPI
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
4.6	4.4	3.6	3.3	3.1	2.5	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.5

Provision for Excess Inflation:

There is also a corporate provision which is held to assist services that may experience price increases greatly in excess of the budgeted inflation allowance provided when setting the budget. This will only be released for specific demonstrable demand. The provision was increased significantly in the budget agreed by the Council in March 2023 because of the cost of living crisis and persistently high level of inflation.

The provision has proved essential in supporting service directorate budgets during the current financial year 2023/24 and given the enormous pressures that services remain under, it is proposed to replenish the budget to provide cover for this.

The proposed provision in the MTFs will be as follows :-

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Budget in MTFS 2023-27	3,808	3,808	3,808	3,808
Allocated to services in 2023/24	(3,735)	(3,735)	(3,735)	(3,735)
Replenish budget	3,960	3,960	3,960	3,960
Proposed Budget	4,033	4,033	4,033	4,033

The cash limiting strategy is not without risks and if the inflation rate fails to return to the Government's 2% target levels of inflation it will lead to further pressure on service budgets.

Work is currently ongoing with Directorates to assess the impact, service by service of the prevailing levels of inflation. This will be fed into future MTFS updates.

Inflation is still a major risk and it is possible that further pressures will emerge during the year for both pay and general price inflation.

2.4.2 Budgetary Control 2023/24

There may be issues identified from monthly monitoring, elsewhere on this agenda, that have on-going financial implications which need to be addressed in setting the budget for 2024-28.

Monitoring 2023/24

Based on expenditure and income to period 6, as at 30 September 2023, the year end forecast is a net £8.0m unfavourable variance compared to the current budget

	Current Budget 2023/24 £m	Full Year Forecast (Nov.) £m	Forecast Variance at year end (Nov.) £m
Innovation and Change	12.2	12.3	0.1
Finance and Digital	17.2	17.5	0.3
Housing and Sustainable Development	9.2	11.7	2.5
Environment, Civic Pride and Climate	20.0	22.8	2.8
Children, Lifelong Learning, and Families	65.6	67.6	2.0
Adult Social Care, Integrated Care, Public Health	67.4	69.9	2.6
NET SERVICE EXPENDITURE	191.6	201.9	10.4
Corporate	(9.5)	(11.9)	(2.4)
Total Expenditure	182.1	190.1	8.0
Funding	(182.1)	(182.1)	0
Net Expenditure	0	8.0	8.0

Based on September 2023 monitoring, an overall unfavourable variance is forecast, with the following service pressures (greater than £0.5m unfavourable variance) being flagged:-

- a) Housing and Sustainable Development:
Building and Development Control, Housing – temporary accommodation, homelessness
- b) Environment, Civic Pride and Climate:
Parking Services income
- c) Children, Lifelong Learning, and Families
Children’s Social Care
- d) Adult Social Care, Integrated Care, and Public Health
Adult Social Care Placements

2.4.3 London Living Wage (LLW) and Living Wage Employer Accreditation

Merton received accreditation as a Living Wage Employer in February 2023 and will introduce the Real Living Wage into Merton contracts - as and when the contracts come up for re-tendering

The MTFS 2023-27 currently includes provision for the additional cost of implementing the LLW for its contracts as follows:-

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Provision in MTFS 2023-27	711	2,382	2,382	2,382	2,382
Less:					
Allocated to Security & Services Contract	(68)	(68)	(68)	(68)	(68)
ASC Inflationary pressures due to LLW/NLW	(490)	(490)*	(490)*	(490)*	(490)*
Balance	153	1,824	1,824	1,824	1,824

* Due to pressures on the Council’s budget it is proposed to fund the Adult Social Care pressure of £0.490m from Social Care Grant with effect from 2024/25 but maintain the reduction in this budget .

The provision needs to be reviewed and regularly updated to ensure that the MTFS reflects the latest forecast cost of renewing council contracts.

2.4.4 Freedom Passes

Freedom Passes are administered by London Councils on behalf of London boroughs. The latest estimates for each London borough were reported to London Councils’ Transport and Environmental Committee on 7 December 2023 and Merton’s figures are summarised in the following tables.

The costs of Freedom Passes are driven by two key factors:-

- The estimated average number of journeys made by Freedom Pass holders over the past two years
- Previous work to calculate expected average fares per trip taking into account fare increases and decreases within a “basket of fares”

When forecasting demand, London Councils officers have attempted to establish a baseline, as well as lower range higher range scenarios. The latest estimates from London Councils are:-

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Baseline	7.764	8.703	9.936
Lower range	7.764	8.968	10.457
Higher range	7.764	9.233	10.978

The table below compares the current provision in the budget and MTFS for Freedom Passes with the latest worst case estimate:-

	MTFS 2024/25 £m	MTFS 2025/26 £m	MTFS 2026/27 £m	MTFS 2027/28 £m
Merton MTFS Current Provision	8.472	10.347	11.656	12.822
Latest forecast (Higher range for 2025-27)	7.764	9.233	10.978	12.076
Change	(0.708)	(1.114)	(0.678)	(0.746)

2.5 DSG Deficit and Safety Valve Agreement

- 2.5.1 The Dedicated Schools grant has four distinct blocks: The Schools block, the central School Services Block, the Early Years block the High needs block.
- 2.5.2 While the first 3 are not under cost pressure as the expenditure meets the government grant received (save for some timing lag issues) it is the High Needs block that is the issue and has been subject to previous specific reports.
- 2.5.3 The ‘High Needs’ block relates to children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) or receiving alternative provision. Due to a rising deficit in the budget in autumn 2021 the DfE invited Merton to participate in the second round of their ‘safety valve’ intervention programme with the aim of agreeing a package of reform to the high needs system that will bring the High Needs DSG in-year deficit under control, with additional financial contributions from the DfE dependent on the council undertaking these actions. The cumulative deficit at the end of the 2022/23 financial year was £34.465 million.

2.5.4 Merton's Safety Valve Agreement was signed in March 2022. It commits Merton to getting to a balanced budget by 2026/27. DfE expect Merton to remain in deficit until the final year. In return the DfE will provide deficit funding of £28.8m paid in instalments.

	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	Total £m
DfE Funding	11.6	6.7	2.625	2.625	2.625	2.625	28.8

2.5.5 This agreement is between the Department for Education and Merton Local Authority, and covers the financial years from 2021-22 to 2026-27. Merton has agreed to implement the DSG management plan with terms set out in the Agreement. Merton is contributing significant resources to ensuring that the terms of the Safety Valve agreement are met. Budget provision has been made and credited to reserves to match the DSG Deficit that has been accumulated in an unusable reserve.

2.5.6 The medium term position will be far more challenging since, in line with other Local Authority's, the council's High Needs block allocation announced on 18 December is just 2.06% higher than in 2023/24. This considerably lower than inflationary costs and our previous expectations from informal liaison with the DfE.

2.5.7 Officers are currently reviewing the budget and forecast and will provide more details in the Cabinet report in February.

2.6 Contingency

2.6.1 The latest MTFS includes provision of £2.5m in 2023/24 as a contingency to meet unforeseen cost and demand pressures with £3m in years 2024/25 to 2026/27

2.6.2 Given the continuing pressure on services going in to 2024/25 and increased risk of overspending it is proposed to increase the corporate contingency by £1m to £4m over the MTFS period.

2.7 Appropriation to Reserves

2.7.1 The budget for 2023/24 and MTFS 2023-27 includes the following corporate contributions to the Reserve for Future Years Budgets:-

	MTFS 2024/25 £000	MTFS 2025/26 £000	MTFS 2026/27 £000	MTFS 2027/28 £000
Planned contribution to Reserves	1,449	29	0	0

2.7.2 Given the pressure on services and the requirement to produce a balanced budget it is proposed that these contributions are not made. These are one-off reductions to the years in question and do not have an ongoing impact.

3. Capital Programme for 2024-28

3.1 It is important to ensure that the revenue and capital budgets are integrated and not considered in isolation. The revenue implications of capital expenditure can quickly grow if the capital programme is not contained within the Council's capacity to fund it over the longer term. The report to Cabinet in November 2023 set out the current capital programme. Since then further revisions and re-profiling of budgets has been undertaken. The latest current capital programme is summarised in the Table below:-

Department	Revised Budget 2024-25 £000's	Revised Budget 2025-26 £000's	Revised Budget 2026-27 £000's	Revised Budget 2027-28 £000's
Finance & Digital	9,181	1,280	7,536	7,331
ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health	0	0	0	0
Children, Lifelong Learning & Families	16,921	3,479	3,400	2,500
Environment, Civic Pride & Climate	12,520	15,555	12,970	11,320
Innovation & Change	0	0	0	0
Housing & Sustainable Development	21,164	20,682	17,962	2,152
Total	59,786	40,996	41,868	23,303

The following tables summarise the change in proposed capital expenditure and associated capital financing costs from Cabinet in November 2023 to the latest information:-

Capital Expenditure	2024/25 Estimate £000's	2025/26 Estimate £000's	2026/27 Estimate £000's	2027/28 Estimate £000's
Capital Expenditure (Cabinet November 2023)	51,998	41,096	41,868	23,303
Capital Expenditure (Cabinet January 2024)	59,786	40,996	41,868	23,303
Change	7,788	(100)	0	0

Capital Financing Costs	2024/25 Estimate £000's	2025/26 Estimate £000's	2026/27 Estimate £000's	2027/28 Estimate £000's
Capital Financing costs (Cabinet November 2023)	7,944	8,806	9,587	10,733
Capital Financing costs (Cabinet January 2024)	7,878	8,840	9,612	10,725
Change	(66)	34	25	(8)

3.2 Merton's Draft Capital Strategy is included as Appendix 4.

4. Forecast of Resources and Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

4.1 Autumn Statement

On 22 November 2023, the Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered the Autumn Statement 2023. As usual it provided an update on the public finances and performance of the economy and on the same day the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published its November 2023 Economic and fiscal outlook (EFO) which sets out its central forecast for the five years to 2028-29, taking account of recent data and government policies announced up to and including the Autumn Statement 2023.

The Autumn Statement gave details on Government taxation and spending plans. Whilst planned Government Departmental Expenditure Limits were announced for 2024-25, individual local authorities allocations were not known until the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023 was published on 18 December 2023).

4.2 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

The Departmental Expenditure Limits set out in the Autumn Statement 2023 form the basis of the allocations included in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024-25. The Provisional Settlement was announced on 18 December 2023.

4.3 Headline Implications for Merton in the Provisional Settlement

- Merton's Settlement Funding Assessment (Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates) increased by 5.3% in 2024/25 (National increase 5.2%, London average 5.3%)
- Merton's Core Spending Power (CSP) increased by 5.8% in 2024/25 (National increase 6.5%, London average 6.4%). As CSP includes several assumptions, it is unlikely to be an accurate reflection of the actual resources available to local authorities.
- The Council Tax Referendum threshold is 5% (3% core, 2% ASC precept)
- The small business rate multiplier will be frozen for 2024-25 at 49.9p while the standard multiplier will increase to 54.6p. Local authorities will be compensated for the shortfall in income for under indexation of the multiplier for the small business rate multiplier via the under-indexation section 31 grant.
- RSG will be increased in line with September CPI inflation (6.7%).

A more detailed analysis of the potential financial impact of the provisional Settlement is included in Appendix 2.

4.4 Merton's Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) is detailed in the following table:-

MERTON	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m	Change £m	Change %
Settlement Funding Assessment	43.415	45.727	2.312	5.3
of which:				
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	6.108	6.513		
Baseline Funding Level (BFL)	37.307	39.214		
(Tariff)/Top-Up (Included in BFL)	43.415	45.727		
	6.679	6.997		

It should be noted that this is based on the DCLG's assumptions included within Core Spending Power calculations. Merton's actual Business Rates forecast will be used in the final funding forecast on which the Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28 will be agreed. It will not be possible to finalise this until the government return NNDR1 is completed (deadline 31 January 2024).

4.5 Government grants in Core Spending Power

The majority of grant in CSP is ringfenced to spend on social care services

	Provisional 2024/25 £m
Improved Better Care Fund	5.01
Social Care Grant	12.189
ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	3.272
ASC Discharge Fund	1.171
Ringfenced to Social Care	21.642
New Homes Bonus	0.152
Services Grant	0.229
Unringfenced	0.381
Total	22.023

4.6 A more detailed analysis of the potential financial impact of the provisional Settlement is included in Appendix 2.

5. **London Business Rates 2024-25**

5.1 The London Business pool was discontinued for 2021/22 and, as for the past two years will not be resurrected for 2024/25.

5.2 There were a number of announcements affecting Business Rates in the Autumn Statement published on 22 November 2023 and confirmed in the Provisional Settlement:-

- The standard business rate multiplier will be increased by September CPI (6.7%) and the small business rate multiplier will be frozen for a fourth consecutive year.
- The 75% Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief will be extended for 2024-25.

Local authorities will be fully compensated for the loss of income because of these two measures and will receive new burdens funding for administrative and IT costs.

6. Council Tax Strategy – Council Tax Base and Council Tax 2024/25

6.1 The Council Tax Base is a key factor which is required by levying bodies and the Council for setting the levies and Council Tax for 2024/25. The council tax base is the measure of the number of dwellings to which council tax is chargeable in an area or part of an area. The Council Tax Base is calculated using the properties from the Valuation List together with information held within Council Tax records. The properties are adjusted to reflect the number of properties within different bands in order to produce the Council Tax Base (Band D equivalent). This will be used to set the Council Tax at Band D for 2024/25. The Council is required to determine its Council Tax Base by 31 January 2024.

6.2 Regulations set out in the Local Authorities (Calculation of council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012:2914) ensure that new local council tax support schemes, implemented under the Local Government Finance Act 2012, are fully reflected in the council tax base for all authorities.

6.3 The Council Tax Base Return to central Government takes into account reductions in Council Tax Base due to the Council Tax Support Scheme and also reflects the latest criteria set for discounts and exemptions. The CTB Return for October 2023 is the basis for the calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2024/25.

6.4 Details of how the Council Tax Base is calculated are set out in Appendix 1. A summary of the Council Tax Bases for the Merton general area and the addition for properties within the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators area for 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 is set out in the following table:-

Council Tax Base	2023/24	2024/25	Change
Whole Area	77,694.3	78,257.8	0.7%
Wimbledon & Putney Common Conservators	11,761.2	11,782.4	0.2%

6.5 The Localism Act 2011 amended the legislation regarding the calculation of council tax. It also provides for a council tax referendum to be held if an authority increases its relevant basis amount of council tax in excess of principles determined by the Secretary of State.

6.6 Council Tax Referendum Principles

6.6.1 The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announced the following referendum principles will apply for 2024-25 for authorities such as Merton:

- For 2024-25, the relevant basic amount of council tax of an authority which belongs to the category including London boroughs is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2024-25 is 5% (comprising 2% for expenditure on adult social care, and 3% for other expenditure), or more than 5%, greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2023- 24.

6.6.2 For Merton, a Council Tax increase of 5% (3% core + 2% Adult Social Care) would be regarded as excessive but, for example, a core principle of 2.999% core plus an Adult Social Care (ASC) precept of 2% on top of the core principle (i.e. 4.999%) would be in accordance with the thresholds set.

6.6.3 The MTFS 2024-28 approved by Cabinet in November 2023 included a council tax increase of 4% (2% core plus 2% Adult Social Care precept).

6.6.4 An increase in council tax represents an ongoing income which increases the council's funding base. Given the pressures that the Council's services are currently under the council will be foregoing an ongoing funding source if it does not increase council tax to the maximum permitted. It is therefore proposed to increase council tax by 4.99% consisting of 2.99% core council tax and 2% Adult Social Care precept.

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Core Council Tax increase	2.99%	2%	2%	2%
Adult Social Care Precept increase	2.00%	0%	0%	0%
Council Tax increase	4.99%	2%	2%	2%

The estimated council tax yield from these proposed increases are as follows:-

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Core Council Tax increase	3,392	5,689	8,010	10,353
Adult Social Care Precept	2,269	2,280	2,292	2,303
Council Tax increase	5,661	7,969	10302	12,656

The Adult Social Care precept is passported to fund the Adult Social Care service.

7. GROWTH – ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS

7.1 Details of a second tranche of growth proposals are set out in Appendix 5 and are summarised in the following table:-

Growth - Cabinet 15 January 2024	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Total £000
Innovation and Change	71	0	0	0	71
Finance and Digital	250	0	0	0	250
Housing and Sustainable Development	505	0	0	0	505
Environment, Civic Pride and Climate	1,501	0	0	0	1,501
Children, Lifelong Learning, and Families	0	0	0	0	0
Adult Social Care, Integrated Care, and Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Total Growth 2024-28	2,327	0	0	0	2,327
Cumulative Total	2,327	2,327	2,327	2,327	

8. REVIEW OF SAVINGS 2024/25 AND REVISED MTFS GAP

8.1 Following feedback from scrutiny panels and feedback from the budget engagement , as well as the opportunity afforded through the review of MTFS assumptions, after further consideration, it is proposed to delete the following saving included in the package of savings previously put forward to Cabinet in November 2023:-

(Cumulative)	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Highways verge cutting - change from an outcome-based requirement to a cyclical programme (Saving ECPC 2425-S02)	60	60	60	60

9. BUDGET STRATEGY AND UPDATE TO MTFS 2024-28

9.1 The council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget. Since the Cabinet report in November the government has published the Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024-25 and in particular officers have undertaken a thorough review of budgets and updated a wide range of the information .

9.2 Over the past three years we have all experienced unprecedented pressures, firstly with the pandemic and then double-digit inflation leading to the cost of living crisis. The council has provided significant support during this particularly to those with the greatest need.

In the current financial year some council services are under severe pressure from both the effects of inflation and increased demand. In particular, housing costs due to temporary accommodation and, homelessness and both children's and adult's social care placements have increased greatly. At the same time the council's income was devastated during the pandemic and has never fully recovered.

On 18 December the government announced council funding for 2024/25. Merton's core spending power, the government's measure of additional resources next year, increases by £10.7m (5.8%) to c. £195m. Of the £10.7m year on year increase, £6.7m is due to the government's estimate of council tax raised, leaving c. £4m which is mostly grants that are required to be spent on social care. There is very little grant that is at the discretion of the council on which service it is used to support. It is clear that given the cost of living crisis, growing demand pressures of vulnerable groups and persistently high inflation over the past two years that the funding provided via the Provisional Settlement does not meet growing needs.

- 9.3 There is still a lot to do to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25. The government has set a council tax threshold of 5% for authorities such as Merton and it is intended to increase Merton's council tax by 4.99% (2.99% general, 2% adult social care). Increasing council tax by this level will provide an opportunity to address some of the ongoing service pressures that continue to arise.
- 9.4 Social care costs, both in children's and adult's services continue to grow. In the Provisional Settlement Merton has received an additional c £1.8m grant to be shared between both services of which c.£0.7m has been allocated to Children's and c. £0.5m to Adult's. The remaining £0.6m will be allocated during 2024/25 following discussion between both services and taking into account any national guidelines and needs of each service. It is clear that this level of government funding is well below the level of the increasing needs of both services.
- 9.5 Adult social care has also received additional grant funding from the Provisional Settlement, above 2023/24 levels, of £469k Discharge Grant and £1.521m Market Sustainability and Improvement but this is more than matched by the Council Tax contribution via the Adult Social Care precept of 2% which amounts to c. £2.3m
- 9.6 Taking into account the changes set out in this report, the latest budget gap forecast is:-

DRAFT MTFS 2024-28:				
	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
GAP Cabinet 16 November 2023	(80)	6,117	5,632	10,414
Extra 1% Council Tax	(1,123)	(1,129)	(1,135)	(1,140)
Pay Award 2023/24 - Revised allocation based on directorates	(1,608)	(1,608)	(1,608)	(1,608)
Remove planned contribution to reserves - Council March 2023	(1,449)	(29)	0	0
Increase contingency from £3m to £4m	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Extra unhypothecated grants from provisional Settlement	(381)	0	0	0
Capital Programme - latest version	(66)	34	25	(8)
Latest concessionary fares forecast	(708)	(1,114)	(678)	(746)
Extra 1% provision for 2024/25 Pay Award to 4%	1,058	1,058	1,058	1,058
Fund ASC LLW/NMW uplift from Social Care Grant	(490)	(490)	(490)	(490)
Reduce/Remove Corporate Provision for National Minimum Wage	(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,500)
Latest investment income projection	(1,000)	(1,000)	(1,000)	(1,000)
Replenish Provision for Excess Inflation	3,960	3,960	3,960	3,960
Growth – Additional Proposals	2,327	2,327	2,327	2,327
Amendment to savings proposals	60	60	60	60
REVISED GAP	0	7,686	7,651	12,327

9.7 A more detailed analysis of the movement in the MTFS from Council in March 2023 to Cabinet in January 2024 is included in Appendix 3.

10. GLA BUDGET AND PRECEPT SETTING 2024-254 – PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE

10.1 The Greater London Authority (GLA) sets a budget for itself and each of the four functional bodies: Transport for London, the London Development Agency, the Metropolitan Police Authority, and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority. These budgets together form the consolidated budget.

10.2 The GLA's provisional timetable for its precept setting process is as follows:-

19 December 2024	Following the publication of the provisional Local Government, Fire and Police Settlements, issue the Mayor's Consultation Budget.
25 January 2024	Assembly to consider Draft Consolidated Budget.
22 February 2024	Assembly to consider Final Draft Consolidated Budget.
22 February 2024	Final precept amounts and approved supporting text for the Mayor's communication to council taxpayers issued to billing authorities.

- 10.3 NNDR1 returns will be required to be submitted to the DLUHC by 31 January 2024. It is essential that all authorities meet this deadline for the GLA to be able to achieve its timetable. It is anticipated that the percentage shares for 2024/25 used for the returns for London authorities will be 37% GLA, 33% central government and 30% London boroughs. This is expected to be confirmed in the provisional local government finance settlement.
- 10.4 The Mayor of London published his draft consolidated budget, capital spending plan and proposed council tax precept for 2024-25 on 19 December 2023 for consultation. The consultation on the budget proposals closes on Wednesday 10 January 2024.
- 10.5 The proposed 2024/25 Band D precept for council taxpayers in the 32 London boroughs is £471.40 – a £37.26 or 8.6% increase compared to 2023/24. This increase comprises £20 for TfL, £13 for the Met Police and £4.26 for the London Fire Brigade. This is in line with the maximum increase permitted under the GLA’s referendum limit – which is a monetary one – confirmed in the provisional settlement on 18 December 2023. The provisional precept for council taxpayers in the City of London is £166.27 (an increase of £24.26 which excludes the £13 relating to the Met Police).
- 10.6 Indicative overall Council Tax increase

Council Tax at Band D	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	% change from 2024/25
Merton (exc. WPCC)	1,449.68	1,522.01	5.0%
GLA Precept (Provisional)	434.14	471.40	8.6%
Implied Council Tax at Band D	1,883.82	1,993.41	5.8%

11. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 11.1 Engagement on the council’s budget priorities is an important part of the budget setting process and essential in informing the development of the council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy. During November and December 2023 we have encouraged residents, businesses and community organisations to have their say on what the priorities should be in the council’s budget for the 2024/25 financial year via a short online survey or by attending one of the council’s engagement events .
- 11.2 Initial findings have been considered in preparing this report but more detailed feedback will be provided in the February report to Cabinet.
- 11.3 In accordance with statute, consultation is taking place with business ratepayers and a meeting will be arranged for February 2024.

11.4 A Member's information pack has been prepared and was distributed to all councillors at the end of December 2023 so that it can be taken to all Scrutiny and Cabinet meetings from 24 January 2024 onwards and to Budget Council. As for recent years, this should be an improvement for both councillors and officers - more manageable for councillors and it will ensure that only one version of those documents is available so referring to page numbers at meetings will be easier. It will also keep printing costs down and reduce the amount of printing that needs to take place immediately prior to Budget Council.

11.5 The pack includes:

- Growth proposals
- Savings proposals
- A draft Equality impact assessment for each saving proposal.

12. STILL TO DO

12.1 There are still a number of key pieces of information that were not available in compiling this budget and MTFS update and these will need to be incorporated into the report to Cabinet in February prior to the budget setting council meeting in March. These include:-

- Business Rates forecast for 2024/25 requires data that will not be available until the government NNDR1 return is completed by 31 January.
- Levies – there are a number of levies on the council that need to be incorporated into the council's budget. This includes the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators levy which can have an impact on the councils average council tax
- Incorporating any changes to the budget arising from the Final Local Government Finance Settlement.

13. TIMETABLE

13.1 The key deadlines are as follows:-

18 December 2023	Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement
End of December	Member's Information Pack circulated
15 January 2024	Cabinet
24 January 2024	Healthier Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel
25 January 2024	Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel
30 January 2024	Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel
31 January 2024	Overview and Scrutiny Commission
End Jan. /Early Feb.	Final Local Government Finance Settlement
20 February 2024	Cabinet
6 March 2024	Council approves Council Tax 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28

14. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 All relevant implications have been addressed in the report.

15. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

15.1 All relevant implications have been addressed in the report.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

16.1 Draft Equalities assessments of the savings proposals are provided as part of the Member's Information Pack which has been prepared and is available to all Members.

17. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

17.1 Not applicable.

18. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

18.1 Not applicable.

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

Appendix 1: Council Tax Base 2024/25

Appendix 2: Summary of Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25

Appendix 3: Transition of MTFS gap from Council 2023 to Cabinet 15 January 2024

Appendix 4: Merton's Draft Capital Strategy 2024-28

Appendix 5: Growth Proposals 2024-28 – Second tranche

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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Council Tax Base 2024/25

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The council tax base is the measure of the number of dwellings to which council tax is chargeable in an area or part of an area. The Council Tax base is calculated using the properties from the Valuation List together with information held within Council Tax records. The properties are adjusted to reflect the number of properties within different bands in order to produce the Council Tax Base (Band D equivalent).
- 1.2 Since 2013/14 the Council Tax Base calculation has been affected by the introduction of the new local council tax support scheme and technical reforms to council tax. On 30 November 2012, new regulations set out in the Local Authorities (Calculation of council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012:2914) came into force. These regulations ensure that new local council tax support schemes, implemented under the Local Government Finance Act 2012, are fully reflected in the council tax base for all authorities.
- 1.3 Under the regulations, the council tax base is the aggregate of the relevant amounts calculated for each valuation band multiplied by the authority's estimated collection rate for the year.
- 1.4 The relevant amounts are calculated as
- number of chargeable dwellings in each band shown on the valuation list on a specified day of the previous year,
 - adjusted for the number of discounts, and reductions for disability, that apply to those Dwellings
- 1.5 All authorities notify the DLUHC of their unadjusted Council Tax Base using a CTB Form using valuation list information as at 11 September 2023.
- 1.6 The CTB form for 2023 includes the latest details about the Council Tax Support Scheme and the technical reforms which impacted on discounts and exemptions.
- 1.7 There is a separate council tax base for those properties within the area covered by Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators. The Conservators use this, together with the Council Tax bases from RB Kingston, and Wandsworth to calculate the levy which is charged each year.

2. UNADJUSTED COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25

2.1 Information from the October 2023 Council Tax Base Return

2.1.1 The Council makes two CTB returns, one for the whole area of the borough and the other for the area covered by the Wimbledon and Putney Common Conservators for which an additional levy is applied.

2.1.2 From the CTB Returns, prior to incorporating an assumed collection rate, the unadjusted council tax bases are

Unadjusted Council Tax Base	2024/25
Merton – General	79,248.3
Wimbledon & Putney Common Conservators	11,931.5

3. ASSUMPTIONS IN THE MTF5

3.1 Other than changes in the actual council tax rates levied, in producing a forecast of council tax yield in future years, there are two key variables to be considered:-

- the year on year change in Council Tax Base
- the council tax collection rate

3.2 The MTF5 approved by Council in March 2023 assumed that the Council Tax Base increases by 0.5% per year and that the collection rate will be 98.75% in 2023/24 and in future years.

3.3 Based on these assumptions the revised estimated Council Tax Base used in the MTF5 2024-28 is as set out in the following table:-

Council Tax Base - Revised Calculation 2024/25 to 2027/28	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Council Tax Base	79,248.3	79,248.3	79,644.5	80,042.7
Assumed Annual increase	-	396.2	398.2	400.2
Estimated Council Tax Base before collection rate adjustment	79,248.3	79,644.5	80,042.7	80,442.9
Collection Rate	98.75%	98.75%	98.75%	98.75%
Estimated Council Tax Base after collection rate adjustment	78,257.8	78,649.0	79,042.3	79,437.4

3.4 The regulations require that the Council Tax Requirement calculated for the forthcoming year is actually credited to the General Fund and any difference arising from actual collection rates is recognised in future years as part of the surplus/deficit calculation

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL TAX YIELD 2024-28

4.1 Based on a collection rate of 98.75% (paragraph 3.2 refers), on a like for like basis (i.e. assuming council tax charges do not change) the estimated income in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 is summarised in the following table:-

Council Tax: Whole area	2023/24	2024/25
Tax Base	77,694.3	78,257.8
Band D Council Tax	£1,449.68	£1,449.68
Estimated Yield	£112.632m	£113.449m
Change: 2023/24 to 2024/25 (£m)		£0.817m
Change: 2023/24 to 2024/25 (%)		0.7%

4.2 An exact reconciliation for the change between years is not possible because of changes in distribution of Council Tax Support and discounts and benefits, and premiums between years and bands. However, broadly the changes can be analysed as follows:-

a) Number of Chargeable Dwellings and Exempt Dwellings

Between years the number of properties increased by 455 from 87,099 to 87,554 and the number of exempt dwellings increased by 132 from 998 to 1,130. This means that the number of chargeable dwellings increased by 323 between years. Based on a full charge, this equates to additional council tax of £0.468m.

b) Amount of Council Tax Support Reduction

Based on October 2022 there was a reduction of 7,441.2 to the Council Tax Base for local council tax support. This has reduced to 7,220.0 in based on October 2023 which is a change of 221.2 and equates to an increase in council tax of about £0.321m.

c) Changes in Discounts, Exemptions and Premiums

Overall, the number of properties subject to discounts or exemption increased by 424 and those subject to premiums increased by 53 between October 2022 and October 2023.

Summary

The following puts the individual elements together to show how the potential council tax yield changes between 2023/24 and 2024/25:-

	Approx. Change in Council Tax Base	Approx. Change in Council Tax yield
		£m
Increase in number of chargeable dwellings	323.0	0.468
Change in Council Tax Support Reductions	221.2	0.321
Change in discounts, exemptions, premiums and distribution	19.3	0.028
Total	563.5	0.817

4.3 Council Tax Yield 2024/25

4.3.1 The draft MTFs assumes a Council Tax increase of 4.99% in 2024/25. Assuming this the estimated Council Tax yield for 2024/25 is:-

Council Tax: Whole area	Tax Base	Band D 2024/25	Council Tax Yield 2024/25	Council Tax Yield 2023/24
Merton	78,257.8	1,522.01	£119.1m	£112.6m

4.3.2 There has been no guidance published by the government yet regarding Council Tax Referendum Principles relating to Council Tax increases for general and Adult Social Care precepts.

4.3.3 The updated MTFs is based on the following assumptions, subject to announcement in the Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 of the Referendum Principles for 2024/25:-

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Increase in CT Base	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Collection Rate	98.75%	98.75%	98.75%	98.75%
Council Tax – General	2.99%	2%	2%	2%
Council Tax – Adult Social Care†	2%	0%	0%	0%

4.3.4 Based on the estimated Council Tax Base calculations set out in the table in paragraph 3.3, and annual Council Tax increases of 2% as in the latest MTFS assumptions, the estimated council tax yields over the MTFS period are as follows:-

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Council Tax (Band D) b/f from previous year	£1,449.68	£1,522.01	£1,552.45	£1,583.49
2.99% increase 24/25, 2% after - General	£43.34	£30.44	£31.04	£31.66
2% for Adult Social Care 24/25, nil thereafter	£28.99	0	0	0
Revised Council Tax (Band D)	£1,522.01	£1,552.45	£1,583.49	£1,615.15
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Estimated Council Tax Yield	119.1	121.5	123.9	126.4

4.3.5 The change in the Council Tax yield compared to that included in the MTFS are:-

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
MTFS (Cabinet 16 November 2023)	118.0	120.8	123.5	126.8
Revised Estimated Council Tax Yield	119.1	121.5	123.9	126.4
Change	1.1	0.7	0.4	(0.4)

5. SUMMARY

5.1 Based on the information discussed, the council tax bases for 2024/25 and compared to 2023/24 are summarised in the following table:-

Council Tax Base	2023/24	2024/25	Change
Whole Area	77,694.3	78,257.8	0.7%
Wimbledon & Putney Common Conservators	11,761.2	11,782.4	0.2%

PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2024/25Background

The Chancellor of the Exchequer published an Autumn Statement 2024/25 on 22 November 2023. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) also published its November 2023 Economic and Fiscal Outlook on the same day. The figures included in these documents underlie the allocations to local authorities announced in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 on 18 December 2023. Details on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 are provided in this Appendix.

Overview of the Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024/25

Details of the provisional Local Government Settlement were published on 18 December 2023. Unfortunately it is only a one-year settlement so it does not facilitate long-term planning.

This is a summary of the main details included in the Provisional Settlement, with particular emphasis on the implications for Merton.

1. Provisional Local Government Settlement**1.1 Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)**

This section sets out the main details included in the Provisional Settlement and assesses the implications for Merton's finances as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The Settlement outlined core funding allocations (Settlement Funding Assessment)

The Settlement Funding Assessment is the total of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Baseline Funding (BF) from Business Rates. There has been an increase of 5.2% in SFA nationally in 2024/25. Details of changes in SFA for England, London boroughs and in Merton are summarised in the following table:-

	2020/21 Final £m	2021/22 Final £m	2022/23 Final £m	2023/24 Final £m	2024/25 Final £m
Merton (£m)	41.120	41,148	41,311	43,415	45,727
Annual % Change		0.1%	0.4%	5.1%	5.3%
Cumulative % change		0.1%	0.5%	5.6%	11.2%
England (£m)	16,208.5	16,206.7	16,348.2	17,144.8	18,039.4
Annual % Change		0.0%	0.9%	4.9%	5.2%
Cumulative % change		0.0%	0.9%	5.8%	11.3%
London Boroughs (£m)	2,757.7	2,760.7	2,777.7	2,931.6	3,086.5
Annual % Change		0.1%	0.6%	5.5%	5.3%
Cumulative % change		0.1%	0.7%	6.3%	11.9%

The Provisional Settlement broadly reflects the details set out in the Autumn Statement 2023 The main details are:-

- a) Settlement Funding Assessment (RSG + Business Rates) allocations have increased by 5.2% nationally and by 5.3% in London. The details for Merton are:-

MERTON	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m	Change £m	Change %
Settlement Funding Assessment	43.415	45.727	2.312	5.3
of which:				
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	6.108	6.513		
Baseline Funding Level (BFL)	37.307	39.214		
	43.415	45.727		
(Tariff)/Top-Up (Included in BFL)	6.679	6.997		

1.2 Core Spending Power

Core Spending Power is the Government's measure of the resources available to local authorities to fund service delivery.

Core Spending Power in 2024-25 is made up of:

- Settlement Funding Assessment
- Estimated Council Tax Requirement excluding Parish Precepts
- Compensation via Section 31 grant for under-indexing the business rates multiplier
- Additional Council Tax revenue from referendum principle for social care
- Potential additional Council Tax revenue from referendum principle for all districts.
- Improved Better Care Fund inc. Winter Pressures Grant
- New Homes Bonus;
- Rural Services Delivery Grant
- Social Care Grant rolling in previous allocations of the Independent Living fund
- Funding Guarantee grant - it ensures all local authorities receive a minimum 3% Core Spending Power increase from 2023-24
- Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund
- Adult Social Care Discharge Fund
- Services Grant to support all services delivered by councils

As Core Spending Power includes a number of assumptions, this is unlikely to be an accurate reflection of the actual resources available to local authorities. In particular it assumes:-

- All authorities that are eligible raise the social care precept to its maximum of 2% in 2024-25

- All authorities increase overall council tax by the maximum amount (5% in 2024-25, comprising 3% general and 2% ASC council tax)
- Tax base increases in 2024-25 at the same average rate for each authority as between 2019-20 to 2023-24
- New Homes Bonus allocations are based on a share of total national NHB of £291m.

In England the level of assumed spending power will increase by £3.9 bn (6.5%) in 2024-25 . In London boroughs the assumed increase is £563.7m (6.4%) in 2024-25

Core Spending Power	2020/21 Final	2021/22 Final	2022/23 Final	2023/24 Final	2024/25 Provisional	2024/25 Change
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	%
England	49,337.0	50,718.3	54,647.4	60,196.7	64,099.8	6.5
London Boroughs	7,257.4	7,440.7	7,977.7	8,805.5	9,369.2	6.4
Merton	150.8	153.7	165.7	184.0	194.8	5.8

A summary of Merton's assumed Core Spending Power from 2020/21 to 2024/25 is included in the following table:-

Detailed Breakdown of Core Spending Power – Merton

	Final	Final	Final	Final	Provisional	Annual Change (23-24 to 24-25)	Cumulative Change (20-21 to 24-25)
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25		
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	%	%
Council Tax	97.386	99.862	104.984	113.055	119.779	5.9%	23.0%
SFA	41.12	41.148	41.311	43.415	45.727	5.3%	11.2%
S.31 grant Compensation for business rates	1.441	1.874	3.675	6.355	7.238	13.9%	402.3%
Improved Better Care Fund	4.862	4.862	5.01	5.01	5.01	0.0%	3.0%
New Homes Bonus	1.438	0.612	0.482	0.732	0.152	-79.2%	-89.4%
Social Care Grant	4.058	4.466	6.282	10.43	12.189	16.9%	200.4%
Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund	0	0	0.505	0	0	-100.0%	-
ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	0	0	0	1.751	3.272	86.9%	-
Lower Tier Services Grant	0	0.399	0.429	0	0	-100.0%	-
ASC Discharge Fund	0	0	0	0.702	1.171	66.8%	-
Services Grant	0	0	2.479	1.454	0.229	-84.3%	-
Grants rolled in	0.499	0.522	0.516	1.137	0	-100.0%	-100.0%
Funding Guarantee	0	0	0	0	0	-	-
Core Spending Power	150.804	153.745	165.672	184.042	194.766	5.8%	29.2%

1.3 Settlement Funding Assessment

One of the main changes to distributing core settlement resources in 2024-25 includes:

- Business Rates Retention: The small business rate multiplier will be frozen for 2024-25 at 49.9p while the standard multiplier will increase to 54.6p. Local authorities will be compensated for the shortfall in income for under indexation of the multiplier for the small business rate multiplier via the under-indexation section 31 grant.
- Revenue Support Grant: RSG will be increased in line with September CPI inflation (6.7%).
- Negative RSG: The Government will continue to eliminate negative RSG in 2024-25 (via adjustments to tariffs and top-ups rather than a separate grant).

1.4 Council tax referendum principles for principal local authorities

In terms of controlling the level of council tax increases that local authorities can set in 2024-25, without the need for a local referendum, the Government has decided that the core principles to be applied to authorities with social care responsibilities including London boroughs such as Merton are:-

- For 2024-25, the relevant basic amount of council tax is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2024-25 is 5% comprising 2% for expenditure on adult social care and 3% for other expenditure), or more than 5%, greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2023-24.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) including the GLA charge for the Metropolitan Police will be allowed increases of £13.

1.5 GLA Council Tax Precept

The Mayor of London published his draft consolidated budget, capital spending plan and proposed council tax precept for 2024-25 on 19 December 2023 for consultation. The consultation on the budget proposals closes on Wednesday 10 January 2024.

The proposed 2024/25 Band D precept for council taxpayers in the 32 London boroughs is £471.40 – a £37.26 or 8.6% increase compared to 2023/24. This increase comprises £20 for TfL, £13 for the Met Police and £4.26 for the London Fire Brigade. This is in line with the maximum increase permitted under the GLA's referendum limit – which is a monetary one – confirmed in the provisional settlement on 18 December 2023. The provisional precept for council taxpayers in the City of London is £166.27 (an increase of £24.26 which excludes the £13 relating to the Met Police).

1.6 Business Rates

1.6.1 Business Rates Retention Compensation for under-indexing the business rates multiplier

The compensation for under-indexing of the business rates multiplier will increase nationally by £377m (17.1%) to £2.6bn in 2024-25, mainly due to the Government freezing the small business multiplier and extending the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief for 2024-25. For London boroughs, this grant will increase by £59m (up 15.2%) to £450m.

1.6.2 Business rates multipliers

The standard business rate multiplier will be increased by September CPI (6.7%) and the small business rate multiplier will be frozen.

1.6.3 Business rates pool

London Councils' Leaders' Committee agreed in September 2023 not to reconstitute the pan-London business rates pool for 2024- 25 as it was unlikely to provide any financial benefit.

1.6.4 NNDR1

Although the Provisional Settlement includes amounts for business rates and compensation for the under-indexing of the multiplier, these are based on the government's assumptions and may differ greatly from Merton's actual business rates profile.

The figures used in the Council's budget for 2024/25 will be based on the latest business rates information available for Merton which will be included in the government's NNDR1 Return which, as for all local authorities, has to be submitted by 31 January 2024.

The NNDR1 form for 2024/25 has now been received from Government.

1.7 Social Care Funding

1.7.1 Improved Better Care Fund

The Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) will continue at the same level as in 2023/24 (£2.1bn), with London Boroughs receiving £346m (16.3%). The grant will continue to be required to be pooled as part of the Better Care Fund.

The MTFS assumes that this level of funding continues over the four year period. This is summarised in the following table:-

Adult Social Care (iBCF)	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Improved Better Care Fund	5.010	5.010	5.010	5.010

1.7.2 Adult Social Care Discharge Grant

The Discharge Fund (originally introduced in the 2022 Autumn Statement) has been increased by £200m to £500m nationally. London will receive £81m. This is a new grant totalling £300m nationally and part of the £600m new funding announced in the Autumn statement 2022. The Discharge Funding grant is provided to upper tier authorities to ensure those people who need to draw on social care when they are discharged from hospital can leave as soon as possible. The Discharge Funding must be pooled as part of the Better Care Fund.

Merton's grant is:-

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Adult Social Care Discharge Fund	702	1,171

1.7.3 Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund

A total of £1.1bn will be distributed for adult social care through the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund, which includes £162m of Fair Cost of Care funding. It also includes £205m Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund - Workforce Funding, which was a two-year fund announced in July 2023, and will be rolled into the existing Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund. This is a £488m increase, and London will receive £162.6m from the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund. As with the additional iBCF funding, there will be reporting requirements placed this grant.

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	1,751	3,272

1.7.4 Social Care Grant

The Social Care Grant is a grant provided to upper tier authorities for social care expenditure, on both adult and children's social care.

Social Care Grant will total £4.5bn in 2024-25: an increase of £0.692bn of which £114m will be distributed to London increasing its funding to £726m (16% of the total).

Social Care Grant is to be shared between Children's and Adults Social Care services on a basis determined at the discretion of each local authority.

The grant received up to 2023/24 has been allocated as follows:-

Social Care Grant (cumulative)	2023/24	2024/25
	£000	£000
Children's allocation (in Base budget)	4,635	4,635
Adult's allocation (in Base budget)	1,647	1,647
Children's FYE previous growth	390	390
Children's new growth	545	545
Children's 2023/24	600	600
Adult's 2023/24	2,312	2,312
Replacement funding for Independent Living Fund	301	301
Allocation to be determined		1,759
Social Care Grant	10,430	12,189

Potential demands on additional 2024/25 grant:

Childrens Social Care - Placements pressure £662k

ASC placements pressures due to LLW & NLW £490k

Balance £607k to be determined

1.8 Special and specific grants

The distribution of a number of grants was published alongside the Provisional Settlement. Within core spending power these include:-

- New Homes Bonus
- Services Grant
- Funding Guarantee
- Rural Services Delivery Grant (not applicable to London)

1.8.1 New Homes Bonus

The New Homes Bonus was introduced in 2011 and is a grant paid by central government to local councils to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas. It is based on the amount of extra Council Tax revenue raised for new-build homes, conversions and long-term empty homes brought back into use. There is also an extra payment for providing affordable homes.

The Government is proposing to roll over last year’s policy on New Homes Bonus for a new round of payments in 2024-25, which will attract no new legacy payments as in 2023-24. The 2024-25 allocation totals £291m, funded through a top slice of Revenue Support Grant. The calculation methodology remains unchanged, with authorities needing to achieve tax base growth of greater than 0.4 per cent before they receive any New Homes Bonus funding.

Provisional New Homes Bonus allocations total £291m nationally (no change from 2023-24) and London borough provisional allocations total £50m.

Merton’s allocation as announced in the Provisional settlement is:-

New homes bonus	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m
Merton	0.732	0.152

1.8.2 Services Grant

This is intended to provide funding to all tiers of local government in recognition of the vital services delivered at every level of local government. This was intended to be a one-off grant in 2022-23 and nationally has reduced from £822m in 2022-23 to £464m in 2023-24 and down further to £77m for 2024-25. London boroughs will receive £14m (18%). It is assumed that, as for 2023-24, the grant will not be ring-fenced and conditions on reporting requirements will not be attached

Merton’s allocation as announced in the Provisional settlement is:-

Services Grant	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m
Merton	1.397	0.229

1.8.3 Funding Guarantee

This guarantee will ensure that all councils will see at least a 3% increase in their core spending power, adjusted for actual council tax take-up and base growth and their actual increase in CSP before any increases to council tax levels.

Seven London Boroughs are expected to receive funding via the funding guarantee in 2024-25 (No London boroughs received this funding in 2023-24).

1.9 Finance Reforms

The Government postponed any plans to reform its assessment of need and resources or to reset the business rates retention scheme until the next parliament (i.e. 2025-26 at the earliest).

Additionally, the Government has launched a data collection exercise seeking to consult on the potential of using financial levers in future settlements to disincentivise the practice of implementing a four-day working week.

2. Schools funding

2.1 The allocations for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) have been published for financial year 2024-25. The DSG continues to be funded via four blocks as previously: the schools block, the central schools block (CSSB), the high needs block and the early years block.

2.2 The DSG allocations for 2024 to 2025 are made up of:

1. the schools block is based on the primary units of funding (PUF), and secondary units of funding (SUF), and premises funding announced in October 2023 and growth funding
2. the central school services block (CSSB) is based on the units of funding and total historic commitments funding announced in July 2023
3. the high needs block is based on the allocations announced in July 2023 with the basic entitlement element of the national funding formula (NFF) updated for the number of pupils in the October 2023 school census
4. the early years block is based on the early years funding rates published in November 2023 and made up of items 5 to 12 below
5. funding for the universal 15 hours entitlement for all 3 and 4-year-olds
6. funding for the additional 15 hours for 3 and 4-year-old children of eligible working parents
7. funding for the 15 hours entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds
8. funding for the 15 hours entitlement for 2-year-old children of eligible working parents
9. funding for the 15 hours entitlement for 9-month-old up to 2-year-old children of eligible working parents
10. funding for the early years pupil premium (EYPP) for 3 and 4-year-olds, 2-year-olds and under 2s
11. funding for the disability access fund (DAF) for 3 and 4-year-olds, 2-year-olds and under 2s
12. supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools (MNS) for 3 and 4-year-olds

Dedicated schools grant (DSG): 2024 to 2025 allocations local authority summary	2024 to 2025 DSG allocations, before recoupment and deductions for national non-domestic rates, and for direct funding of high needs places by Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)				
	Schools block (£s)	Central school services block (£s)	High needs block (£s)	Early years block (£s)	Total DSG allocation (£s)
315 Merton	156,218,099	1,146,726	50,208,828	24,168,693	231,742,346

Dedicated schools grant (DSG): 2024 to 2025 allocations local authority summary	2024 to 2025 DSG allocations, after deductions for national non-domestic rates, and direct funding of high needs places by ESFA				
	Schools block (£s)	Central school services block allocation (£s)	High needs block allocation (£s)	Early years block (£s)	Total DSG allocation (£s)
315 Merton	155,994,834	1,146,726	49,988,828	24,168,693	231,299,081

2.3 A more detailed analysis of Schools Funding will be provided to Cabinet in February 2024.

Summarised Transition from Council March 2023 to Cabinet 15 January 2024

Budget Forecast 2024/25 to 2027/28				
	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000
Budget Gap Council March 2023	0	2,296	3,836	13,534
Inflation - Pay and Prices	5,210	5,083	5,287	5,653
Savings - New 2024/25	(2,099)	(3,038)	(3,348)	(3,735)
Transfer to services from corporate inflation and contingency budgets	4,659	4,659	4,659	4,659
External Borrowing Costs	(3,339)	(2,238)	(3,346)	(7,303)
C&H: Taxicard and Concessionary Fares	(905)	(1,610)	(2,039)	(3,115)
Proposed Growth - Services	4,363	6,684	6,727	6,765
Investment Income	(2,000)	(2,000)	(2,000)	(2,000)
Provision for Corporate Contract increases due to London Living Wage	(490)	(490)	(490)	(490)
Collection Fund - t/f of Ctax surplus(-)/deficit	(278)	0	0	0
Collection Fund - t/f of BRates surplus(-)/deficit	(1,667)	0	0	0
Council Tax income	(1,624)	(1,630)	(1,635)	(1,641)
Additional unringfenced grant	(381)	0	0	0
Reduced contribution to Reserves	(1,449)	(29)	0	0
Cabinet 15 January 2024	0	7,686	7,651	12,327

Merton's Capital Strategy 2024-28



December 2023 – 2nd Draft (November 2023 Monitoring)

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Delivering Building a Better Merton Together

Merton as a borough has a huge amount to offer those who live, work or visit here. It is one of the greenest boroughs in London and has plenty of parks, green spaces and rivers offering easy access to nature. It is extremely well connected to central London, as well as neighbouring boroughs and the Surrey Hills. Each year, 500,000 visitors come to our borough to enjoy the Wimbledon Championships, which have been held since 1877 at the All-England Club. Merton is also proud to be the home once more of AFC Wimbledon in the Plough Lane stadium.

We are a growing and diverse borough – Merton is home to 215,187 people, an increase of 7% over the last 10 years, and the population is made up of a broad range of ethnicities. One third of residents were born outside the UK and the most common languages spoken after English are Polish, Tamil, Portuguese and Urdu, which reflects the Polish, European, South American and Asian communities across Merton.

We have always strived for Merton to be a great place to raise a family. There is excellent support for children and young people and all our secondary schools are rated either good or outstanding. We are one of the safest boroughs in London, and we have worked hard to prevent homelessness and maintain the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation of all London's boroughs. However, we know there is more to do to meet the expectations of our residents and make Merton a better place to live for everyone.

If we want to achieve the goal of building pride in Merton, this must be truly felt and experienced by all communities across the borough. Parts of Merton have higher levels of overcrowding, poorer health, deprivation and poverty and a greater proportion of lower-income households that are more affected by the cost-of-living emergency. We will target our delivery to address these disparities and to make sure that investment, support, and action goes to the right places and makes a difference.

We have shown that we work best when we work together and that will become even more important in the years ahead. The council cannot achieve these ambitions alone but will need to work closely and collaboratively with communities, businesses, and partners on a local and London-wide level to build a better Merton together.



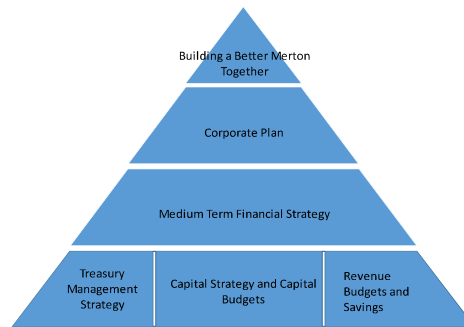
Councillor Ross Garrod, Leader, Merton Council



Councillor Billy Christie, Lead Member Finance & Corporate Services

Strategic Planning Framework

The Capital Strategy is an integral part of the Council's Strategic and Financial Planning Framework:



The Corporate Plan is specific to Merton Council and sets out the council's vision and ambitions for improvement over the next four years and how this will be achieved. Corporate Planning and financial planning frameworks are closely aligned and integrated.

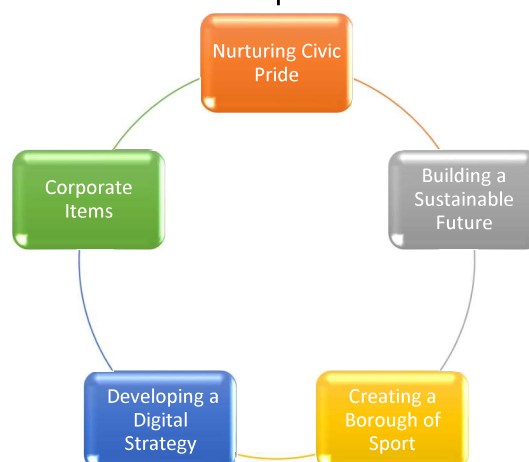
The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a 4 year plan which sets out our commitment to provide services that meet the needs of people locally, and represents good value for money. It links our council vision and priorities with forecasted resources and budgets. This shows how our finances will be structured and managed to ensure they support our priorities, and those of our partners. It incorporates the medium term impact on rate payers of activity within both the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy.

Capital Strategy - The importance of having a meaningful and comprehensive Capital Strategy is recognized by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) in both its Prudential Code (2021) and Capital Strategy Guidance. It provides a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contributes to the provision of services, along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and what the implications might be for future financial sustainability.

Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) summarises the management of the council's cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions and the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

Strategic Themes

The Corporate Plan sets out the key themes, for analysing the capital programme two further areas have been added modernisation themes and corporate items:



Underneath these five Themes sit a set of priorities which we would work with our partners to develop and deliver on. As a Council we continue to respond to these challenges making sure we position ourselves to recover as quickly as possible from its effects. Strong financial management is at the heart of the Capital Strategy enabling it to play a key role in the Council's response.

Capital Strategy

The Council recognises the vital contribution its Capital Strategy plays in the economic growth of the borough. The significant and strategically planned investment shows that Merton is an ambitious borough looking to invest in improvements of placemaking to create an economic resilience which allows both local business and communities to thrive. It also welcomes the opportunity to work with the private sector to deliver its priorities and for the private sector to see Merton as a place it wants to invest in. The Council recognises that it needs to leverage private investment to create a resilient local economy and deliver the best outcomes for residents and businesses.

In developing the Capital Strategy, clear linkages have also been identified with not only the Corporate Plan, MTFS and TMS but departmental service and commissioning plans beneath this. It reflects the capital investment implications of the approved objectives of those plans, which themselves reflect the council's proposals set out in service based strategies such as the Primary Places Strategy, Local Implementation Plan (Transport), and Asset Management Plans.



Evidence of Need

Merton is an outer London borough with a current population in 2021 of 215,187 (source census 2021), projected to increase to 218,005 in 2040 (GLA Estimates).

Over the next 20 years it is projected that the number of residents aged over 65 across Merton as a percentage of the population will increase from 12.9% to 19.2%. The population aged 85 and over is projected to increase by an even greater proportion, 52% (BPO March 2021). Local research supports the increasing need identified in the London Plan for housing designed for older people, including sheltered and extra-care.

The Local Plan sets out that the council will plan for 11,732 new homes over the 15 year plan period from 2021 to 2036. Delivery of this housing is required to meet the needs of the increase in population and growth; projected to be an overall increase of approximately 16,600 people.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies the anticipated strategic requirements for the provision of a range of different infrastructure types across the borough. These include transport, health, education, green and blue infrastructure, sport and leisure, community, utilities, climate change, economic development and emergency services.

The council must ensure that the necessary infrastructure required to support new residential and commercial development throughout the borough can be delivered at the right time, therefore addressing any existing shortfalls in provision.

We have co-designed a methodology with our partners to improve how we work with our local communities and use local, council and partner assets and resources. This work was undertaken with Collaborate CIC, one of the leaders in the field of collaboratively designed public services and produced 'Working Better with Communities' framework. This model takes what we learned from how we worked differently with partners during the pandemic, feedback from community groups and best practice from Merton and elsewhere to offer a guide to how we can work differently with communities.

The commissioning of our new multi-million-pound Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector has provided a valuable opportunity to put this framework into practice. The fund invests in social infrastructure at a neighbourhood level and supports our voluntary groups.



Health and Wellbeing - Merton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024 focuses on the influence that the wider determinants – the air we breathe, our schools, workplaces, homes, food, transport and relationships with friends and family – have on our health. This is in line with the report on Health Equity in England: Marmot Review 10 Years On published in 2020, and is focused on tackling health inequalities so that all residents can: Start Well, Live Well and Age Well in a Healthy Place.

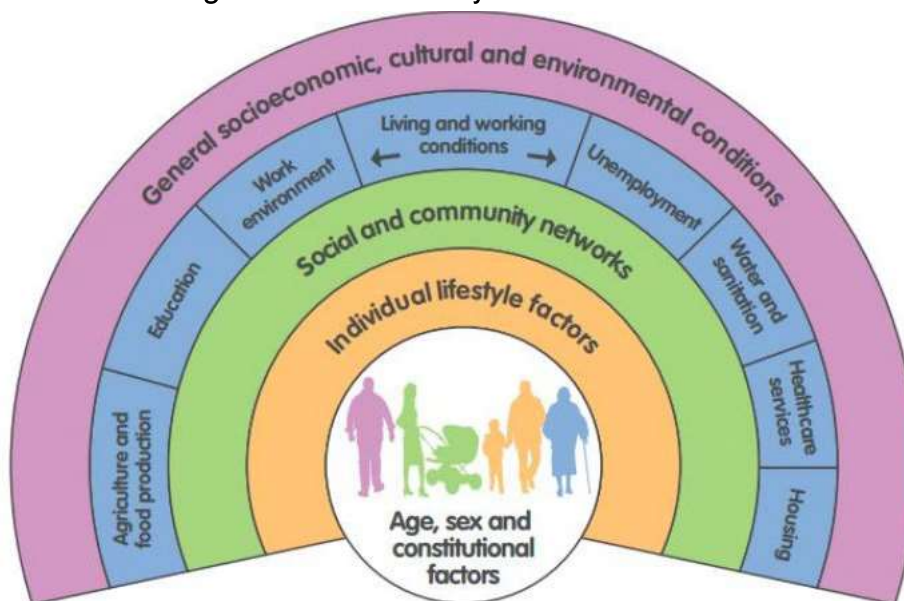


Diagram 1 – Wider determinants of health
Source: Dahlgren & Whitehead, 1991

The Merton Story (2022/23) is Merton's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), which sets out the population health and wellbeing needs for the Health and Wellbeing Board. It identifies the following key themes and challenges:

- *Start well priorities: 1) Emotional health and wellbeing for Children and Young People; 2) Integrated children's services and 3) Developing pathways into adulthood*
- *Live well priorities: 4) East Merton model of health and wellbeing, 5) Diabetes, 6) Primary care at scale, 7) Primary mental healthcare*
- *Age well priority: 8) Integrated health and social care*

The plan focused on the collaborative action that communities, health, social care and the voluntary sector could take together to deliver quality health and care services that support local people.

The Merton Story identifies that the main causes of ill health and premature deaths in Merton are cancer and circulatory disease such as coronary heart disease and stroke. Unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking, lack of physical activity, an unhealthy diet and using drugs and alcohol, can all contribute to these types of deaths. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to make healthy choices easier and more preferred, particularly for people in areas with lower socio-economic conditions.

The mental health of residents is just as important as their physical wellbeing. Public Health England figures indicate that in 2017, it was estimated that 25,300 adults in Merton were suffering depression and anxiety. While this is lower than the London and England average, it suggests that not all adults who experience mental health issues visit a GP.

The number of people in Merton with dementia is predicted to increase from 2,050 to 3,300 by 2035. The new Local Plan policies incorporate how dementia-friendly design through housing, transport and public realm can help to make communities more dementia-friendly.

Projections

The London Healthy Urban Development Unit (HUDU) has provided a spatial analysis of the population projections for Merton, to illustrate the interactions between the different types of health services in the borough and how the changes in future population may impact on these services:

- *Overall healthcare provision; health centres, primary care networks, GPs and hospitals;*
- *Primary care floorspace;*
- *Mental health care floorspace; and*
- *Acute health care floorspace.*

A new Merton Borough Health and Care Estates Strategy 2021 (MBES) has been prepared in partnership with Merton Borough Estates Group. The MBES reviews the needs of local health providers against the borough's housing and population growth and supports the delivery of Merton's Local Health and Care Plans. The MBES also takes into account some of the implications of Covid-19 on the healthcare system, although it is acknowledged that this is ongoing work and further information may be provided to the council as it comes forward.

Merton is unique to its neighbouring boroughs as there is no acute hospital within the borough. This results in residents travelling to the most convenient hospital close to where they live, either St George's University Hospital in Wandsworth, Epsom and St Helier Hospital in Sutton or Kingston Hospital in Kingston. The MBES 2021 identifies the key healthcare needs for the borough, setting out the areas and the projects that are considered to be a priority in meeting the health needs of the Merton population.



Strategic Theme 1 - Nurturing Civic Pride

Civic pride is about the relationship that people and communities have with a place – not only their physical surroundings but also their feelings of identity and belonging. By nurturing civic pride, we want people to be proud of their local area, feel more connected to their community, and get more involved in making Merton a great place to live, work and visit. That means getting the basics right so that all residents across the borough can benefit from cleaner streets, vibrant high streets, good schools, and safe neighbourhoods. It is also about everyone taking pride in their borough, which means becoming a fairer, more equal and inclusive place.

There are 8 established priorities in this area which detailed below, capital investment is being utilised to deliver them where necessary

- 1. We will put residents at the heart of everything we do, and be responsive and resident-centric in our approach to customer service, communication, and engagement**
- 2. Residents, businesses and visitors will enjoy clean, safe and welcoming places across the borough** - the proposed capital programme includes £6 million investment in a new waste transfer station and £15 million for the replacement of the bulk of the waste and cleansing fleet with a carbon neutral alternative.
- 3. Existing businesses are supported, and new businesses, talent and investment will be attracted to the borough** - the proposed programme provides £4 million match funding for Morden town centre regeneration.
- 4. More residents will be able to access secure and well-paid employment in a local economy that is fairer and more inclusive** - the approved programme 2024-28 contains £10.2 million of regeneration schemes spread throughout the borough.
- 5. Merton will be a thriving place for voluntary and community organisations where giving back is valued and encouraged**
- 6. Fantastic educational provision and support gives children the best start and equips residents of all ages with the skills and qualifications to succeed** – the approved capital programme 2024-28 includes £26 million for the expansion of Special Educational Needs Places in the borough.
- 7. Residents across Merton will be supported through the cost-of-living emergency**
- 8. We will continue to embrace diversity across the Borough**

Strategic Theme 2 - Building a Sustainable Future

Working towards a greener, more sustainable, and resilient future for the borough means better housing, action on climate change, and support for the health and wellbeing of our communities. Accelerating the supply of affordable and sustainable homes is a top priority for the council. Alongside this priority, we will push for better standards in private and social housing and work with Integrated Care partners to make sure that local health provision meets the needs of communities across Merton.

There are 7 established priorities in this area which detailed below, capital investment is being utilised to deliver them where necessary:

1. **New developments deliver more affordable housing and exhibit design excellence -**
Like other London boroughs, Merton faces a housing crisis with increasing numbers of households in temporary accommodation and too many people living with high housing costs and poor-quality accommodation. The approved capital programme 2024-28 includes £28 million for the provision of affordable housing and £9.8 million for the provision of learning disability housing
2. **A borough where residents can live in good quality housing**
3. **Our environment and parks will be protected, restored, and well managed -** the approved capital programme 2022-28 includes £3.5 million for Parks and Trees Funding.
4. **The council will aim to reach net zero by 2030**
5. **Take-up of alternative and sustainable modes of transport increases**
6. **Air quality across the borough will improve**
7. **Equal access to local health services in Merton -** the Authority will be looking to utilise grant funding to develop the electric vehicle infrastructure within the borough.



Strategic Theme 3 - Creating a Borough of Sport

As the home of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, AFC Wimbledon, the oldest cricket club in the world, and a rugby club that was one of the founding members of the RFU, our borough has a great sporting heritage on which to build. Today, we have an array of parks, tennis courts, sports pitches, leisure centres and a wealth of grassroots clubs and sporting organisations.

We are perfectly placed to establish Merton as a borough of sport and promote healthy, active lives for all our residents. Increasing participation in sport and exercise not only supports better health and wellbeing but can also bring wider social benefits such as greater connectedness and engage young people. By supporting residents of all ages to be active and incorporate more movement into their lives, we can help people to lead more healthier lives and become more independent, particularly those who are older or disabled.

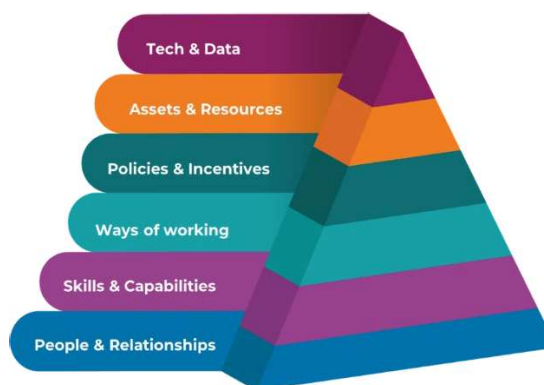
There are four established priorities in this area which detailed below, capital investment is being utilised to deliver them where necessary

1. **Merton's sporting heritage will receive national recognition Increasing participation in sport and physical activity amongst all residents**
2. **All 4- to 16-year-olds and over 65s will have access to weekly sporting and wellbeing activities** - The approved capital programme includes just under £10 million investment in sports and green spaces.
3. **More residents will take part in sport and physical activities**
4. **Investment in sporting infrastructure and promoting healthy activities**

Developing a Digital Strategy (4)

Our vision is to develop inclusive, connected and engaged communities and develop digitally-optimised and innovate services. Digital strategy focuses on using innovation, data and technology to improve business performance by improved utilisation of the resources and capabilities available to it. Compiling and implementing this strategy is a key priority for the organisation.

Hierarchy of Public Sector Innovation



By empowering our staff with the capabilities needed in the digital-era, we can, in turn, help our less confident residents benefit from digital services and technologies.

Our priority is to improve people's lives and we can only do this if we ensure our services are designed with people's needs truly at their heart. Tackling digital exclusion and ensuring our residents have the tools, skills, and technology to participate in today's society. Providing fast, reliable internet availability throughout the Borough, and the skills to enable our residents to use it.

We recognise that redesigning or building new services requires the collaborative efforts of people across the organisation and out in our communities, and that our data holds valuable information which isn't always immediately visible. By working collaboratively, sharing data appropriately and engaging our communities, we can get the insights and understanding that we need in order to design services which improve people's lives.

The Authority will be reviewing business needs, determining required outcomes, developing a delivery plan and identifying the resources required to deliver those developments. A strategic engagement plan will need to be developed which includes engagement with both internal and external stakeholders. The newly established Transformation Team will manage the consultation and manage the impact across the organisation. The Table over the page provides a summary overview of the work to be undertaken.

Digital Strategy

Services	Data & Insight	Workforce	Digital Inclusion	Technology Estate	Digital Place
User-centred digital services	Data usage	Recruitment and retention	Needs identification	Technology Governance	Smart City
Improve digital presence	IG & data ethics	Agile working methods	Digital inclusion for staff	Interoperability and data access	Digital Economy
Service design capabilities	Data culture	Staff training in digital and data methods	Digital inclusion for residents	Procurement	Digital Infrastructure
Digital democracy	Data quality	Tools for staff	Local Partnerships	Cyber security	
Emerging tools and practice	Advanced data methods	Effective hybrid working		Emerging Tech	

Residents have told us they want to be involved in decisions that affect the things that matter most to them, such as their high streets, parks and local services. They want to maintain and build on the community spirit that saw us through the pandemic where thousands of residents, businesses and local organisations helped support some of our most vulnerable residents. We want to harness this collaborative spirit to work with residents, businesses and local organisations and build a better Merton together.

Our new Community Engagement strategy will change our approach to engaging with residents and enable us to engage more directly. We will be expanding the use of new and existing digital channels to engage with residents on a regular basis and seek their views on a range of topics. We will also bring in new ways for residents to talk with us and each other, including an annual Question Time for the Leader and Cabinet in each town centre and more support for community groups that hold consultations with residents.

Corporate Items (5)

The authority retains three corporate budgets to maximise its flexibility and agility these are:

1. Acquisitions Budget £2.0 million for the purchase of land and buildings to aid the delivery of capital schemes
2. Capital Bidding Fund £1.0 million to provide match funding to lever in external funding for capital schemes
3. Capital Contingency £1.7 million to offset funding shortfalls in capital schemes



Climate Emergency

On 10th July 2019, Merton Council passed a motion to declare a Climate Emergency and set an ambitious carbon reduction target to make the London Borough of Merton carbon neutral by 2050. In order to lead by example, Merton Council has also set a target to decarbonise its own buildings and services by 2030

The capital investment required to achieve the carbon reduction target can be divided into four main areas:

1. Buildings – the number of operational buildings needs to be rationalised, and the Authority needs to invest in the remaining buildings to make them carbon neutral – surveys are currently being undertaken on Merton owned property the results will inform the rationalisation process
2. Vehicles – the approved capital programme includes £15 million to decarbonise the waste and street cleansing fleet – and officer are reviewing the options for decarbonisation the whole fleet including the required infrastructure
3. Infrastructure – will consider the changes required to the infrastructure for the devised decarbonisation programme in 1 and 2 above.
4. Other Items not covered in the items above – the approved capital programme includes two small schemes related to climate change for £504k (Community Retrofit Loan £254k and Business Retrofit Support £250k)



External and Partner Influences

The Council's capital investment plans are influenced by a number of external parties and factors: central government and its agencies, legislation requiring capital works, partner organisations, businesses developers and by the needs and views of other interested parties, particularly those of Borough residents

Government sponsored initiatives and programmes will influence the projects which the Council will include in its capital investment plans. In particular, its Housing Investment Programme in which the Council participates with regard to Disabled Facilities Grants, this is a major area of investment where the majority of funding is provided by Government.

Transport for London works closely with all London boroughs and community groups to integrate transport planning and operations across the Capital. This results in the provision of ring-fenced funding for work to be undertaken by Merton.

The Authority is working closely with the Department of Education to deliver plans to reduce and contain the increasing revenue pressure from independent sector SEN placements, this is resulting in the provision of additional SEN places within the capital programme.

Where required by legislation to carry out works of a capital nature, such as to comply with the Disablement Disability Act or Health and Safety requirements, or anti-pollution regulations, the Council will consider the most effective way to discharge its obligations and appropriate provision will be made in its Capital Programme once it has determined the necessary work and what can be capitalised.

The Council works with a wide range of partners from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, all of which have an influence over its spending priorities. Wherever possible the Council will seek to work in partnership with others to deliver its capital investment programme in order to provide facilities which meet its own and partners' needs. When working with the private sector, the objective will be to maximise the benefits to the Council and the community from any projects, both in terms of outputs and in relation to obtaining funding for the project.

Regard will be given to the Council's obligations under Disabled Access requirements in putting forward proposals for capital investment and in the design of any facilities which are proposed. Wherever possible the principles of financial and environmental sustainability will be incorporated into any capital projects.



Property as a Corporate Resource

The Asset Management Strategy provides the overarching aims and framework for managing the Council's property portfolio within the context of the council's corporate priorities.

The Council also works closely with a wide range of partners, such as the health sector, police and education services. The Property Strategy acknowledges the importance of joint working with these organisations and the need to be consistent with the Community Plan and planning framework.

The Council's aim is to maximise the contribution of property assets to the delivery of the council's objectives, with the flexibility to continually adapt to changing demands.

The Financial Aims are to:

- Maximise capital receipts.
- Maximise revenue income.
- Reduce revenue cost.
- Reduce capital expenditure.

The Service aims are to:

- Minimise the amount of office accommodation.
- Improve quality and suitability of property assets.
- Match property to approved service requirements.

It ensures that its properties are fit for purpose by making proper provision and action for maintenance and repair. The organisation makes investment and disposal decisions based on thorough option appraisal. The capital programme gives priority to potential capital projects based on a formal objective approval process.

Whole life project costing is used at the design stage for significant projects where appropriate, incorporating future periodic capital replacement costs, projected maintenance and decommissioning costs.

The Asset Management Plan/Strategy is being reviewed and will include greater emphasis on the use of the council's property assets to support the council's Transformation Programme, regeneration and increased income/revenue generation.

The Authority use the CIPFA Fixed Asset IT System to manage, maintain and account for its fixed assets, Property Management, Facilities Management and Capital Finance utilise the system.

Under the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 parish councils and local voluntary and community organisations have the right to nominate local land or buildings they would like to see included in a list of assets of community value which is maintained by the Local Authority. Once listed the owner must allow community interest groups up to six months to make an offer before the property can be sold to another. It is envisaged that this may lengthen the disposal time for some properties if they are listed as assets of community value by the council.

Capital Investment Mapping

The Authority has the following identified priorities:

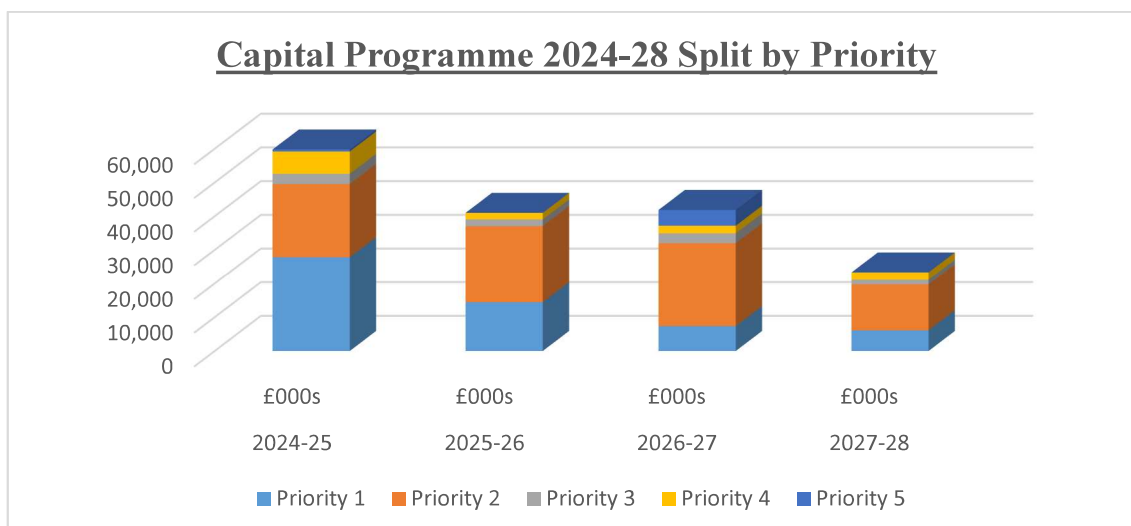
1. Nurturing Civic Pride – is about the relationship that people and communities have with a place this includes their physical surroundings and feelings of identity and belonging.
2. Building a Sustainable Future - Working towards a greener, more sustainable, and resilient future for the borough means better housing, action on climate change and supporting the health and wellbeing of our local communities.
3. Creating a Borough of Sport - From internationally renowned organisations like the All-England Club to grassroots clubs and organisations like Tooting and Mitcham FC, we want to strengthen our partnerships with sports clubs, organisations and businesses across the borough and promote increased participation in sports and activity.
4. Digital Strategy - To develop inclusive, connected and engaged communities and develop digitally-optimised and innovate.
5. Corporate Budgets

The table analyses the priority information contained in Annex 3, showing the investment in each priority:

Capital Programme 2024-28 Split by Priority

Priority	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
1	27,848	14,454	7,355	6,130
2	21,738	22,612	24,677	13,613
3	2,987	2,000	2,880	1,380
4	6,613	1,930	2,275	2,180
5	600	0	4,681	0
Total	59,786	40,996	41,868	23,303

The chart below reflects this budget over the five strategic priorities of the organisation:



The Detail ...

Capital Investment Planning

Capital resources 2024-28

Capital expenditure is funded from a variety of sources:-

- Grants which are not ring-fenced to be spent on a specific project or service
- Specific grants - earmarked for a specific project or purpose
- Capital receipts from the disposal of surplus and under-utilised land and property and repayment of principal
- Other contributions such as Section 106/CIL
- Council Funding – through revenue funding, use of reserves or borrowing.

Capital receipts

Capital receipts generated from the disposal of surplus and under-utilised land, property and other assets are a major source of funding and the potential available capital resources are under constant review and revision. The forecast of capital receipts included in this report are based on a forecast of planned land and property disposals. In addition, after the transfer of the housing stock to Merton Priory Homes, the council continues to receive a share of the receipts from Right to Buy applications and through future sharing arrangements, receipts from the sales of void properties, sales of development land and VAT saving on expenditure on stock enhancements.

Projected Capital Receipts

Much of the anticipated capital receipts are as a result of the VAT shelter agreement entered into with Merton Priory Homes as part of the housing stock transfer. There are current proposals for some of the properties under this agreement to be redeveloped which could result in a reduction in receipts from the VAT shelter agreement (ends in the financial year 2024/25), however a Development and Disposals Clawback Agreement was entered into as part of the same transfer and this could result in a significant capital receipt should these development plans go ahead.

The following table represents an estimate of an anticipated cash flow and therefore these future capital receipts have been utilised to fund the capital programme:-

Anticipated Capital Receipts	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Sale of Assets	0	0	0	0
Right to buy/VAT Shelter*	1,059	545	0	0
Total	1,059	545	0	0

* Umbrella VAT agreement with Clarion ceases March 2025

As there is currently no need to enter into external borrowing, investment balances will rise with the addition of capital receipts until utilised to fund the capital programme. Average expected interest rates on investments across the years of the capital programme are approximately 2.8%, as such an increase in receipts of £1m would be expected to generate a £28,000 increase in interest in a full year.

Grant Funding

The Table below summarises the allocated grants being utilised to fund the budgeted proposed capital programme over the planning period:

Grants	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Transport for London LIP/Department for Transport (earmarked) Capital	1,659	0	0	0	0
ORCS Grant	425	0	0	0	0
Digital Maker Space	73	0	0	0	0
LibraryOn	25				
GLA Grant for New Green Flag Parks	12				
TOTAL: E,CP&C	2,194	0	0	0	0
School Condition 2022-23 (semi-ringfenced)	1,044	0	0	0	0
School Condition 2023-24 (semi-ringfenced)	1,994	387	0	0	0
Estimated School Condition Future Years (semi-ringfenced)*	0	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
High Needs (ringfenced)	1,620	9,308	0	0	0
Estimated High Needs (ringfenced)	0	0	0	0	0
Family Hubs	10	187	0	0	0
Devolved Formula Capital (Earmarked)	353	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
Childcare Expansion	0	312,985	0	0	0
Sixth Form Expansion Grant	0	3,236	0	0	0
TOTAL: C,LL&F	5,021	15,931	2,500	2,500	2,500
Salix Grant	1,100	2,037	0	0	0
Agran Resettlement/Homelessness	2,480	0	0	0	0
Disabled Facilities Grant Allocation 2021-22	880	512	0	0	0
Disabled Facilities Grant Allocation 2022-23 Onwards	0	315	827	310	0
Disabled Facilities Grant Allocation 2023-24 Onwards				517	827
Grant for the Demolition of Farm Rd Church	130	0	0	0	0
GLA Affordable Housing Grant			4,950	9,000	
TOTAL: H&SD	4,590	2,864	5,777	9,827	827
TOTAL GRANT FUNDING	11,804	18,794	8,277	12,327	3,327



Contributions

The Table below summarises the budgeted contributions being utilised to fund the proposed capital programme over the planning period:

Capital Contributions	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy	5,229	7,934	8,274	3,700	800
Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy	1,165	350	0	0	0
Section 106 Agreements	242	4,522	1,728	0	0
Hercules	15	0	0	0	0
Friendship Clubs	25	0	0	0	0
Lawn Tennis Association	709	0	0	0	0
South London Partnership	417	0	0	0	0
School Contributions	397	314	0	0	0
Clarion Contributions to fund CPOs	0	3,058	0	0	0
Total Used to Fund the Programme	8,198	16,178	10,002	3,700	800

In accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations the Authority is required to provide an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement which provides analysis of income and expenditure in relation to CIL and Section 106

It is envisaged that the budgeted capital programme will slip, the table below shows the expected outturn position and the summary funding position. Balances held by the authority will generate interest until utilised to fund the capital programme (detail in Annex 2).

Capital Expenditure	2023/24 Estimate £000's	2024/25 Estimate £000's	2025/26 Estimate £000's	2026/27 Estimate £000's	2027/28 Estimate £000's
Capital Expenditure	33,917	59,786	40,996	41,868	23,303
Slippage and Underspends	(9,444)	(24,393)	(13,237)	(11,230)	8,171
Total Capital Expenditure *	24,473	35,392	27,759	30,638	31,473
Financed by:					
Capital Receipts *	1,059	479	33	17	10
Capital Grants & Contributions	15,479	25,418	18,270	15,472	11,746
Revenue Provisions	768	680	842	687	163
Net financing need for the year	7,167	8,815	8,614	14,463	19,555

* Includes Multi-Function Devices finance lease

The total anticipated resourcing of the capital programme after allowing for slippage is summarised in the following table:-

	2024/25 £000s	2025/26 £000s	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s
Grant & Contributions *	25,418	18,270	15,472	11,746
Council Funding	9,974	9,488	15,167	19,728
Total	35,392	27,759	30,638	31,473

* This table shows the grants and contributions applied to fund the programme after allowing for slippage.

Impact of the Capital Programme on Revenue

The capital strategy recognises that the prudential framework provides the council with flexibility, subject to the constraints of the council's revenue budget. This flexible ability to borrow, either from internal cash resources or by external borrowing, coupled with the revised treatment of finance leases with effect from 1 April 2010, means that prudential borrowing is used for the acquisition of equipment, where it is prudent, affordable and sustainable. Since 2006/07 it has been possible to borrow from internal cash resources rather than external borrowing and it is forecast that this will continue to be the case until 2029/30. Over the period 2023-28 the Authority is scheduled to repay £18.2 million (16%) of long term debt. This will be kept under review as part of general Treasury Management.

The revenue effects of the capital programme are from capital financing charges and from additional revenue costs such as annual maintenance charges. The capital financing charges are made up of interest payable on loans to finance the expenditure and of principal repayments on those loans. The principal repayments commence in the year after the expenditure is incurred and are calculated by the application of the statutory Minimum Revenue Provision. The interest commences immediately the expenditure is incurred. The revenue effects of the capital programme are fully taken account of in the MTFS, with appropriate adjustments for slippage, timing of capital payments and the use of internal investment funds.

Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement

Under guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government, authorities are required to prepare an annual statement on their policy on making MRP. This mirrors the existing requirements to report to the council on the Prudential borrowing limit and investment policy. The statement is set out in Section 3 of the Treasury Management Strategy.

The revenue effects of the capital programme are built into the MTFS and are summarised below:

MTFS March 2023	2023/24 £000s	2024/25 £000s	2025/26 £000s	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s
MRP	4,841	5,197	6,129	7,861	11,499
Interest on Borrowing	6,041	6,020	4,949	5,097	6,528
Total Borrowing Costs	10,882	11,217	11,078	12,958	18,028
Interest on Investments	(1,430)	(722)	(181)	0	0
CCLA Investment Two Loans @ £10m	(323)	(323)	(323)	(323)	(323)
Total Borrowing Costs Net of Investment interest	9,129	10,172	10,574	12,635	17,705

Proposed Programme Business Plan 2024-28	2023/24 £000s	2024/25 £000s	2025/26 £000s	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s
MRP	4,965	4,501	5,463	6,235	7,536
Interest on Borrowing	4,272	3,377	3,377	3,377	3,189
Total Borrowing Costs	9,237	7,878	8,840	9,612	10,725
Interest on Investments	(10,441)	(8,280)	(7,759)	(7,836)	(7,325)
CCLA Investment Two Loans @ £10m	(1,349)	(1,000)	(1,000)	(323)	(323)
Total Borrowing Costs Net of Investment interest	(2,554)	(1,402)	81	1,453	3,077

Movement in Projected Costs	2023/24 £000s	2024/25 £000s	2025/26 £000s	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s
MRP	124	(697)	(666)	(1,627)	(3,963)
Interest on Borrowing	(1,769)	(2,643)	(1,572)	(1,720)	(3,340)
Total Borrowing Costs	(1,646)	(3,340)	(2,238)	(3,346)	(7,303)
Interest on Investments	(9,011)	(7,558)	(7,578)	(7,836)	(7,325)
CCLA Investment Two Loans @ £10m	(1,026)	(677)	(677)	0	0
Total Borrowing Costs Net of Investment interest	(11,683)	(11,575)	(10,492)	(11,182)	(14,628)

Debt repayment

The council has had a strategy to reduce its level of debt when opportunity arises in the market. The average interest payable on outstanding debt is 6.1%. For the period 2024-28, capital receipts may continue to be used to pay the premiums on the repayment of those authority debts which have high fixed interest charges, if the terms offered will result in appropriate revenue savings. Any decision to repay debt early will be considered alongside the funding however, this is unlikely to be the case in the short to medium term requirement of the programme.

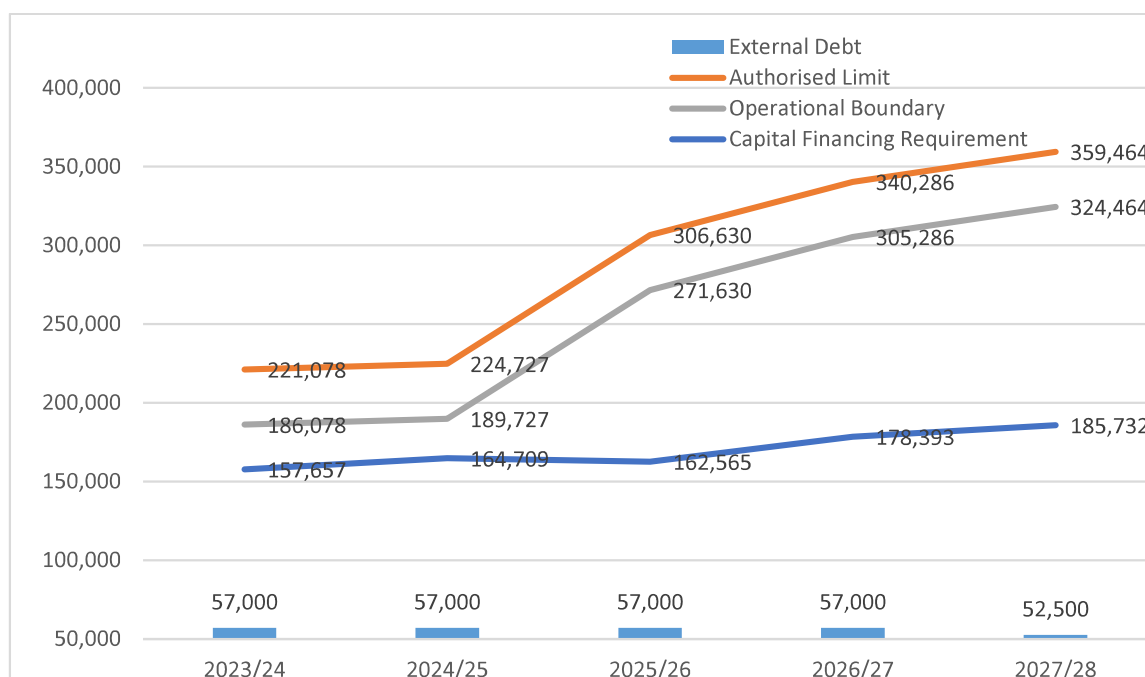
The Table below shows the maturity structure of current external debt

Maturity Structure of Borrowing		
Length of Time	Actual November 2022	Value £'000
less than 1 year	19.38%	13,700
1 to 2 years	0.00%	0
2 years to 5 years	6.36%	4,500
5 years to 10 years	0.00%	0
10 years to 20 years	31.82%	22,500
20 years to 30 years	0.00%	0
30 years to 40 years	42.43%	30,000
40 years to 50 years	0.00%	0
Total	100.00%	70,700

Internal borrowing to fund unsupported capital expenditure will reduce the balances available to invest under the treasury management strategy. In contrast, external borrowing will provide additional balance to invest under the Treasury Management Strategy until utilised.

The chart below shows the debt related treasury activity limits discussed in detail in 4.4 of the Treasury Management Strategy and incorporates the proposed capital programme and funding strategy contained in this document.

Treasury Management Limits on Activity



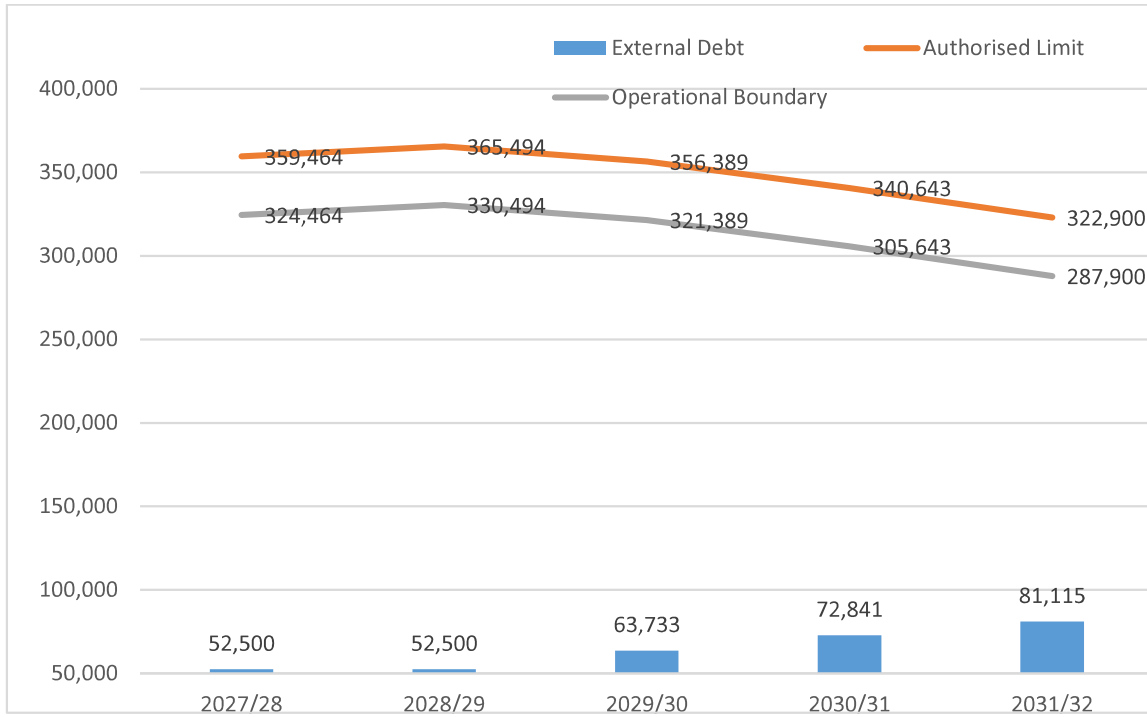
The Table below summarises the Indicative Capital Programme for 2028 to 2033. Additional detail is provided as Annex 5:

Department	Indicative Budget 2028-29 £000s	Indicative Budget 2029-30 £000s	Indicative Budget 2030-31 £000s	Indicative Budget 2031-32 £000s	Indicative Budget 2032-33 £000s
Finance & Digital	2,620	3,215	3,410	2,930	1,955
ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Children, Lifelong Learning & Families	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Environment, Civic Pride & Climate	5,040	6,120	4,360	4,310	4,340
Innovation & Change	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Sustainable Development	1,560	1,325	1,325	1,325	1,325
Total	11,720	13,160	11,595	11,065	10,120

Please note these figures do not include any allowance of grant funding or expenditure for Transport for London and Disabled Facilities.

For every £1 million capital expenditure that is funded by external borrowing it is estimated that there will be annual revenue debt charges of between £228k for assets with a life of 5 years to £48k for an asset life of 50 years.

The Table below shows the impact of the indicative programme 2027-32 on the Authority's debt:



Capital Investment Strategy for Non-Core Activity

This section of the strategy details the approach adopted in non-core investment activity and sets out how this will help the Authority to deliver its core functions. The definition of Investment covers all financial assets of a local authority as well as non-financial assets that the organisation holds primarily to generate financial returns, such as investment property portfolios.

During the period 2024-28 the Authority is planning the following investment activity:

- i) Section 5 of the Treasury Management Strategy sets out the Authority's short to medium term Investment Strategy. This strategy focusses on short to medium term low risk investments.
- ii) Having sold the financial interest in CHAS the Authority is considering balancing the activity in (i) with debt redemption and legacy asset investment.

From 1 April 2018 (financial year 2018/19) the International Financial Reporting Standard 9 (Financial Instruments) came into force. Its purpose was to make accounting for financial instruments more transparent.

Security - The activity in relation to non-core investment will result in:

- i) Short to Medium Term investment of available cash resources in low risk low return investment.

Liquidity

- i) Short to medium term cash investments can be liquidated easily and will boost the interest generated.
- ii) Debt redemption will reduce the MRP annual charge and reduce the annual interest due on loans easing the financial pressure on revenue budgets:

The authority has also loaned money to MSJCB and should the Authority need to liquidate this loan it could be sold.

Yield - Expected yield:

- i) Section 5 of the Treasury Management Strategy details the yield expected from short to medium term cash investments

In assessing whether investment assets retain sufficient value to provide security of investment officers will be mindful of the fair value model in the International Accounting Standard 40: Investment Property.

Borrowing in Advance of Need

Section 4.2 of the Treasury Management Strategy details the current and future level of under borrowing by the Authority and sets out the Authority's borrowing strategy linked to this and internal borrowing.

Current indications are that interest rates are likely to rise making it more expensive to borrow, but will start to reduce in around 2 years. Consideration will be given to the timing of required borrowing to minimise the cost to the Authority and with regard to the current debt portfolio (detailed in Section 4.5 of the Treasury Management Strategy)

Capacity, Skills and Culture

The Authority will where appropriate, buy in expertise to progress loan and investment activity. It is also appropriate in some cases to develop expertise internally.

Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy

Capital receipts can only be used for specific purposes and these are set out in Regulation 23 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) regulations 2003 made under section 11 of the Local Government Act 2003. The main permitted purpose is to fund capital expenditure. The use of capital receipts to support revenue expenditure is not permitted by the regulations.

However, the Secretary of State is empowered to issue Directions allowing expenditure incurred by local authorities to be treated as capital expenditure. Where such a Direction is made, the specified expenditure can then be funded from capital receipts under the Regulations.

In December 2017, the Secretary of State announced the continuation of the capital receipts flexibility programme, which provides Local Authorities the freedom to use capital receipts generated from the sale of assets (except for Right to Buy disposals) to fund revenue costs arising from transformational revenue projects that deliver savings or service improvements. With extensions since, the current flexibility direction runs until 31 March 2025.

The Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State requires authorities to prepare, publish and maintain a 'Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy'. The guidance also requires that each authority should disclose the individual projects that will be funded or part funded through capital receipts flexibility to full Council or the equivalent - this requirement can be satisfied as part of the annual budget setting process.

There is no prescribed format for the Strategy, the underlying principle is to support local authorities to deliver more efficient and sustainable services by extending the use of capital receipts to support the revenue costs of reform projects.

It is a required condition of the direction that authorities must send details setting out their planned use of the flexibility to the Secretary of State, in advance of its use for each financial year. This is to make sure that the government is adequately sighted on the use of the flexibility and can monitor how it is used - it is not a process of approval.

Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy

Government has provided a definition of expenditure which qualifies to be funded from capital receipts. This is:

“Qualifying expenditure is expenditure on any project that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years for any of the public sector delivery partners. Within this definition, it is for individual local authorities to decide whether or not a project qualifies for the flexibility.”

The Council has not used Capital Receipt under flexibility arrangements in the past. Further Information on each of the programmes is provided below.

Housing Development and Regeneration: Up to 6 posts for housing development, regeneration and engagement and their associated costs. These posts will be focussing on the delivery of the first 93 units of affordable housing, developing a delivery programme for further housing and Morden town centre and other regeneration. It is envisaged that medium to long term schemes will provide revenue savings through the provision of affordable housing.

The extension is only currently available to the end of the financial year 2024-25. Utilising borrowing instead of capital receipts will increase the Council's borrowing requirement. This is affordable and will remain within prudential indicators. Allowance for these proposals has been built into the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy (including the Prudential indicators).

In 2024-25, £0.4m capital receipts received and will be available to provide funding for transformation (Housing Development and Regeneration). As this is only a small sum officers have not attempted to separately identify their impact within the above documents and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Capital Planning Process

Capital Bids and Prioritisation Criteria

The authority has an annual bidding process for capital resources, in keeping with corporate priorities and identified service priorities. Submitted bids are reviewed and challenged as part of the process. Proposed capital bids are subject to scrutiny in the autumn and January. There was no bidding process during 2023-24. The table below summarises the movement in the capital programme from this year's process (detail in Annex 4):

Department	Revised Budget 2023-24 £000's	Revised Budget 2024-25 £000's	Revised Budget 2025-26 £000's	Revised Budget 2026-27 £000's	Indicative Budget 2027-28 £000's
Finance & Digital	(13,130)	4,226	(1,350)	(4,211)	5,051
ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Children, Lifelong Learning & Families	(2,034)	8,184	0	0	0
Environment, Civic Pride & Climate	164	1,993	(14,448)	4,801	4,339
Innovation & Change	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Sustainable Development	(3,823)	1,782	(330)	5,327	827
Total	(18,823)	16,185	(16,128)	5,917	10,216

Given the scarcity of financial resources the Authority has dovetailed the CIL annual bidding processes with the capital bidding process.

Corporate Governance

Accounting Definitions and Practices

The council's approach to Capital Accounting follows the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, which itself is based on the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and guidance issued by CIPFA and professional accounting networks.

As in previous years, there has been continual review of the Capital Programme to ensure that expenditure meets the strict definition of capital expenditure and to identify any items which would be more appropriate to be charged to revenue. This has not resulted in any major changes to the future programme.

The de-minimis level of capital expenditure for the authority is set at £10,000 per project. This applies to all schemes within our capital programme, however, in exceptional circumstances thresholds below this may be considered where specific items of expenditure are below this de-minimis level but meet proper accounting definitions of capital expenditure.

Individual schools may choose to adopt the above de-minimis limit or use the limit of £2,000 as mentioned in some Department for Education and HMRC guidance for various types of school.

IFRS 9 requires that investment in risk capital will need to be valued annually at fair value with any loss or gain being written through the profit and loss account in the year it occurs.

IFRS 16 will require all but short-term de-minimis leasing rental/leasing arrangements appear on the Authority's balance sheet from the financial year 2024/25.

Capital Programme Board

Merton's Capital Strategy is coordinated by the Capital Programme Board. The board, is effectively a sub-group of the Corporate Management Team (CMT). It comprises the Executive Directors of Environment, Civic Pride and Climate, Housing and Sustainable Development and Finance and Digital with selected key managers from each service department.

The Terms of Reference of the Board are:

- Lead on the development and maintenance of the capital investment strategy and ensure it is consistent with the council's strategic objectives, TOMs and service plans.
- Ensure that the capital investment strategy informs and is informed by the asset management plan.
- Ensure there is a transparent and clearly communicated process for allocation of capital funds with clear and well documented criteria and decision making process.
- Monitor progress of capital funded schemes and any other critical schemes as determined by CMT. Receive joint reports from Finance/departmental staff on progress against deliverables, milestones and budget forecasts.
- In conjunction with other governing bodies, consider/approve business cases that involve capital investment.
- Monitor issues arising as a result of changes in accounting treatment of capital expenditure and ensure the organisation responds accordingly.
- Assess capital schemes in the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure they are affordable in revenue terms.
- Receive reports from the Property Management and Review Manager relating to capital funds coming from the disposal of property, in collaboration with the Property and Asset Management Board.

- Receive benefits reports from Programme/Project Managers when capital projects/programmes are closed. Monitor key benefits to ensure they are realised for large capital schemes.

The role of the Board is to:

- Set framework and guidelines for capital bids;
- Draft the capital programme for consideration by CMT and Cabinet;
- Review capital bids and prioritise in accordance with the council's strategic objectives;
- Identify and allocate capital funds;
- Monitor progress of capital programmes/projects and key variances between plans and performance;
- Monitor budgets of capital programmes/projects against forecasts;
- Monitor benefits and ensure they are realised. Monitor capital receipts
- Develop and share good practice

The Board is accountable to the Corporate Management Team who will receive reports and escalated matters from the Board on a regular basis. CMT will set the strategy and direction, the Capital Programme Board will operationalise this and escalate concerns and ideas. The Board will refer to, and take advice from, the Procurement Board on any proposals and/or decisions that have a procurement dimension. The Board will work closely with the Property and Asset Management Board on any property/asset related proposals.

The Board will make agendas and minutes available to the other Governance Boards within 5 working days of the meeting.

During the budget process the Executive Director Finance and Digital recommends to Cabinet an initial view as to how the Capital Programme should be funded. However, this recommendation will be informed by the Capital Programme Board's consideration of the capital receipts available and the forecast of future property disposals and the final funding during the closure of accounts will depend on the precise financial position. At this stage it is intended to utilise internal borrowing, capital grant, direct revenue financing, capital receipts and earmarked reserves. Any capital loans given out by the authority, dependent on the size, will normally be funded from capital receipts as the repayments will be received as capital receipts. It will be reported to Members in advance when it is proposed to use external borrowing.

The council has had a robust policy for many years of reviewing its property holding and disposing of surplus property, this is detailed in the Asset Management Plan/Strategy (AMP/S) which also includes policy and procedures for land and property acquisition. All capital receipts are pooled, unless earmarked by Cabinet, and are used either to finance further capital investment or for the payment of premiums on repayment of higher interest loans.

Capital Programme Approval and Amendment

The Capital Programme is approved by Council each year. Any change which substantially alters the programme (and therefore the Prudential Indicators) requires full Council approval. Rules for changes to the Capital Programme are detailed in the council's Constitution within Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures and the key points are summarised here.

For virements which do not substantially alter the programme the below approval limits apply:

- Virements up to £5k can be signed off by the budget manager and the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is informed of these changes as part of the monthly financial monitoring
- Virements £5k up to £100k must be approved by the Chief Officer of the area or areas affected along with the Chief Financial Officer, typically this will be as part of the monthly financial monitoring report to CMT however approval can be sought from these officers at any time if necessary
- Virements £100k and upwards go to Cabinet for approval
- Any virement which diverts resources from a scheme not started, resulting in a delay to that scheme, will be reported to Cabinet
(Please note virement rules are cumulative i.e. two virements of £5,000 from one project; the latter would require the approval of Chief Officers)

For increases to the programme for existing schemes up to £100,000 must be approved by the Executive Director Finance and Digital. Increases above this threshold must be approved by Cabinet. In accordance with the Prudential Code if the increase in the Capital Programme will substantially change prudential indicators it must be approved by Council.

For new schemes, the source of funding and any other financial or non-financial impacts must be reported and the limits below apply:

- Budgets of up to £50k can be approved by the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the relevant Chief Officer
- Budgets of £50k up £500k will be submitted to Cabinet for approval
- Budgets over £500k will be submitted to full Council for approval

Approval thresholds are kept under review.

Capital Monitoring

The Council approves the four-year Capital Programme in March each financial year. Amendments to the programme are approved appropriately by CMT, Cabinet and Council. Budget managers are required to monitor their budget monthly, key reviews are undertaken in September and November. November monitoring provides the final opportunity for budget managers to re-profile budgets into future financial years and January monitoring provides the final opportunity for budget managers to vire their budgets within the current financial year.

December monitoring information feeds into the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and is used to assess the revenue impact over the period of the strategy with minor amendments in the later months. November monitoring is also used to measure the accuracy of year-end projections.

Councillors receive regular monitoring reports on the overall position of capital expenditure in relation to the budget. They also receive separate progress reports on key spend areas.

Capacity, Skills and Culture

Team planning and staff appraisals highlight staff developmental requirements and monitor their progression. Qualified financial staff meet the continual professional development requirements of their relevant CCAB organisation.

Member induction and development is led corporately by the Authority's Human Resources division, this is supplemented, where appropriate, with additional financial briefings.

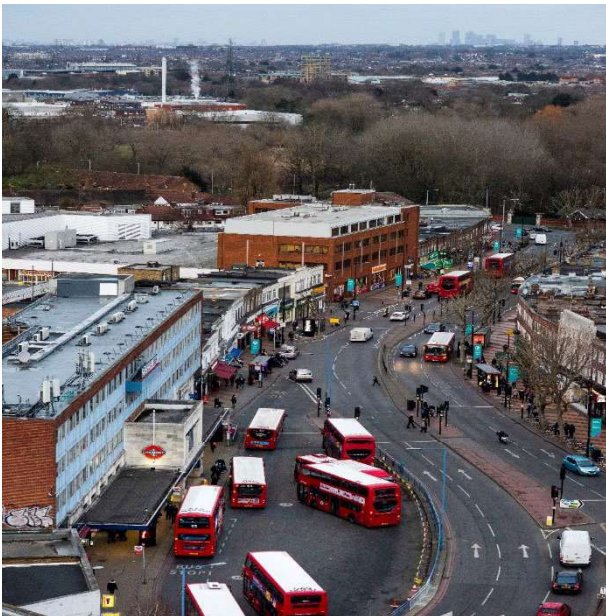
Risk Management and Assessment

The management of risk is strategically driven by the Corporate Risk Management group. The group collates on a quarterly basis the headline departmental risks and planned mitigation activity from each department, project and partnership. From this information a Key Strategic Risk Register is compiled and presented to CMT quarterly for discussion and onto Cabinet and Standards and General Purposes Committee annually. The Authority's Risk Management Strategy is reviewed and updated annually and presented to CMT, Cabinet and Council.

Risk Appetite - The council recognises that its risk appetite to achieve the corporate priorities identified within its corporate plan could be described in general as an "informed and cautious" approach. Where significant risk arises, we will take effective control action to reduce these risks to an acceptable level.

It is also recognised that a higher level of risk may need to be accepted, for example, to generate higher returns from loans and investment. To offset this there are areas where the council will maintain a very cautious approach for example in matters of compliance with the law, and public confidence in the council, supporting the overall "informed and cautious" position on risk.

Within its portfolio of risk Merton is developing a balance between financial and non-financial investments



Capital Investment Programme - Schemes for Approval 2023-28**Annex 1**

Department	Revised Budget 2023-24 £000's	Revised Budget 2024-25 £000's	Revised Budget 2025-26 £000's	Revised Budget 2026-27 £000's	Revised Budget 2027-28 £000's
Finance & Digital					
Business Improvement	4,010	3,688	220	580	525
Information Technology	633	1,835	1,060	970	1,005
Resources	125	0	0	75	0
Corporate Budgets	489	3,658	0	5,911	5,801
Total Finance & Digital	5,256	9,181	1,280	7,536	7,331
ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health					
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Total ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Children, Lifelong Learning & Families					
Primary School	2,515	2,624	2,500	2,500	2,500
Secondary Schools	429	3,550	0	0	0
SEN Schools and ARPs	2,586	10,082	979	900	0
Other	469	665	0	0	0
Total Children, Lifelong Learning & Families	5,999	16,921	3,479	3,400	2,500
Environmental, Civic Pride & Climate					
Public Protection and Development	1,356	1,307	45	45	0
Street Scene and Waste	36	1,600	7,500	6,500	6,000
Sustainable Communities	7,934	6,110	5,580	3,390	3,940
Borough of Sport	3,732	3,078	2,190	2,960	1,380
Libraries	122	350	140	0	0
Climate Change	254	75	100	75	0
Total Environmental, Civic Pride & Climate	13,434	12,520	15,555	12,970	11,320
Innovation and Change					
Governance	45	0	0	0	0
Total ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health	45	0	0	0	0
Housing & Sustainable Development					
Housing	4,181	10,698	16,102	14,952	1,202
Regeneration	1,829	4,562	3,630	2,000	0
Property Management	451	134	0	0	0
Facilities Management	2,722	5,770	950	1,010	950
Total Housing & Sustainable Development	9,183	21,164	20,682	17,962	2,152
Total Capital	33,917	59,786	40,996	41,868	23,303

Please Note:

1. Excludes budget relating to future year announcements of Better Care Fund
 2. Excludes indicative budgets relating to future year announcements for Transport for London and Schools Condition Grant
- OSC = Overview and Scrutiny, CYP = Children and Young People, HCOP = Healthier Communities and Older People and SC - Sustainable Communities

FUNDING THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022-27Annex2

Merton	Capital Programme £000s	Funded by Merton £000s	Funded by grant and capital contributions £000s
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2023/24 Current Budget	33,917	13,916	20,001
Potential Slippage b/f	0	0	0
2023/24 Revised Budget	33,917	13,916	20,001
Potential Slippage c/f	(7,343)	(3,076)	(4,267)
Potential Underspend not slipped into next year	(2,100)	(1,846)	(255)
Total Spend 2023/24	24,473	8,994	15,479

2024/25 Current Budget	59,786	24,813	34,973
Potential Slippage b/f	7,343	3,076	4,267
2024/25 Revised Budget	67,129	27,890	39,240
Potential Slippage c/f	(25,956)	(13,556)	(12,399)
Potential Underspend not slipped into next year	(5,781)	(4,358)	(1,422)
Total Spend 2024/25	35,392	9,974	25,418

2025/26 Current Budget	40,996	22,718	18,279
Potential Slippage b/f	25,956	13,556	12,399
2025/26 Revised Budget	66,952	36,274	30,678
Potential Slippage c/f	(32,968)	(22,506)	(10,462)
Potential Underspend not slipped into next year	(6,225)	(4,279)	(1,946)
Total Spend 2025/26	27,759	9,488	18,270

2026/27 Current Budget	41,868	24,611	17,257
Potential Slippage b/f	32,968	22,506	10,462
2026/27 Revised Budget	74,836	47,118	27,719
Potential Slippage c/f	(38,692)	(28,192)	(10,501)
Potential Underspend not slipped into next year	(5,505)	(3,759)	(1,746)
Total Spend 2026/27	30,638	15,167	15,472

2027/28 Current Budget	23,303	13,375	9,928
Potential Slippage b/f	38,692	28,192	10,501
2027/28 Revised Budget	61,995	41,567	20,428
Potential Slippage c/f	(25,808)	(18,538)	(7,269)
Potential Underspend not slipped into next year	(4,714)	(3,300)	(1,414)
Total Spend 2027/28	31,473	19,728	11,746

Detailed Capital Programme 2024-28

Annex 3

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Revised Budget 2024-25 £000s	Revised Budget 2025-26 £000s	Revised Budget 2026-27 £000s	Indicative Budget 2027-28 £000s
Business Improvement	Business Improvement						
Customer Contact Programme	Digital Strategy	4	OSC	579	0	0	0
Customer Contact Programme	CRM&TK Amendments	4	OSC	171	0	0	0
Customer Contact Programme	Dynamics 365 CRM	4	OSC	85	0	0	0
Customer Contact Programme	Transport Management System	4	OSC	46	0	0	0
Business Systems	Ancillary System	4	OSC	29	0	50	0
Business Systems	Youth Justice	4	OSC	0	100	0	0
Business Systems	Children's Safeguarding	4	OSC	125	0	0	125
Business Systems	Parking System	4	OSC	512	0	0	0
Business Systems	Payroll System	4	OSC	0	0	160	0
Business Systems	Invoice Scanning SCIS/FIS	4	OSC	50	0	0	0
Business Systems	Environmental Asset Management	4	OSC	327	0	0	0
Business Systems	Housing System (Capita Housing)	4	OSC	0	120	0	0
Business Systems	Revenue & Benefits	4	OSC	75	0	0	0
Business Systems	Payments project	4	OSC	150	0	0	0
Business Systems	GIS Mapping (Spectrum Spatial Ana	4	OSC	0	0	200	300
Business Systems	LLPG&LSG System ((Gazetteer Mar	4	OSC	0	0	0	100
Business Systems	Planning&Public Protection Sys	4	OSC	666	0	0	0
Business Systems	E Form Replacement	4	OSC	101	0	0	0
Business Systems	Exacom	4	OSC	40	0	0	0
Business Systems	Safer Merton Case Management	4	OSC	60	0	0	0
Replacement SC System	Replacement SC System	4	OSC	637	0	0	0
Replacement SC System	EHCP Hub	4	OSC	34	0	0	0
Replacement SC System	SEN Case Management	4	OSC	0	0	170	0
Information Technology	Information Technology						
Planned Replacement Program	Project General	4	OSC	1,835	1,060	970	1,005
Resources	Resources						
Financial Systems	Implementing New Financial System	4	OSC	0	0	75	0
Corporate Budgets	Corporate Budgets						
Multi-Functioning Device (MF	Multi-Functioning Device (MFD) - F	5	OSC	600	0	0	0
Acquisitions Budget	Acquisitions Budget	5	OSC	0	0	2,000	0
Capital Bidding Fund	Capital Bidding Fund	5	OSC	0	0	1,000	0
Corporate Capital Contingency	Corporate Capital Contingency	5	OSC	0	0	1,681	0
Compulsory Purchase Order	Clarion - CPO	2	OSC	3,058	0	1,230	5,801
Total Finance & Digital	Total Finance & Digital			9,181	1,280	7,536	7,331

Priority

1. Nurturing Civic Pride – is about the relationship that people and communities have with a place this includes their physical surroundings and feelings of identity and belonging.
2. Building a Sustainable Future - Working towards a greener, more sustainable, and resilient future for the borough means better housing, action on climate change and supporting the health and wellbeing of our local communities.
3. Creating a Borough of Sport - From internationally renowned organisations like the All-England Club to grassroots clubs and organisations like Tooting and Mitcham FC, we want to strengthen our partnerships with sports clubs, organisations and businesses across the borough and promote increased participation in sports and activity.
4. Digital Strategy - To develop inclusive, connected and engaged communities and develop digitally-optimised and innovate.
5. Corporate Budgets

Please Note:

1. Excludes budget relating to future year announcements of Better Care Fund
 2. Excludes indicative budgets relating to future year announcements for Transport for London and Schools Condition Grant
- OSC = Overview and Scrutiny, CYP = Children and Young People, HCOP = Healthier Communities and Older People and SC - Sustainable Communities

Detailed Capital Programme 2024-28 continued.....

Annex 3

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Revised Budget 2024-25	Revised Budget 2025-26	Revised Budget 2026-27	Indicative Budget 2027-28
Primary Schools	Primary Schools						
Malmesbury	School Capital Maintenance	1	CYP	58	0	0	0
Bond	School Capital Maintenance	1	CYP	44	0	0	0
Unlocated Primary School Pro	School Capital Maintenance	1	CYP	2,522	2,500	2,500	2,500
Secondary Schools	Secondary Schools						
Harris Wimbledon School	6th Form Expansion	1	CYP	3,550	0	0	0
Special Schools	Special Schools						
Perseid School	Perseid School Expansion	1	CYP	125	0	0	0
Melrose	School Capital Maintenance	1	CYP	13	0	0	0
Melbury College – Smart Cent	School Capital Maintenance	1	CYP	125	0	0	0
Mainstream SEN (ARP)	Further Primary School ARP expansi	1	CYP	451	0	0	0
Mainstream SEN (ARP)	Raynes Park school ARP expansion	1	CYP	2,039	0	0	0
Mainstream SEN (ARP)	Secondary School ARP Expansion 2	1	CYP	876	0	0	0
Mainstream SEN (ARP)	Secondary School ARP Expansion 3	1	CYP	1,709	0	0	0
Mainstream SEN (ARP)	Secondary School ARP Expansion 4	1	CYP	730	979	0	0
Mainstream SEN (ARP)	Safety Valve - New ARP	1	CYP	0	0	900	0
Perseid Lower School	Perseid School Expansion	1	CYP	4,014	0	0	0
Other	Other						
Children's Centres	Family Hubs	1	CYP	187	0	0	0
Childcare	Childcare Expansion	1	CYP	313	0	0	0
Other	Children's Safeguarding	1	CYP	165	0	0	0
Total Children, Lifelong Lea	Total Children, Lifelong Learning & Families			16,921	3,479	3,400	2,500
Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Revised Budget 2024-25	Revised Budget 2025-26	Revised Budget 2026-27	Indicative Budget 2027-28
Public Protection and Develo	Public Protection and Development						
Off Street Parking - P&D	Car Park Upgrades	4	SC	50	0	0	0
Off Street Parking - P&D	Peel House Car Park	4	SC	390	0	0	0
CCTV Investment	CCTV cameras and infrastructure up	1	SC	790	0	0	0
CCTV Investment	Rapid deployment cameras	1	SC	0	45	45	0
CCTV Investment	Brangwyn Cresent / Commonsia Ea	1	SC	51	0	0	0
CCTV Investment	Willow Lane Bridge BID - Improver	1	SC	26	0	0	0
Street Scene and Waste	Street Scene and Waste						
Fleet Vehicles	Replacement of Fleet Vehicles	2	SC	300	0	0	0
Fleet Vehicles	Fleet De-carbonisation Infrastructure	2	SC	300	0	0	0
Waste SLWP	Replacement of Fleet Vehicles	2	SC	0	3,000	6,000	6,000
Waste SLWP	Waste Transfer Station	1	SC	1,000	4,500	500	0
Sustainable Communities	Sustainable Communities						
Street Trees	Street Tree Programme	2	SC	60	60	60	60
Highways & Footways	Street Lighting Replacement Pr	1	SC	290	0	0	0
Highways & Footways	Traffic Schemes	1	SC	150	150	150	150
Highways & Footways	Surface Water Drainage	1	SC	100	100	60	60
Highways & Footways	Repairs to Footways	1	SC	1,300	1,600	1,000	1,300
Highways & Footways	Maintain AntiSkid and Coloured	1	SC	60	60	60	60
Highways & Footways	Borough Roads Maintenance	1	SC	2,000	2,000	1,800	1,800
Highways & Footways	Highways bridges & structures	1	SC	597	560	260	260
Highways & Footways	Haydons Road Access for All	2	SC	100	0	0	0
Highways & Footways	Various Culverts Strengthening & Up	2	SC	303	0	0	0
Highways & Footways	ANPR Cameras Supporting Enforcer	1	SC	200	200	0	0
Highways & Footways	Raynes Park Station Step Free Acces	2	SC	0	0	0	250
Highways & Footways	Walking & Cycling Strategy Delivery	2	SC	950	850	0	0

Detailed Capital Programme 2024-28 continued.....

Annex 3

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Revised Budget 2024-25	Revised Budget 2025-26	Revised Budget 2026-27	Indicative Budget 2027-28
Borough of Sport	Borough of Sport						
Sports Facilities	Borough of Sport Infrastructure Fund	3	SC	1,500	500	0	0
Wimbledon Park	New Wimbledon Park lakeview buil	3	SC	0	500	2,000	500
Sports Facilities	Leisure Centre Plant & Machine	3	SC	400	250	280	280
Sports Facilities	Sporting Big Screens	3	SC	60	0	0	0
Parks Investment	Parks Investment	3	SC	300	300	300	300
Parks Investment	Sports Drainage	3	SC	222	0	0	0
Parks Investment	Bridges and Structures	1	SC	1	80	80	0
Parks Investment	Existing Green Flag Improvement Pr	3	SC	75	50	0	0
Parks Investment	New Green Flag Improvement Progr	3	SC	130	100	0	0
Parks Investment	Parks Security Measures & Travelle	1	SC	30	50	0	0
Parks Investment	Playground Priority Upgrades Progra	3	SC	300	300	300	300
Parks Investment	Wandle Tree Trail Safety & Manage	2	SC	60	60	0	0
Libraries	Libraries						
Libraries IT	Library Management System	2	SC	0	140	0	0
Libraries IT	Library Self Service	2	SC	350	0	0	0
Climate Change	Climate Change						
Climate Change	Business Retrofit Support Scheme	2	SC	75	100	75	0
Total Environment, Civic Pr	Total Environment, Civic Pride & Climate			12,520	15,555	12,970	11,320

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OSC = Overview and Scrutiny, CYP = Children and Young People, HCOP = Healthier Communities and Older People and SC - Sustainable Communities

Detailed Capital Programme 2024-28 continued...

Annex 3

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Revised Budget 2024-25	Revised Budget 2025-26	Revised Budget 2026-27	Indicative Budget 2027-28
Housing	Housing						
Disabled Facilities Grant	Project General	2	SC/HCOP	827	827	827	827
Major Projects Affordable Ho	Affordable Housing Fund	2	SC/HCOP	9,346	10,000	9,000	0
Major Projects Affordable Ho	Empty Homes Strategy	2	SC/HCOP	375	375	375	375
Major Projects Social Care H	LD Supported Living	2	SC/HCOP	150	4,900	4,750	0
Regeneration	Regeneration						
Mitcham Area Regeneration	Rowan Park Community Facility Ma	1	SC	150	0	0	0
Mitcham Area Regeneration	Pollards Hill Bus Shelter/Toilets Re	1	SC	400	50	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Haydons Road Public Realm Improv	1	SC	327	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Crowded Places/Hostile Vehicle Mi	1	SC	100	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Wimbledon Public Realm Implement	1	SC	305	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Wimbledon Village - Heritage Led P	1	SC	650	0	0	0
Morden Area Regeneration	Morden Town Centre Improvements	1	SC	200	0	0	0
Morden Area Regeneration	Morden TC Regen Match Funding	2	SC	0	2,000	2,000	0
Borough Regeneration	Lost Rivers Repairs	2	SC	230	0	0	0
Borough Regeneration	Civic Pride Public Realm Improvem	1	SC	1,450	930	0	0
Borough Regeneration	Shopping Parade Improvements	1	SC	750	650	0	0
Property Management	Property Management						
Property Management	Stouthall	2	SC	134	0	0	0
Facilities Management	Facilities Management						
Works to Other Buildings	Repair and Maintenance	4	OSC	650	650	650	650
Civic Centre	Civic Centre Cycle Parking	2	OSC	0	0	60	0
Civic Centre	Civic Centre Roof and Shops	2	OSC	282	0	0	0
Civic Centre	Civic Centre Boilers	2	OSC	3,803	0	0	0
Civic Centre	Workplace Design	2	OSC	530	0	0	0
Invest to Save	Project General	2	OSC	300	300	300	300
Total Housing & Sustainable	Total Housing & Sustainable Development			21,164	20,682	17,962	2,152
Total Capital	Total Capital			59,786	40,996	41,868	23,303

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- OSC = Overview and Scrutiny, CYP = Children and Young People, HCOP = Healthier Communities and Older People and SC - Sustainable Communities

Detailed Capital Programme 2023-28 continued...

Annex 3

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Revised Budget 2023-24	Revised Budget 2024-25	Revised Budget 2025-26	Revised Budget 2026-27	Indicative Budget 2027-28
Housing	Housing							
Disabled Facilities Grant	Project General	2	SC/HCOP	880	827	827	827	827
Major Projects Affordable Ho	Affordable Housing Fund	2	SC/HCOP	784	9,346	10,000	9,000	0
Works to Other Buildings	Afgan Resettlement	2	SC/HCOP	2,480	0	0	0	0
Major Projects Affordable Ho	Empty Homes Strategy	2	SC/HCOP	38	375	375	375	375
Major Projects Social Care H	LD Supported Living	2	SC/HCOP	0	150	4,900	4,750	0
Regeneration	Regeneration							
Mitcham Area Regeneration	New Horion Centre	1	SC	6	0	0	0	0
Mitcham Area Regeneration	Rowan Park Community Facility Ma	1	SC	0	150	0	0	0
Mitcham Area Regeneration	Pollards Hill Bus Shelter/Toilets Re	1	SC	0	400	50	0	0
Mitcham Area Regeneration	Knowledge Exchange Mitcham	1	SC	267	0	0	0	0
Mitcham Area Regeneration	SMCA Springboard	1	SC	86	0	0	0	0
Mitcham Area Regeneration	Mitcham Cricket Green	1	SC	54	0	0	0	0
Mitcham Area Regeneration	The Small Quarter Phase 2	1	SC	22	0	0	0	0
Mitcham Area Regeneration	Chapter House	1	SC	33	0	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Haydons Road Public Realm Improv	1	SC	350	327	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Crowded Places/Hostile Vehicle Mi	1	SC	0	100	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Wimbledon Public Realm Implement	1	SC	58	305	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Wimblon Hill Rd	1	SC	92	0	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Wimbledon Village - Heritage Led P	1	SC	50	650	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Kenilworth Green Pocket Park	2	SC	65	0	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Cannizaro Park Valley Path	2	SC	0	0	0	0	0
Wimbledon Area Regeneration	Survive to Thrive	1	SC	116	0	0	0	0
Morden Area Regeneration	Crown Creative Knowledge Exchang	1	SC	417	0	0	0	0
Morden Area Regeneration	Morden Town Centre Improvements	1	SC	0	200	0	0	0
Morden Area Regeneration	Morden TC Regen Match Funding	2	SC	0	0	2,000	2,000	0
Borough Regeneration	Wandle Project (Colliers Wood Cha	1	SC	69	0	0	0	0
Borough Regeneration	Lost Rivers Repairs	2	SC	300	0	0	0	0
Borough Regeneration	Civic Pride Public Realm Improvem	1	SC	20	1,450	930	0	0
Borough Regeneration	Shopping Parade Improvements	1	SC	0	750	650	0	0
Property Management	Property Management							
Property Management	Community Ctre Energy Saving Light	2	SC	35	0	0	0	0
Property Management	Stouthall	2	SC	416	134	0	0	0
Facilities Management	Facilities Management							
Works to Other Buildings	Repair and Maintenance	4	OSC	675	650	650	650	650
Civic Centre	Civic Centre Cycle Parking	2	OSC	0	0	0	60	0
Civic Centre	Civic Centre Boilers	2	OSC	1,100	3,803	0	0	0
Civic Centre	Workplace Design	2	OSC	759	530	0	0	0
Invest to Save	Project General	2	OSC	330	300	300	300	300
Invest to Save	Photovoltaics	2	OSC	50	0	0	0	0
Total Housing & Sustainable	Total Housing & Sustainable Development			9,640	20,652	20,682	17,962	2,152
Total Capital	Total Capital			37,140	56,400	40,996	41,868	23,303

Growth/(Reductions) proposed Programme 2023-27 Compared to March 2022 MTFS Annex 4

Department	Revised Budget 2023-24 £000's	Revised Budget 2024-25 £000's	Revised Budget 2025-26 £000's	Revised Budget 2026-27 £000's	Revised Budget 2027-28 £000's
Finance & Digital					
Business Improvement	1,407	738	(1,350)	(1,200)	(750)
Information Technology	(137)	430	0	0	0
Resources	(575)	0	0	75	0
Corporate Budgets	(13,824)	3,058	0	(3,086)	5,801
Total Finance & Digital	(13,130)	4,226	(1,350)	(4,211)	5,051
ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health					
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Total ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Children, Lifelong Learning & Families					
Primary School	(569)	124	0	0	0
Secondary Schools	429	3,550	0	0	0
SEN Schools and ARPs	(1,976)	3,845	0	0	0
Other	82	665	0	0	0
Total Children, Lifelong Learning & Families	(2,034)	8,184	0	0	0
Environmental, Civic Pride & Climate					
Public Protection and Development	(2,220)	887	(420)	(435)	(473)
Street Scene and Waste	(288)	576	(13,278)	5,976	5,401
Sustainable Communities	(1,106)	(2,508)	(2,705)	(3,775)	(290)
Borough of Sport	3,732	2,738	1,840	2,960	(160)
Libraries	122	350	140	0	(140)
Climate Change	(76)	(50)	(25)	75	0
Total Environmental, Civic Pride & Climate	164	1,993	(14,448)	4,801	4,339
Innovation and Change					
Governance	0	0	0	0	0
Total ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Sustainable Development					
Housing	(1,771)	(404)	0	5,267	827
Regeneration	(1,345)	262	(330)	0	0
Property Management	416	134	0	0	0
Facilities Management	(1,068)	1,790	0	60	0
Total Housing & Sustainable Development	(3,768)	1,782	(330)	5,327	827
Total Capital	(18,768)	16,185	(16,128)	5,917	10,216

Indicative Capital Programme 2028-33**Annex 5**

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Indicative Budget 2028-29 £000s	Indicative Budget 2029-30 £000s	Indicative Budget 2030-31 £000s	Indicative Budget 2031-32 £000s	Indicative Budget 2032-33 £000s
Business Improvement	Business Improvement							
Customer Contact Programme	Customer Contact Programme	4	OSC	0	0	1,000	1,000	0
Customer Contact Programme	Transport Management System	4	OSC	0	0	0	150	0
Business Systems	Ancillary System	4	OSC	0	50	0	0	50
Business Systems	Parking System	4	OSC	0	0	600	0	0
Business Systems	Payroll System	4	OSC	0	0	0	160	0
Business Systems	Invoice Scanning SCIS/FIS	4	OSC	0	0	0	150	0
Business Systems	Environmental Asset Management	4	OSC	0	0	0	500	0
Business Systems	Revenue & Benefits	4	OSC	0	0	750	0	0
Business Systems	Payments project	4	OSC	150	0	0	0	200
Business Systems	Planning&Public Protection Sys	4	OSC	0	0	0	0	550
Business Systems	E Form Replacement	4	OSC	0	0	0	0	150
Business Systems	Safer Merton Case Management	4	OSC	0	60	0	0	0
Replacement SC System	Replacement SC System	4	OSC	1,100	1,000	0	0	0
Information Technology	Information Technology							
Planned Replacement Program	Project General	4	OSC	770	1,405	1,060	970	1,005
Resources	Resources							
Financial Systems	Implementing New Financial System	4	OSC	0	700	0	0	0
Corporate Budgets	Corporate Budgets							
Multi-Functioning Device (MFD)	Multi-Functioning Device (MFD) - F	5	OSC	600	0	0	0	0
Total Finance & Digital				2,620	3,215	3,410	2,930	1,955

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Indicative Budget 2028-29 £000s	Indicative Budget 2029-30 £000s	Indicative Budget 2030-31 £000s	Indicative Budget 2031-32 £000s	Indicative Budget 2032-33 £000s
Total ASC, Integrated Care & Public Health				0	0	0	0	0

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Indicative Budget 2028-29 £000s	Indicative Budget 2029-30 £000s	Indicative Budget 2030-31 £000s	Indicative Budget 2031-32 £000s	Indicative Budget 2032-33 £000s
Primary Schools	Primary Schools							
Unlocated Primary School Pro	School Capital Maintenance	1	CYP	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Total Children, Lifelong Learning & Families				2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500

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Indicative Capital Programme 2028-33 continued....**Annex 5**

Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Indicative Budget 2028-29 £000s	Indicative Budget 2029-30 £000s	Indicative Budget 2030-31 £000s	Indicative Budget 2031-32 £000s	Indicative Budget 2032-33 £000s
Public Protection and Development	Public Protection and Development							
CCTV Investment	Rapid deployment cameras	1	SC	0	50	50	0	0
Street Scene and Waste	Street Scene and Waste							
Waste SLWP	Replacement of Fleet Vehicles	2	SC	0	1,290	0	0	0
Sustainable Communities	Sustainable Communities							
Street Trees	Street Tree Programme	2	SC	60	60	60	60	60
Highways & Footways	Traffic Schemes	1	SC	150	150	150	150	150
Highways & Footways	Surface Water Drainage	1	SC	60	60	60	60	60
Highways & Footways	Repairs to Footways	1	SC	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300
Highways & Footways	Maintain AntiSkid and Coloured	1	SC	60	60	60	60	60
Highways & Footways	Borough Roads Maintenance	1	SC	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800
Highways & Footways	Highways bridges & structures	1	SC	260	260	260	260	260
Highways & Footways	Raynes Park Station Step Free Access	2	SC	250	0	0	0	0
Borough of Sport	Borough of Sport							
Wimbledon Park	New Wimbledon Park lakeview build	3	SC	500	0	0	0	0
Sports Facilities	Leisure Centre Plant & Machine	3	SC	300	300	320	320	350
Parks Investment	Parks Investment	3	SC	300	300	300	300	300
Libraries	Libraries							
Libraries IT	Library Management System	2	SC	0	140	0	0	0
Libraries IT	Library Self Service	2	SC	0	350	0	0	0
Total Environment, Civic Pride & Climate				5,040	6,120	4,360	4,310	4,340
Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Indicative Budget 2028-29 £000s	Indicative Budget 2029-30 £000s	Indicative Budget 2030-31 £000s	Indicative Budget 2031-32 £000s	Indicative Budget 2032-33 £000s
Total Innovation & Change				0	0	0	0	0
Cost Centre Narrative	Project Narrative	Priority	Scrutiny	Indicative Budget 2028-29 £000s	Indicative Budget 2029-30 £000s	Indicative Budget 2030-31 £000s	Indicative Budget 2031-32 £000s	Indicative Budget 2032-33 £000s
Housing	Housing							
Major Projects Affordable Housing	Empty Homes Strategy	2	SC/H COP	375	375	375	375	375
Facilities Management	Facilities Management							
Works to Other Buildings	Repair and Maintenance	4	OSC	650	650	650	650	650
Invest to Save	Project General	2	OSC	300	300	300	300	300
Total Housing & Sustainable Development				1,560	1,325	1,325	1,325	1,325
Total Capital				11,720	13,160	11,595	11,065	10,120

Glossary of Terms

Asset Management Plan/Strategy (AMP/S) - An Asset Management Plan (AMP) is a tactical plan for managing an organisation's infrastructure and other assets to deliver an agreed standard of service. The plan is reviewed annually as part of the budget cycle.

Budget - Statement of the spending plans for the year.

Capital Expenditure - Expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset or expenditure, which adds to, and not merely maintains, the value of an existing fixed asset.

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) - The total historical outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources i.e. a measure of the underlying borrowing need. (See Minimum Revenue Provision)

Capital Programme - Documentation which summarises the outcome of priority allocations contained in the capital strategy and details individual schemes for approval by Council / Cabinet.

Capital Programme Board - The Capital Programme Board ensures:

- that the overall capital investment strategy is consistent with strategic objectives, is affordable within the revenue budget strategy, and examines potential funding options
- that bids are submitted in accordance with the set framework and guidelines (including business cases, value for money and options appraisal) and prioritised in accordance of agreed criteria
- compiles and manages a multi-year capital programme for consideration by CMT and approval by Cabinet

Capital Projects/Schemes - Capital Projects / Schemes is the level at which Member approval is obtained.

Capital Receipts - Proceeds from the sale of fixed assets and repayments of capital grants and loans. These are divided into reserved and usable parts.

Capital Monitoring - The monthly comparison of actual spend against the anticipated spend (profiled budget) and the revision of projected year end spend where necessary. Periodically budget managers will be required to review their in year budget requirement and re-profile their projected expenditure over subsequent financial years.

Capital Strategy - A Capital Strategy is a core planning document designed to dovetail with the MTFS and Treasury Strategy to ensure that limited capital resources are deployed in accordance with corporate priorities / achieving our vision. The document will also detail how the proposed capital programme will be funded.

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) - The Institute produces standards and codes of practice that must be followed in preparing the Council's financial statements.

Corporate Governance - Corporate Governance is the system by which local authorities direct and control their functions and communicate to their communities.

Council's Borrowing Requirement - Based on projected spend, this is the amount of money a local authority will need to borrow to finance this projected spend.

Debt Rescheduling - Where certain debt may be redeemed and a further loan obtained. This may be undertaken to provide an even spread of debt redemption date and terms, It may also be used to optimise beneficial borrowing rates in the market while maintaining activity within acceptable risk levels.

Depreciation - Depreciation is a charge to the revenue account to reflect the reduction in the useful economic life of a fixed asset, reducing the value of the fixed asset in the balance sheet. It is not a charge to the General Fund as it is reversed in the Movement in Reserves Statement and replaced with the Minimum Revenue Provision.

Glossary of Terms continued...

Earmarked Capital Resources/Grants - Money received by the Authority which has certain conditions / restrictions (loose terminology) over its use limiting the type of expenditure that it may be applied against. IFRS refers to Stipulations and sub divides them into Conditions and Restrictions. Earmarked grants (revenue or capital) are grants which are subject to restrictions.

Finance Lease - A lease is classified as a finance lease if it transfers substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership. Situations that would normally lead to a lease being classified as a finance lease include the following:

- the lease transfers ownership of the asset to the lessee by the end of the lease term
- the lessee has the option to purchase the asset at a price which is expected to be sufficiently lower than fair value at the date the option becomes exercisable and that, at the inception of the lease, it is reasonably certain that the option will be exercised
- the lease term is for the major part of the economic life of the asset, even if title is not transferred
- at the inception of the lease, the present value of the minimum lease payments amounts to at least substantially all of the fair value of the leased asset
- the leased assets are of a specialised nature such that only the lessee can use them without major modifications being made

Financial Year - The financial year runs from 1 April to the following 31 March.

Fixed Assets - Assets that yield benefits to the local authority and the services it provides for a period of more than one year. These assets can be tangible or intangible.

General Fund - The main fund of the Council, from which all expenditure is met and all income is paid, with the exception of those items, which by statute have to be taken to some other account.

Government Grants - Financial assistance by government and other bodies, in the form of cash transfers to an authority, issued in return for compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the authority.

Impairment - The loss of value in a fixed asset arising from physical damage, deterioration in the quality of service provided by the asset or from a general fall in prices. When this occurs the asset must be written down to the recoverable value. The charge is then reversed out from the General Fund in the Movement in Reserves Statement and replaced with the Minimum Revenue Provision.

International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) - International Financial Reporting Standards are a single set of accounting standards, developed and maintained by the IASB (International Accounting Standards Board) for the purposes of being applied on a globally consistent basis by developed, emerging and developing economies. The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting is based on IFRSs

Investment Strategy - The investment of the Authority's cash balances to optimise its strategic and operational needs.

Localism Act 2011 - It sets out a series of proposals with the potential to achieve a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people. They include: new freedoms and flexibilities for local government; new rights and powers for communities and individuals; reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective

Minimum Revenue Provision - A provision, via a revenue charge, in respect of historical capital expenditure which has been financed by borrowing, as required by the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008

Operational Boundary - The operational boundary is a prudential indicator for monitoring the total external debt, gross of investments, and separately identifying borrowing from other long term liabilities.

Glossary of Terms continued...

Operating Lease - A contract that allows for the use of an asset, but does not convey rights of ownership of the asset. An operating lease is not capitalised; it is accounted for as a rental expense in what is known as "off balance sheet financing." For the lessor, the asset being leased is accounted for as an asset and is depreciated as such.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) - PFI contracts are agreements with private sector organisations to refurbish, maintain and operate fixed assets on behalf of public sector organisations such as local authorities.

Prudential Code - The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to have regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. In doing so, the Council is required to set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators, the key objectives of which are to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment and borrowing plans of the council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

Prudential Indicators – Are a set of performance indicators for treasury management.

Revenue Expenditure - Expenditure incurred on day to day running costs and confined to accounts within one financial year.

Reserves - This is a council's accumulated surplus income (in excess of expenditure) which can be used to finance future spending. Reserves can be either capital or revenue

Ringfenced Grant - A grant paid to councils which has conditions attached to it, which restrict the purposes for which it may be spent.

Risk Management - A risk is a threat, obstacle or, barrier, that will stop the Authority from achieving its ambitions, aims and objectives. Risk management is the process of managing the risks that may prevent delivery of desired outcomes so that the organisation can anticipate and respond positively to change. Merton's approach to risk management is to raise awareness, integrate it into day to day operations and establish a robust framework and procedures to identify, analyse, assess and manage risk.

Treasury Management - The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

Useful Life - This is the period over which the local authority derives benefit from the use of a fixed asset.



MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-28

Growth - Cabinet 15 January 2024	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Total £000
Innovation and Change	71	0	0	0	71
Finance and Digital	250	0	0	0	250
Housing and Sustainable Development	505	0	0	0	505
Environment, Civic Pride and Climate	1,501	0	0	0	1,501
Children, Lifelong Learning, and Families	0	0	0	0	0
Adult Social Care, Integrated Care, and Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Total Growth 2024-28	2,327	0	0	0	2,327
Cumulative Total	2,327	2,327	2,327	2,327	2,327

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-28

INNOVATION AND CHANGE: GROWTH 2024-28

	2024/25 £.000	2025/26 £.000	2026/27 £.000	2027/28 £.000
Information Governance Increasing establishment of team and attaching a market supplement to an existing post	71	0	0	0
Total : INNOVATION AND CHANGE Growth 2024-28	71	0	0	0
Cumulative Total	71	71	71	71

Panel	Ref	Description of growth	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Type of Growth (see key)
OSC	2024-25 ICG4	<p>Service/Section</p> <p>Legal and Governance</p> <p>Description</p> <p>Service Implication</p> <p>Information Governance</p> <p>Good Information Governance is a core requirement for all public bodies, and failure to discharge this responsibility effectively presents legal, financial, and reputational risk. Merton's IG function currently only has one post, which in order to fill it at the required level is subject to a market supplement, which is currently unbudgeted.</p> <p>This post provides growth in the Information Governance team to cover market factor pay, as well as an additional officer. Currently, the team only has one officer, which presents significant corporate risk around a key legal responsibility and a potential single point of failure. The new manager has made significant progress in clearing the backlogs of FOIs and SARS, and improving the overall performance of the organisation in creating a strong IG culture, however an additional officer is required to ensure progress is maintained, and to manage the risk of a single point of failure. The Council is under close scrutiny from the Information Commissioner's Office and risks fines if this area of work is not properly resourced.</p> <p>Staffing Implications</p> <p>Strategic Priorities implications</p> <p>Impact on other departments</p> <p>Equalities Implications</p>	71				
Total			71	0	0	0	

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-28

FINANCE AND DIGITAL: GROWTH 2024-28

	2024/25 £.000	2025/26 £.000	2026/27 £.000	2027/28 £.000
IT Business Systems: Key systems re-procurement	250	0	0	0
Total : FINANCE AND DIGITAL Growth 2024-28	250	0	0	0
Cumulative Total	250	250	250	250

APPENDIX 5

GROWTH PROPOSALS 2024-28
 DEPARTMENT: Finance and Digital

Panel	Ref	Description of growth	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Type of Growth (see key)
JOSC	2024-25 FDG4	Service/Section Description	250	0	0	0	GNS1
		Service Implication Staffing Implications Strategic Priorities implications					
		Impact on other departments Equalities Implications					
		Total					
		Business Systems Team Key systems re-procurement, new annual support & maintenance contracts costs likely to be greater than existing budget given the significantly inflated market prices Improved, modern systems for service areas N/A Prioritised projects Business engagement required for configuration, training and testing. None	250	0	0	0	

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-28

HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: GROWTH 2024-28

	2024/25 £,000	2025/26 £,000	2026/27 £,000	2027/28 £,000
Facilities Management - Additional funding required in order to cover the cost of unachievable income targets	65	0	0	0
Housing Needs & Strategy - additional temporary accommodation visiting officer and upgrade existing officer	50	0	0	0
Development Management & Building Control - Planning Enforcement Restructure and recruitment	190	0	0	0
Development Management & Building Control - Development Management Recruitment and retention	200	0	0	0
Total : HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT Growth 2024-28	505	0	0	0
Cumulative Total	505	505	505	505

GROWTH PROPOSALS 2024-28
DEPARTMENT: Housing and Sustainable Development

Panel	Ref	Service/Section Description	Description of growth	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Type of Growth (see key)
OSC	I&T 02	<p>Service/Section Description</p> <p>Strategic Priorities implications Impact on other departments Equalities Implications</p>	<p>Facilities Management Additional funding is required in order to cover the cost of unachievable income targets set in the facilities management team. The £65,000 is to cover unachievable income from the facilities management trading account, specifically income for printing, which has not been achievable since the pandemic and changes to usage. This will rectify ongoing structural overspends, and allow the time for a comprehensive, evidence based review of our printing services to be put in place over the coming year which will look to bring forward some efficiencies in future years.</p> <p>None None None</p>	65				G11
SC	HSD 2024-25 01	<p>Service/Section Description</p> <p>Service Implication</p> <p>Staffing Implications</p> <p>Strategic Priorities implications</p> <p>Impact on other departments Equalities Implications</p>	<p>Housing Needs & strategy additional temporary accommodation visiting officer and increase existing officer to team leader</p> <p>The temporary accommodation team is currently 1FTE temporary accommodation visiting officer at ME10 and one ME7 admin officer. This staffing compliment has been in place since 2010. Since 2010 the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased from 76 to 391 (June 23) with a 52% increase in the last year. As a result it is increasingly difficult to visit all temporary properties to confirm they are in use, but also to check that property safety standards are met. The addition of an additional officer and increase of the existing visiting officer to team leader will increase the capacity of the team to inspect properties, improve standards and provide greater focus on efficient temporary accommodation. Both posts do have a role in accommodation cost recovery and this will increase the ability of the team to tackle non-payment.</p> <p>1FTE at ME10, increase existing visiting officer to team leader from ME10 to ME11</p> <p>improving the quality and safety of temporary accommodation, increasing income and reducing non-use. Current trends suggest continuing rises in the use of temporary accommodation across London and these points will reduce risks for the Council</p> <p>none none</p>	50				GS1

GROWTH PROPOSALS 2024-28
DEPARTMENT: Housing and Sustainable Development

Panel	Ref	Description of growth				2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Type of Growth (see key)
SC	HSD 2024-25 02	Service/Section	Development Management & Building Control - Planning Enforcement				190			GS1
		Description	Restructure and recruitment drive for the Planning Enforcement, following a Full Council motion to improve the service. The 22/23 staffing budget provision was £180,860. This needs to increase to £370,836 for a full year to maintain a level of service without significant backlogs, which requires a £190,000 growth bid. This level of staffing is already in place with temporary staff as an establishment overspend to provide the required levels of service.							
		Service Implication	A reduction in the high dependency on agency staff, the establishment of a more stabilised team and continuous improvement in the performance and responsiveness of the service.							
		Staffing Implications	1 new permanent Planning Enforcement Team Manager; Replacement of Deputy Team Leader with 1 new permanent Principal Enforcement Officer; 2 new permanent Enforcement Officer; 1 new permanent Principal Tree and Landscape Officer, and loss of 3 current Agency posts. All of these new posts are currently in place and occupied, taking the service over budget.							
		Strategic Priorities implications	Merton Council has previously stated that it recognises the importance of good town planning and understands local residents want planning applications which are approved to be adhered to and properly enforced. The enforcement of planning control is a key area of priority for the Council and its stakeholders.							
		Impact on other departments	Potential greater support and stronger working with Greenspaces/Street Trees							
		Equalities Implications								

GROWTH PROPOSALS 2024-28
DEPARTMENT: Housing and Sustainable Development

Panel	Ref	Description of growth		2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Type of Growth (see key)
SC	HSD 2024-25 03	Service/Section	Development Management & Building Control - Development Management	200				GS1
		Description Service Implication	Recruitment and retention of planning officers and admin staff. To enable staff to process planning submissions to meet statutory targets and to ensure there is a high performing service in response to pre-application enquiries and to meet Planning Performance Agreements. Creation of a more stabilised team with reduced costs. The current service is over budget and establishment, using agency staff in order to provide the levels of service required in terms of statutory deadlines					
		Staffing Implications	3 new permanent planning officer roles, plus market supplements to principal planners, which have to be and are already being paid to ensure retention and competition with other local authorities. This growth can mostly be paid for through an increase in pre application and PPA fees, but without the resources this income cannot be achieved (especially in PPA fees as if service levels are not met, then income will not be paid).					
		Strategic Priorities implications Impact on other departments Equalities Implications	To meet the statutory requirements of the Local Planning Authority and secure the sustainable growth of the Borough.					
			Total Housing and Sustainable Development Growth Proposals	505	0	0	0	0

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-28

ENVIRONMENT, CIVIC PRIDE AND CLIMATE: GROWTH 2024-28

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Parking Income - to right size budget following sustained fall in parking income	800	0	0	0
Public Space: Removal of Transport Revenue Income Budget for additional Community Transport activities	336	0	0	0
Public Protection: Safer Merton- CCTV team	365	0	0	0
Total : ENVIRONMENT, CIVIC PRIDE AND CLIMATE Growth 2024-28	1,501	0	0	0
Cumulative Total	1,501	1,501	1,501	1,501

GROWTH PROPOSALS 2024-28
 DIRECTORATE: Environment, Civic Pride & Climate

Panel	Ref	Service/Section	Description of growth	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Type of Growth (see key)
SC	2024-25 ECPC G04	Parking Income		800				GI1
		Description	Whilst efforts have been made to achieve additional income it has become apparent that the budgeted parking income targets are unrealistic and unachievable, even after accounting for the previously agreed inflationary increases to parking charges due to be implemented this financial year.					
		Service Implication	None					
		Staffing Implications	None					
		Strategic Priorities implications	None					
		Impact on other departments	None					
		Equalities Implications	None					
		Total		800	0	0	0	

REVENUE GROWTH PROPOSALS 2024-28
 DIRECTORATE: Environment, Civic Pride & Climate.
 DIVISION: Public Space

Panel	Ref	Description of growth	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Type of Growth (see key)	
SC	2024-25 ECPC G07	<p>Public Space Passenger Transport</p> <p>Removal of Transport Revenue Income Budget for additional Community Transport activities: Prior to covid, the Transport Section ran a "paid for" community transport service for mid day and excursions outside of the provision for schools. This service has never recovered post-covid. With the ageing fleet, it is not possible to continue with this service sustainably and to be able to meet the current projected income targets (current shortfall of £336K per annum). The service is running under resourced from a staffing perspective, and has been since the pandemic. Due to the part-time nature of the role, the service is struggling to recruit new staff and the staff we currently have are aging and nearing retirement. The service is currently in no position to be able to provide any additional work at this point in time. This bid is to request the reduction in the revenue income budget to allow the service to run core services sustainably.</p> <p>Service Implication This will remove the pressure to provide an unsustainable service with an aging fleet. It will mean that focus can be placed on core service delivery to improve the customer experience and meet targets while focussing on the sustainable replacement of fleet within achievable timescales.</p> <p>Staffing Implications None</p> <p>Strategic Priorities implications Creating a Sustainable Future. Improving the Customer Experience</p> <p>Impact on other departments The proposal will have no impact on the local community and voluntary groups - the services have not run since before the Covid-19 pandemic. It will benefit core service users by freeing up resource to support the sustainable replacement of the current fleet as well as improving customer service.</p> <p>Equalities Implications Possible perceived negative impacts across the community & voluntary sectors due to the removal of an additional day time service, however, this has not run since the covid-19 pandemic, and the current fleet does not allow for the service to be re-introduced.</p>	336					GI2
TOTAL			336	0	0	0		

Panel	Ref	Description of growth	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Type of Growth (see key)
SC	2024-25 ECPC G08	<p>Service/section Safer Merton- CCTV team</p> <p>Description Strengthen the funding for critical and essential services by increasing core funding to enable us to grow our permanent staff levels to maintain a 24hr service. This will provide resilience in the team and reducing the reliance on overtime. The current budget funds 7 operators and there needs to be 8, and there is no middle management. This would also allow us to have a more robust staffing and management structure to enable the service to operate at a high standard, work closely with partners and build on the good work and outcomes the service has had. It will allow for focus on the CCTV upgrade and generating income opportunities with wider partners, using the SLA we have with Clarion as a good example of the benefits of a 24/7 CCTV service. The council is investing in a significant upgrade of the CCTV cameras which will provide one of the best for London and provides opportunities for income if the service maintains 24/7. Without growth the service will struggle to 24/7 coverage and hours will need to be reduced with a focus on providing out of hours coverage during busier times such as Thurs-Saturday nights.</p> <p>Service Implication There are not enough operators or effective management structure within the service which is impacting on core delivery and there have been regular occasions where we are relying on overtime to fill gaps and had to procure an external provider to provide additional staff.</p> <p>Staffing Implications Additional staff.</p> <p>Strategic Priorities implications Impact on other departments Equalities Implications The council have invested in upgrading the CCTV cameras and keeping Merton safe is a strategic priority CCTV supports and works with a range of internal teams and monitors those cameras. without the necessary none.</p>	365	0	0	0	GS1
Total			365	0	0	0	
Cumulative Total			365	365	365	365	

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Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 25th January 2024

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Childhood Immunisations

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

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

Contact officers: Dr Mike McHugh, Consultant in Public Health (Interim)

Ruth Eager, Head of Immunisations PMO and Planning, NHS South West London

Recommendations:

- A. To note the content of this cover report and the detailed report from NHSE (London) Immunisation Commissioning Team.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To update the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on Vaccination and Immunisation uptake and work in SW London and Merton.

2 DETAILS

General Immunisation and Vaccination

- 2.1 SW London has the highest uptake of immunisations in London although coverage is lower than the England average. Merton has a general uptake just below the SW London average. This reflects the lower coverage found in urban areas which tend to have highly mobile populations and large immigrant populations. Lower uptake is also observed in more deprived communities.
- 2.2 Communications and engagement activities over Q3 has concentrated on vaccine uptake and focused on engaging local communities. In Merton there has been targeted advertising at tram link stops, localised radio scripts for different target audiences, on street engagement activity with low uptake groups, promotion of the winter vaccination offers in low uptake areas and engagement with local partners at key meetings.

Childhood Immunisations

- 2.3 Childhood immunisations for Merton has a general uptake of 84.5% which is currently below the 95% national target. This is in common with all London boroughs. Merton performs lower than the SW London average with the exception being MMR1 at 24 months and 5 years where the Merton coverage exceeds SW London and London averages. Please note the percentage of unvaccinated children for MMR 1 and MMR2 at age 5 has reduced in Merton by 2% between Q1 and Q2 as a result of the Phase 1 MMR initiative.
- 2.4 We have recently recruited two additional Childhood Immunisation Co-Ordinators across SW London and dedicated resource will be allocated to Merton in late January 2024.

2.5 We anticipate an announcement of a national measles incident following an increase in confirmed cases across the country. London and the Midlands have seen the greatest number of cases, and we currently have two confirmed cases in SW London. Our response to this will be an acceleration of current plans to improve uptake in all childhood immunisations but particularly MMR at all ages. Working with the National phase 2 polio/MMR programme we plan to:

- Increase targeted patient engagement in geographic areas with low uptake and develop open community clinics as a walk-in offer. The focus will be on children's centres with the lowest MMR uptake.
- Develop MMR promotional videos in GP surgeries/community settings to promote the importance of the MMR vaccine and we will build on this to produce similar videos with community leaders as trusted voices to promote MMR.
- Target our outreach activity to identified community groups with low uptake and host clinics in low uptake areas through alternate venues e.g. religious venues, organised community groups (i.e. parent and toddler groups), children's centres and housing estates. We will also increase our offer at wider health and wellbeing events.
- Develop an Engagement and Outreach MMR MECC module through the SW London Training Hub to enhance practice engagement and delivery at every point of contact. Concentrating on staff not normally involved with vaccinations and immunisations e.g. allied HCP and non-clinical staff
- Collaborate with health visiting service to offer vaccination, including their point of contacts with parents, e.g. 'Well Baby' clinics, post-natal groups, parenting support and breastfeeding clinics.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. N/A

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. N/A.

5 TIMETABLE

6.1 Work undertaken during the period September to December 2023 and proposed activity for January to March 2024N/A

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. None.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. As outlined in the report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. As outlined in the report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. As outlined in the report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. As outlined in the report.

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

Appendix 1 – Report on Vaccination Services in the London Borough of Merton

Appendix 2 - Merton Immunisations Update January 2024

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Report on Vaccination Services in the London Borough of Merton

Prepared by: NHSE (London) Immunisation Commissioning Team, South West London Integrated Care Board & Merton Public Health Team

Jan 2024

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Aims

This paper provides an overview of Section 7a vaccination programmes in the London Borough of Merton. It covers vaccine uptake and an account of what NHS England (NHSE) London region and system partners are doing to improve this.

The paper focuses on childhood vaccinations, but data is included where pertinent on the wider schedule.

Members of the Merton Health Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and support the work that system partners across London, including NHSE London, the Local Authority (LA), and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) are doing to increase vaccination uptake in Merton.

Background

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that vaccinations are one of the public health interventions that have had the greatest impact on the world's health. Vaccination is also one of the most cost-effective public health interventions. High immunisation rates are key to preventing the spread of infectious disease, protecting from complications and deaths. Childhood immunisation in particular helps to prevent disease and promote child health from infancy, creating opportunities for children to thrive and get the best start in life.

Section 7a vaccination programmes are population-based, publicly funded immunisation programmes that cover the life course and include:

- Routine childhood vaccination programme for 0-5 years
- School-age (young person) vaccinations
- Adult vaccinations (including in pregnancy and older age)
- Seasonal COVID-19/flu vaccination programme

The full immunisation schedule can be found in the [Green Book](#) and as a summary table [here](#). Changes to this schedule are regularly reviewed and recommendations are made at the UK Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

The European region of the WHO currently recommends at least 95% of children are immunised against diseases preventable by vaccination and targeted for elimination or control, specifically, diphtheria, neonatal tetanus, pertussis, polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), hepatitis B, measles, mumps, and congenital rubella.

There is an expectation that UK coverage rates of all routine childhood vaccinations up to 5 years of age achieve 95%.

Roles and responsibilities

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) provides national strategic oversight of vaccination policy in England, with advice from the independent JCVI and the Commission on Human Medicines. They also set performance targets.

NHSE is responsible for commissioning national vaccination programmes in England under the terms of the Section 7a agreement, National Health Service Act 2006. NHSE is accountable for ensuring that local providers of services deliver against the national service specifications and meet agreed population uptake and coverage levels. NHSE is also responsible for monitoring providers' performance and for supporting providers in delivering improvements in quality and changes in the programmes when required. A summary table of NHSE responsibilities can be found at appendix 2.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) undertakes surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and leads the response to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. They provide expert advice to NHSE immunisation teams in cases of vaccination incidents.

Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) have a duty of quality improvement, and this extends to primary medical care services. ICBs provide opportunities for improved partnership working across NHSE (London), local authorities, voluntary and community sector partners to improve vaccination uptake and reach underserved areas and populations. NHSE (London), alongside ICBs, local authorities and others, will work to progress delegated commissioning for vaccination and screening.

LA public health teams deliver population health initiatives including improving access to health and engagement and promotion of vaccinations overall.

Pre-school and adult vaccinations are usually delivered by GP surgeries. They are commissioned through the NHS GP contract. Five core GP contractual standards have been introduced to underpin the delivery of vaccination services: a named lead, provision of sufficient convenient appointments, standards for call/recall programmes and opportunistic vaccination offers, participation in nationally agreed catch-up campaigns, and standards for record-keeping and reporting. One of the five Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) domains is childhood vaccinations and shingles vaccination, rewarding GP practices for good practice.

School-age vaccinations are commissioned by the seven regional NHSE teams and delivered through school age immunisation services (SAIS).

Vaccinations are also provided by maternity services, some outreach services, and community pharmacies.

Inclusion and Equity

The challenge is not just overall immunisation coverage but the variation in coverage across groups, which can increase the likelihood of preventable outbreaks locally. Groups with lower coverage include migrants, urban communities, more deprived communities, and certain ethnic groups.

People migrating to the UK may originate from countries that have different vaccination schedules or lower vaccination rates overall. Individuals may also have missed vaccinations in the country of origin or missed opportunities for vaccination after arrival to the UK.

National vaccine coverage varies geographically, with lower coverage in urban areas and London, compared to England as a whole.

At a national level, there are some small inequalities by socioeconomic status, with coverage being slightly lower in lower socio-economic groups.

For the routine childhood vaccinations, there is no simple relationship between ethnicity and coverage. The relationship varies by immunisation programme and by area. However, coverage in certain ethnic groups does appear to be lower than in white-British children, for example, black Caribbean, Somali, white Irish, and white Polish populations. Some ethnic groups, notably South Asian ethnicities, have broadly similar and sometimes higher vaccination coverage than white children. For MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) these relationships are less consistent, in that coverage in children of white ethnicity could be lower or the same as other non-white groups, thought to perhaps reflect differences with respect to awareness of the MMR controversy.

Merton have undertaken [a childhood immunisation joint strategic needs assessment¹](#). This report shows some geographical areas (such as East Merton) having lower uptake compared with West Merton. It was also recognised that deprivation impacts vaccination uptake, which has many overlaps with ethnicity and socioeconomic factors.

National vaccination coverage

Overall, coverage for most vaccines in England is high and comparable with other high-income countries although there has been a small but steady decline in the last few years. Nationally, in 2021-2022, vaccine coverage decreased by 0.2% to 1.1% depending on the vaccine. No vaccines met the 95% target. Coverage for the [6-in1 vaccine](#) amongst children 5 years of age (measured at this age to allow time for 'catch-up' of missed doses earlier in life) decreased from 95.2% in 2020-21 to 94.4% in 2021-22.

Regional vaccination coverage

Historically and currently, London performs lower than the national (England) average across all the immunisation programmes. Uptake in London has also fallen over the past 6 years and has fallen further than elsewhere in the country.

Every borough in London is below the 95% WHO target. For some vaccines such as MMR, all London boroughs have an uptake below 90%. Two-thirds of all measles cases in 2023 in England were in London.

London has a highly mobile population, a large migrant population, and areas of high deprivation. In London, vaccine uptake is lower in areas of higher deprivation compared with areas of low deprivation across all ethnicities.

¹ Childhood Immunisation JSNA 2022/2023. London Borough of Merton, Start Well Childhood Immunisation and Newborn Screening

Local vaccination coverage

The focus of this report is childhood vaccinations (for children 0-5 years old), but data is also included on key aspects of school-age, prenatal, older adult and seasonal programmes.

Routine childhood immunisation programme (0-5 years)

The routine childhood immunisation programme for 0-5 years can be found at appendix 1.

Coverage data for the country, region, ICB and local authorities (LAs) within South West London (SWL) is presented in table 1.

For almost all childhood immunisations Merton has higher coverage than the London average but slightly lower than the SWL average and below the England average. The exception being the first dose of measles mumps and rubella (MMR1) at 24 months and 5 years where Merton coverage exceeds SWL and London averages.

In the most recent data for Quarter 2 2023/24 (July-Sept 2023) there was a slight decreasing trend in coverage across all childhood vaccinations as compared to Quarter 1 (2022/23) (except for 5y MMR1 and Hib/MenC). Decreases in uptake in children at the respective ages in Q2 is seen year on year. These children are typically eligible for vaccination over the summer period when families may be less inclined or able to get children vaccinated. Typically, this improves later in the year but is not reflected in this time limited snapshot. Overall, there has been an increase in coverage at age 5 for MMR1+ MMR2 from Q1 to Q2 with the number of unvaccinated children in Merton reduced by 2%.

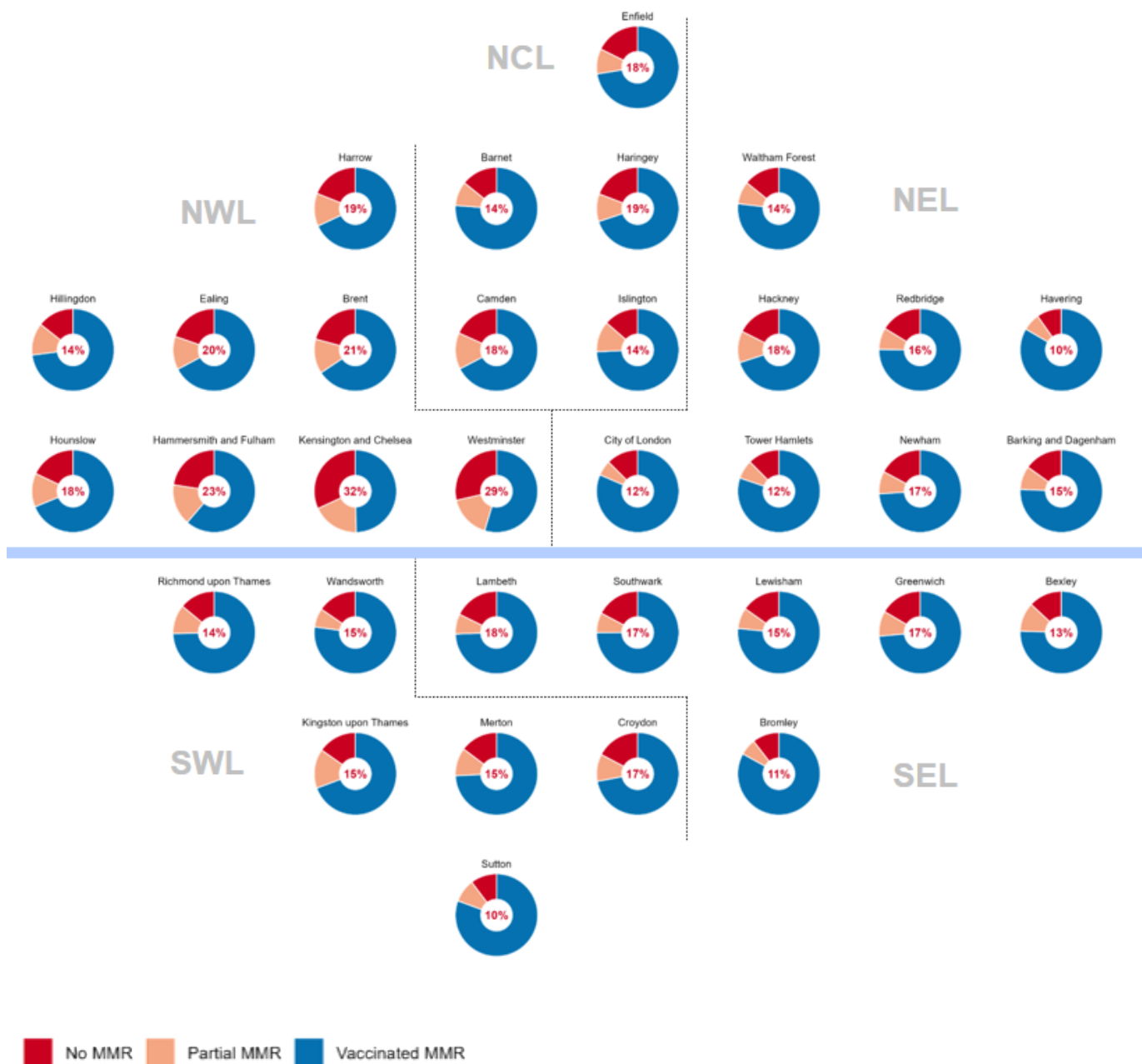
The recent announcement of a National Measles incident is the result of an increase in confirmed cases in areas across England which include the London region. There have been two confirmed cases in South West London. We will be working with all agencies to accelerate the catchup programme for MMR at all ages as well as promoting increased uptake for children as part of their scheduled immunisation programme.

Table 1: Overview of ‘cover of vaccination evaluated rapidly’ (COVER) data for SWL ICB and LAs. *Source: UKHSA COVER quarterly data*
[Cover of vaccination evaluated rapidly \(COVER\) programme 2022 to 2023: quarterly data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cover-of-vaccination-evaluated-rapidly-cover-programme-2022-to-2023-quarterly-data)

Monitoring Age	Immunisation	England	London	SWL	Kingston	Richmond	Merton	Wandsworth	Croydon	Sutton
12 months	DtaP/IPV/Hib (HepB)	↓ 91.3%	↓ 86.4%	↓ 88.4%	↑ 91.7%	↓ 92.1%	↓ 87.5%	↑ 90.2%	↑ 85.2%	↓ 92.0%
	PCV1	↓ 93.4%	↓ 89.3%	↓ 88.4%	↑ 93.7%	↓ 77.4%	↓ 90.2%	↑ 91.0%	↑ 87.5%	↓ 93.3%
	Rotavirus (2 doses)	↓ 88.2%	↓ 83.7%	↓ 84.6%	↑ 90.9%	↓ 75.7%	↓ 86.2%	↑ 88.0%	↑ 82.2%	↓ 88.7%
	Men B (2 doses)	↓ 91.0%	↓ 86.2%	↓ 88.2%	↑ 91.7%	↑ 92.5%	↓ 87.7%	↑ 90.3%	↑ 84.6%	↓ 91.2%
24 months	DtaP/IPV/Hib	↑ 92.9%	↓ 88.8%	↓ 88.0%	↑ 94.3%	↓ 91.0%	↓ 88.6%	↓ 90.4%	↓ 86.4%	↓ 92.7%
	MMR 1	↑ 89.4%	↓ 82.9%	↓ 81.8%	→ 90.6%	↓ 76.5%	↓ 84.2%	↓ 85.7%	↑ 80.8%	↓ 87.8%
	Hib/MenC	↑ 89.2%	↓ 82.3%	↓ 81.2%	↓ 89.4%	↓ 74.6%	↓ 83.4%	↓ 84.8%	↑ 80.7%	↓ 88.7%
	PCV (Booster)	↓ 88.8%	↓ 81.7%	↓ 80.5%	↓ 89.3%	↓ 75.0%	↓ 82.8%	↓ 84.5%	↑ 79.5%	↓ 86.3%
	Men B (Booster)	↓ 88.0%	↓ 80.8%	↓ 80.6%	↓ 87.4%	↓ 82.8%	↓ 82.4%	↓ 84.5%	↑ 77.6%	↓ 86.3%
5 years	DtaP/IPV/Hib/HepB	↓ 92.8%	↓ 87.3%	↓ 89.0%	↓ 88.3%	↑ 91.6%	↓ 88.4%	↓ 88.4%	↑ 87.5%	↓ 93.2%
	DtaP/IPV (Booster)	↓ 82.7%	↓ 72.4%	↓ 72.7%	↓ 75.7%	↓ 72.0%	↓ 71.7%	↓ 69.9%	↑ 71.2%	↓ 78.8%
	MMR 1	↓ 92.3%	↓ 85.6%	↓ 87.1%	↓ 86.8%	↓ 88.1%	↑ 88.4%	↓ 86.2%	↑ 84.2%	↓ 91.7%
	MMR 2	↓ 83.8%	↓ 72.8%	↓ 73.7%	↓ 75.5%	↓ 71.3%	↓ 73.1%	↓ 74.7%	↑ 70.1%	↓ 79.6%
	Hib/MenC	↓ 90.2%	↓ 83.3%	↓ 84.5%	↓ 83.5%	↑ 86.0%	↑ 85.0%	↓ 83.4%	↑ 82.4%	↓ 89.2%
	Average Uptake	↑ 89.6%	↓ 83.1%	↓ 83.5%	↓ 87.8%	↓ 81.9%	↓ 84.3%	↓ 85.2%	↑ 81.4%	↓ 88.5%

For almost all childhood immunisations Merton has higher coverage than the London average but slightly lower than the SWL average and below the England average. The exception being the first dose of measles mumps and rubella (MMR1) at 24 months and 5 years where Merton coverage exceeds SWL and London averages. .

Figure 1: MMR Schedule Completeness for Merton, SWL and London, October 2023



London remains at high risk for the reintroduction of polio virus or a resurgence of measles. The Polio/MMR Phase 2 campaign has reached out to children who are likely to be missed for either a polio-containing vaccine or MMR vaccine. Using regional CHIS data from 01 October 2023, Figure 1 shows the proportion of children aged 1-22 who are completely, partially or not vaccinated for MMR. Central red figure represents the percentage of zero dose (unvaccinated) children. In Merton, 74% of children are fully vaccinated for MMR and 15% of children have not had any vaccinations and are therefore at high risk of catching measles.

Figure 1: DTaP-IPV-Hib-HepB coverage (%) for Merton, London and England over time from 2013-14 to 2022-23. Source: NHSE Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics.

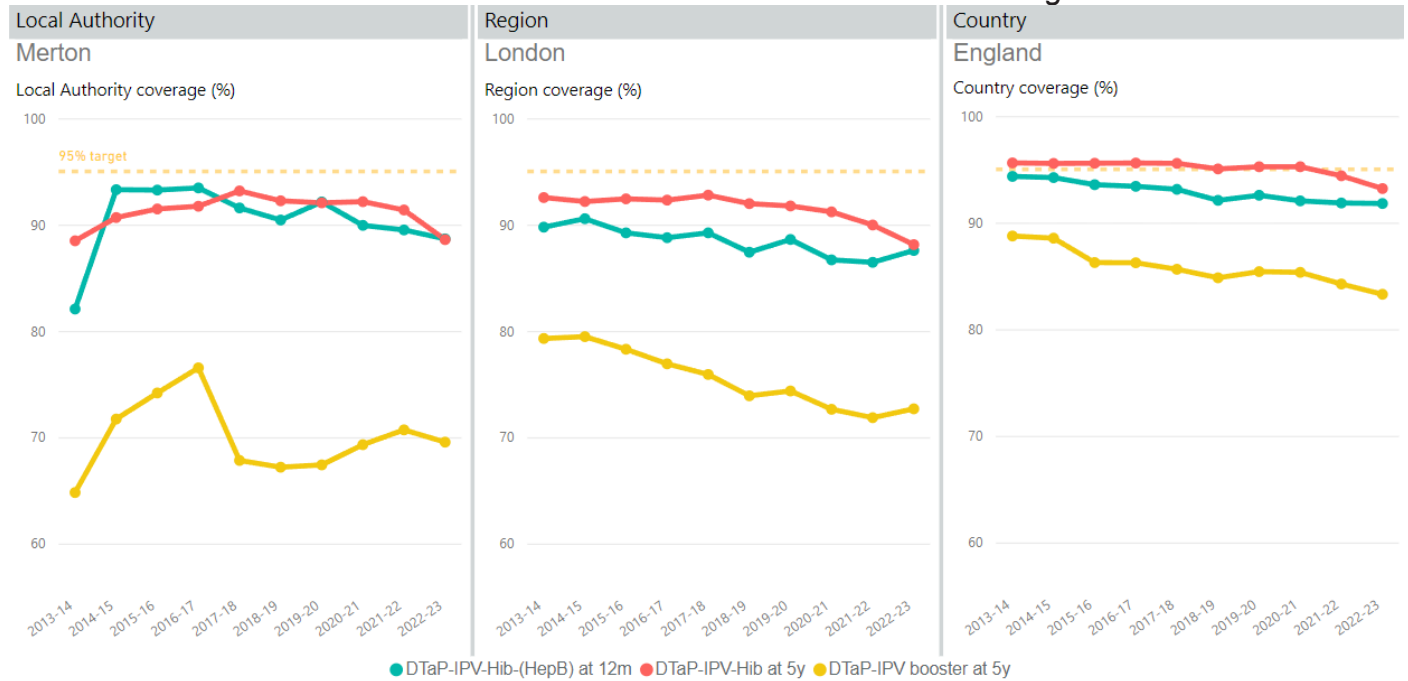


Figure 1 shows Merton coverage trends over time of the childhood primary immunisation course and booster at 5 years (yellow bar). Trends follow a similar pattern to London. Merton, along with London and England shows an overall declining trend of coverage in primary and booster doses all below the 95% WHO international standard. The 5-year booster dose well below target in Merton, London and England.

Vaccinations for school-age young people

Vaccinations in this group consist of:

- HPV vaccine offered to 12–13-year-olds (since September 2019 boys receive the vaccine as well as girls).
- Tetanus, diphtheria, polio booster (teenage booster) at age 14/15
- Meningitis ACWY at age 14/15.
- Annual child ‘flu vaccination programme which in 2023/24 covers:
 - Reception to Year 6 in primary schools.
 - Children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2023 (born between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2021)
 - Some secondary school aged children (Year 7 to Year 11)
 - Children aged 2 to 17 years with certain long-term health conditions.

Local and regional data on the school aged routine schedule coverage is presented below in figure 3.

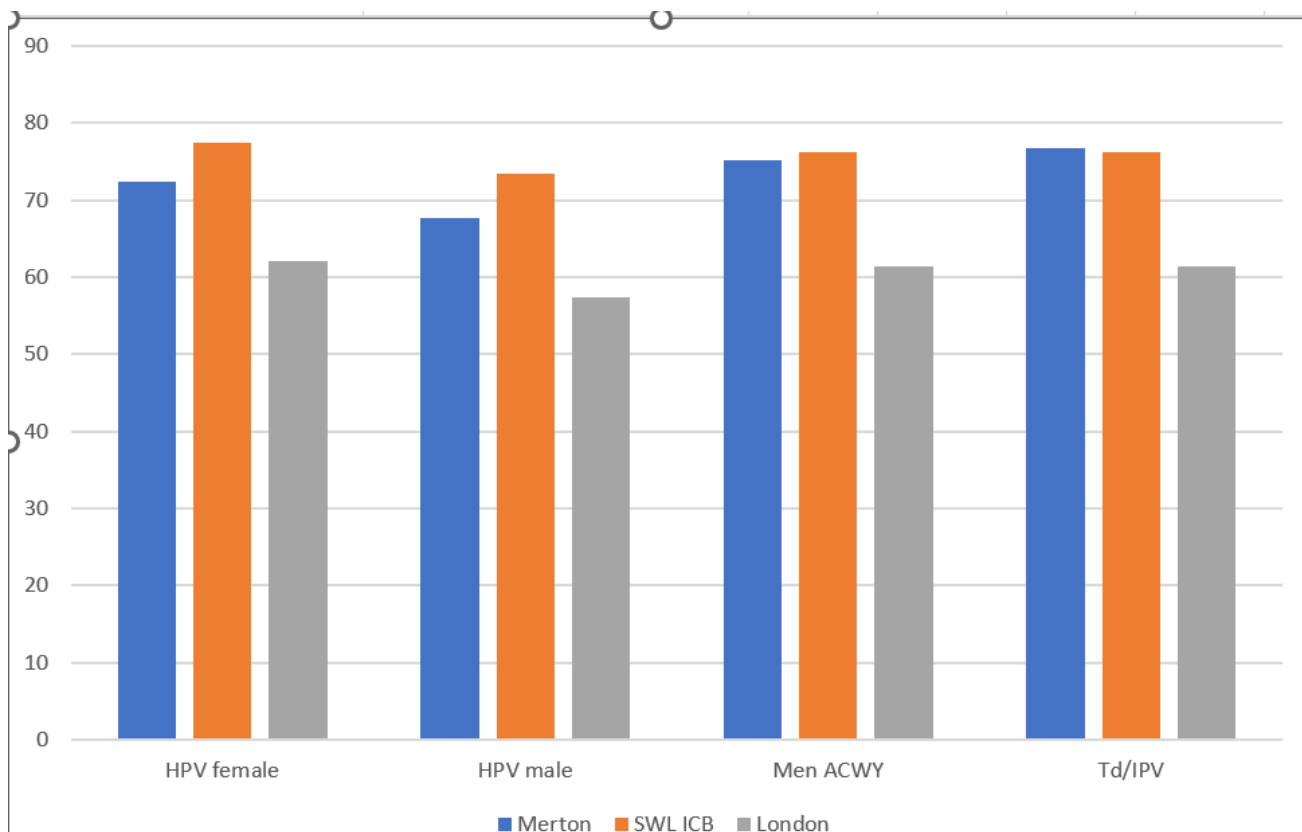


Figure 3: Percentage (%) eligible adolescents vaccinated September 2022 – August 2023 in Merton, SWL ICB and London. Source: UKHSA 'ImmForm'².

Merton perform better on immunisations in this age group, as compared to the London average, though less well than SWL average as a whole.

Data sources for local authority stakeholders

- The vaccinations and screening Future NHS page provides a range of vaccination dashboards for local use and can be accessed here: <https://future.nhs.uk/vaccsandscreening/view?objectID=42174992>
- In addition, there are interactive dashboards on the NHS Digital website on childhood vaccinations here: [Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics, England, 2022-23 - NHS Digital](#)

² ImmForm data is validated and analysed by the UKHSA to check data completeness, identify and query any anomalous data and describe epidemiological trends.

Vaccination programme challenges

System

- COVID-19: pausing some programmes, redeployment of workforce and introduction of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.
- Complexities in data collection: some data is not recorded, not uploaded, not correctly cleansed, or the denominator population may not be up to date.
- Access to appointments: wider pressures on GP services and limited workforce.
- Inconsistent reminder systems- call/ recall.

Community

- London's high population mobility affects data collection and accuracy. There is a 20-40% annual turnover on GP patient lists which affects the accuracy of the denominator for COVER submissions. A 2017 audit showed that by the age of 12 months, 33% of infants moved address at least once.
- Large numbers of underserved populations who are associated with lower uptake of vaccinations than the wider population.
- Large migrant population who may not be registered or have their past immunisation history accurately recorded.

Individual

- Lack of trust or confidence in vaccines or other health service or complacency.
- Saturation of vaccine offer post the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 vaccination programme.
- Increasing disinformation
- Lack of awareness of the immunisation schedule

Actions to improve vaccination uptake.

Increasing vaccination uptake is complex and requires a suite of interventions. Work is ongoing at a national, regional, system, and place level to increase uptake in Merton.

A London-wide and SWL immunisations strategy have been agreed to both improve vaccination uptake and reduce inequalities. Multi agency action plans are being taken forward to support delivery of the strategy aims and are in the process of being refreshed following the publication of the National vaccination strategy. More information on the oversight of this work in SWL can be found at appendix 3.

The London Immunisation Board, Mayors Health Board, and ICBs have all agreed on the 10 principles for London vaccination (figure 6). Action will now focus on developing this into a comprehensive delivery approach tailored to community needs and building on Borough-led health initiatives.

10 Principles for London Vaccination Programmes

These principles were developed for the London Health Board building on existing work and evidence and with a focus on reducing inequalities. They have been collectively written and agreed by UKHSA, London Councils, ADHP London, GLA, OHID and NHS to identify areas for collaborative working and system leadership and to underpin the next phase of partnership and delivery of all London Vaccination.

Diversity and Inclusion



1. Focus on equity at all stages of the programme (design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation) focusing on hyper-local models with equality as central to the mission as volume



2. Building strength through diversity bringing diversity and community voices around the table, including the workforce as they cannot and should not be separated from the communities they are a part of.

Community centered: Population Health approach



3. Committing to Community First and Community Driven approaches: putting communities into the core of programmes, particularly marginalised groups, hearing their voices, engaging with them, co-producing activities and building culturally competent campaigns.



4. Placing people at the centre of delivery: improving access for those targeted for vaccinations as well as thinking more holistically around vaccination messaging and engaging with communities around their health and health services more generally.

Spotlight on the early years



5. A focus on improving childhood immunisation uptake: acting early in the life course and with a partnership commitment to emphasise promotion of childhood vaccinations making every contact count across all settings and opportunities and identifying children with missed immunisations or those who are unregistered.

Ways of working: Embedding sustainability and leveraging opportunities



6. Ensure immunisations as part of every conversation on health, being integral to health and well-being and not a standalone agenda for our residents and their families.



7. Working to one goal with one voice: a multi-system pan London approach working with partners across organisational boundaries and in collaboration with the clear beat that we all need to work together to increase vaccination rates for London.



8. Permission for and encouragement of innovation and creativity: to continue working in new ways and thinking more holistically about vaccination for whole communities.



9. Freedom and funding to explore different hyper-local approaches: This might include, for example, vaccines in new spaces, models of delivery for the school-aged population or the housebound.



10. Amplifying impact through an evidence approach: a commitment to continue to collect, evaluate and share outputs, to ensure, and be able to evidence equitable access of uptake, value for money and best use of our skilled workforce.

Figure 6: 10 principles for London vaccination programmes.

A range of cross vaccination programme actions are in place to maximise uptake in line with these principles including:

- An ICB level operational working group regularly discusses delivery of all vaccination and immunisation programmes.

- NHSE London fund immunisation coordinators to support GP practices with a focus on those with the lowest uptake and community outreach work within their relevant boroughs as highlighted by performance dashboard.
- A series of national immunisation webinars are available for Primary Care to support training and development.
- Local SW London webinars to further support GP Practices around processes and good practice.
- Training for NHS patient facing staff on having difficult conversations around immunisation and vaccination. This has been expanded to Local Authority staff and the potential for wider deployment is being explored.

Further actions targeted to specific programmes are outlined below.

Childhood vaccinations

A strong focus for Merton and SWL ICB and London is to increase childhood vaccination coverage overall to pre-pandemic levels and to identify the communities which are persistently missed from vaccination and other health services.

A particular risk in 2023 is the sub-optimal childhood MMR1 and 2 coverage (below 95%) which increases the risk of preventable measles outbreaks. To reduce the risk of poliovirus transmission, focus also remains on identifying and supporting underserved communities of Merton and London.

Actions to improve uptake include:

- A national NHSE MMR vaccination call and recall service was implemented between September and December 2022. This promoted the take-up of the MMR vaccine amongst individuals between the ages of 1 to 25 years through letters and texts.
- A new national call/recall service will start in January 2024 working through each vulnerable cohort, primary school aged, secondary school age and then 21–25-year-olds.
- A regional communications campaign took place across London in March 2023 to encourage the uptake of missed MMR doses. This included media, social media, health ambassadors, translated materials, and attendance at local events and community groups.
- NHSE London commissioned UKHSA to deliver immunisation training to all vaccinators in London. Vaccinators were trained to build and maintain trust, address parent concerns and queries and deliver a high-quality service.
- Vaccinations have been added to the MECC London [resource hub](#) to facilitate using every available opportunity to engage with the public to increase vaccination.
- A funded regional catch-up programme through the SAIS (for children aged 4-11) led by NHSE and GP practices (for children aged 0-4) led by ICBs is underway to provide

DTaP, MMR, and full-schedule catch-up. This programme is focused on targeting under and un-vaccinated children. We anticipate that the first quarter findings and uptake rates for London will be available by January 2024.

- Completion of return to school letters for primary and secondary school pupil, outlining forthcoming vaccination programmes over next school year and reminders to ensure that their routine schedule is up to date.
- MMR outreach delivery which will identify and target community groups with low uptake. This will include opportunities for conversations and vaccination at community groups and children's centres.
- Alignment of the work of roving team together with local grass roots organisations enabling facilitated discussions to take place that address vaccine concern as well as promoting benefits of immunisations is being undertaken.
- Enhanced access hubs within Merton offer locally registered patients' additional access to childhood immunisation clinics in the evenings and at weekends. This will include open community clinics with a general walk-in offer alongside health visitor clinics in Children's Centres.
- SWL has dedicated Immunisation Co-ordinators working across the borough with multiple stakeholders to increase immunisation uptake. This post is funded by NHSE. A summary of the work they are currently doing is shown below:
 - Working with practices to support adherence to the GP Core Contractual Standards, ensuring they are running their call/recall effectively, addressing barriers to uptake with patients and supporting overall delivery.
 - Encourage all practice staff to feel confident in discussing childhood immunisations with their patient population (clinically appropriate to the role).
 - Supporting practices to support national and local agreed catch-up campaigns e.g. London polio phase 1&2 campaigns and national MMR campaigns.
 - Ensuring that practices have knowledge of resources available to support immunisation delivery and how to access them, including those in multiple languages.
 - Ensuring patient lists are up to date and accurate.
 - Encouraging attendance at UKHSA/NHSE webinars around childhood vaccinations and local webinars delivered by SWL ICB.
 - Ensuring practices are using the correct and most up to date IT templates to record vaccinations.
 - Facilitate good working relationships between the ICB, NHSE and GP Practice/Primary Care.

Next Steps

Both NHSE London and SWL have planned further vaccination uptake and broader strategic work in relation to vaccinations including:

- Review of funding models with LAs offering funding streams that allow for greater integration.
- Phase 2 polio/MMR programme is on track, and we anticipate completion of the campaign by Quarter 2 2024. The future focus will include how to embed learning from this catch-up programme into business-as-usual vaccination services.
- As part of Polio Phase 2, funding has been allocated to SWL ICB for additional activities that contribute to:
 - Comms/ engagement activities that raise awareness of the childhood vaccination schedule and the importance, individual and community benefits of vaccination.
 - Outreach activities for children aged 1-4 or geographical that make contact with those families whose children are un- or under-vaccinated for their age and offer a vaccination appointment/event.
- This must be outside of existing functions, funding routes or mechanisms. SWL ICB are currently drafting the plans for the utilisation of this funding in conjunction with local stakeholders.
- The findings from the above analysis has informed the overall approach to inequalities in SWL with both the autumn/winter capacity and outreach plans incorporating learning from this analysis and reflecting this in the availability of local infrastructure as well as the way the offer is made to underserved groups.
- Focused areas of work to address inequalities within underserved groups which we see across all vaccination programmes including:

1) Community outreach and education via the SWL team as well as other health organisations

- Develop culturally sensitive and multilingual educational materials about vaccines' safety and benefits.
- Train community health workers to provide information, address concerns, and facilitate vaccine appointment.

2) Vaccine Clinics in Underserved Settings

- Continue to partner with community organisations, places of worship, and schools to host vaccine clinics.
- Ensure that clinics are welcoming, culturally sensitive, and staffed by diverse healthcare professionals.

3) Data Collection and Monitoring

- Continue to analyse vaccination data broken down by demographic factors (race, ethnicity, income, etc.) to identify disparities.
- Continuously monitor vaccination rates and address disparities in real-time.

4) Organise Tailored Campaigns:

- Customise vaccination campaigns to address the unique needs and preferences of underserved communities, including visuals and messaging.

5) Engage Trusted Messengers:

7) Access and Inequality Funding

- Plans provide commitment to address disparities in vaccine uptake by implementing the Access and Inequality (A&I) funding initiative, which aims to increase vaccination rates in deprived areas through working with our borough leads.

In Merton this will include;

Targeted patient engagement in geographic areas with low uptake

Capitalising on the practice call and recall initiatives we will develop open community clinics to general walk-in offer. The focus will be on children's centres with the lowest MMR uptake.

MMR promotional video in GP surgeries/community settings

Video to promote the importance of the MMR vaccine, utilising infographics and a GP who is representative of the local community – display in GP surgery waiting areas, websites, community settings. Build on this to produce similar videos with community leaders - trusted voice to promote MMR.

Targeted outreach to identified community groups with low uptake.

Host clinic in low uptake areas e.g. religious venues, organised community groups (i.e. parent and toddler groups), children's centres and housing estates. Offer at wider health and wellbeing events.

Engagement & Outreach MMR MECC module

Through the SWL Training Hub we will develop an Outreach model that incorporates MECC principles to enhance practice engagement and delivery at every point of contact. Concentrating on staff not normally involved with vaccinations and immunisations eg allied HCP and non-clinical staff.

Health visitors

Collaborate with health visiting service to offer vaccination, including their point of contacts with parents, e.g. 'Well Baby' clinics, post-natal groups, parenting support and breastfeeding clinics.

Appendix 1: Immunisation schedule

Routine childhood immunisations				
Age Due	Diseases protected against	Vaccine given	Trade name	Usual Site
8 weeks	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and hepatitis B	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB	Infanrix hexa or Vaxelis	Thigh
	Meningococcal group B (MenB)	MenB	Bexsero	Left thigh
	Rotavirus gastroenteritis	Rotavirus	Rotarix	By mouth
12 weeks	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib and hepatitis B	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB	Infanrix hexa or Vaxelis	Thigh
	Pneumococcal (13 serotypes)	PCV	Prevenar 13	Thigh
	Rotavirus	Rotavirus	Rotarix	By mouth
16 weeks	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib and hepatitis B	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB	Infanrix hexa or Vaxelis	Thigh
	MenB	MenB	Bexsero	Left thigh
1 year	Hib and Meningococcal group C (MenC)	Hib/MenC	Menitorix	Upper arm/thigh
	Pneumococcal	PCV booster	Prevenar 13	Upper arm/thigh
	Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles)	MMR	MMRvaxPro or Priorix	Upper arm/thigh

	MenB	MenB booster	Bexsero	Left thigh
Eligible paediatric age groups	Influenza (each year from September)	Live attenuated influenza vaccine LAIV	Fluenz Tetra	Both nostrils
Three years four months	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio	dTaP/IPV	Boostrix-IPV	Upper arm
	Measles, mumps and rubella	MMR (check first dose given)	MMRvaxPro or Priorix	Upper arm
12-13 years	Cancers and genital warts caused by specific human papillomavirus (HPV) types	HPV (2 doses 6 to 24 months apart)	Gardasil	Upper arm
14 years Year 9	Tetanus, diphtheria and polio	Td/IPV (check MMR status)	Revaxis	Upper arm
	Meningococcal groups A, C, W and Y	MenACWY	Nimenrix	Upper arm

Selective childhood immunisation programmes

Target group	Age and schedule	Disease	Vaccines required
Babies born to hepatitis B infected mothers	At birth, 4 weeks and 12 months old	Hepatitis B	Hepatitis B (Engerix B/HBvaxPRO)
Infants in areas of the country with tuberculosis (TB) incidence \geq 40/100,000	Around 28 days old	Tuberculosis	BCG
Infants with a parent or grandparent born in a high incidence country	Around 28 days old	Tuberculosis	BCG
Children in a clinical risk group	From 6 months to 17 years of age	Influenza	LAIV or inactivated flu vaccine if contraindicated to LAIV or under 2 years of age

Adult Immunisation Programme

65 years old	Pneumococcal (23 serotypes)	Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (PPV)	Pneumovax 23
65 years of age and older	Influenza (each year from September)	Inactivated influenza vaccine	Multiple
70 to 79 years of age	Shingles	Shingles	Zostavax3 (or Shingrix if Zostavax contraindicated)
Pregnant women	At any stage of pregnancy during flu season	Influenza	Inactivated flu vaccine
	From 16 weeks gestation	Pertussis	dTaP/IPV (Boostrix-IPV)

The complete routine immunisation schedule from February 2022
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

Appendix 2: NHSE current responsibilities & performance targets

Cohort	Immunisation Programme	Who we commission	National Target
Routine 0-5 imms	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Poliomyelitis, Pertussis, Hib and Hepatitis B (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB)	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract	95%
	Meningitis B (Men B)	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract	95%
	Rotavirus	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract	95%
	Pneumococcal	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract	95%
	Hib/Men C	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract	95%
	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio dTap/IPV (pre-school booster)	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract	95%
	Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract & opportunistic catch up via School Aged Immunisation Providers	95%
Routine	Seasonal Influenza Immunisation for children - Eligible age or risk group	School Aged Immunisation Providers – 8 in London	70%
Routine School- aged	Human Papillomavirus (HPV)	School Aged Immunisation Providers	95%
	Td/IPV (Teenage Booster)	School Aged Immunisation Providers	90%
	Meningitis ACWY (Men ACWY)	School Aged Immunisation Providers	95%
Routine	Seasonal Influenza Immunisation for adults	General Practice (Enhanced Service), Maternity Units, Acute & Community Trusts, Community Pharmacy	Adults under 65 years - 75% Over 65 years & HCW - 85%
Routine Older adults	Pneumococcal	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract Pharmacy	75%
	Shingles	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract	65%
Selective	Hepatitis B for babies born to hepatitis B infected mothers	General Practice, Essential Service in GP Contract	100%
	BCG for at risk newborns	Community Providers – 11 in London	80%
	HPV for Men who have sex with men	Acute Trusts	No Target
	Pertussis for pregnant women	Maternity Units and General Practice, Essential Service in GP contract	London ambition is 70%
TBC	COVID-19 Immunisation Programme in Development	GPs, Community Pharmacies, Acute Trusts,	100% universal offer

Appendix 3: Data collection

Data is uploaded into Child Health Information Service (CHIS) from GP practice records via a data linkage system. The CHIS provides quarterly and annual submissions to the UKHSA for their publication of statistics on 0-5s childhood immunisation programmes. This is known as Cohort of Vaccination Evaluated Rapidly (COVER) and these are the official statistics. Annual data is more complete and should be used to look at longer-term trends.

COVER monitors immunisation coverage data for children in the UK who reach their first, second, or fifth birthday during each quarter. Children having their first birthday in the quarter should have been vaccinated at 2, 3, and 4 months, those turning 2 should have been vaccinated at 12/13 months and those who are having their 5th birthday should have been vaccinated before 5 years, ideally 3 years 3 months to 4 years.

There are known complexities in collecting data on childhood vaccinations. Indeed, since 2013, London's COVER data is usually published with caveats, and drops in reported rates may be due to data collection or collation issues for that quarter.

Production of COVER statistics in London involves a range of individuals and organisations with different roles and responsibilities. London has four CHIS Hubs – North East London (provider is North East London Foundation Trust, NELFT), South East London (provider is Health Intelligence), South West London (provider is Your Healthcare CIC), and North-West London (provider is Health Intelligence). These hubs are commissioned by NHSE to compile and report London's quarterly and annual submissions to UKHSA for COVER.

A 'script' or algorithm is utilised to electronically extract anonymous data from the relevant data fields to compile the reports for COVER within the caveats specified. For example, for the first dose of MMR, any child who had their MMR vaccination before their first birthday is not included and so appears unvaccinated.

CHIS hubs are commissioned to check the reports run and are expected to refresh the reports before final submission to UKHSA. CHIS Hubs are also commissioned to 'clean' the denominator by routinely undertaking 'movers in and movers out' reports. This is to ensure the denominator is up to date with the children currently resident in London. They are also expected to account for the vaccinations of unregistered children in London. There are ongoing issues with CHIS hubs keeping up to date with movers in and out which is picked up in contract performance meetings with the NHSE (London) commissioners.

Vaccination data is extracted from London's GP IT systems and uploaded onto the CHIS systems. This isn't done directly by the CHIS Hubs. Instead, data linkage systems provided by three different providers provide the interface between general practices and CHIS. Two of these providers – QMS and Health Intelligence – are commissioned by NHSE whilst 4 boroughs in outer North-East London commission a separate system.

NHS (London) Immunisation Commissioning Team receives data linkage reports from QMS and Health Intelligence. This provides a breakdown by general practice of the uptake of vaccinations in accordance with the COVER cohorts and cohorts for Exeter (for payments).

This information is utilized by the team as part of the 'COVER SOP', to check against the COVER submissions by CHIS to question variations or discrepancies.

While data linkage systems provide an automated solution to manual contact between CHIS and General Practices, data linkage does not extract raw data. General practices must prepare the data for extraction every month. This will vary between practices how automated the process is, but it can be dependent upon one person to compile the data in time for the extraction by the data linkage system providers and should this person be on annual or sick leave, there will be missing data.

General practices have to prepare data for four immunisation data systems – COVER, ImmForm (although this is largely done by their IT provider of Vision, EMIS or TPP SystemOne, all of whom are commissioned by their ICS), CQRS (the payments system run by NHS England for the payment of administration of the vaccine) and Exeter (payments system, whereby practices receive targeted payments for achieving 70% or 90% uptake of their cohorts – these cohorts are different to the COVER cohorts of children). Preparation of data for the systems again will vary between practices but this can be time and resource intensive.

There is also an array of codes that can be used to code the vaccination (if a code different to what the data linkage system recognises is utilised, it results in the child looking unvaccinated) and there are difficulties with coding children who received their vaccinations abroad or delays in information on vaccinations given elsewhere in UK being uploaded onto the system in time for the data extraction.

Whilst NHSE (London) commissioning team verify and pay administration of vaccines that are part of the Section 7a immunisation programmes, they do not commission GPs directly. Vaccination services, including call/recall (patient invite and reminder systems) are contracted under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract. This contract is held by primary care commissioning directorates of NHSE.

For most newer vaccine programmes and for those targeting people older than 5 years vaccination and population data is extracted directly from general practice systems using ImmForm, an online platform.

Appendix 4: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CHIS	Child health information Service
COVER	Cover of vaccination evaluated rapidly
DHSC	Department of Health & Social Care
dTaP/IPV	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, inactivated polio combined vaccine
GP	General practitioner
Hib	Haemophilus influenzae B
HepB	Hepatitis B
HPV	Human papillomavirus
ICB	Integrated care board
ICS	Integrated care system
JCVI	Joint committee on vaccination and immunisation
LA	Local authority
MECC	Making every contact count
Men B	Meningococcal group B
Men C	Meningococcal group C
MMR	Measles, mumps and rubella combined vaccine
NHSE	National Health Service England
PCV	Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine

Abbreviation	Definition
PPV	Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine
PSB	Pre-school booster
Rota	Rotavirus
QOF	Quality and outcomes framework
SAIS	School age immunisation services
UKHSA	United Kingdom Health Security Agency
WHO	World Health Organisation

Appendix 5: Contacts

Name, Role	Email
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This publication can be made available in a number of alternative formats on request.

Immunisations Update

Merton
January 2024

Covid

Highest uptake in London at 44.1%
(London at 36.8%)

Flu

Highest uptake in London at 45.6%
(London at 38.6%)

Childhood immunisations

Vaccination rates for routine immunisations have remained stable in Q1 since the last reported quarter (Q4) with a small decrease in MMR, particularly in Croydon.

Review and Learning

- Clear national comms and finance as a requirement.
- Sufficient time to plan an effective campaign.
- Tech and data in place from day 1.
- Reduction in vaccine types used.

AW23 Booster Uptake by Cohort

- *Note: HCW figures are ESR reported only.*
- Uptake varies across cohorts with the highest uptake seen in care home residents and lowest in household contacts of immunosuppressed.
- Overall uptake ranges from 44.5% in SWL to 30.7% in NEL.
- Darker shades of green indicate higher uptake.

Cohort	England	London	NCL	NEL	NWL	SEL	SWL
01: Care homes	81.3%	75.8%	77.9%	75.0%	74.3%	76.2%	76.1%
02: HCW (ESR)	32.7%	26.3%	31.1%	20.3%	27.5%	24.6%	30.0%
02: HCW (self declared)	62.7%	56.2%	59.0%	54.9%	53.6%	56.3%	58.1%
03: SCW	23.0%	13.9%	13.7%	13.7%	10.7%	16.8%	15.9%
04: 80+	79.5%	64.7%	65.6%	58.6%	60.9%	68.3%	71.2%
05: 75-79	78.7%	64.3%	65.1%	58.0%	59.3%	68.4%	71.4%
06: 70-74	73.8%	57.4%	59.2%	50.4%	51.7%	62.5%	65.4%
07: 65-69	64.6%	47.1%	49.4%	40.2%	42.1%	51.1%	55.3%
08: At risk	29.6%	20.3%	21.3%	17.0%	17.4%	23.6%	24.9%
09: 12-15 At risk	14.0%	11.4%	9.7%	10.7%	9.4%	13.3%	13.9%
10: HC Immuno	1.3%	0.8%	1.0%	0.5%	0.5%	1.1%	0.9%
11: 5-11 At risk	18.7%	16.9%	14.3%	16.8%	12.5%	21.5%	18.6%
All cohorts	53.4%	37.2%	39.1%	30.7%	33.8%	40.6%	44.5%

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Covid uptake by Borough & Cohort - SW London Overview 7th January



South West London

Uptake figures taken from Foundry.

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Covid Uptake	Total			
Borough	Eligible	Vaccinated	Uptake	Remaining
Croydon	114,099	43,997	39%	70,102
Kingston	57,706	29,432	51%	28,274
Merton	57,711	24,933	43%	32,778
Richmond	58,504	33,673	58%	24,831
Sutton	64,030	28,228	44%	35,802
Wandsworth	85,173	34,389	40%	50,784
Unknown	174	103	59%	71
SW London	437,397	194,755	44.5%	242,642
London Uptake	2,523,099	940,252	37.3%	1,582,847

Covid Uptake	SWL Total				London Uptake
By JCVI Cohort Adults	Eligible	Vaccinated	Uptake	Remaining	London Uptake
01: Care homes	6,414	4,878	76.1%	1,536	76%
02: HCW (ESR)	26,950	8,107	30.1%	18,843	26%
02: HCW (self declared)	15,218	8,847	58.1%	6,371	56%
03: SCW	20,092	3,189	15.9%	16,903	14%
04: 80+	49,407	35,172	71.2%	14,235	65%
05: 75-79	41,594	29,714	71.4%	11,880	64%
06: 70-74	46,571	30,468	65.4%	16,103	57%
07: 65-69	57,999	32,112	55.4%	25,887	47%
08: At risk	167,147	41,655	24.9%	125,492	20%
09: 12-15 At risk	2,711	376	13.9%	2,335	11%
10: HC Immuno	2,121	19	0.9%	2,102	1%
11: 5-11 At risk	1,173	218	18.6%	955	17%
Total	437,397	194,755	44.5%	242,642	37%



Flu Uptake by Cohort

- *Note: Uptake calculated on double counting.*
- Uptake varies across cohorts with the highest uptake seen in care home residents and lowest in household contacts of immunosuppressed.
- Overall uptake ranges from 47.4% in SWL to 36.9% in NEL.
- Darker shades of green indicate higher uptake.

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Cohort	England	London	NCL	NEL	NWL	SEL	SWL
Care Home Residents	77.8%	71.8%	68.7%	70.2%	72.6%	75.1%	71.8%
Age 65+	73.3%	60.5%	56.5%	57.8%	60.7%	61.3%	65.6%
Frontline Healthcare Worker (ESR)	42.5%	33.9%	35.1%	28.6%	34.5%	32.6%	40.4%
Frontline Healthcare Worker (self-declared)	37.8%	30.5%	30.8%	27.3%	28.3%	31.6%	35.4%
Frontline Socialcare Workers	25.4%	16.8%	15.0%	17.7%	14.2%	18.6%	20.1%
Flu At-risk	43.2%	35.6%	31.8%	34.6%	37.4%	34.9%	39.3%
Household Contacts of Immunosuppressed	28.2%	15.6%	13.8%	15.5%	14.3%	14.9%	21.0%
Pregnant	16.7%	17.9%	13.6%	19.0%	14.1%	20.4%	23.3%
Secondary School Age Children	34.9%	30.8%	32.1%	25.7%	23.8%	31.9%	43.5%
Primary School Age Children	47.3%	44.8%	43.8%	44.6%	34.2%	47.8%	56.7%
Children 2-3	38.9%	30.8%	24.9%	25.8%	32.7%	33.5%	38.6%
All cohorts	50.2%	39.9%	37.6%	36.9%	38.1%	40.9%	47.4%

Flu uptake by Borough & Cohort - SWL Overview 7th January 2024



South West London

Flu Uptake	Total			
Borough	Eligible	Vaccinated	Uptake	Remaining
Croydon	211,340	73,293	35%	138,047
Kingston	98,038	49,144	50%	48,894
Merton	104,530	45,316	43%	59,214
Richmond	110,454	58,064	53%	52,390
Sutton	111,974	56,020	50%	55,954
Wandsworth	156,061	61,731	40%	94,330
Unknown	90,100	74,980	83%	15,120
SW London	882,497	418,548	47%	463,949
London Uptake	4,686,644	1,869,971	40%	2,816,673

Note – All unknown SAIS activity has been placed under unknown. Borough uptake does not include all SAIS data as it is unavailable at borough level in Foundry.

Flu Uptake	SWL Total				London Uptake
By JCVI Cohort Adults	Eligible	Vaccinated	Uptake	Remaining	
Age 65+	227,406	149,150	66%	78,256	60%
Care Home Residents	5,561	3,991	72%	1,570	71%
Children 2-3 years	34,547	13,345	39%	21,202	30%
At risk	176,400	69,483	39%	106,917	35%
Frontline staff (ERS)	41,578	16,853	41%	24,725	32%
Frontline staff self declared	72,010	25,549	35%	46,461	29%
Frontline staff Social Workers	33,582	6,757	20%	26,825	16%
Household Contact Immunosuppressed	41,258	8,666	21%	32,592	16%
Pregant Women	9,733	2,263	23%	7,470	18%
Primary School Aged Children	135,661	76,920	57%	58,741	45%
Secondary School Aged Children	104,761	45,571	44%	59,190	31%
Total	882,497	418,548	47.4%	463,949	40%



Autumn Winter 23-24 Communications and Engagement Campaign



South West London

Communications

The campaign is supported by three approaches backed using population data to identify areas of low uptake, high frailty and groups of specific concern – e.g. immunosuppressed.

Face to Face Community outreach which focuses on working with communities disproportionately impacted by health inequalities and disparities. Use of the winter engagement to fund street engagement through health ambassadors. Messaging has been based on what we have heard through the insight led work and webinars in to address the real concerns of the populations in target areas.

Digital pathways – face to face outreach is supported by a digital offering for those who are digitally and receptive to health messages. This includes the use of community voices in different languages and resources in different languages including BSL and easy read. Evidence is that these videos are being viewed in some Core 20+ areas including Roehampton, North Croydon, Carshalton and Mitcham. For those people that are not digital enabled we focus our face-to-face community outreach activity and ensure information is easily available in other formats.

Signposting to key campaigns – Using other workstreams to share information about Imms and Vaccs to help people make an informed choice. Making it an everyday conversation and signposting to access. Use of our now much expanded community pharmacy estate for both flu and covid to promote “vaccinations on the high street”.

Engagement Activity

Over 30 engagement activities have been organised over the period September to November in collaboration with our borough engagement leads and local authority colleagues. These have been a mix of webinar and face to face events with members of the public, practice, clinical staff and community leaders.

Events included groups from;

- Faith communities
- Perinatal, mother and infant group
- Women’s centre’s
- Night watch
- Focus groups for immunosuppressed patients
- Older age adults
- Local community partnership groups.

Street ambassadors were used in areas of low uptake.



Communications and Engagement



South West London

So far, our digital campaign has been seen over 2 million times and reached approximately 489,580 local residents. Advertising on our social media channels has generated 7,053 clicks to information about walk-in clinics. Our materials are borough-localised as we know this increases engagement.

We have now launched the second phase of the campaign which is more targeted, based on data about levels of vaccine uptake and focuses on engaging with local communities.

Key activities over the next month will include:

- **Outdoor advertising in key areas in our six boroughs** – this will include phone box posters across South West London and advertising on the Croydon tram
- **Street ambassadors** – teams of people engaging with local residents in high foot fall areas offering information about vaccines
- **Radio and Spotify advertising** – localised radios scripts for different target audiences
- **Targeted paid digital advertising in postcodes of low uptake** – all adverts are borough-specific which we know increases engagement
- **Voluntary led engagement events** – events funded through our winter engagement fund small grants scheme will begin taking place in December, focusing on engagement with communities experiencing health inequalities



Communications & Engagement – Merton Highlights



South West London

- **Outdoor advertising** – via the Croydon Tram link stops in Merton.
- **Radio and Spotify advertising** - localised radios scripts for different target audiences
- Our **on street engagement activity** is aligned to our data around low uptake groups – in particular, we are promoting around our roving team vaccination offer and community pharmacies in some of our low uptake areas, including Wimbledon Library, Cricket Green, Merton Civic Centre and Colliers wood
- **Community engagement** at local partnerships meetings and community groups such as Merton Community Voice Forum, Merton and Wandsworth Communications and Engagement Group, Merton and Wandsworth long term conditions community empowerment steering group and Merton social prescribing steering group.

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We received over 200 applications for our Winter Engagement Fund, 100% increase from last year. We are the process of shortlisting and activities will start in December.



Roving Team Activity - Update to End of December

Housebound

Since the start of the Autumn / Winter Campaign the Roving team have Held 113 Housebound sessions and provided a total of 1,293 covid vaccinations and 36 Flu vaccinations to this patient cohort.

84 of these sessions were held in Sutton.

Housebound by Borough <input type="text"/>	Sessions	Number of covid-19 doses given	Number of flu doses given
Croydon	14	101	9
Kingston & Richmond	7	54	5
Merton	7	74	6
Richmond	1	9	0
Sutton	84	1055	16
Grand Total	113	1293	36

Pop up Activity

A further 230 pop up clinics have been held delivering 2,327 covid vaccinations and 278 flu vaccinations. 84 of these sessions were held in areas of higher deprivation (487 covid and 49 flu vaccinations were given). On 15th November the team in collaboration also provided over 30 Hep A vaccinations to pupils and staff at Nursery school in Croydon following an outbreak.

<input type="text"/>	Sessions	Number of covid-19 doses given	Number of flu doses given
Homeless	9	25	8
LD	2	74	0
Out patients	72	525	72
At risk	2	138	62
General	145	1565	136
Grand Total	230	2327	278

Future activity

The team have planned a further sessions during January providing both Covid and Flu to 31st January and Flu to 31st March. Aside from their regular pop ups they are attending a variety of additional events such as Football Fireworks in Sutton, Health Event in Wandsworth, Knives not Lives in Croydon, homeless and refugee events in Kingston and Croydon and Mencap in Richmond. The roving team are supported by the SWL Workforce Management team and approx 300 bank staff, including registered and unregistered vaccinators, and admin.

Sites currently offering Covid vaccinations in Merton

Fixed Sites

- AP Chemist
- Harland Chemist
- Hilton Pharmacy

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Pop up venues

- Merton Civic Centre (20th Dec and 17th Jan)
- Mitcham Library (23rd Jan)
- Wimbledon Guild of Social Welfare (23rd Jan)
- Age UK Mitcham (25th Jan date TBC)
- Pollards Hill Library (Currently in discussion TBC)



MMR and SAIS activity



South West London

Vaccination rates for all routine immunisations have declined in Q2 for children turning 12m-5yr between July to September.

- In Q2 (COVER data), a total of 4,094 out of 4,993 children have been vaccinated with 2 doses of MMR by 5yrs. 899 children remained unvaccinated in SWL.
- Funding for the MMR campaign has been approved. Submissions for how the MMR funding will be utilised has been completed.
- There will be a focus on maximising capacity outside of GPs for MMR.

Q2 - July to September					
	Denominator (5yrs)	Vaccine	MMR Uptake %	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated
SWL	4,810	MMR1 by 2yrs	82%	3944	866
	4,993	MMR1 by 5yrs	87%	4094	899
	4,993	MMR2 by 5yrs	74%	4094	899
	4,993	MMR1+MMR2	80%	4094	899
Kingston	6,05	MMR1+MMR2	91%	496	109
Richmond	658	MMR1+MMR2	77%	540	118
Merton	654	MMR1+MMR2	84%	536	118
Wandsworth	1,104	MMR1+MMR2	86%	905	199
Sutton	651	MMR1+MMR2	88%	534	117
Croydon	1,328	MMR1+MMR2	81%	1089	239

Table highlights total denominator of children eligible by 5yrs who have and have not received any dose of MMR by 5yrs based off Q2 COVER data.

- HRCH are providing MMR/Polio vaccination in priority schools and community clinics across 5 boroughs.
- Where possible, the polio imms team has been attending schools to administer MMR/Polio on the same day as the SAV teams administering flu to minimise disruption to the schools.
- The call centre has been calling parents of unvaccinated/under vaccinated children to offer a clinic appointment.
- Uptake of vaccinations remains poor.
- In total 144 children have been vaccinated this term in clinics and schools. 114 MMR and 101 vaccines containing polio administered.

COVER Data - [Cover of vaccination evaluated rapidly \(COVER\) programme 2022 to 2023: quarterly data - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cover-of-vaccination-evaluated-rapidly-cover-programme-2022-to-2023-quarterly-data)
www.gov.uk

Pre Campaign

- Start date was brought forward at short notice.
- EOI process was released for any community pharmacy to take part.
- Frontload of vaccine for sites was done with insufficient notice to provide proper consideration for clinic planning.
- Tech readiness for new sites was not in place.
- Finances were changed and then changed again.

Operational

- Training and assurance was not released at the same time
- Vaccine types were switched mid campaign
- Vaccine delivery does not work for everyone despite increased frequency
- Significant increase in number of sites taking part
- National algorithms do not take into account local booking systems or walk ins

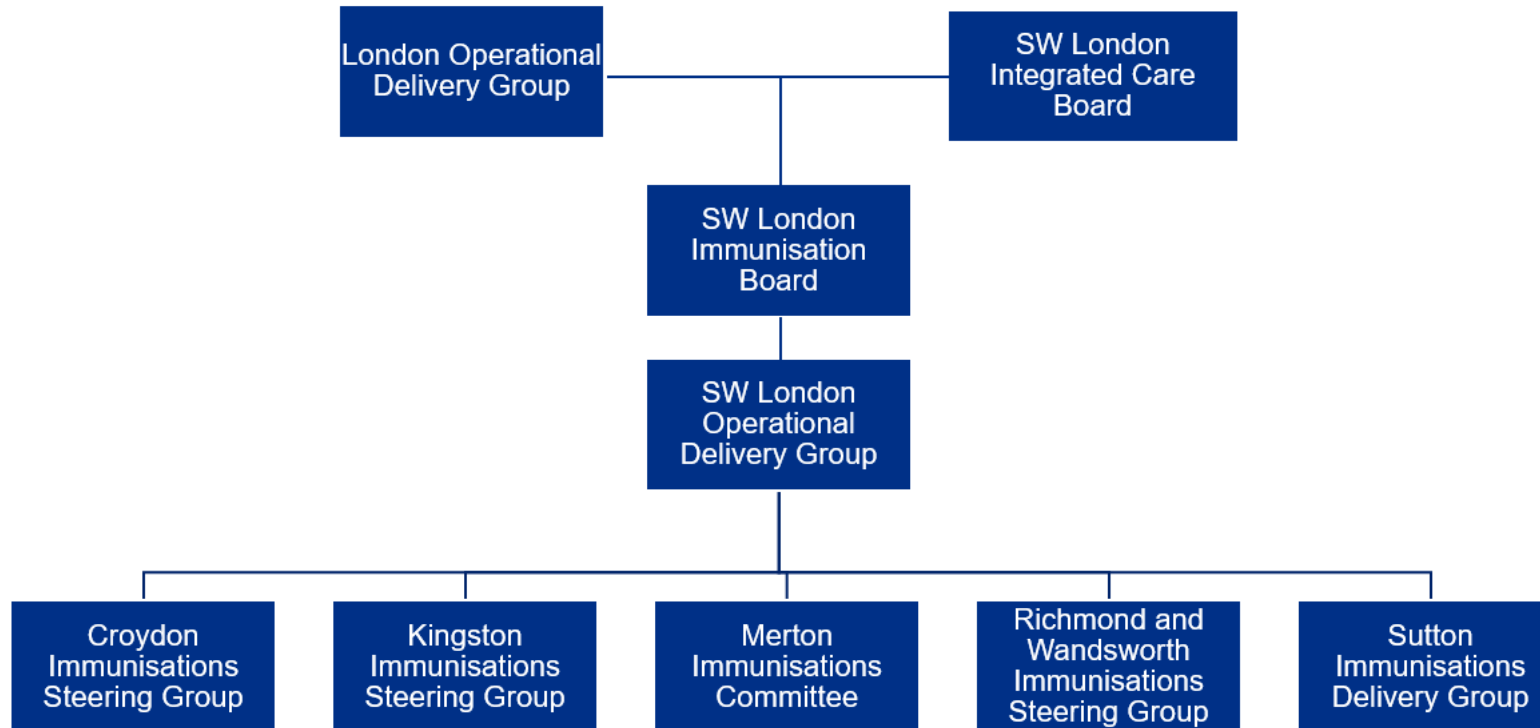
Communications and Engagement

- Early communications were not clear with changes to the start date for both the public and providers
- Local communications campaigns very good
- National campaign not launched until November
- A lot of local engagement with community groups carried out

Lessons Learned

- Look at how to manage the increased number of sites, are they all necessary going forward
- Needs to be a change to vaccine delivery system
- More time to add local knowledge to national front load suggestions
- Communications from national need to be clearer
- Increasing access/sites doesn't increase uptake in areas of vaccine hesitancy. Need to do something different to target these groups?

Governance and Local Immunisation Committees



January Onwards

- Covid Legal Framework ends 31 January 2024
- MMR Phase 2 campaign.
- Planning for Spring – awaiting JCVI decision
- Infant Second Covid doses continue
- Newly immunosuppressed under PSD

- Page 191
- Spring Covid Campaign** – Current thinking – awaiting confirmation
- April 15th Start for Care homes with others to follow the week after.
 - Cohorts the same as Spring 23
 - Vaccine - Cominarty

To be confirmed

- RSV
 - Chicken pox
- 

Immunisations – a look ahead

- New National Strategy published in December 2023
- Refreshed SW London Strategy and Borough plans by April 2024
- Using the Roving Team March-April to support immunisation uptake
- Roving team joining Health Visiting/School Nursing teams
- Immunisations Facilitators starting January/February 2024
- Training for front line Local Authority staff to support conversations with parents
- Training for Primary Care staff
- Changes to the ICS Immunisations staffing structures



Questions



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Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 25th January 2024

Wards: All Wards

Subject: Condition and Maintenance of Local Playgrounds

Lead officer: Dan Jones, Executive Director of Environment, Civic Pride and Climate

Lead member: Councillor Natasha Irons, Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate Change

Contact officer: Andrew Kauffman, Head of Parks Services

Recommendations:

- A. Provide the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Panel with the current condition of playgrounds in Merton and the councils maintenance regimes and funding in place for the future maintenance of the borough's playgrounds
 - B. Provide the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Panel with an update on recent and future improvements for playgrounds in Merton 2023-27 through an extensive Capital Growth Playground Improvement Program approved by council in April 2023.
 - C. Provide the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Panel with a summary of specific playground improvements within Merton park playgrounds that have considered elements of Natural Play, Eco Friendly safety surface, more accessible equipment and incorporating playground equipment made from sustainable materials.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The below report outlines the council's Greenspaces Teams responsibility in developing and managing a diverse range of play facilities across the borough of Merton's parks and open spaces.
- 1.2. Outlining the current condition and annual maintenance operations children's playgrounds within Merton's Parks and Open Spaces. See full park playground listing can be found on the council's website [All play areas | Merton Council](#).
- 1.3. Highlight councils commitment to the future of playgrounds in Merton and councils strategic improvement plan 2023-27 onwards.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The council's Greenspace Team is at the forefront of developing and managing a diverse range of play facilities across the borough. With the responsibility of 44 formal play areas in Merton's Parks The team ensures that these spaces cater to different community needs, reflecting a deep understanding of the evolving landscape of recreational spaces in urban environments.
- 2.2. These play facilities, each with its unique history and purpose, range from long-standing areas like Joseph Hood to those introduced as part of broader initiatives such as housing developments and school expansions. The diversity in the origin

of these playgrounds illustrates the council's adaptability and responsiveness to community needs over time. For instance, Dundonald Rec was developed in response to school expansion, while Rowan Park's facilities were added to meet the needs arising from housing development.

- 2.3. The council's commitment to investing in these facilities has been consistent, as demonstrated by the significant Play Pathfinder funding received in 2010-12.
- 2.4. Merton Council was one of just 30 councils in the UK to successfully bid for pathfinder status – meaning it scooped a total of £2.5 million from the government's Children, Schools, and Families department (DCSF) to pay for new play equipment. The project saw significant upgrades to 8no Merton Park Playgrounds between

PARK	UPRADE	Funding	
Donnelly Green	2011	£100K	
Dundonald Recreation Ground	2011	£100K	
Edenvale Rec	2011	£100K	
Garfield Rec	2011	£100K	
Mostyn Gardens	2012	£100K	
Oakleigh Way	2012	£100K	
Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields	2012	£100K	
Tamworth Farm Rec	2012	£100K	

Table 1: Merton Park Upgrades through DCSF Pathfinder Funding 2011-12



Park & Playground Category	Photographic Image
 <p>Dundonald Recreation Ground play area will be undergoing some improvement works over the next few months as part of a National scheme called Play pathfinder. This design is a product of consultation with local children and residents whose creativity and ideas have been brought to life.</p>	
<p>DCSF Pathfinder upgrade saw the playground increase from LEAP to NEAP and provide another destination facility for the East of Merton. Addition of sand and stone features to the play spaces provided a great play experience for playground users and features like the GL Jones round-about provided great DDA accessibility to the current playground.</p>	

Table 2: Dundonald Recreation Ground Pathfinder Improvement 2011

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1. Despite annual investment and notable funding above, it's noteworthy that some areas now require considerable investment for upgrades. But despite the aging infrastructure and changing safety standards, the playgrounds in Merton continue to offer valuable play experiences, validated by thrice-weekly inspections by Idverde and annual independent RoSPA inspections.
- 3.2. In 2023 the council Greenspace Team using the current ROSPA Annual Inspection Finding to build a more strategic picture of the Playground Infrastructure of Merton and prepare a Capital Growth Bid for future strategic investment to improve the Playground Infrastructure in Park between 2023-27 which lead to the council confirming this with a £1.75 million pound investment in play moving forward.
- 3.3. In terms of categorisation, playgrounds are identified as LAPs (Local Area for Play), LEAPs (Local Equipment Area for Play), and NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play). This classification system guides the planning and development of these areas to meet specific community requirements.
 - **LAPs** are designed for young children (up to age 6) and are ideally situated within a minute's walking distance along well-used pedestrian routes. They feature low-level equipment and have a minimum activity zone of 100m², often with seating for parents and carers.
 - **LEAPs** cater to children who are beginning to play independently, located within 5 minutes' walking distance. They provide a variety of play experiences with at least three distinct play items and have a minimum activity zone of 400m².
 - **NEAPs** are aimed at older children, located within 15 minutes' walking distance. They offer challenging play opportunities with at least five different play items, alongside an area for younger users. The minimum space for a NEAP is 1000m², including provisions for activities like 5-a-side football.

LAP	LEAP	NEAP
Brenley Park	Abbey Rec	Colliers Wood
Pitt Crescent	All Saints Rec	Donnelly Green
Lavender Park 1	Armfield Rec	Dundonald
Wimbledon Park 1	Canons Rec	Joseph Hood Recreation Ground
	Colliers Wood Rec	Lavender Park 2
	Colliers Wood Rec Shared	Long Bolstead Recreation Ground
	Cottenham Park	London Road PF
	Durnsford	Colliers Wood
	Durnsford Rec Shared	Donnelly Green
	Edenvale	Dundonald
	Garfield	Joseph Hood Recreation Ground
	Haydons Road	Lavender Park 2
	Joseph Hood Recreation Ground	Long Bolstead Recreation Ground
	King Georges	
	Lewis Road	
	Miles Road	
	Morden Park	
	Moreton Green	
	Mostyn Gardens 2	
	Oakleigh Way	
	Pollards Hill	
	Rock Terrace 1	
	Ravensbury Park	
	Rowan Road Park	
	Rowan Road Rec	
	Sherwood	
	Stanford Road	
	Wandle Park	
	Wimbledon Park 2	

Table 3: Merton Council 44 Playgrounds designations

- 3.4. These playgrounds not only serve as play areas but also as vital community hubs, fostering social interaction and physical activity among children of various ages. While all playgrounds offer unique benefits, some, like Wimbledon Park and Dundonald Rec, have gained higher popularity due to additional features that engage families for extended periods.
- 3.5. The Greenspaces Team has been proactively engaged in maintaining and developing playgrounds across the borough. Most recently, this has been best

demonstrated by the investment in the Multi-use Sports Areas (MUSA) and the redesign and investment in our traditional paddling pools with a view to broaden accessibility and appeal during both the summer period and throughout the year.

- Haydons Road Recreation Ground MUSA Upgrade
- Morden Recreation Ground MUSA Upgrade
- Colliers Wood Recreation Ground MUSA Upgrade
- Colliers Wood Recreation Ground MUGA Upgrade

Refer **Appendix:** Borough wide Multi Use Sports Area (MUSA) Improvements 2023-24

- 3.6. Thematic upgrades to paddling pools at several locations. These enhancements not only improve the physical infrastructure of the playgrounds but also add unique attractions that appeal to a broader audience and the ramped access and path surface improvements ensured that DDA accessibility to the facility was improved.
- 3.7. The team have also worked with the London Tree Officer Association (LTOA) to ensure the waste water from the Paddling Pools can be used to irrigate the boroughs New and Replacement Tree planting seasonally to make the facilities more sustainable moving forward. Colliers Wood Recreation Ground Themed Paddling Pool
- King Georges Recreation Ground Themed Paddling Pool
 - Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields Themed Paddling Pool
 - Rowan Recreation Ground 3D Themed Paddling Pool

Refer to **Appendix** Borough-Wide Themed Paddling Pool Improvements delivered between 2022-24

PLAYGROUND MAINTENANCE

- 3.8. Playgrounds within the borough are subject to rigorous maintenance schedules. Each playground receives thrice weekly inspections by service contractors from Idverde UK, who are trained in ROSPA Visual Inspection, this ensures that any immediate safety concerns are promptly addressed.
- 3.9. In addition to these daily inspections, the borough conducts independent, detailed assessments of playground safety annually through Independent Annual ROSPA to ensure the long-term safety of the site, equipment, and ancillary items. This will also meet legal and insurance responsibilities as well as complying with the requirements of the British and European Playground Safety Standards.
- 3.10. To support these ongoing maintenance efforts, the council has formulated a monthly playground maintenance plan in collaboration with service providers from Idverde. This plan is financially backed by two key funding source's set out in table below.

Annual Playground Maintenance Program	
Funding Source	Funding Value
Idverde annual maintenance program contribution	£45K
Merton Parks Investment Fund contribution (1/3 of overall budget)	£90K

Table 4: Playground Maintenance Budget

- 3.11. This financial investment underscores the council's dedication to maintaining the boroughs important playground facilities.
- 3.12. Please also refer to Section 11 of the report that outlines the councils Financial Resources invested in the future of play for playgrounds in Merton.
- 3.13. From the ROSPA Annual Inspection a report is generated for each site listing all items within the play area (including supporting furniture such as benches and seating), each item's is given an appraisal and an associated risk score is given, based on a traffic light system.
- 3.14. Any items identified as **Red** are addressed with immediate effect and any remaining items are addressed in order of priority on a sliding scale. Please note that risk is inherent in any playground, because without it, it limits the child's development opportunities both in terms of motor and cognitive skills. Where a risk is identified because of a physical defect it will be remedied accordingly, however, the same risk score can be allocated to a more challenging item.

Refer to **Appendix** EXAMPLE ROSPA Annual Playground Inspection Report Durnsford Road Recreation Ground.

PLAYGROUND DEVELOPMENT

- 3.15. Understanding the importance of engagement, the council acknowledges that while playgrounds are being maintained to a high standard, there has been limited engagement activity specifically targeting these areas.
- 3.16. To address this, the council is actively working to develop more facilities in collaboration with Park Friends and Residents Associations, linked to the councils Civic Pride Investing in Neighbourhoods Fund.
- 3.17. Notable successes using the above co-design approach in the last few years have included the below co-designed community play spaces linked to the Merton Council Neighbourhood CIL

Merton Council Neighbourhood CIL Playground Community Co-designed Improvements			
Site	Groups Involved		Funding
Colliers Wood Shared Use Playground	Colliers Wood Residents Association, Friends of Colliers Wood Rec, Single Gate Primary School		£65,000.00
Garfield Recreation Ground MUGA Area Improvement.	Friends of Garfield Rec, Garfield Primary School, and Make Space for Girls.		£75,000.00
Morden Park Junior Playground and Adventure Trail	Friends of Morden Park, Kids First (Disablement Charity) Merton College		£65,000.00
Moreton Green Outdoor Gym	Friends of Moreton Green, GLL Better Leisure Partnership Team		£20,000.00

Table 5: Neighbourhood CIL Co-designed Playspace Improvement Projects

Refer to **Appendix** Design and Photographic Improvements of the above Neighbourhood CIL Improvements.

- 3.18. This collaborative approach aims to enhance the appeal of playgrounds and encourage more young people and wider community to get involved co-designing these spaces.

- 3.19. Another particularly innovative playground engagement project was the National Heritage Lottery-funded playground at Canons House and Grounds, where the design process involved local children working with Studio Hardey, fostering community involvement and ownership in the new Canons House Playground.
- 3.20. The playground designers, Studio Hardie, ran four workshops to engage with children and parents about what they would like to see in the playground and to teach the community about how innovative playground design works.
- 3.21. One set of workshops was delivered at Cranmer Primary School with students and parents from Cranmer Primary and St. Peter and St. Paul Primary, while the second set was delivered with the Peer Mentors at the SHINE programme.
- 3.22. Visit Studio Hardie Project Page The Canons Playground - Studio Hardie - Studio Hardie



Images School Workshop
Engagement at Cranmer Primary and St Peter and St Pauls Primary



Images: Canons House Playground

Final Outcome from Childrens Imaginations

FUTURE PLAYGROUND DEVELOPMENT 2023-27

- 3.23. After a successful Capital Growth Bid in 2023 for Playground Improvements linked to the most recent ROSPA Annual Inspection a £1.75 Million pound future investments in the Merton's park playground was secured in April 2023 and over the next 5 years the council will be investing £350K per year in some of the boroughs ailing playground infrastructure, including both complete playground overhauls as well as improvements to Priority 1 playground equipment replacements & improvements to accessible play .
- 3.24. Please visit the Merton Playground and Paddling Pool Upgrade page on the councils website to see the visuals and consultation findings from the first 3 Playground Improvement Consultations held between August-October 2023 which over 150 children and families attended.

Playground and paddling pool upgrades | Merton Council

3.25. See table 6 below for the consultation dates and project commencement dates confirmed so far.

Year 1 Playground Upgrade Program		
Park	Consultation	Project Commencement
Rowan Recreation Ground	31 st August 2023	4 th March 2024
Miles Road Recreation Ground	1 st September 2023	22 nd April 2024
Lewis Road Recreation Ground	27 th October 2023	TBC: Scheme is being updated based on Consultation feedback

Table 6: Year 1 Playground and Paddling Pool Upgrade community consultation events



Image: Playground community engagement events @ Rowan Rec / Miles Road and Lewis Road

Refer to **Appendix** Playground Designs and Consultation Feedback Boards for Rowan Rec, Miles Road Rec, and Lewis Road Rec

3.26. The popularity of playgrounds varies, with some locations like Wimbledon Park, Dundonald Rec, Canons House and Grounds, Cottenham Park, and Pollards Hill attracting more visitors.

3.27. This variation is primarily due to additional features that these playgrounds offer, which keep families engaged for longer periods. These key playgrounds have become focal points for community activity, reflecting the council's success in creating spaces that are not just play areas but also community hubs.



Image: Wimbledon Park Destination Park for west of Merton



Image: Tamworth Rec Splash Pad Canons Heritage Lottery Upgrade Destination Parks for East of Merton

USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS

- 3.28. The Playground industry is very conscious of its affect on the environment and sustainability is now well represented in the numbers of product lines that utilise materials from sustainable sources, like the use of recycled car tyres in the production of the Play-Smart Jungle Mulch product that Merton Council now specify for its sustainable surface solutions in its playgrounds or the FSC Certified Timber that Merton have adopted in its Vince Adventure Trails.
- 3.29. The councils declaration of a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and the councils Climate Strategy and Action Plan adopted in 2020 and the Year 3 Climate Delivery Plan is listing how the councils Strategies including recently adopted Tree Strategy and Procurement Strategies ensures that sustainable practices and procurement is used to lessen the councils impact on the environment as well as ensuring the impact of climate change is mitigated against in councils developments.
- 3.30. Two good examples of these Climate Mitigation Strategies in Merton's Parks include the 2021-23 Wimbledon Park Lake Safety Project where the de-culverting of the Wimbledon Park Brook created an open channel in Wimbledon Park which was incorporated into the landscape of the park which was incorporated into the popular 18 hole Crazy Golf facility that now boasts an open stream with 2no recycled plastic bridges with swathes of conservation grass and meadows that have booth improved the landscape while protecting the surrounding properties from 1-150 year flood events



Image: Wimbledon Park Crazy Golf was integrated into the Wimbledon Park Lake Safety Projects

- 3.31. Secondly linked to the adoption of the boroughs first Tree Strategy in June 2023 the council were successful in a £15K external funding grant to the Mayor of London Cool Spaces Grant which saw the council plant 30 standard trees in the

boroughs Parks and Open Spaces to create Cool Spaces in the boroughs Parks and Street, which was part of a wider planted in 2022-23 as we seek to enhance the boroughs canopy cover.

3.32. Other Natural Features that the council has incorporated into its Parks Playground and Playscapes include Climbing Boulders like you will see at Ravensbury Park, Durnsford Rec and Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields. Planting



Image: Trees for Streets and Cool Spaces In Parks

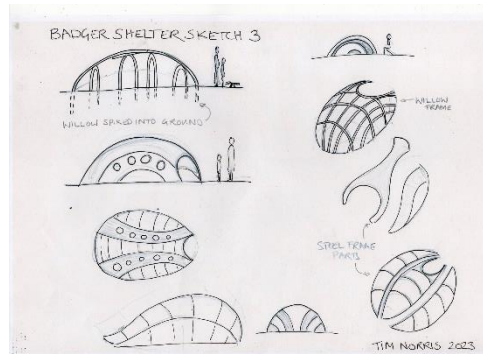


Image: Art in Merton Parks and Playscapes

4 NEW SAFETY SURFACES FOR PLAYGROUNDS

- 4.1. Due to the shrinkable clay in Merton, much of the early wet pour surfacing used by the Greenspaces service historically using concrete kerb edging and infill with wet pour EPDM Rubber has suffered from the clayshrinking and rubber being pulled away from the concrete curbs and creating trip hazard.
- 4.2. In 2022 the Greenspaces Team have trialled the use of recycled Jungle Mulch trowel down safety surface that can be laid without concrete edging at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields and Mostyn Gardens playground and we have been very happy with the results so far (pictures below).
- 4.3. The council Greenspaces Team will continue to monitor the Play Smart Jungle Mulch product with the added advantage that the product is tis made from recycled car tyres making it an environmentally friendly surfacing solution for our playground in Merton



Image: Play-smart recycled jungle mulch at multiple Merton Parks Playgrounds

5 MORE ACCESSIBLE EQUIPMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

- 5.1. Where possible the council will always aim to ensure accessibility in all new playground schemes. The main obstacle we find it physically being able to access equipment within play facilities. As with Morden Park we are ensuring that gate and supporting footpath infrastructure is sufficient to enable those with limited mobility to navigate the site.
- 5.2. There are certain items that we can and do consider for play facilities such as flush access roundabouts which we currently have at 8no park playground locations across Merton including Dundonald Rec, Durnsford Rec, Morden Park, Ravensbury Park and basket swings (which are easier for individuals to be transferred from their day chair to the apparatus) for which we have at 8no play locations across Merton including Canons House and Grounds, Garfield Park, Colliers Wood Rec shared use playground, Morden Park and Abbey Recreation Ground.



Image: Flush mounted DDA roundabout, Inclusive basket swing and swing seat, sound play

- 5.3. We have recently refurbished a number of the councils paddling pools; part of these developments involved creating new sloped access ramp to all Paddling Pools enabling wheelchair users and those with limited mobility the opportunity to both access and now enjoy the facility too.



Images: Ramps created in all paddling pools combining tactile wet pour paths and interactive graphics

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1. Not applicable for this report

7 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

7.1. Not applicable for this report

8 TIMETABLE

8.1. Not applicable for this report

9 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The Greenspaces Capital Investment Programme is focused on three key areas: enhancing civic pride, building a sustainable future, and developing a Borough of Sport. These initiatives contribute to improving the quality of life for residents. The programme outlines the ambitious investment plans for our valued parks, playgrounds, and greenspaces.

The programme outlines a total investment of £4,879,862 in various projects relating to the development of parks, playgrounds, and sports facilities for the benefit of children and young people. Key projects involve new water play features, park enhancements, sports drainage improvements, and multi-use sports areas. Investments also cover playground upgrades, green flag improvement programmes, and park security measures to help make sure these sites are protected. These planned investments reflect the Council's commitment to meeting current community needs while preparing for the future.

Capital Investments	Budget 2023-24	Budget 2024-25	Budget 2025-26	Budget 2026-27	Budget 2027-28	Budget 2028-29
Parks Investment	£273,530	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000	£1,473,530
New water play feature Wimb Pk	£87,430	£-	£-	£-	£-	£87,430
Paddling Pool Borough Wide	£33,390	£-	£-	£-	£-	£33,390
Morley Park Enhancements	£19,370			£-	£-	£19,370
Sports Drainage	£66,970	£222,000	£-	£-	£-	£288,970
Multi Use Sports Areas	£140,690	£-	£-	£-	£-	£140,690
Green Spaces Bridges and Structures	£115,000	£81,000	£80,000	£-	£-	£276,000
Playground Priority Upgrades Prog	£350,000	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000	£1,550,000
New Green Flag Improvement Prog	£76,430	£130,000	£100,000	£-	£-	£306,430
Existing Green Flag Impr Prog	£50,000	£75,000	£50,000	£-	£-	£175,000
Parks Security - Illegal incursions	£95,000	£30,000	£50,000	£-	£-	£175,000
Morden Park Playground	£75,530	£-	£-	£-	£-	£75,530
Durnsford Road Recreation Ground	£44,770	£-	£-	£-	£-	£44,770
Garfield Rec MUGA refurb	£120,000	£-	£-	£-	£-	£120,000
Green Gym for Moreton Green	£31,252	£-	£-	£-	£-	£31,252
Cannizaro Park Safety	£82,500	£-	£-	£-	£-	£82,500
						£4,879,862

10 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. Not applicable for this report

11 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

11.1. Not applicable for this report

12 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1. Not applicable for this report

13 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1. Not applicable for this report

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

Appendix Name	Appendix Details
Borough wide multi use sports area improvements (MUSA) 2022-23	Improvements made to Haydons Road Rec, Colliers Wood Rec, and Morden Rec 2022-23
Borough wide themed Paddling Pool Improvements 2023-24	Improvements made to Colliers Wood, Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields, King Georges Rec, Rowan Recreation Ground 2023-24
ROSPA Annual Inspection Report Example	Durnsford Road Recreation Ground January 2023.
Design and Photographic Improvements to Neighbourhood CIL Schemes 2023-24	Colliers Wood Rec Shared Use Playground Garfield Road Rec, Morden Park, Moreton Green Outdoor Gym
Playground Improvement Program 2023-27	Playground Design and Feedback Boards from consultation at Rowan Rec, Miles Road, and Lewis Road

15 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1. Not applicable for this report

Haydons Road Rec MUSA: Before and After



Colliers Wood Rec MUGA: Before and After



Morden Rec MUGA: Before and After

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Colliers Wood Rec central MUGA Before and After





Colliers Wood Rec Paddling Pool



Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields Paddling Pool



King George's Playing Fields Paddling Pool



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Rowan Rec Paddling Pool



Morden Park Paddling Pool



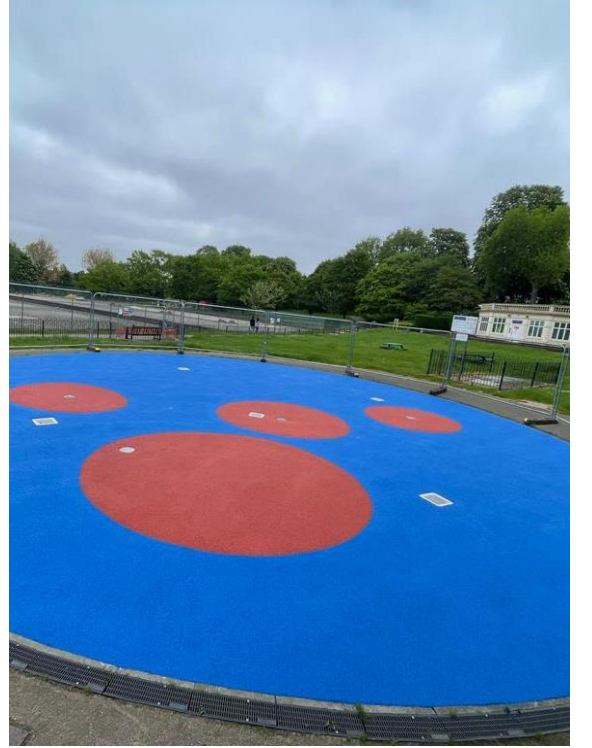
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Joseph Hood Rec Paddling Pool



Tamworth Rec Splash Pad



Wimbledon Park Splash Pad



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Colliers Wood Rec Shared-Use Playground



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Colliers Wood Rec Shared-Use Playground

GARFIELD RECREATION GROUND

London Borough of Merton



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PROJECT DETAILS:

- A** Existing goal ends to be repositioned
- B** Existing foliage
- C** Existing pathways
- D** ACO Drainage & small soakaway
- E** Tarmac laid over MOT type 1 & defined with PCC edging laid to 1:100 fall to ACO Drain
- F** Bonded Rubber Mulch with stone bases laid to appropriate free fall heights
- G** Thermoplastic line markings for football & basketball
- H** Mounds up to 1m High to be formed from excavated spoil
- I** Tarmac pathway over MOT type 1 & defined with block edging
- J** 1.5m Mowing strip buffer for maintenance

Broxap
Weyburn Curved Bench with
3x Planters
Code: BX14 BSP



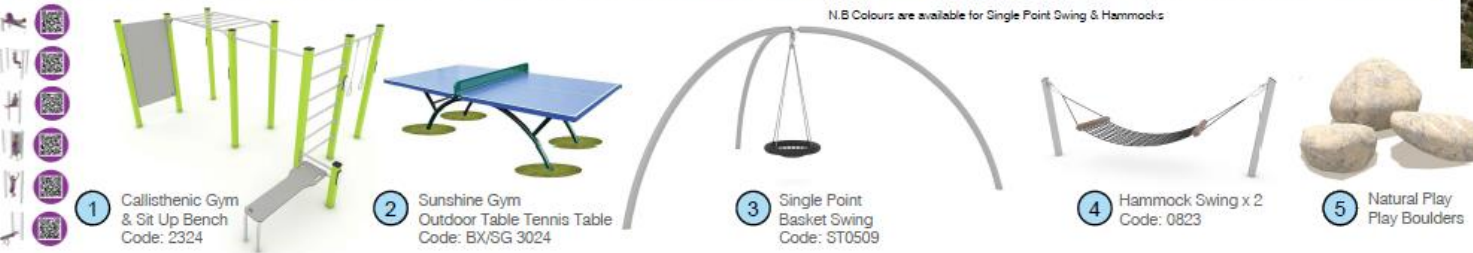
Proposed:
Natural Play
Fallen Log Tree Trunks



David Ogilvie
KC Bench Seat
Code: KC1180



Broxap
Derby E Litter Bin with
Seagull Flaps
Code: BX45G 2550-E



N.B Colours are available for Single Point Swing & Hammocks

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Project	GARFIELD_RECREATION_GROUND	Date	1:100@A1
Client	LR_OP_MERTON	Drawing No.	020
Issue	020	Date	15/04/2023
Author	020	Checked	020

GAREFIELD Recreation Ground NCIL Project

Multi Use Play Area and Space for Girls

BEFORE



AFTER



GAREFIELD Recreation Ground

Multi Use Play Area and Space for Girls





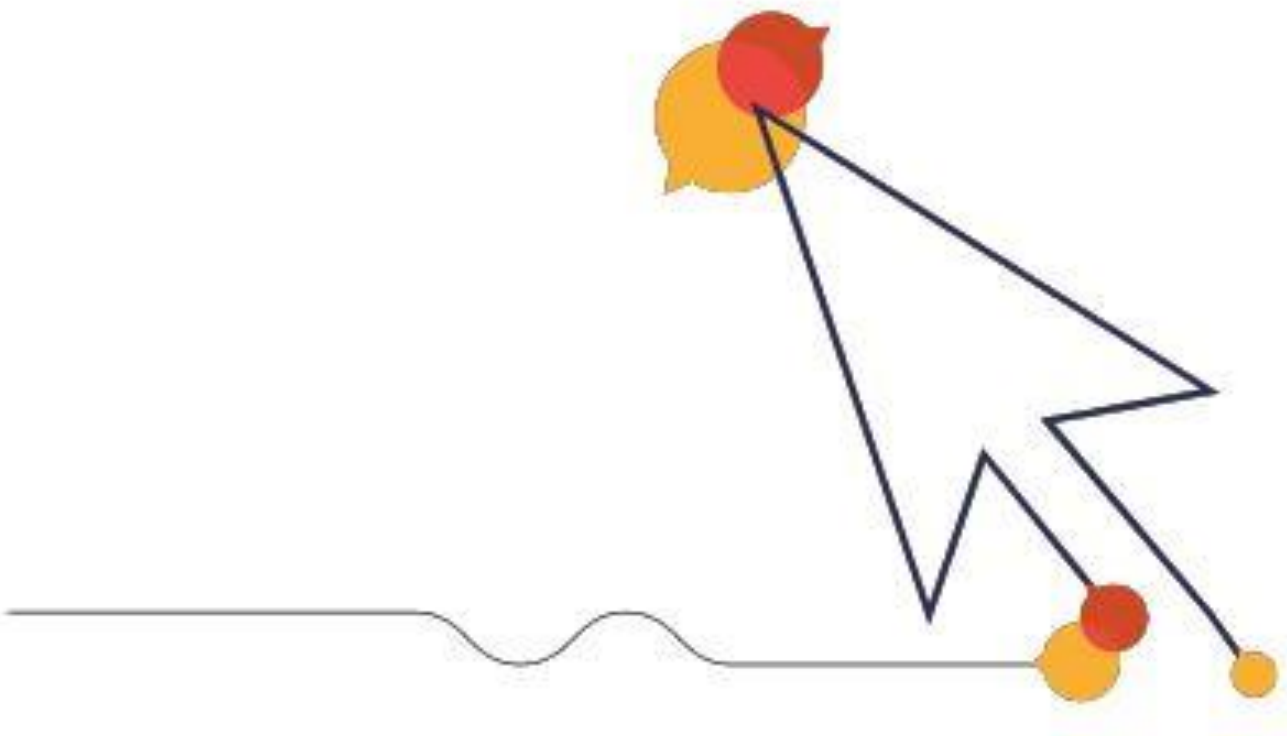
Safety Inspection Report

Annual Inspection

Durnsford Road Rec. Play Area

London Borough of Merton (Parks)

07 December 2023



Playsafety Ltd is licensed by RoSPA to trade as RoSPA Play Safety

Swing - Toddler - 1 Bay 2 Seat

Manufactured by (Unknown)



Standards:

EN 1176-1:2017+A1:2023, EN 1176-2:2017

The item is not compliant with the requirements of the relevant standards. The surfacing meets with the requirements of the relevant standards.

Maintenance Finding

Description

Trip points on the surface.

Tasks

Remove trip points.

Risk level:

Medium

Risk score:

8

Finding Photos



Play Train Station Area - Toddler

Manufactured by Kompan Ltd



Standards:

EN 1176-1:2017+A1:2023

The item and its surfacing (where applicable) meet with the requirements of the relevant standards.

Maintenance Finding

Description

Delamination of wood.

Tasks

Repair.

Note

Throughout. Slide side in particular, needs attention.

Risk level:

Medium

Risk score:

9

Finding Photos



Multiplay - Junior

Manufactured by Wicksteed Leisure Ltd



Surface: Rubber - Mulch - Bonded

Standards:



EN 1176-1:2017+A1:2023

The item is not compliant with the requirements of the relevant standards. The surfacing meets with the requirements of the relevant standards.

Maintenance Finding

Description

Chain link connectors notched.

Tasks

Replace worn parts.

Note

Eye bolts on clatter bridge.

Risk level:

Low

Risk score:

6

Finding Photos



Rowan Road Recreation Ground Community Engagement

"3D Shapes are cool, love the tunnels" "Cannot wait!"
 "Nice & bright, colourful & inviting"
 "Keep the Paddling Pool – very popular during the warmer months, happy to see it remain"
 "We love high ropes & climbing"
 "Trampolines are always fun"
 "Space on grass for Outdoor Gym?"
 "Shade &/or Trees need to be considered"



There should be swings and things that should cover all the ages of children from toddler to active kids.

"As many swings as possible, lots of swings on show, that's great!"

"Zip Wire at the park down the road is broken but they're always a winner!"

"We love the theming"

"Lots of different swings"

"Existing benches looking tired & too low, please could these be replaced"

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"The benches should be little bit higher and benches need repairing"

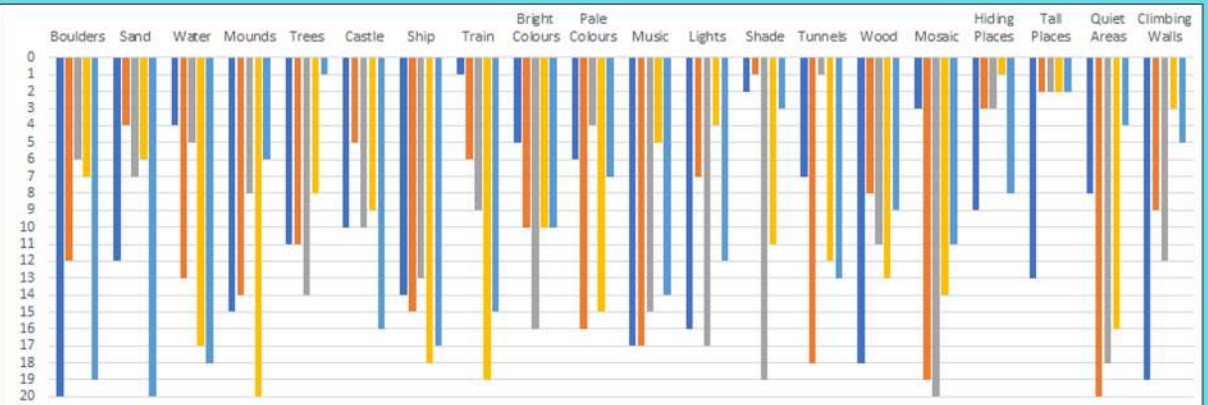
"Really happy with it all!"

"Amazing, looks great, just what we need, wouldn't change anything, just happy to see the investment in the park, long overdue and if this is completed in October time that would be extremely quick and it would make a huge difference".

"Big net is awesome!"

"Overhead bars would be great"

Chart results of favourite Items



Rowan Road Community Engagement Results

Responses from residents, parents & children who attend:

- Granton Primary School
- Woodmansterne School
- Liberty Primary School
- Others N/A
- Ages <1-15 yrs

Lewis Road Recreation Ground Community Engagement

"Lewis road is too run down. New design looks really cool!"

"Nature area sounds fantastic place for some quieter time. The sports area is a good idea for teenagers & to keep them away from the play park."

"Lots for different age groups, seating for parents and a safe & separate dog area."

"Would like bright colours, zipwire, climbing and lots of swings."

"Really happy with how the designs look, look amazing!"

"Our ideal playground would have a zipline, roundabout and swings!"

"The main units look really great and exciting, love the huge slides and the rope play!"

"Lewis Road Playground is the worst place to play, I don't like the floor, slippery and uneven."

"An ideal playground would be well maintained, mixed ages/levels, safe, practical and long lasting."

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"Designs look very impressive, very much looking forward to the much-needed update, this part of Merton don't usually get this attention."

"The main units look really great and exciting, love the huge slides and the rope"

"We like Basket swing, things that spin, rope group swings, concerned the shelter gazebo would invite anti-social behaviour."

"Would be a good idea to include an inclusive swing seat if possible."

"Great it will all be on surface area so no trip areas."

"Inclusive roundabout is a really nice addition & basket swing is my favourite!"

"Would like plenty of seating."

"Once this is done will be the best place to play!"

"More bins & benches"



Chart results of favourite Items



1. Tube Slides!

2. Tree Houses!

3. Bright Colours!

4. Trees 5. Tunnels

Responses from residents, parents & children who attended:

- Haslemere Primary School
- Liberty Primary School
- Harris City Academy
- Ricards Lodge High School
- Merton Abbey Primary School
- Home Schooled
- Others N/A
- Ages <1-12 yrs
- Adults 36-59

"Don't think wood is a good idea here, splinters, no trip hazards."

"Think the additional phased areas would be a much-needed inclusion so as to entice older children away from the play area."



Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 25 January 2024

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: Tim Wallder – Interim 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

- 2.1 Since my last update in November we welcome two new heads of service.
- 2.2 We were sad to see the departure of Rachel Bowerman as head of School Improvement but her replacement, Clare Dudman, has already started. Clare comes with a wealth of senior experience, most recently in Gloucestershire and Lambeth.
- 2.3 Secondly, Jo Ross, the new permanent Head of Family Support and Safeguarding is due to start in Merton on 22 January. Jo comes with a lot of experience from her time holding similar positions in Wandsworth and Croydon. A big thank you goes out to Rorie Ovens and Kay Dove who have been acting up from their Service Manager positions to cover the vacancy since October.
- 2.4 The rest of this report highlights some of the Department's key activity since the last report in November 2023.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection

- 2.5 From 20 November to 8 December 2023 Merton received a Joint Targeted Area Inspection of our safeguarding partnerships response to Serious Youth Violence.

- 2.6 Inspectors fed back that they had seen a strong and effective partnership working to safeguard and support children affected by serious youth violence in Merton but have also highlighted some areas for improvement to help us strengthen this further and ensure a consistent multi-agency response to some of our most vulnerable children through their journey.
- 2.7 Our letter of findings will be published on 12th February 2024, after which we will respond with a plan of action on how we will keep working to improve our offer

Schools

School Ofsted inspections

- 2.8 The inquest into the death of headteacher Ruth Perry from Caversham Primary in Reading, concluded on the 7th December 2023, issuing a 'Prevention of Future Deaths Report'. This stated that the Ofsted inspection was a contributory factor in Mrs Perry's death. The coroner gave the inspectorate until the 7th February to respond in writing about the actions it will take to reduce the likelihood of a similar incident occurring. As a result of this ruling, schools were able to decline an Ofsted inspection during the last week of the autumn term. All inspections have been suspended until the 22nd January whilst inspectors have training in identifying signs of headteacher distress during inspections.
- 2.9 Since the start of this academic year, we have had four inspections in Merton, with one report published since the last committee. Cranmer Primary has been judged to be good.

School Attendance

- 2.7 Rates of school attendance in Merton continue to be better than national and outer London averages in primary and secondary schools, and in the Pupil Referral Unit. Autumn term indicative data shows Merton's attendance is improving but it is still approximately 2% below pre pandemic levels. Improving attendance remains a key strategic priority for the Council, with an overarching approach that 'Attendance is Everybody's Business', ensuring that there is a multi-agency approach to the issue.
- 2.8 Merton's plan to improve attendance is monitored by the Prevention & Early Intervention subgroup of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership. The subgroup has overseen a multi-agency attendance self-assessment. This self-assessment was scrutinised by a Department of Education Attendance Advisor who spent a whole day in Merton in November. Feedback from this visit highlighted many examples of best practise in how we are tackling this issue reflecting post-pandemic challenges. Feedback also reflected positively on the way we constantly challenge ourselves to achieve more. Follow up meetings have been undertaken with the Education Welfare Service and the Virtual School to look at how they work to support groups of vulnerable children.
- 2.9 We are developing an action plan to further reduce the number of lessons that children are missing and support children and families to thrive in school

Stanford Primary School

- 2.10 The Secretary of State has made the finalised decision to close Stanford Primary School at the end of the summer term (August 2024). The decision to seek permission from the Department for Education was taken by PACE Academy Trust due to a consistent and significant decrease in pupil numbers that has made the school financially unsustainable. The council understands this has been a very difficult decision by the Trust.
- 2.11 Merton Council has an important role in facilitating alternative school places for the children and we are determined to do all we can to make this transition as easy as possible for families. The council has been working closely with Stanford School and will continue to work with the school and parents to ensure alternative school places are made available for all pupils presently on roll. Stanford Primary School has an ARP (Additional Resource Provision for children with special educational needs). We have agreed with the governors of Liberty Primary School that they will open a new ARP for the start of term in September 2024 to ensure these children presently at Stanford Primary School can be offered a directly comparable school place.

Secondary school admissions

- 2.12 Secondary school offer day is 1 March 2024. Officers now have the preference information and, despite the cohort of children from primary schools being a lower number, we are seeing an increase in preferences to our secondary schools, reflecting the increased parental confidence in the quality of our secondary school. We therefore expect secondary numbers to remain at a stable high number for September 2024.

Early Years

- 2.13 National campaigns have been launched in the New Year to promote the new early education and childcare entitlements from April 2024. Parents must apply for their code via the HMRC this term, for securing their free place from April. This has been promoted via the resident email, through our own internal communications for staff, via the Family Hub Facebook page and via our professional networks. We will continue to promote during the roll out phase of the next 18 months.
- 2.14 In December we shared a childcare survey with residents, via the resident email, to gain views on the suitability and availability of childcare in Merton. Findings will be used to inform 2024 Sufficiency Assessment of the local childcare market and following on action plan.
- 2.15 In addition to the childcare survey for residents, we shared a survey with local early years providers to gain an understanding of their preparedness and ability to deliver the new entitlements. Findings of this survey will also inform the 2024 sufficiency assessment and action plan.

Early Help

- 2.16 The funding for the transformation programme for Family Hubs has now been extended until end of the summer term 2024. This means we can continue to embed and develop our approach, whilst planning for the cessation of the

programme from September. This will involve ensuring the legacy of the transformation through the ongoing reshaping of current arrangements so that we can deliver and sustain a Family Hub approach within local communities.

Supporting Vulnerable Children

Supporting Vulnerable Children with Education, Health and Care Plans

- 2.17 As at the 31st December 2023, Merton maintained 2563 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), an increase of 92 in comparison with the same time last year. A smaller growth in the number of EHCPs the Local Authority maintains is being continued from previous years, as a result of the robust decision-making processes that have been implemented since 2022 and the work being undertaken in the Post 16 EHCP Team regarding ceasing plans where appropriate.
- 2.18 In this calendar year (January to December 2023), the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service (SENDIS) has received 464 requests for an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA), representing a small increase in comparison with the previous year.
- 2.19 The EHCNA process should be completed within 20 weeks. Over the course of the calendar year, and excluding exceptions, 55% of EHCNAs were issued within the statutory 20 weeks. This is a decrease in timeliness in comparison with last year, but Merton performance remains above the latest national average (51%). As outlined in previous reports, this lower local performance is due to a combination of factors which include delays in receiving professional advice; challenging staffing issues across education, health and social care (mirroring a national issue); and the increase in demand for EHCNA's. A robust action plan has been developed to address the factors impacting on timeliness.
- 2.20 In the calendar year 2023, 78 children and young people with an EHCP have moved into Merton and their plan has been adopted; a greater number (150) moved out of the Borough.
- 2.21 In the calendar year 2023 the Local Authority has discontinued 408 EHC Plans, including the 150 referenced above, where young people have moved out of the Borough.
- 2.22 The SEN Team are now undertaking data cleansing of all 2023 data in preparation for submitting the Government's SEN 2 Return which is the Special Educational Needs Survey submitted yearly by all Local Authorities to the Department for Education. SEN2 collects data about children for whom the local authority has responsibility for the management of the SEN processes, under the 1996 Education Act and the 2014 Children and Families Act. The information collected via the annual SEN2 survey form provides the major source of data collected on children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. It is the only source of data on the totality of EHC plans maintained by individual local authorities.

Safety Valve and Special School provision

- 2.23 The DfE has announced the High Needs budget allocations for 2024/25 – the uplift is only 2% compared to the previous year. This will make managing the High Needs budget more challenging next year than expected.
- 2.24 The DfE announced approval for the new special free school in Merton on 23rd August 2023. There are two preferred trust providers and we have been invited to participate in the interview process although the final decision on the choice of provider rests with the DfE. The agreement to a suitable site is still ongoing.

Children Social Care & Youth Inclusion.

- 2.25 Regarding the national reforms to Children’s Social Care (Stable Homes Built on Love) the DfE have published ‘Children’s Social Care National Framework’ which is statutory guidance setting out the purpose, principles for practice and expected outcomes of children’s social care. They have also published information on the indicators which will make up the new National Children’s Social Care Dashboard. They are holding briefings on the new guidance over the coming weeks and discussions will be held regionally and locally around what this guidance means for services locally and how we can start to adapt. Merton currently has a bid submitted to take part in the 2nd round of pathfinders which we will be notified of at the end of January.
- 2.26 Following a review of our In House Fostering Out of Hours Service, we have amended it to provide a better service to our foster carers. The most significant change is enabling fostering social workers to carry out visits to support foster homes in moments of crises which will provide greater stability to our children in care.
- 2.27 There were a number of events for care experienced young people leading up to the new year. To celebrate National Care Leavers week in November, staff took a group of care experienced young people out for a meal at Spice Village in Tooting, and for their festive celebration they went to Wimbledon Cinema to see the award-winning film – Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Our foster carers also celebrated the festive season with their annual Christmas dinner at Merton Registry Office, which was a big success. The Metropolitan Police provided us with gifts to distribute to children in need and who are on child protection plan. These were then wrapped and delivered by social work teams. Christmas cards from staff and Councillors were also delivered to all Care Experienced Young people.

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Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 25th January 2024

Wards: All

Subject: Performance Report

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: Tim Wallder, Interim 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. This report summarises the performance information for 2023/24, up to 30th November 2023, as set out in the accompanying document, the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2023/24.

1.2. As reported at June’s Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the Performance Index has been updated with some additional/amended target measures, as well as a selection of new indicators for care experienced young people.

2 DETAILS

Exception Report

2.1. The following indicators are marked as amber or red.

No	Indicator	Rating	Service Commentary
3a & 3b	% of Education, Health and Care (EHCP) Plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale	R	This indicator is RAG rated Red with 56% of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks against a new target of 65% (increased from 60% in 22-23). However, our performance remains above the national average in this area (in 2022 the England average was 50.7%). Nevertheless, we continue to scrutinise this data regularly and work with partners to address variability in performance.
8	% of children subject of a CP plan who had a CP visit	R	This indicator is Red as performance at November was 86% compared to our target of 90%. However, this is back on

	within timescales in the month		an upward trajectory from the October performance.
13	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks	R	Performance improved in quarter 1 increasing from 25 weeks from 52 to 38 weeks. The data for September 2023 had not yet been released when this report was being prepared. See further contextual information in the commentary section below.
17	Stability of placements of Looked After Children (aged under 16) - length of placement (in care 2.5 years, placement 2 years)	R	<p>The target for this indicator was increased to 71% from 65% following performance consistently above target during 2022/23 and to bring in line with regional performance at 71%. Currently it is RAG rated Red following a dip in performance in June. Performance has improved from 63% to 68% and the trajectory is good.</p> <p>This indicator relates to a small cohort, as such, small variances can often result in a seemingly high % change. Placement stability is tracked in weekly oversight meetings.</p>
28	Secondary school surplus places	R	2023/24 school census information is not yet available so 2022/23 is still provided. This is red as the level of surplus places for Year 7 is so low but is expected to change in future years as lower numbers flow through from primary schools.
33a	% of care leavers (aged 19-21) in suitable accommodation	A	<p>The indicator is currently RAG rated Amber as performance is at 93%, just below the 95% target. Merton's current performance is better than the national and regional averages.</p> <p>Merton has a monthly NEET panel to track this group of care leavers.</p>
33b	% of care leavers (aged 19-21) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	A	<p>The indicator is currently RAG rated Amber as performance is at 33% compared to a 32% target. However, Merton's current performance is better than the national average and is on an improved trajectory, achieving amber for the first time this reporting year.</p> <p>Merton has a monthly NEET panel to track care leavers not in ETE.</p>

Commentary

Indicator 13: Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks

2.2. Nationally, the duration of care proceedings has increased. This is a result of court closures during the pandemic.

2.3. A range of influences impact on the duration of court proceedings – some of which are outside of the authority’s immediate control. These include court availability, the availability and timeliness of expert witness input, and the desire to engage effectively with the wider family network to explore alternatives (where appropriate and safe to do so).

2.4. The service has monthly court and PLO tracking meetings including legal representatives. On a quarterly basis, representatives from the Children and Families Court Advisory Services (Cafcass) attend. These meetings allow the authority to raise concerns about timeliness. A permanent court progression officer is now in place with positive anecdotal feedback on her impact.

2.5. Merton continues to receive positive feedback from Merton’s link judge on the Council’s PLO work.

3 AMENDMENTS, CORRECTIONS AND DATA CAVEATS

Amendments, Corrections and Data Caveats

3.1. We are currently unable to report against the following indicators:

No	Indicator	Service Commentary
6	% of quorate attendance at CPP conferences	Following amendments to the system workflow, as part of the Mosaic Repair Project, a report has now been built to extract this data and we are currently in the process of user acceptance testing.
23	% outcome of School Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness)	The publication schedule for School Ofsted inspections fits around the academic year and is not currently available. Updated outcomes will be available for the next report.
29	Youth services participation rate	This data is no longer collected nationally, and the indicator is on hold until new guidance is published later this year.

Appendices – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2023/24.

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Performance Index 2023/24

				Benchmarking															
No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2023/24	2022/23	England	London	Year	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Assessments																			
1	Number of Early Help Assessments undertaken by the Authority	Monthly	Not a target measure	165	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22	5	16	9	24	22	18	14	13	12	6	16	10
							22/23	6	8	15	11	14	12	13	21	19	12	19	10
							23/24	17	22	12	17	10	15	18	21				
2	% of Single Assessments authorised within the statutory 45 days	Monthly	91%	96.8%	82.5% (DfE 2022/23)	85.4% (DfE 2022/23)	21/22	97%	92%	85%	66%	87%	85%	93%	94%	90%	99%	94%	90%
							22/23	91%	94%	92%	97%	94%	94%	94%	93%	89%	82%	90%	96%
							23/24	97%	99%	91%	98%	95%	93%	93%	95%				
3a	% of Education, Health and Care (EHCP) Plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale (Monthly)	Monthly	65%	81% (2022 calendar year)	50.7% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2023 for the 2022 calendar year)	54.7% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2023 for the 2022 calendar year)	21/22	62%	56%	74%	42%	79%	87%	100%	76%	100%	100%	100%	78%
							22/23	67%	67%	67%	60%	95%	82%	92%	92%	100%	100%	69%	56%
							23/24	74%	41%	64%	38%	62%	61%	41%	29%				
3b	% of Education, Health and Care (EHCP) Plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale (YTD Calendar Year)	YTD	65%	81% (2022 calendar year)	50.7% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2023 for the 2022 calendar year)	54.7% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2023 for the 2022 calendar year)	21/22	63%	61%	64%	61%	63%	66%	68%	69%	71%	100%	100%	89%
							22/23	81%	76%	75%	71%	77%	77%	79%	80%	81%	100%	79%	69%
							23/24	70%	63%	63%	59%	59%	60%	58%	56%				
Child Protection																			
4	Rate of Child Protection Plans started per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (Monthly)	Monthly	Not a target measure	43.2	54.3 (DfE 2022/23)	48.8 (DfE 2022/23)	21/22	37.1	36.3	32.5	30	30.8	27.8	28.1	26.8	24.9	22	22	34.8
							22/23	21.2	24.1	23.3	21.6	24.7	25.3	26.4	25.3	26.6	27	31.6	34.8
							23/24	35.4	33.5	35.2	34.6	33.9	32.7	33.5	33.1				
5	Number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan - as at end of month	Monthly	Not a target measure	158	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22	176	172	154	142	146	132	133	127	119	105	105	166
							22/23	101	115	111	103	118	121	126	121	126	129	151	166
							23/24	169	160	168	165	162	156	160	158				
6	% of quorate attendance at child protection conferences	Quarterly	95%	N/A	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22			N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A	
							22/23			N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A	
							23/24			N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A	
7	% of reviews completed within timescale for Children with Child Protection Plans	Monthly	95%	100%	88.1% (DfE 2022/23)	91.6% (DfE 2022/23)	21/22	100%	97%	95%	94%	95%	98%	100%	100%	97%	100%	100%	98%
							22/23	98%	94%	95%	96%	97%	98%	98%	98%	94%	91%	95%	96%
							23/24	92%	88%	88%	95%	94%	99%	97%	99%				
8	% of Children subject of a CP Plan who had a CP visit within timescales in the month	Monthly	90%	96%	Unavailable	82% (Q2 D2I dataset 2023/24)	21/22	97%	97%	95%	93%	99%	91%	89%	96%	82%	90%	94%	96%
							22/23	94%	86%	90%	91%	88%	95%	90%	93%	91%	94%	87%	93%
							23/24	90%	88%	86%	84%	76%	90%	82%	86%				
9a	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time (within 2 years)	Monthly	<20%	NEW indicator	11.2% (EOY D2I dataset 2022/23)	10% (Q2 D2I dataset 2023/24)	21/22												
							22/23												
							23/24	17%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%				
9b	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time (Ever)	Monthly	<20%	25.1%	23.6% (DfE 2022/23))	19.8% (DfE 2022/23)	21/22	16%	14%	16%	13%	14%	14%	13%	12%	11%	12%	14%	25%
							22/23	14%	19%	24%	24%	25%	24%	25%	25%	24%	28%	26%	25%
							23/24	26%	22%	23%	23%	22%	21%	19%	20%				
Looked After Children																			
10	Rate of Children looked-after per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (snapshot) (Monthly)	Monthly	Not a target measure	26	70.5 (DfE 2022/23)	51.2 (DfE 2022/23)	21/22	30	30.6	31	30.6	30	29.7	29.1	28.9	27.6	26.4	26.4	25.6
							22/23	26.4	26.2	25.1	25.6	25.8	25.8	25.3	26.2	25.3	25.8	26	25.6
							23/24	26	26.2	26.8	27	27.6	27	27.9	29.1				
11	Number of Looked After Children as at end of month	Monthly	Not a target measure	123	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22	142	145	147	145	142	141	138	137	132	126	126	122
							22/23	126	125	120	122	123	123	121	125	121	123	124	122
							23/24	124	125	128	129	132	129	129	139				
12	Number of UASC children and young people	Monthly	48 (Agreed Quota)	26	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	21/22	23	21	20	19	19	22	22	23	23	18	19	19
							22/23	19	19	19	20	19	23	22	22	23	22	24	25
							23/24	26	26	28	27	26	28	25	27				

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2022/23	Benchmarking															
				2022/23	England	London	Year	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
13	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks	Quarterly	26 weeks	53	44 (CAFCASS Avg Q1 2023/24)	Unavailable	21/22			42			69			39			41
							22/23			57			64			25			52
							23/24			38			N/A						
14	% of Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales	Monthly	96%	94%	Unavailable	95% (Q4 2022/23)	21/22	99%	96%	94%	94%	97%	96%	96%	96%	98%	98%	97%	94%
							22/23	94%	94%	96%	96%	98%	96%	97%	98%	97%	99%	98%	94%
							23/24	85%	90%	48%	87%	86%	100%	95%	96%				
15	% of Looked After Children participating in their reviews in month (excludes children aged 0 - 4)	Monthly	Not a target measure	92%	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22	94%	88%	91%	100%	83%	73%	88%	86%	90%	94%	100%	87%
							22/23	100%	80%	93%	92%	91%	100%	100%	100%	74%	100%	77%	100%
							23/24	90%	80%	100%	100%	75%	88%	95%	100%				
16	Stability of placements of Looked After Children - number of placements (3 or more in the year)	Quarterly	9%	7%	10% (DfE 2022/23)	10% (DfE 2022/23)	21/22			14.9%			12.7%			11.4%			10.3%
							22/23			7.5%			7.3%			5.8%			6.6%
							23/24			4.7%			7.0%						
17	Stability of placements of Looked After Children (aged under 16) - length of placement (in care 2.5 years, placement 2 years)	Quarterly	71%	70%	Unavailable	61% (Q2 D2I dataset 2023/24)	21/22			48%			64%			70%			68%
							22/23			66%			71%			71%			70%
							23/24			63%			68%						
18	% of Looked After Children in foster placements who are placed with in-house foster carers	Quarterly	60%	59%	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22			63%			58%			62%			67%
							22/23			57%			61%			60%			61%
							23/24			61%			62%						
19	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	Quarterly	2 per quarter	6	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22			1			2			2			2
							22/23			1			2			1			2
							23/24			4			6						
20	Number of Looked After Children who were adopted (YTD)	Monthly	Not a target measure	3	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
							22/23	0	0	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	
							23/24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
21	Number of Looked After Children for whom agency Special Guardianship Orders were granted (YTD)	Quarterly	Not a target measure	1	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22			0			1			0			1
							22/23			0			0			1			1
							23/24			2			2						
Childrens Centres and Schools																			
22	% of total 0-5 year estimated Census 2011 population from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) whose families have accessed children's centre services (cumulative)	Annual	65%	47%	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22			12%			24%			25%			32%
							22/23			39%			46%			52%			47%
							23/24			85%			66%						
23	% outcome of School Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness)	Quarterly	95%	95%	87% (30/04/2022)	94% (30/04/2022)	21/22			95%			95%			95%			95%
							22/23			95%			95%			95%			95%
							23/24			95%			N/A						
24	Number of Primary* permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	Monthly	Not a target measure	0	4.9% (National exclusion statistics for AY 2019/20)	0.8% (National exclusion statistics for AY 2019/20)	21/22	<5	<5	<5	<5	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
							22/23	0	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	
							23/24	0	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0		
25	Number of Secondary* permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	Monthly	Not a target measure	19	28.5% (National exclusion statistics for AY 2019/20)	14.6% (National exclusion statistics for AY 2019/20)	21/22	<5	5	13	13	N/A	1	2	2	3	3	3	5
							22/23	5	6	7	7	N/A	1	4	9	11	12	16	19
							23/24	19	21	22	22	N/A	2	0	3				
26	Persistent absenteeism - All Schools (10% or more sessions missed)	Annual	21%	NEW indicator	22.3% (DfE AY Aut-Spr 2021/22)	18.8% (DfE AY Aut-Spr 2021/22)	21/22												19.3%
							22/23												19.2%
							23/24												
27	% of Reception year surplus places*** (calculated October and January)	Quarterly	5-10%	9.8%	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22			8.7%			11.1%			10.8%			11.6%
							22/23			11.6%			11.6%			9.7%			9.8%
							23/24			9.8%			9.8%						

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2022/23	Benchmarking															
				2022/23 (Provisional)	England	London	Year	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Young People and Services																			
28	% of Secondary school (Year 7) surplus places *** (calculated October and January)	Quarterly	5-10%	2.3%	Unavailable	Unavailable	21/22			5.6%		5.6%		3.0%				3.2%	
							22/23			3.2%		3.2%		2.4%				2.3%	
							23/24		● 2.3%		● 2.3%								
29	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Monthly	1.2%	1.1%	2.6% (2021/22)	1.5% (2021/22)	21/22	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.6%	1.4%	0.9%	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%
							22/23	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	1.2%	0.6%	1.1%	1.5%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%
							23/24	● 1.1%	● 1.1%	● 1.2%	● 1.3%	● 1.4%	● 1.1%						
30	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) education, employment or training status 'not known'	Monthly	Not a target measure	2.1%	2.2% (2021/22)	1.9% (2021/22)	21/22	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.6%	1.1%	12.8%	2.2%	1.2%	1.1%	0.9%	0.9%
							22/23	1.2%	1.4%	1.2%	1.5%	1.5%	No Data	11.3%	2.6%	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%
							23/24	0.8%	1.4%	1.3%	1.2%	1.5%	n/a	1.5%	N/A				
31	Number of First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 (cumulative)	Monthly	50	23	144 (rate per 100,000, 2022)	N/A	21/22	3	4	8	10	13	14	16	18	20	23	24	28
							22/23	0	2	4	5	8	10	11	12	17	18	18	23
							23/24	● 1	● 1	● 1	● 8	● 12	● 14	● 23	● 24				
32	Rate of proven re-offending by young people in the youth justice system - quarterly / annual (annual is 21/22)	Quarterly	41.8%	33% (Provisional Annual)	31.2% (2021/2022 YJB pub)	41.8% (2020/2021 YJB pub)	21/22			45.50%		45.50%		40.00%				52.90%	
							22/23			27.30%		28.60%		53.80%				38.10%	
							23/24		● 22.2%		● 22.2%								
33a	% of care leavers (aged 19-21) in suitable accommodation	Monthly	95%	92%	88% (DfE 2022/23)	88% (DfE 2022/23)	21/22	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
							22/23	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
							23/24	● 94%	● 95%	● 94%	● 93%	● 96%	● 95%	● 93%	● 93%				
33b	% of care leavers (aged 19-21) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Monthly	32%	28%	38% (DfE 2022/23)	33% (DfE 2022/23)	21/22	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
							22/23	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
							23/24	● 38%	● 36%	● 35%	● 37%	● 40%	● 41%	● 38%	● 33%				
34	% agency social workers (HR data)	Quarterly	22.7%	26%	17.1% (DfE Census Sept 2022)	24.3% (DfE Census Sept 2022)	21/22			28%		37%		35%				34%	
							22/23			34%		36%		29%				26%	
							23/24			● 25%		● 22%							
35	Average total caseload for social workers (working with looked after children and/or children subject of child protection plans) (total caseload including non LAC and CPP cases as at end of month)	Monthly	Not a target measure	14	16.6 (DfE Census Sept 2022)	14.5 (DfE Census Sept 2022)	21/22	14	15	13	12	12	13	13	13	13	12	13	13
							22/23	14	15	14	13	14	12	13	11	10	11	13	14
							23/24	15	15	15	16	15	15	15	14				

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Work Programme 2023/2024



This table sets out the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2023/24; the items listed were agreed by the Panel at its meeting on 21 June 2023. 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: -
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For more information about overview and scrutiny at LB Merton, please visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Meeting date: 20 September 2023 (~~**Deadline for papers:** 12pm, 11 September 2023~~)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Departmental update	Written Report	Jane McSherry, Executive Director Children Lifelong Learning and Families	Review priority work streams within the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Department.
Pupil Place Planning Strategy	Written Report	Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director of Education and Early Help	Review approach to managing school places.
Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Maisie Davies, Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships	To review the basket of indicators
Work programme 2023/24	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Panel Chair	To review the work programme and agree any changes

~~Meeting date: 27 November 2023~~ (~~Deadline for papers: 5pm 16th November 2023~~)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Budget/business plan Round 1	Written Report	Councillor Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services	To discuss and make recommendations to forward to Commission
School Meals in Merton	Written Report	Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director of Education and Early Help	Review provision of meals at all phases of education
Youth Services	Written Report	Keith Shipman, Head of Education Inclusion	Review service and gaps in current provision
Youth Task Group - Report and Recommendations	Written Report	Cllr Max Austin, Task Group Chair.	Agree the recommendations and for report to go to Cabinet.
Departmental Update	Written Report	Jane McSherry, Executive Director	Review priority work streams within the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Department.
Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Maisie Davies, Head of Performance	To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern
Work programme 2022/23	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, CYP Panel Chair	To review the work programme and agree any changes

Meeting date: 25 January 2024 (**Deadline for papers:** 5pm 16th January 2024)

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
Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report	Written Report	Tom Procter,	Review services over last 12 months.
Local playgrounds	Written Report	John Bosley, Assistant Director of Public Space Contract and Commission	Review of provision and how they ensure children and young people remain healthy
Childhood Immunisations	Written Report	NHS England	Review uptake of immunisations.
Departmental update report	Written Report	Jane McSherry, Executive Director	An overview of the key issues within the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Department.
Youth Task Group - Report and Recommendations	Written Report	Cllr Max Austin, Task Group Chair.	Agree the recommendations and for report to go to Cabinet.
Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships	To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern
Work programme 2023/24	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, CYP Panel Chair	To review the work programme and agree any changes

Meeting date: 11 March 2024 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm 28 February 2024)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Corporate Parenting	Written Report	David Michael, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion	Review service performance
Education Standards Report	Written Report	Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director of Education and Early Help	Review overview of performance in schools
Healthy Child Programme Report	Written Report	Public Health Merton	Review services including those to tackle childhood obesity
0-19 Health Update	Report to the Panel	Public Health Merton	Review services in for children aged 0-19
Departmental update report	Written Report	Jane McSherry, Executive Director; Children, Lifelong Learning and Families.	An overview of the key issues within the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Department.

Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Maisie Davies, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern
Topic suggestions for 2023/24	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, CYP Panel Chair	To identify topics for the 2023/24 work programme