

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

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> October 2015

### Subject: Update on Developments Affecting Children, Schools and Families Department

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

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cllr Martin Whelton

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

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#### Recommendations:

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

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## 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments affecting Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last meeting in July 2015.

## 2 DETAILS

- 2.1 Four Ofsted school inspection reports have been published since the panel's last meeting. Garfield, Poplar and St Mark's primary schools have retained ratings of 'good' while the grade for Merton Park primary school improved to 'outstanding'. Two further inspections – of Gorringe primary school and the Smart Centre have taken place but reports have not yet been published.
- 2.2 Provisional GCSE and A-Level results, and a new NEET 'scorecard', were published over the summer period. Details of these are contained in the performance report on this agenda.
- 2.3 As a result of representation from parents and a recent letter from the Schools Minister to all local authorities on the subject, the department has reviewed its position on delayed admission of summer born children. An interim policy and guidance note has been issued in respect of Merton's community schools which adopts a more flexible approach than previously with a presumption that requests for delayed admission will be agreed provided reasonable justification is provided that such a delay will be in a child's best interests. This position is in line with the government's policy intention but will be reviewed when the new national Admissions Code is published in early 2016. A copy of the interim position is attached at **Appendix One**.
- 2.4 Officers are continuing to work closely with the government's Education Funding Agency and the Harris federation to identify a prospective site for the new secondary school in the Wimbledon area which has been given pre-opening approval by the DfE. As options appraisal and feasibility work is continuing on a small number of options, it has not been possible to submit a report to Cabinet

in October with a recommendation on a preferred site as was hoped. It is now anticipated that Cabinet will receive this report in December 2015.

- 2.5 The school admissions service was able to allocate a place to every child applying for a primary school reception place this year. At the time of writing, we are maintaining a vacancy rate of around 5%, in line with levels historically recommended by the Audit Commission. For year 7 entry (start of secondary school), the council received 161 additional applications from LB Merton residents this year, generally as expected in our pupil projections, and were also able to offer places to all residents with a significantly reduced surplus.
- 2.6 Promotion of Free School Meals (FSM) and the Pupil Premium continues across Merton schools. Feedback confirms schools are promoting this initiative in a variety of ways including parent meetings, newsletters, and as part of the induction process for new starters. Pupil Premium data provided by the DfE confirms 4983 children eligible for FSM in 2014/15 and attending Merton schools are still entitled in 2015/16. The data also shows that an additional 1060 eligible children were identified in the last year and will now generate Pupil Premium funding for Merton schools. This funding is worth in the region of £1.26M. However, largely as a result of changes to entitlement through welfare benefit reform, there are a significant number of pupils no longer entitled to FSM and Pupil Premium with over 1000 children removed from the register over the last year.
- 2.7 Officers and partners are currently engaged in a refresh of the borough's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). Although no longer required by statute to have a CYPP, the council and our partners have continued to be committed to this Plan as it is seen to be a key tool in promoting partnership practice across services for children and their families and in promoting multi – agency accountability for the implementation of key priorities. As agreed by the Children's Trust Board, the Plan is to retain the focus it has had for some years now, driven by public sector funding pressures, on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough. A copy of the draft Plan is attached at **Appendix Two** and comments from panel members are welcome. The final plan will be presented for approval to the Children's Trust Board in November 2015.
- 2.8 An examination of data and the results of multi-agency case auditing has led Merton's Safeguarding Children Board to commission a new local strategy for responding to issues of neglect in families. The strategy reinforces the need to identify children suffering neglect as early as possible and it clarifies thresholds for intervention, particularly in relation to chronic neglect.
- 2.9 As part of their own transformation planning, Merton CAMHs is adopting a 'Single Point of Entry' (SPA) model through which all referrals to the service are considered and directed to the most appropriate form of CAMH intervention. In a further step to improve co-ordination and increase integration across services, the MH Trust has agreed that the SPA will be located in Civic Centre alongside Merton's MASH and assessment services. This proximity will improve information sharing and support more 'joined up' assessments of children's needs.
- 2.10 Members of the panel will be aware of the significant numbers of refugee children, young people and families migrating to Britain as a result of conflicts in

their countries/regions of origin. Pressures on children's services in Kent have been unsustainable and central and local government across the country are currently developing procedures for the dispersal and re-settlement of refugees, both unaccompanied minors and families. Merton has agreed to participate in this scheme and is currently awaiting further information on its implementation.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

4.1. None for the purposes of this report.

### **5 TIMETABLE**

5.1. N/A

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. No specific implications.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. No specific implications.

### **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. No specific implications.

### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. No specific implications.

### **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. No specific implications.

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

- Appendix 1 – admission of summer born children
- Appendix 2 – draft Children and Young People Plan

### **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. None

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