

**LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON**

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM**

**A SCRUTINY REVIEW OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICES**  
**AVAILABLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN MERTON**

**2005/2006**

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## REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Six members from the Life Chances Scrutiny Panel formed a task group to undertake a review looking at youth engagement and the services available to young people in Merton. The purpose of this investigation was to present Cabinet with a set of recommendations for service improvement arising from the scrutiny review. (Full scope and timetable for the review can be found in **Appendix A**).

Youth engagement and services available to young people was chosen for review by scrutiny in response to the following drivers:

- OSTED Report<sup>1</sup> which deemed Merton Local Authority Service provision as inadequate
- 'Youth Matters'<sup>2</sup> Green Paper which proposes a new statutory duty to provide youth services and a youth offer. This paper also brings youth services under the Every Child Matters Outcome Framework<sup>3</sup>.
- The objective, as set out in the Transforming Youth Work Resourcing Excellent Youth Services<sup>4</sup>, to increase the youth service spending per head of population aged 13 – 19 years to £100 per annum.

The purpose of the review is outlined as:

*'To determine ways to increase engagement with young people in Merton, including identifying mechanisms to enable them to actively participate in the democratic process and to give young people a vehicle for expressing their views'.*

With the objectives of the review agreed as:

- To examine existing levels of youth service provision
- To examine the existing level of youth engagement in Merton
- To have a greater understanding of young people's aspirations and to identify the barriers to democratic engagement
- To develop and recommend a framework for improving democratic engagement for young people in Merton
- To identify best practice from elsewhere

The task group undertook the review over a five-month period, between October 2005 and February 2006, meeting nine times and gathering evidence from a number of sources, including:

- Young people – including results of young persons' residents survey, meetings with young people in reparation and young people from Merton College and with young people through the creation of a time limited sub group to look at the idea of a Youth Parliament.
- Advice and information from officers working within the youth service.

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<sup>1</sup> OFSTED Inspection 2004 – see background evidence section 3.1

<sup>2</sup> Youth Matters Green Paper-July 2005 - see background evidence section 4.4

<sup>3</sup> Every Child Matters - see background evidence section 4.2

<sup>4</sup> Transforming Youth Work Resourcing Excellent Youth Services background evidence section 4.3

- Meetings with a number of partner organisation, voluntary and community groups including:
  - Connexions
  - Safer Merton Partnership
  - Merton Voluntary Sector Council
  - YMCA Wimbledon
  - Merton College Youth Service
  - Chair of MeMu
  - Millennium Volunteers
  - Groundwork Merton
  - Merton Young Carers Project
- Best practice from other local authorities, including evidence from Government Office for London on Youth Services.
- Consultation exercise with the public, interested organisations and community groups.

A number of key findings and recommendations have been identified from the evidence gathered by the task group over the five months of the review and these have been detailed in the key findings and recommendations section.

## **PROCESS OF THE REVIEW**

21 Oct 05	Youth Matters Green Paper
24 Oct 05	Youth Service Officers - Farm Rd Office
21 Nov 05	Safer Merton Partnership Merton Voluntary Services Council Connexions
05 Dec 05	Government Office for London (GOL)
20 Dec 05	Young People in Reparation
17 Jan 06	Merton College YMCA Millennium Volunteers Groundwork Merton Chair of MeMu.
20 Jan 06	Merton Young Carers
02 Feb 06	Young People from Merton College
15 Feb 06	Feedback from Youth Parliament Steering Group Information on 'Hear by Right'
07 Mar 06	Summary of evidence, key issues and recommendations discussed
29 Mar 06	Life Chances Scrutiny Panel

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The task group found that the key findings and subsequent recommendations arising from the review naturally fall into two main areas, namely the 'changing role of the youth service' and 'communicating, involving and engaging young people'.

### The Changing Role of the Youth Service

#### Merton's Youth Service OFSTED Report

Merton's youth service was inspected by OFSTED in September 2004 and the service was found to be inadequate. The Merton's Youth Service OFSTED<sup>5</sup> report and the resulting action taken by the council to address the issues raised, was highlighted as key to the future role of the youth service and to the authorities commitment to young people.

The weaknesses of the service significantly outweigh its strengths. The level of funding is low and there are weaknesses in achievement, youth work practice, curriculum and management that make this an inadequate service that provides poor value for money.

***Merton Youth Service OFSTED Report 2004***

Merton Council responded by putting together an action plan to put steps in place to address the issues raised by the report. It was agreed that the quality, reach and targeting of the service must improve. On 17 January 2005 Cabinet agreed to commit the council to review funding allocation and set realistic priorities, to develop a proposal for increased funding for 2006/07, to ensure sufficient budget to fund full time worker posts and develop plans to decrease the proportion of spend on the voluntary sector as a proportion of the budget over three years.

#### The Youth Service Budget

On 14 November 2005<sup>6</sup>, Cabinet agreed to the proposed growth in the youth service budget over the next two years and to a rolling programme of improvement, taking account of the analysis of need<sup>7</sup>, the lead time and the capacity to deliver these changes. The underlying financial assumption is that spending on the youth service in Merton will be raised to reflect the national average spend from £56.35 to £70 per head of young people.

The task group was pleased to see the commitment to the spend per head on young people in the borough increased to £70, which is the national average, but felt that the longer term goal should be to reach the National Youth Association recommendation of £100 (relative – figure as at 2006).

#### ***It is recommended that:***

***R1 The spend per head per young person be increased year on year with the commitment to reach the National Youth Association's recommended spend (currently £100 per young person).***

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<sup>5</sup> Merton Youth Service OFSTED report – background evidence section 3.1

<sup>6</sup> Youth Service Budget Report to Cabinet 14<sup>th</sup> November 2005 see background evidence section 6.0

<sup>7</sup> Mapping and Needs Analysis exercise completed in late 2005 by Connexions, MVSC and the youth service background evidence section 3.3

### Mapping of Provision and Analysis of Need

An audit of services and analysis of areas<sup>8</sup> of greatest need in the borough was completed in 2005 by Connexions, Merton Voluntary Services Council and the youth service. This exercise has helped to establish the range, availability and location of voluntary sector youth provision in Merton.

The needs analysis exercise also looked at the current delivery of services including budget, statistics of attendance, project/centre profile, accommodation, ward profiles, key data on young people by ward etc, all of which help to build up a picture of current needs and issues for young people. This can then be used to match provision with need.

The task group considered the mapping/needs analysis exercise to be extremely valuable and wished to congratulate all those who assisted in its compilation. Although they did note that only approximately a third of voluntary groups responded and that it did not include provision available in the private sector. Members believed that this exercise needed to be an ongoing process rather than a one-off project.

#### ***It is recommended that:***

***R2 The mapping exercise be ongoing and extended to include the private sector service provision available to young people in Merton.***

### Matching Provision to Need

A model of formula funding for matching provision to need as suggested by Libre Consultancy<sup>9</sup> was used to analyse areas of need within Merton. Ten wards were identified as having the most need based on the 'factors of need' considered. This will assist the authority to target resources and provision of services to those areas in most need.

For the first time Merton Youth Service will be in a position to target delivery when and where it is needed.

#### ***Youth Service Needs Analysis***

### Legislative and Policy Drivers for Change

The task group recognised that there are a number of legislative and policy drivers designed to direct local authorities in their work with children and young people and these have a direct effect on youth service provision, including: Every Child Matters Framework, Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services, Hear by Right and, most poignantly, the Youth Matters Green Paper.

#### **• Youth Matters Green Paper**

The intention of the Youth Matters Green Paper<sup>10</sup> will be to make it a statutory duty for the local authority to provide an adequate youth service and to ensure that it is properly resourced in order to fulfil the 'youth offer'. The council will need to

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<sup>8</sup> Mapping and Needs Analysis Exercise completed in late 2005 by Connexions, MVSC and the youth service background evidence sections 3.3

<sup>9</sup> Libre Consultancy were commissioned to work with the youth service in 2004, see background evidence on section 3.4

<sup>10</sup> Youth Matters Green paper, see background evidence section 4.4

consider what 'offer' Merton wishes to make to its young people, what proportion of this should be delivered by the statutory youth sector, what should be provided by the voluntary/community sector and what should be commissioned.

***It is recommended that:***

**R3    *The authority be proactive rather than reactive in publishing its 'youth offer' to young people in Merton.***

#### Youth Centre Provision

The OFSTED Inspection Report stated that many of the youth service buildings were in a bad state of repair and that the service needed to make decisions about refurbishing or releasing such buildings and/or delivering alternatively. The state of the buildings and lack of facilities available at youth centres was also highlighted through the task group discussions with young people and voluntary/community organisations. Members maintain that youth centres should provide facilities and activities that will interest young people and provide 'added educational value'.

Work at youth centres must 'add value'. They are an extension of education but they must make activities enjoyable. All forms of activity are valued not only academic learning, less teacher to pupil but more interactive and about the individual. Must remember it is the young persons free time, they need to have a choice in the opportunities/activities available to them.

***Youth Services Officer***

The issue of the state of the buildings and facilities available is currently being addressed through proposals such as the sale of Farm Road administrative office in order to raise funds for refurbishing other buildings where service delivery takes place. This refurbishment will concentrate on four centres: Pollards Hill Youth Centre, Phipps Bridge Youth Centre, Wyvern Youth Centre and South Wimbledon Youth Centre. Four teams of youth workers will also be established around these four centres. With additional targeted work in areas with no youth centre provision i.e. in Colliers Wood, Morden, Longthornton and Graveney wards in line with the needs analysis<sup>11</sup>.

In the results of the young persons residents survey 40% thought the activities available to young people in Merton were poor, very poor or extremely poor<sup>12</sup>. The task group, through speaking to young people and voluntary and community groups, have identified the following issues relating to the activities and facilities available to particularly in relation to youth service provision:

- The need to work with young people to ensure the service is actually providing what young people actually want and need.
- More provision of healthy living youth work.
- Football, football leagues and dance activities.

Went to Pollards Hill youth centre, but wasn't impressed – not much to do. There is a pool table and music and not much else.

***Young Person in Reparation***

A juice bar would be a good idea, gets young people to learn how to make their own healthy fruit drinks and would act as a social meeting point.

***Young Person from Merton College***

Important to have services available to young people as well as to target services to those who need more specialist support.

***Task group meeting with Safer Merton Partnership 5<sup>th</sup> December 2005***



- More publicity for the services provided by youth service, especially youth centres and clubs.
- More useful and modern equipment including computers, music equipment for playing and producing.
- A more up to date look to reflect its users, including modern furniture, TV/DVD, juice bar etc.
- Specialised workshops to help/support young people do what they want to do.
- Opening times of the clubs currently 7.30pm to 9.30pm, what do young people do between 5pm and 7.30pm?
- Exchange trips and peer mentoring.
- Sessions around driving and independence skills.

It was highlighted that there are many halls, playing fields and other facilities available right across the borough including many in private ownership, that are not used fully and members agreed that the use of these resources could be maximised.

Members agreed that young people must feel that they have a stake in what is happening in their youth centres. The council must ask young people what they want and listen. It was thought that young people were often consulted with the decisions were not fed back to them so they do not bother to engage again.

***It is recommended that:***

***R4 The youth service, partner and other organisations work with young people through detached, centre and group work to ensure the services that Merton provides are actually what young people want, particularly in relation to the facilities and activities available. This should include systematic approach to detached work across the borough being developed.***

***R5 The use of Merton's existing facilities and expertise be maximised including the full use of public and privately owned facilities.***

***R6 A co-ordinated cross borough competitive approach to football and dance activities be initiated.***

Working with External Organisations, Voluntary and Community Groups

The Merton youth service has many links with public, voluntary and community groups and private agencies. These have increased as partnership working has become a more important part of government policy and local authorities seek to involve the voluntary and community sector in the planning and delivery of services.

'Each manager will also have key responsibility across the services for linking with agencies such as Connexions, Youth Participation etc.'

'The youth service will continue to work with its wider partnership of youth providers in the voluntary and community sectors with its commissioned work far more closely targeted and quality assured.'

***Merton Youth Services Action Plan***

The task group recognised that a wide-ranging and varied amount of partnership working between different agencies, the voluntary and community sectors and the youth service was taking place across the borough. They understood that this is an ongoing process but emphasised the importance of partnership working in building improved services for young people. They particularly highlighted the collaborative work between Connexions, MVSC and the youth service on the mapping and needs analysis exercise. Some of the key points highlighted by the voluntary sector<sup>13</sup> throughout this review included:

- Would like to see the council's role as a strategic one, setting priorities and commissioning work.
- Main role for the council is strategic but need to work in partnership with other organisations and voluntary groups to ensure a wide spectrum of services.
- As a provider you need to offer good innovative programmes that can be adapted quickly.
- Youth service and Connexions could be brought more closely together, not pooled budgets yet but could have aligned budgets so that there is no duplication, providing added value.
- The idea of youth service covering wider areas rather than the small borough area to get better economies of scale.
- Localise some of what is done
- Look at services in value for money terms
- Work wider than Merton like across South London to reap benefits from sharing
- Share best practice with other authorities and organisations
- Ring fenced monies so that money that is available is not used elsewhere
- Look to 0-19 agenda, developing and delivering services for all young people but must make sure there is enough funding.
- More preventative work needed - preventing rather than firefighting.

Members agreed that the voluntary sector will be fundamental to the provision of services and activities for young people in the future and that many voluntary organisations and community groups provide excellent services for young people. More partnership working with the voluntary sector could maximise the provision of activities and facilities.

It was also identified that service level agreements (SLA) were usually in place where financial support by the council is given. Members believe that SLAs have an important role to play in the future to ensure that financial assistance provided to voluntary organisations is used as part of an overall strategy for the provision of services to young people.

***It is recommended that:***

***R7 Consideration be given to increasing the amount of community development work around young people in the borough.***

***R8 Links and work with partner, voluntary and other organisations continue to be developed so that a full cross borough service can be provided to young people.***

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<sup>13</sup> See background evidence in section 8.4

## **Communicating, Involving and Engaging Young People**

### Hear by Right and Involving Young People in Decision Making

Hear by Right<sup>14</sup> was published in 2001 by the Local Government Association and is designed to help ensure that services are better able to meet the needs of children and young people as customers and as stakeholders in the democratic process. Hear by Right provides a framework for the development of opportunities for children and young people to become active in their communities. It argues that there are five key reasons why local authorities and organisations should adopt Hear by Right, these include:

- It is children and young people's right to be involved in the decisions that affect them (Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- Services will be more effective, better targeted and received.
- The health of our democratic community depends on the active involvement of children and young people.
- Children and young people will benefit from being involved in decision making.
- The council are encouraged and required to, and our performance will be evaluated on how well we do this in the future.

The task group agreed that Hear by Right should be adopted as a tool to assess the current levels of engagement and to help services across the authority plan and develop their process for consultation and involvement of young people.

Members also believed that there needed be a co-ordinated approach across the authority to the engagement and consultation of young people to ensure one group is not bombarded with requests and to ensure it is done in the safest and most appropriate manner for the group of children or young people being engaged.

#### ***It is recommended that:***

***R9 The council adopt 'Hear by Right' national standards for the involvement of young people as a self-assessment tool for measuring achievements and aspirations in youth participation.***

***R10 Young people are routinely consulted as stakeholders by all council departments where there is an impact on young people's lives.***

***R11 A co-ordinated approach to the consultation and engagement with children and young people be developed which should include:***

- ***Providing advice across the authority and to voluntary and community groups on how best to consult/engage young people.***
- ***Development of a set of guidelines on consulting with children and young people.***

***R12 The council ensures that when it consults with children and young people that it provides feedback on the final outcome and any decisions made and that this be done in a manner and language that is most appropriate to those consulted.***

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<sup>14</sup> Hear by Right 2001 – see background evidence in section 4.5

### Merton Youth Parliament

A Merton Youth Parliament Steering Group was convened on 5 February 2006. It was made up of nine young people from schools across the borough representing the Youth Forum. They met with the purpose of putting together a paper outlining what they would want from a youth parliament.<sup>15</sup> (Full copy of Merton Youth Parliament Steering Group paper can be found in **Appendix B**).

UKYP believes that through the active involvement of children and young people in shaping and influencing policy at all levels of decision-making structures both locally, regionally and nationally, will we begin to see practical change to better the lives of children and young people in this country.

**UK Youth Parliament Website**

The Merton Youth Parliament would consist of young people aged from 11 to 18 years old who are elected on an annual basis representing a wide cross section of the young people as possible. From schools, colleges, 6 forms, religious groups, sports groups etc. They will represent both men and women, including people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and people with physical and learning disabilities.

The task group agreed that a Merton Youth Parliament would give the young people of the borough a voice, which will then be heard and listened to by local and national government, providers of services for young people and other agencies who have an interest in the views and needs of young people.

Monies will be available from April 2006 via the Government-funded Youth Opportunities Fund and Youth Capital Fund for setting up projects proposed and approved by young people. The guidance for this is not yet available but should be subject of a ministerial launch sometime in March 2006.

#### ***It is recommended that:***

- R13 The Merton Youth Parliament (MYP) is established and it commences in the next school year (September 2006) and that it should include:***
- A constitution that is drawn up by young people in summer 2006.***
  - Decision-making powers (which would be looked into by the Cabinet/department once the allocation of fund for Merton and the guidance on the allocation of funds becomes available from DfES).***
- R14 Steps are taken where necessary to ensure that every school within the borough has a school council system in place so young people can be democratically elected to the Merton Youth Parliament.***
- R15 The Cabinet Member for Schools meets with representatives of the Merton Youth Parliament every two months.***

### 'Transportable Concepts'

The idea of 'transportable concepts' was raised when the task group met with voluntary sector organisations. This term relates to the use of the core principles

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<sup>15</sup> Youth Parliament Steering Group Paper 5<sup>th</sup> February 2006 see section 10.2 and Appendix B

of an initiative or successful project that can be used elsewhere. The task group highlighted two particular activities/projects as examples to represent the idea of the transportable concept:

- Youth Club in a room in a Merton public house - A project involving the local community in setting up a youth club in a location in the heart of the community designed to give young people in the area a place to go and meet in an supervised environment in an area where little provision existed. Unfortunately, due to the public house changing hands the facility could not continue but members considered that this 'concept' could be used elsewhere.
- MeMu (Music Events) - Music events organised for young people by young people in Wimbledon. Members felt that this idea could be transported elsewhere in the borough given the appropriate support.

***It is recommended that:***

***R16 The youth service adopts a proactive role in developing the use of existing good and innovative practices both seen within the borough and beyond.***

#### How Best to Communicate and Engage with Young People

The task group spoke to a number of young people, partner organisations and voluntary groups in order to look for the best ways to communicate and engage young people. They asked young people 'how they would like to be communicated with' and 'how organisations and voluntary groups communicate and engage young people'. From this exercise the task group highlighted a number of useful tools and issues that could be considered by the borough when communicating and engaging young people including:

- Access to computers via, for example, youth centres and libraries.
- More outreach work.
- Young people best engaged over a period of time, need to be consistent and develop trust.
- Peer led projects with support of adults
- Newsletter (Sense Newsletter good - written for and by young people)
- Idea of a radio station run by young people

Good way to interact with young people is through a website but other ways include texting, focus groups in the community, at events, peer working and by providing incentives.

***Task Group meeting with Voluntary/Community Groups 17<sup>th</sup> January 2006***

A good way to engage easily with young people is to design a good interactive website.

***Young Person from Merton College***

How do the council know what young people want? They need to ask young people more, come to the youth club and the college.

***Young Person from Merton College***

- A website designed for use by young people specifically.
- Be careful not to raise expectations that you cannot deliver.
- 'Texting' is a good way to keep in touch with young people.

- Provide incentives for young people to be involved.
- Publicise services available - young people need to be aware of what is out there and how to access it safely.

The task group acknowledges that many innovative ways of engaging and involving young people are used across the borough every day and that the council has in the past and shows commitment to learning from good practice in the future.<sup>16</sup>.

Members of the task group liked the suggestions made in relation to the development of an interactive website for young people and the idea of a radio station run by young people. The importance of using modern technology and continually looking for innovative ways to involve and engage young people was also emphasised.

***It is recommended that:***

***R17 Young people, through the Merton Youth Parliament, are the central drivers in the development of a website and radio station for young people.***

***R18 Continual development in the use of innovative ways of communicating with young people including through the use of new technology be encouraged.***

***R19 Consideration be given to drawing up a publicity strategy for raising awareness of youth services amongst young people including through schools.***

***R20 The youth service increases its involvement of young people in planning service provision.***

Perceptions of Young People in the Community

One of the issues that arose a number of times throughout the review was the perception of young people in the community<sup>17</sup>. That often 'the press' generally only reflect on negative images of young people. In discussions with young people and voluntary/community groups their frustration in relation to this was clearly expressed.

Perceptions of young people in the community can be associated with negative images and a more positive reflection needs to be made. Organisations must work together to do this.  
***Task Group meeting with Voluntary/Community Groups 17<sup>th</sup> January 2006***

Images of young people in the media is generally negative this needs to be combated.  
***Government Officer for London – Youth Services***

After reflecting upon this issue the task group wished to emphasise that the majority of young people are law-abiding respectful citizens doing a lot of positive work within their communities through day to day activities, as young carers and many through involvement in voluntary work.

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<sup>16</sup> See background evidence sections 3.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

<sup>17</sup> Background evidence 8.3, 8.4, 9.3, 11.1

Members thought that the council, other agencies and voluntary organisations should work closely with young people to help to change this perception through countering those negative images with the many positive ones available.

***It is recommended that:***

***R21 The youth service and the wider authority work with organisations, voluntary groups and young people to identify good news stories and positive images to help raise the profile of the important role young people play in our community.***

## **BACKGROUND EVIDENCE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Each year in Merton, key issues are identified which are scrutinised through a review process. A review aims to address areas of weakness or poor service, through making recommendations to improve outcomes for the local community. Elected Members undertake these reviews, working together in task groups.

1.2 The Panel outlined the purpose of their review as:

*'To determine ways to increase engagement with young people in Merton, including identifying mechanisms to enable them to actively participate in the democratic process and to give young people a vehicle for expressing their views'.*

And, that the objectives of the review were agreed as:

- To examine existing levels of youth service provision
- To examine the existing level of youth engagement in Merton
- To have a greater understanding of young people's aspirations and to identify the barriers to democratic engagement
- To develop and recommend a framework for improving democratic engagement for young people in Merton
- To identify best practice from elsewhere

1.3 Review terms of reference and review programme were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. These set out the parameters for the review focus and identified key witnesses and stakeholders to be engaged with. (See Appendix A)

### **2.0 A PICTURE OF MERTON**

2.1 Some background information taken from the Youth Service Needs Analysis document helps to provide a picture of the Merton and its context for young people.

2.2 The most recent census (2001) showed that the population in Merton is growing. The population of 15-24 year olds is set to increase by 8.6% by 2006. 17.8% of all residents are under 15 years old. There are 43 primary schools, eight secondary schools and three special needs schools.

2.3 The number of registered children and young people with a disability between the ages of 0-19 years in the borough is 373. Of these 282 are SEN, 38 are without SEN and 53 are unknown.

2.4 The borough is divided into 20 wards. There are five town centres: Colliers Wood, Mitcham, Morden, Raynes Park and Wimbledon.



- 2.5 The ethnic breakdown of the population of Merton is 75% white and 25% ethnic minorities. The gender breakdown of the population of Merton is 47.9% male and 50.3% female.
- 2.6 The average household income in Merton is £29,000 per annum and for Mitcham wards is between £5,000 and £13,000.
- 2.7 The Indices of Multiple Deprivation combine information, which includes income, employment, education, health, skills, training and crime. According to the 2004 English Indices Merton ranked 220 out of 354 Local Authorities. Lavender ward is ranked in the 20% of the most deprived wards nationally and three are in the top 25% (Cricket Green, Pollards Hill and Ravensbury Wards).
- 2.8 18% of the borough's area is taken up by open space, compared to London's average of 10%. The borough has 67 public parks of various sizes. The Merton Open Space Strategy Summary 2004 revealed that residents frequently blamed young people for graffiti, vandalism and intimidating behaviour in parks. As part of the borough's strategy to improve these spaces, the plan recommends that young people need to be involved in decision making, and be listened to, when facilities are being planned.

### **3.0 LOCAL CONTEXT**

#### **3.1 OFSTED Report**

Merton's Local Authority Youth Service was inspected by OFSTED in September 2004. The service was found to be inadequate. It identified the following weakness in the service:

- Effectiveness and Value for Money

The weaknesses of the service significantly outweigh its strengths. The level of funding is low and there are weaknesses in achievement, youth work practice, curriculum and management that make this an inadequate service that provides poor value for money.

- Strengths

Staff at all levels are highly committed to young people and developing the youth service to meet their needs, youth workers are well motivated and relationships with young people are good. The achievements of young people in project-based and targeted work are good. The service successfully engages high proportions of young people from minority ethnic communities. Senior officers are actively involved in service development. Partnerships are effective in extending the reach of the service and widen access for young people. Operational managements maintains the motivation, goodwill and morale of staff.

- Weaknesses

There are low levels of achievement for young people in too many programmes. Most centre-based work is dominated by recreational activity that does not focus on learning outcomes for young people. The planning

and evaluation of youth work are ineffective. The leadership, co-ordination and implementation of the curriculum are inadequate. Accreditation is not used effectively to support young people's progress. Much of the accommodation is in poor condition. Quality assurance arrangements are poor and there is a lack of systematic needs assessment. There are insufficient resources to implement the curriculum and aims of the service. The deployment of staff is ineffective with too few staff at all levels. The involvement of young people in the governance and management of the service is underdeveloped. OFSTED made a number of recommendations designed to rectify the weaknesses identified, including:

- Review the current funding allocation in relation to youth service priorities and set realistic expectations.
- Improve the management and delivery of the curriculum.
- Arrest the decline in the quality of accommodation and improve resources for youth work.
- Introduce effective quality assurance arrangements and improve needs assessment.
- Take steps to build on examples of good youth work practice including the use of accreditation.
- Ensure that the planning and evaluation of youth work focuses on young peoples learning.
- Involve young people in service development more thoroughly at unit and service-wide levels.
- Rectify deficiencies in the deployment of full and part-time staff and recruit to fill the head of service vacancy.

**Source: Merton's Youth Service OFSTED Report 2004**

### 3.2 **Youth Service Action Plan**

Merton Council responded by putting together an action plan that will put steps in place to address the issues raised by the OFSTED report and its recommendations. It was agreed that the quality, reach, funding for and targeting of the service must improve:

- With centre-based work being improved through clear leadership and management of the service. This will be achieved through the appointment of a new head of service and the creation of centre managers for each site. These managers would run their centres and be responsible for planning, evaluation and implementation of policy and procedures. Each manager will also have a key responsibility across the service for linking with agencies such as Connexions, Youth Participation etc.
- Senior staff responsibilities will ensure that the Youth Service reflects the wider council agenda and will ensure that all youth work is clearly targeted at identified need. Areas of responsibility will mirror the key objectives for the service as agreed by elected members.
- The Senior Youth Worker will support the managers in the effective running of their centres and will support the quality assurance system that is at the heart of the improved work with young people. Each centre will have targets to meet to support the overall targets of the service.
- A team will be set up for each centre and full time hours increased per centre, along with the reduced use of part time staff. The staff time will

assess the needs of their young people, plan to meet their needs with them and enable them to achieve relevant accreditation.

- Each manager will be responsible with their staff for setting up a process of involving young people in the management of their centre.
- Outreach youth work will initially be targeted at support to engage groups in centre based work and targets set within the Safer Merton Strategy.
- Schools based work will be developed to engage young people at school and after school. This work will be developed through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) providing agreed programmes and involving young people.
- Accreditation will be achieved by the use of a wide range of awards relevant to the work of that centre or project.
- Partnership working is essential to ensure an effective offer to young people in Merton. The Connexions service and youth service will seek an ever-closer partnership.
- The youth service will continue to support some voluntary sector provision to complement what the service itself provides. This will be commissioned through SLAs with clear targets for funding and outputs.
- The youth service will continue to work with its wider partnership of youth providers in the voluntary and community sectors with its commissioned work far more closely targeted and quality assured.
- The service will seek new and imaginative ways to develop its work to engage more young people, more effectively.

The Youth Service OFSTED Action Plan, agreed by Cabinet on 17 January 2005 committed the Council to:

- Review the current funding allocation in relation to youth service priorities and set realistic expectations;
- Set expectations within current budget 05/06 and develop a proposal for increased funding for 06/07;
- Members agree the way forward including future funding options for 06/07;
- Ensure sufficient core budget to fund full time worker posts;
- Develop plans to decrease the proportion of spend on the voluntary sector as a proportion of budget over three years.

### 3.3 **Mapping/Needs Assessment Exercise**

A service mapping/needs analysis exercise was carried out between June and August 2005 by Connexions and Merton Voluntary Sector Council to establish the range, availability and location of voluntary sector youth provision in Merton. 150 organisations were contacted. Of the 51 responses received 36 directly provide services targeting young people age 13-19 in Merton.

The needs analysis exercise has looked at the current delivery of service (which includes budget, statistics of attendance, centre/project profile, accommodation, ward profiles, key data on young people by ward, voluntary sector provision, and other relevant data), all of which will help to build up a

picture of current needs and issues for young people, matched with the current provision available. This information will assist with redressing the balance between needs and resources by evidencing and pinpointing the areas of need.

### 3.4 **Matching Provision to Need**

A model of formula funding for matching provision to need was suggested by Libre Consultancy who were commissioned to work with the youth service in 2004. The method used, whilst it does not take account of the quality of work and provision, provides a theoretical framework to shape decision-making. The analysis is focused at work level and key data is used. Factors of need are then considered, for example: the 13-19 youth population for each ward, ward deprivation indices etc. This information is then used to rank each ward in order of the highest and lowest ward ranked in each data field to reflect the priorities of the service. It was felt that the following data fields should be the priorities for determining youth service funding:

- Ward deprivation rank
- 0-17 ward population
- Ward BME population
- Numbers of offences recorded in ward
- 0-19's registered with a disability
- Travellers/others

The wards which came into the top 10 in the total rank of scores (i.e. they consistently score between 1 and 10 in all or most fields), are the wards that need to be prioritised, these are:

- |      |                            |    |               |
|------|----------------------------|----|---------------|
| 1.   | Figge's Marsh              | 2. | Cricket Green |
| 3/4. | Lavender and Pollards Hill | 5. | Ravensbury    |
| 6.   | Longthornton               | 7. | Colliers Wood |
| 8.   | St Helier                  | 9. | Graveney      |
| 10.  | Abbey                      |    |               |

## 4.0 **NATIONAL CONTEXT**

4.1 Some of the key legislative and policy drivers for change in youth provision are detailed below.

### 4.2 **Every Child Matters**

Every Child Matters: Change for Children is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to 19 years of age. The aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve

- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

This means that the organisations involved with providing services to children - from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups - will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together, to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life. Children and young people will have far more say about issues that affect them as individuals and collectively.

Every Child Matters: Change for Children sets out the national framework for local change programmes to build services around the needs of children and young people so that we maximise opportunity and minimise risk. The services that reach every child and young person have a crucial role to play in shifting the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives to preventing things from going wrong in the first place.

**Source: *Every Child Matters: Change for Children***

Over the next few years, every local authority will be working with its partners, through children's trusts, to find out what works best for children and young people in its area and act on it. They will need to involve children and young people in this process, and when inspectors assess how local areas are doing, they will listen especially to the views of children and young people themselves.

#### 4.3 Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing Excellent Youth Services

This document proves a specification of a sufficient local authority youth service. It sets out what the Government expects a local authority to provide through its strategic leadership role. It provides direction regarding:

- The local authority's duty to provide a youth service;
- The Secretary of State's powers of intervention and direction;
- A youth service plan agreed by members following consultation with partners;
- The contribution the youth service makes to other Government priorities such as tackling anti-social behaviour and crime;
- A local pledge to young people;
- National standards of provision;
- Health and safety requirements;
- Mainstreaming equal opportunities, diversity and community cohesion;
- Support and investment to voluntary and community based youth work;
- The youth work curriculum;
- Targeted provision;
- Local authority planning and delivery of substantial increases in the resource and activity levels of their youth services; and
- Clearly designed quality assurance process.

The specification underpins the Transforming Youth Work modernisation programme and the Government's commitment to work with local authorities to ensure the delivery of a high quality youth service for young people.

**Source: *Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services***

#### 4.4 Youth Matters Green Paper

The Green Paper puts youth services firmly in the Every Child Matters Framework. It shows that youth services can contribute to these floor targets in a number of ways:

- Being Healthy: through information and informal education
- Staying Safe: through training around peer work and Anti-Bulling strategies and direct work with young people
- Enjoy and Achieve: through sporting and cultural visits, informal education accreditation and through targeted work to improve attendance
- Making Positive Contribution: through volunteering, running the youth engagement strategy, work with offenders and those at risk of offending/bullying
- Achieving Economic Well-being: contributing to reduce the numbers of young people not in education training and employment.

Young people today have more opportunities than previous generations. Most teenagers take advantage of this and make the transition to independent adulthood successfully. Standards of educational achievement are rising and a higher proportion of young people are in education and training than in 2002.

Yet in other areas there is little improvement or even poorer outcomes. This is the case, for example, with some aspects of teenagers' health such as drinking, sexual health and obesity. A minority of teenagers face serious or multiple problems and some become involved in anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Government, working with the voluntary sector and parents, must provide the right mix of challenge and support for teenagers in these situations. As well as schools and colleges, four other groups of services have important roles to play, but they are not yet fully meeting young peoples needs:

- Youth Services can make a crucial contribution, but they are not doing this everywhere;
- Connexions aims to support and guide all young people, with a focus on those most at risk, but it needs to 'go local' to reflect wider reforms of services for children and young people;
- Other mainstream services, such as health, often do not focus sufficiently on young people's particular needs; and
- Targeted support programmes help those most at risk, but they are too often fragmented and there is not enough focus on prevention.

Overall, today's system of support for teenagers is not sufficiently focused around the needs of the individual. It is too variable in quality and there is too much bureaucracy and duplication.

**Source: Youth Matters Green Paper 2005**

A thriving Youth Service is therefore essential to an effective borough. The Green Paper raises a number of key questions for council to consider when looking at the future shape of services to young people, including:

- **Involvement of young people**

The challenge is to move from planning for young people to consulting young people about those plans. The next stage is to move to involving young people in decision making about the policy and funding of services. How will we ensure that we involve more young people across all groups in Merton in making decisions and developing policy?

- **A Youth Offer**

The paper outlines a possible youth offer and suggests legislation to place a duty on local authorities. The council needs to decide what offer it wishes to make to its young people, what proportion should be delivered by the statutory sector, what should be commissioned and what can be provided by the voluntary and community sectors?

- **Opportunities, Support and Challenge**

The results of the green paper should to provide more and better support to young people, but it is also to provide a challenge to young people.

We need to strike the right balance between rights and responsibilities, appreciating the enormous contribution that young people can make while expecting them in return to appreciate and respect the opportunities available to them.

**Source: Youth Matter Green Paper (p4)**

- **Connexions**

The Green Paper supports the continued existence of Connexions and its brand which young people like. However suggests that Connexions must be brought in much closer harmony with other local support agencies for teenagers and their families. The funding for Connexions will in the future come through Children's Trust for Information, Advice and Guidance this will commence sometime in 2006. So linking to how young people access health advice.

- **Opportunity Cards**

Opportunity cards will be used to give rewards to young people and encourage their access to services. A whole London card is being discussed. The green paper does have the possibility that some Local Authorities may consider channelling funding through these cards. This would put purchasing power in the hands of the young people and provision would then be dependant upon their using the facility.

- **Support for Individuals**

The green paper builds upon the Every Child Matters agenda by asking how best services can be set up in an area to support vulnerable adolescence. The paper proposes merging funding streams, drugs, youth crime and teenage pregnancy to develop a single service for adolescence.

#### 4.5 Hear by Right

In 2001 the Local government Association published the document Hear by Right, it provides a framework for the development of opportunities for children and young people to become active in their communities.

Hear by Right is a tried and tested standards framework for organisation across all sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people.

Although many do not realise it, children and young people have a right to be involved in decision that affect them. Their participation is essential if services are to be improved and their needs are to be met.

**Source: National Youth Association**

Hear by Right is designed to help ensure that services are better able to meet the needs of children and young people as customers and as stakeholders in the democratic process. The Hear by Right document argues that adopting the standards will not only benefit children and young people but the authority, its partners and the wider community.

**Benefits of involving children and young people include:**

For children and young people:

- skills, confidence and self-esteem
- influence organisations
- better services

For the organisation and its partners:

- valuable
- fresh perspectives and new ideas
- better services and saves money

For the wider community:

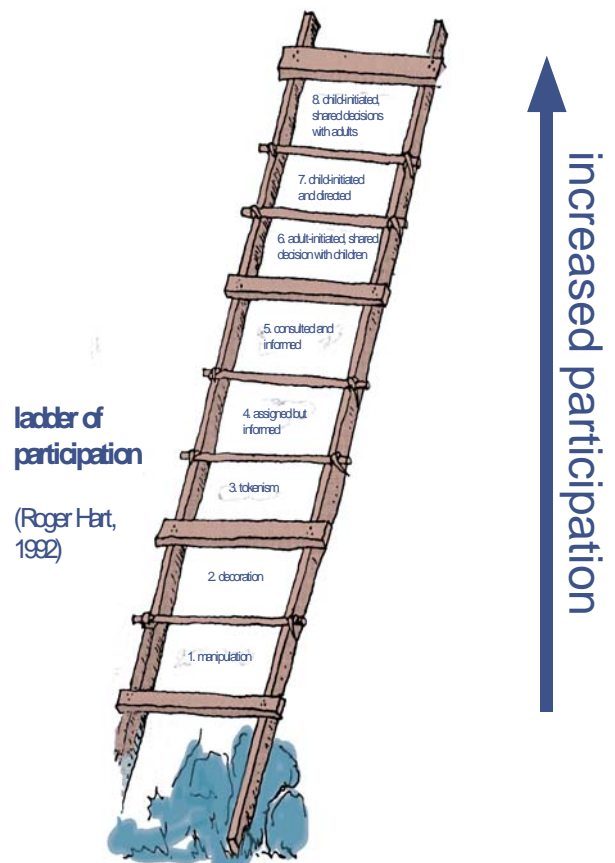
- more vibrant local democracy
- community cohesion
- empowering environment

**Source: Hear by Right**

The document outlines twelve questions for adults to consider in relation to involving children and young people, these include:

1. What are we aiming to achieve?
2. Where have we got to so far?
3. What will children and young people get out of it?
4. Are we prepared to resource it properly?
5. Why have we not done it before?
6. Are we prepared to involve children and young people from the start?
7. Are we being honest with children and young people?
8. What are our expectations?
9. Prepared to give up some power?
10. Prepared to take some criticism?
11. Do we recognise this as a long-term commitment, not just a once-off event?
12. Can we measure the impact of the change for children and young people?

The Hear by Right document also includes a measure to identify to what degree the organisation actually involves young people in decision making called the 'ladder of participation' (see diagram)





## **5.0 YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION**

5.1 The service is committed and accountable to young people based on the standards developed by young people and this is known as the Youth Pledge. The local youth pledge is as follows:

1. Are treated with respect as individuals
2. Listened to
3. Have access to more facilities
4. Have access to youth workers
5. Have access to a personal and Careers Advisor
6. Have meeting places which are safe, warm and well-lit and well equipped with resources for young people
7. Participate in schemes that recognise achievements
8. Have discounts on travel, books for education and information
9. Participate in work experience and voluntary projects
10. Able to participate in creative arts projects
11. Able to go on exchange trips

5.2 There are five main areas of work through which the statutory sector of the Youth Service delivers its work:

- One to One contact, group work and support (Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) detached youth work)
- Information Advice and Guidance (INSIGHT advice and support centre for young people)
- Citizenship (Merton Youth Forum, UK Youth Parliament UKYP)
- Accredited courses (Duke of Edinburgh Award)
- Open/drop in provision – Youth Centres (Phipps Bridge, Pollards Hill, South Wimbledon; Wyvern)

5.3 The statutory youth service provision is spread across the borough as follows:

- Detached youth work project – currently serving the wards of Abbey, Cricket Green, Lavender and St Helier.
- Duke of Edinburgh Award – Ravensbury Ward.
- INSIGHT support and advice centre – Figge's Marsh ward.
- Phipps Bridge Youth Centre – Cricket Green ward.
- Pollards Hill Youth Centre
- South Wimbledon Youth Centre – Abbey ward
- Wyvern Youth Centre – Ravensbury ward

Out of 20 wards in the borough, seven are served by statutory youth provision (other individuals and groups of young people from other wards are in frequent or occasional contact with the service through PAYP events. Commissioned suppliers of youth work, and independent voluntary youth groups also operate in other wards, this is shown later in this report.

5.4 The OFSTED Inspection Report, under the area of 'quality of curriculum and resources', stated that many of the youth service buildings were in a bad state of repair, and that the service needed to make decisions about refurbishing or releasing such buildings and delivering alternatively. This is currently be actioned through proposals such as the sale of the Youth Office at Farm Road, to raise funds for refurbishing other buildings where delivery takes place. The 2004/05 budget for the youth service showed spending as follows (*what the youth service is responsible directly for delivering*):

£85,844	Pollards Hill Youth Centre
£77,454	Phipps Bridge Youth Centre
£88,761	INSIGHT Support and Action Centre
£46,214	Wyvern Youth Centre
£127,749	South Wimbledon and John Innes Youth Centres
£15,000	Detached work in St Helier, Lavender, Cricket Green and Abbey wards

It is important to note that there is currently no youth service delivery at Eastfields Youth Centre and John Innes Centre but there are voluntary sector youth groups supported by the youth service using the centres. The decision was to remove financial responsibility for these two buildings from the youth service, and allow current usage to continue, under different management. The ward profile information shows where service provision is located, six of the wards are in the ten most deprived wards in the borough. However there are three wards in the top ten most deprived in the borough where there is no youth service provision. These are Colliers Wood, Graveney and Longthornton wards. This is where the mapping of youth provision is important showing the other services that are in existence in these areas.

## **6.0 THE YOUTH SERVICE BUDGET**

6.1 A report was approved at Cabinet on 14 November 2005 where the proposed growth to the youth service budget over the next two years was agreed. This followed on from the OFSTED inspection and discussion at cabinet and the Life Chances Scrutiny Panel. Cabinet agreed on a rolling programme of improvement, taking account the analysis of need and the lead time and capacity to deliver the necessary changes. The underlying financial assumption is that spending on the Youth Service in Merton needs to be raised to reflect the national average spend (£70 per head).

6.2 The current budget for 2005/2006 provides for expenditure per head of the 13 – 19 year old population in Merton of £56.35. In 2003/2004 the average spend was £54 per head this placed Merton 106<sup>th</sup> out of 129 authorities nationally. The national average is £70 and the National Youth Association recommend £100. Merton's comparator authorities including Sutton, Kingston and Brighton were funded at an average of £78.25 in 2003/2004.

6.3 Cabinet agreed to the following recommendations in order to increase the growth in the youth service budget:

- (1) That there should be growth in the Youth Service budget to bring the service up to the national average levels per young person 13-19 spend per annum. This growth to be achieved over two years.
- (2) In 2006/2007 the authority should recruit two full time managers (£68,000) and develop resources budgets for three centres (£30,000).
- (3) In 2007/2008 the authority should recruit one full time managers (£34,000) and a part time youth work team to increase the opening hours of Wyvern by more night per week (£20,000).
- (4) In 2007/2008 it is recommended that the budget is increased by £15,000, with £5,000 targeted at each of Longthorton, Graveney and Colliers Wood Wards.
- (5) In 2007/2008 it is recommended that the authority appoint a full time qualified schools worker in response to the extended schools agenda (£34,000).
- (6) In 2007/2008 and subsequent financial years £10,000 should be set aside to fund the youth service contribution to joint provision for outreach youth work targeted at anti-social behaviour hot spots.

6.4 The Youth Service budget and average spend per 13 – 19 young person is as follows:

	2005/2006	2006/2007 with growth	2007/2008 with growth
Employees	458,710	472,471	486,645
Premises	127,580	129,494	131,436
Transport	26,000	27,304	27,713
Supplies and Services	124,030	125,890	127,779
Third party payments	23,930	24,289	24,653
Asset rentals	248,090	248,090	248,090
Internal overheads	72,130	73,212	74,310
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>1,081,370</b>	<b>1,100,750</b>	<b>1,120,627</b>
Fees and charges	-12,440	-12,440	-12,440
<b>Total income</b>	<b>-12,440</b>	<b>-12,440</b>	<b>-12,440</b>
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>1,068,930</b>	<b>1,088,310</b>	<b>1,108,187</b>
For calculation take out Asset rentals*	-248,090	-248,090	-248,090
<b>Growth required to increase average spend</b>		<b>98,000</b>	<b>211,000</b>
Average per young persons spend	56.35	£63.14	70.67

Assumptions:

- Inflation on salaries @ 3% per annum
- Inflation on other budgets @ 1.5% per annum
- Youth population grows @ 2% per annum

\*National Youth Association calculations remove premises from cost of spend

6.5 The authority raises additional external funding which, in line with other local authorities, is not included in any per head of population funding calculations. It is estimated that £388,740 of external funding will be received in 2005/2006, the match funding required to lever in this income is

included in the core youth service budget. The level of external funding in 2003/4 was about average when compared to other local authorities (53<sup>rd</sup> out of 148 authorities).

## **7.0 VOLUNTARY SECTOR PROVISION**

- 7.1 In addition to the budget spent on statutory provision, £194,942 from the youth service budget is given to voluntary groups for the delivery of youth work in the borough. This year some of the money was given in partnership with Safer Merton – Youth Champions Group, Merton Community and Housing Community Development Team, Morrison Facilities Services to provide summer schemes and all year round programmes for the young.
- 7.2 As well as funding from the youth service, Connexions funding supports a number of voluntary organisations in the borough including: Uptown, Merton Young Carers; Kingston and Merton Education Business Partnership, Threshold Housing Advice, U Project and more.

Total Connexions funding to the Voluntary Sector - £547,650

Total Connexions funding to the statutory sector - £182,326

Total amount spent on Voluntary Sector in Merton by youth service, youth service partners and Connexions - £742,592

There is more funding that supports the voluntary sector but this is from independent sources.

## **8.0 EVIDENCE GATHERING**

### **8.1 Youth Service**

Members of the Task Group made a visit to the Youth Service Office in Farm Rd to meet Youth Service staff and discuss the issues affecting service provision and gain the view of front line staff. Highlighted below are the issues that arose from that discussion:

- Youth Service currently in a period of transition with the new head of service starting in early November. The Acting Youth Services Manager has been in the interim been covering three posts.
- Youth workers at youth centres are generally part time, one of the comments from OFSTED was that this service was dependant on part time staff doing hours of unpaid work (working on good faith). Existing full time staff have therefore been allocated a youth centre each to manage alongside their current workload.
- Youth centres have to compete with other places for young people, this can be difficult with many of the centres in a bad state of repair and lacking good facilities such as comfortable chairs, up to date computers.
- Youth Service alone has been attempting to meet government targets, but it has now been realised that this cannot be done in isolation.
- Currently do a lot of cross borough working with Sutton (i.e. joint funding bids with Sutton).

- The youth forum representative said that everyone he had met from the Youth Service had been enthusiastic about the service and its future; that youth services staff do not let young people see any problems the service might be having. He believed that outcomes had been positive; with a successful youth forum and the work outside the borough.
- Work at youth centres must 'add value': is an extension of education but must make activities enjoyable. All forms of activity valued not just academic learning, less teacher to pupil but more interactive and about the individual. Need to remember it is the young persons free time, they need to have choice in the opportunities/activities available to them.
- All those centres that passed the OFSTED inspection had full time workers, all but one of those who only have part time workers failed. This is because full time staff are paid appropriately and given time to concentrate/give the work the proper preparation needed.
- Majority of part time workers very good, but need to be given/allow time to prepare and plan, can be very disheartening otherwise.

### **Short Term Plans**

- Farm Road to be sold, is not used as much as some centres and is a valuable asset.
- John Innes, not a practical building to use, lack of lighting so quite dark, horrible entrance (Not a council asset, but if closed would save running costs).
- Eastfields – used by Kick-start and by Wandsworth and Sutton Schools. (Not a council asset, if closed could release £20,000 from running costs).
- The disposal of John Innes and Eastfields will fund the savings required from the youth services budget for this year (£40,000).
- This would mean that four centres are kept, three to close along with the closure of the admin office.
- Funding of Croyden Community Bus in those areas where there is little or no provision.
- The importance of the work carried out at youth centres was discussed, for some children it may be the only positive input, it is also a way for young people to understand and develop friendships and relationships in a controlled environment. Help to give young people the tools to operate by themselves.

### **The Audit/Mapping Exercise**

The youth services manager took the group through the audit/map of services and analysis of areas of greatest need in the borough. The Group then discussed the following issues:

- Residents Survey completed in September will soon be available. The exercise involved face-to-face interviews with approx 270 young people between ages of 11 and 18.
- Media perception of young people and service, need to celebrate good things and ensure positive output of information.
- Important to engage parents as well and young people.

- The analysis results in ranking the 20 wards in borough in order of need/priority and is based on: deprivation index, number of 0-19 year olds, BME and crime figures. The top five include: Figs Marsh, Cricket Green, Lavender, Pollards Hill and Ravensbury.

## 8.2 Connexions

The Connexions Chief Executive and the Merton Connexions Manager were invited to attend this meeting of the task group, highlighted below are the issues that arose from that discussion along with the background information about Connexions:

### **Connexions Service**

Connexions is for 13-19 year olds, living in England and wanting advice on getting to where they want to be in life. It also provides support up to the age of 25 for young people who have learning difficulties or disabilities (or both). Connexions is a modern public service and young people are actively involved in its design and delivery. The service is managed locally by Connexions Partnerships that bring together all the key youth support services.

### **Issues that they cover**

Anything and everything, if a young person has got a problem, query, question, concern, need some advice or just want to chat to someone then get in touch with Connexions Direct. They will point them in the right direction and give some guidance and direction.

### **Issues arising from discussion at the task group:**

- Connexion involves young people throughout its service including having Shadow Board made up of young people.
- Connexions has a strong relationship with the statutory sector and with the voluntary sector help to manage contracts for providers of the service on the ground.
- Has been set up so that Connexions is part of every other service that is available to young people, so not standing alone.
- Advisors are linked to schools, alternative education and Merton College along with a Connexions service based in Wimbledon.
- It took a while to get connexion known to young people but is now well known.
- Liaise with parents in a number of areas: children with special needs, family and carers and at parents evenings in schools.
- Looking to expand outreach in Merton by increasing advisors and reaching out into other youth services, helping to create programmes and projects.
- Recently been involved in helping to map services available to young people in the borough in conjunction with the youth service and MVSC.
- All work that Connexions is value adding and has a learning outcome.
- Support schools and young people to achieve GSEs but not just formal education but also social education.

- Work with young people at risk of exclusion, advocate on behalf of young person. Cannot influence exclusion policy but can work with young people to keep them in touch with social services, education, health etc.
- Involved in non school activities, young people on caseload engaged in activities outside school, work very closely with youth service.
- Connexions track school leavers with the purpose of getting all young people into work or further learning.
- Connexions in Merton is a contracted out model, a different way of running the service, by 2008 the budget will come directly through local government.
- Youth Service and connexions could be brought more closely together, not pooled budgets yet but could have aligned budgets so that there is no duplication, providing added value.
- Idea of youth service covering wider areas rather than small borough area to getting better economies of scale.

**Vision for the future:**

- Localise some of what is done
- Look at services in value for money terms
- Work wider than Merton, across South London, reap benefits from sharing
- Share best practice with other authorities and organisations
- Ring fenced monies so money not used elsewhere
- Look to 0-19 agenda, developing and delivering services for all young people but must make sure there is enough funding.
- More preventative work, preventing rather than firefighting.
- To remember young peoples need change as they get older and times change.
- 'Youth Matters' paper will determine much of what will happen in relation to young peoples services.

**8.3 Safer Merton Partnership**

Officers from the Safer Merton Partnership attended the meeting, they outlined the work of the partnership and then the task group discussed the issues:

Safer Merton is the Crime & Disorder Partnership and Drug Action Team for Merton. Safer Merton has the responsibility for developing & implementing strategies to reduce crime, anti social behaviour and substance misuse in Merton.

Safer Merton brings together a number of agencies to work together but the statutory agencies involved are:

- London Borough of Merton
- London Fire Brigade
- London Probation Service
- Metropolitan Police Authority
- Metropolitan Police Service (Merton Division)
- Sutton & Merton Primary Care Trust

Some of the work also being done by the Safer Merton Partnership in relation to young people includes:

- Merton Youth Offending Service has been successful in recent years in a number of areas and it is currently ranked in the top 25% of all Youth Offending Teams across the country. The key successes include:
  - High performance in Youth Justice Board's Performance Indicators.
  - Reduction of re-offending in recent years for those subject to supervision.
  - Increasing number of young offenders involved in restorative justice processes.
  - Competent and consistent performance in work with parents.
  - Contact with victims post sentence and anticipated offer of mediation work where requested by victim.
- The Safer Merton Youth Champions Group brought together statutory sector partners under the guidance of an independent chair to run small grants schemes aimed at helping communities run activities for young people in their own area to reduce crime and disorder. The summer Scheme project funded 18 projects over the summer holidays at a cost of £43,535. These schemes engaged 1,081 young people for varying lengths of time. Crime reports relating to under 18s for the period of the Summer Schemes fell by 22.3% in comparison with the previous year.
- The Safer Merton Offenders Group (SMOG) was set up in 2002 with the remit to deal with crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour reduction through engagement offering intervention and diversion. The SMOG uses a multi-agency approach to intervene with those who Safer Merton partners consider to be the most prolific or potentially prolific offenders within Merton and who are not currently being dealt with by other statutory agencies.
- Turnaround was launched on 14 May 2004; it works with young people that are at risk of involvement in offending and anti-social behaviour. Since the launch the project has worked with 51 young people and their families, helping them to access mainstream services and engaging them in one to one and group work activities.
- As a result of the Audit of incidents of Anti Social Behaviour and agency response, Safer Merton has implemented an Anti Social Behaviour Strategy including detailed policies and procedures in order that action taken against perpetrators is effective and streamlined.
- Pier group mediation to be introduced in conjunction with Sutton will involve training young people as mediators.
- A Crime and Disorder Audit was completed, its findings have been used to develop the Safer Merton Strategy 2005-2008 and to set standards to measure progress. A top-down analysis process was used, this started with a broad and shallow exploration of the data to identify areas for deeper data mining and more detailed analysis. Reports of youth crime in Merton decreased by 11% between 2001 and 2003. The main crime types committed by 10-17 year olds were shoplifting and robbery. There are peak times of youth crime between 3pm and 5pm, which matches with school finishing times. The wards containing the most youth crime are Trinity and Fig's Marsh.



Issues arising from discussion:

- Young people as victims of crime, disproportionate number of victims, young people on young people and the increase in young women in crime. Many young people do not report crime but accept it as part of daily life, often associated with anti social behaviour and bullying. Young peoples fear of crime is higher than that of adults.
- Addressing domestic violence important, trauma of witnessing domestic violence and young people may go on to duplicate behaviour, brutalises young people.
- Over 90% of prolific offenders have experience abuse in their childhood, 91% unemployed, they often having difficulty forming relationships and many have drug and alcohol problems. Intervention by Safer Merton Partnership has reduced re-offending by 71% on a sample of those involved.
- Like to see after school and holiday provision throughout the year keeping young people usefully engaged to benefit themselves and the community.
- Pier group mediation will help young people to relate to each other in different ways.
- Youth Champions Group was so successful last year that it will be pulling twice as much funding this year.
- Croydon Community Bus funded by Insight serves some areas where little youth provision.
- Important to get the right services for young people and involving parents also important.
- More outreach (detached youth work) work needed.
- Important to have services available to all young people as well as to target services to those who need more specialist support.

8.4 Voluntary Organisation And Community Groups

A number of voluntary and community groups/organisations were contacted and the task group met with the following groups:

- YMCA Wimbledon
- Merton College Youth Service
- Chair of MeMu
- Millennium Volunteers
- Groundwork Merton
- Merton Young Carers Project

The groups were asked to discuss issues around the following points/questions.

1. What do you think about the services available to young people across Merton?
2. What services would you like to see provided to young people in the borough?
3. How can we make our services more responsive to what young people want while adding educational 'added value' to activities?

4. Do you think the Youth Centres in the borough provide young people with a good service and how would you like to see this improved?
5. How would you like to see services to young people across Merton develop in the future?
6. How do you think the council and organisations, voluntary and community groups could work together better to serve the needs of young people in the borough?
7. What tools do you use to engage and involve young people?
8. How do you think the Council could better engage with young people?

The following issues were raised by this exercise:

- Transportable concepts discussed, for example the youth club that set up in a room in a Morden public house and the music events like those set up by MeMu organised and run by young people (exciting and vibrant events that really engage young people).
- Historical struggle in relation to funding for the youth service.
- Youth service does little detached work but some of this work is currently being done by a number of other organisations.
- Youth centre facilities limited
- Perception of young people in the community can be associated with negative images and more positive reflection needs to be made, organisations must work together to do this.
- Young people are best engaged over a period of time, need consistency of engagement to build trust.
- Solutions and issues relating to young people are not always quick or immediate; it can take time and a consistent approach.
- Football leagues across the borough a good way to bring young people together in a healthy and productive way. Police used to put on events but no longer do this.
- Good to go out to young people, i.e. mobile bus etc.
- Would like to see council's role as a strategic one, setting priorities and commissioning work.
- Main role for council strategic but need to work in partnership with other organisations and voluntary groups to ensure a wide spectrum of services.
- Staff development issue in relation to part time workers – often not enough time for a part time worker to commit to training.
- Would like to see more healthy living youth work.
- Good to develop peer led projects where young people can do what they want to do and have the support to do it.
- Young people are prepared to travel providing there is what they consider a quality programme, what young people want changes quickly.
- As a provider you need to offer good innovative programmes that can be adapted quickly.
- Young people want to feel they have a stake in what's going on. You must ask them what they want and listen. Often young people are consulted with and the decisions are not fed back to them or they see nothing happen so they don't bother to engage again.

- Sense Newsletter good communications tool for young people along with the idea of a radio station.
- Good way to interact with young people is through a website but other ways include texting, focus groups in community, at events, peer working, providing incentives.
- Be careful not to raise expectations that you cannot deliver.
- Consulting with young people a training issue, not to be patronising etc.
- Young carers time and life chances can become limited and one of the barriers to young carers getting involved in the services and activities available in the borough can be transportation, getting to and from the venue/event.
- Young carers opportunity to meet with other young people in the borough is often also limited, respite care for sick or disabled relative was highlighted as an important issue n giving young carers the opportunity to become involved in activities outside the home.
- The project works closely with a number of bodies including Connexions and the youth service – felt it was important to develop good networks.
- Some things that are important to young carers also include: access to a telephone and person to contact and spending time with other young carers so they know they are not alone.

## 9.0 YOUNG PEOPLE

### 9.1 Survey Results

As part of the Merton Annual Residents Survey, which was completed in November 2005, 224 young people between the ages of 11 and 17 years where surveyed. Some of the results include:

- Top six areas of personal concern for young people:
  1. 45% Crime
  2. 35% Bullying
  3. 34% Bad behaviour
  4. 30% Drug use and pushers
  5. 29% Not enough being done for young people
  6. 26% Litter / dirt on the streets
- Attitudes of young people to council services:

<b>Council Service</b>	<b>Excellent, very good or good</b>	<b>Poor, very poor, extremely poor</b>
Parks, playgrounds & open spaces	55%	18%
Primary Schools	60%	5%
Secondary Schools	52%	14%
Leisure and sports facilities	52%	19%
Libraries	63%	11%
<b>Activities for young people</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>40%</b>
Arts and culture	32%	21%
Sixth form provision	35%	8%

- Concern about crime is much higher amongst young people with mixed ethnicity (76%) and Asian (55%), than white (45%) than black/black British (28%).
- Concern about crime increases with age (63% of 17 year olds) and higher amongst males 51% than females 34%. Concern was consistently high in all wards, but in St Helier, Ravensbury and Cricket Green 66% of young people said was and area of concern.
- The police were deemed poorest by young people of mixed ethnicity 26% poor or worse, but were as popular amongst white and black/black British at 56%. This rating was constant across the age range 11-16. In ten wards the rating was over 63% good or better.
- Concern about bullying decreases with age from 51/58% 11 and 12 year olds to under 20% by age 16 and is much higher for Asian young people (68%) and is higher amongst females (50%) to males (26%).
- Not enough being done for young people increases with age from 11 year olds (24%) to 17 year olds (39%). Older females and white and black/black British young people were more likely to say activities for young people were poor. 58% of young people in Cricket Green, St Helier and Ravensbury and 54% of young people in Cannon Hill, West Barnes, Merton Park and Lower Morden said activities were poor or worse.
- Involvement:

<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Excellent, very good or good</b>	<b>Poor, very poor, extremely poor</b>
The council involves young people in decision making	34%	63%
Listens to the concerns of young people	46%	47%
Keeps young people informed	41%	57%
Does enough to protect young people	61%	35%
Provide services which young people need	58%	41%

- 25% say that they have already been a member of a school council, 43% would like to. Only young people of mixed ethnicity were more likely to say that they didn't think they would ever do this. 68% of 12 year olds would like to.
- 90% expect to vote.
- 71% would be willing to do voluntary work
- 72% would consider writing to a councillor about an issue
- Out of school activities, they would like to attend
  - A place to do homework 13%
  - A place to meet friends 44%

A place to do hobbies or play 23%  
A place to do music, art, drama 35%  
A place where adults listen to my problems 6%  
A place where adults organise activities 5%  
Sports 44%

- Attendance at out of school activities
  - Breakfast club 2%
  - After school club 17%
  - Sports/gym 40%
  - Dance, drama, music 19%
  - Youth club 15%
  - Scouts, adventure, cadet 9%
  - Other 6%
  - Don't attend anything 34%
  - Highest level of not attending anything is Graveney, Longthornton and Colliers Wood (42%) and amongst those of mixed ethnicity (53%).
  - Colliers Wood, Longthornton and Graveney 19% of young people attend a youth club.

## 9.2 Merton College

The task group met with four young people currently studying at Merton College at the Youth Club they frequently attend, Phipps Bridge. The following issues were raised/discussed:

- Youth clubs not advertised enough, not many young people know they exist.
- Nothing going on in youth club so can be boring
- Would like to have more events/trips out i.e.: bowling etc.
- More up to date look: modern furniture, TV/DVD (to reflect users)
- More useful equipment: up to date computers, music equipment for playing and producing
- A juice bar would be a good idea, gets young people to learn how to make their own healthy fruit drinks would act as a social meeting point.
- Radio station run by young people
- Specialised workshops to support young people to do what they want to do. This could include one to one work and mentoring.
- Sessions around driving and independence issues
- Connexions and Job Centre visit youth clubs and have session to help young people
- Opening times of youth clubs should be extended currently 7.30pm to 9.30pm but what do young people do between 5pm and 7.30pm?
- Talks from different industries/employers about different careers and employment opportunities
- Exchange trips, peer mentoring and fundraising skills
- Assistance and advice in relation to securing funding from different pots of money available from different sources
- More active type activities i.e.: football league and dance classes

- Youth Parliament a good idea but not heard of it before, would need to be representative of all young people
- How do the council know what young people want, they need to ask young people more, come to the youth club and college etc.
- Good way to engage easily with young people is to design a good interactive website.
- Texting is another good way of keeping in touch with young people.

### 9.3 Young People in Reparation

The task group met with two young people in reparation both aged 17 years. The meeting commenced with an overview of the service provided by Youth Offending Team (YOT). Reparation aims to repay the debt to the victim of the misdemeanour or to the wider community. Includes work on allotments, children's centres, simple construction (e.g. shed building) etc. Work undertaken in places like Wimbledon Rugby Club, Brightwell Respite Care Home, National Trust Café, community centres. YOT is multi-agency with links to Connexions, Police, Social Services. YOT staff attend court with young people and oversee reparation orders. YOT currently has 27 young people with reparation orders.

The following key points emerged:-

- H – at college, been coming to YOT for reparation for 5 months.
- D has just started reparation.
- H&D were asked what they like doing in their spare time – mainly hanging out with friends. D had been to Pollards Hill Youth Centre but was not impressed – not much to do, and often fights broke out or kids just ran about with no structure to the proceedings. Staff did not seem proactive. There is a pool table and music but not much else. Access to PCs and Internet would be good or gym equipment and weight training – although this requires proper supervision.
- The Insight Centre in Mitcham is good because it has computers and proactive staff. D used to go to Kickstart in Eastfields and ride bikes but it is now too expensive (£20 for a session). D is seeking an apprenticeship as a mechanic or a carpenter. D has not been in education since he was 12 years old and has a social worker. It is important to provide a range of choices and options for activities.
- H stated that he had never used a youth centre and would not use one as he would rather go to his mates' houses and use the Playstation.
- Libraries provide computers and Internet access but problems experienced with other library users – asked to be quiet etc. It was agreed that libraries should provide adequate services for young people.
- D thought that there had been some racial incidents at Pollards Hill youth centre. Members highlighted other centres which had good facilities, e.g. High Path has a rap studio, there is the Hub in Morden; also Sherwood Park and the Endeavour.
- H thought young offenders might go to youth centres and start trouble.
- D said that at Pollards Hill, the Community Liaison Officer had promised to set up a football team but nothing had happened. The youth centre needs 'doing-up' and more promotion to get people to use it. Sometimes there are only half a dozen young people there.

- It was agreed by everyone that ‘constructive leisure’ is vital and that opportunities should be provided borough wide.
- The ‘*Youth Justice News*’ could be a useful vehicle for acknowledging good work and providing positive recognition.
- H&D said that they had trouble with younger police officers (some of whom knew them) but that the community support officers were more approachable and fair.
- H spoke about the need to use shock tactics to dissuade young people from offending. He thought that prison visits would be good – so that young people could see what it was really like to be locked up – that it is not glamorous or cool to be in prison. (He spoke from the experience of his friend’s brother who had been imprisoned). Members were advised that Coldingley Prison offers educational visits.

## **10.0 YOUTH PARLIAMENT**

### **10.1 UK Youth Parliament (YKYP)**

Aim to give the young people of the UK, between the age of 11 and 18 a voice, which will be heard and listened to by local and national government, providers of services for young people and other agencies who have an interest in the views and needs of young people. UKYP has the support of Prime Minister Tony Blair, Leader of the Opposition David Cameron, and the Leader of the Liberal Democrats Charles Kennedy. The UKYP has a rolling programme. It meets on an annual basis, and gives young people of the UK a chance to express their views and concerns at the highest levels. The UKYP was launched at the House of Commons in July 1999. Currently, they have over 300 elected Member of the Youth Parliament (MYPs), aged between 11 and 18 (inclusive). MYPs represent both young men and women, including young people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and with physical and learning disabilities. Each Local Education Authority (LEA) represents a UKYP constituency, and 90% of the LEAs across England are currently represented on the UKYP. Agreements are also established with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure that the young people in those countries are represented by the organisation.

### **10.2 Merton Youth Parliament Steering Group**

A Merton Youth Engagement Steering Group was set up by young people from the Youth Forum to look at the idea of introducing a Youth Parliament into Merton.

The Steering Group was made up of nine young people, including representatives the following schools Tamworth Manor, Ricards Lodge, Ursuline High and Rutlish High. A document was produced by the young people which was presented to the Task Group at its meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2005. 14 questions were considered including:

1. What would young people in Merton want from a Youth Parliament?
2. What places should have a representative in the MYP?
3. What should be the ration of representative to number of people at their place?

4. How long should each term last?
5. What would the priorities of the MYP be?
6. How often would the MYP meet?
7. How should communication between representatives be maintained?
8. Would you like a system where Members of the UK youth parliament be a part of the local parliament?
9. Where should the meetings be held?
10. Would you, and how often would you like to meet councillors and the Merton cabinet?
11. Any other details should be added to the MYP?
12. Should there be a specific age range?
13. Should the representatives be elected in a borough way, or should it be up to the individual places?
14. Are young people who live in Merton but don't attend a school or a club in Merton will be allowed to be on the MYP?

The summary from this document outlines what the steering group would like to see the Merton Youth Parliament consist of.

#### **Summary**

Many ideas came up. The general picture was that the Merton Youth Parliament Steering Group would be volunteering to help Young People and give them more enjoyment in Merton.

- Better facilities and more activities for young people such as parties.
- More information on opportunities and teenage problems for young people in Merton.
- Certificates and rewards for those who give up their spare time and work with the MYP.
- Publicise the good of young people in the borough.
- Fairer treatment towards an average teenager.

Looking at the possibilities, the following places will have a representative:

- Schools
- Youth Clubs
- Religious Group for Young People
- Sports groups
- 6<sup>th</sup> Form

Within these representatives, positions can be allocated such as Sports Co-ordinator, looking at sport opportunities in Merton. Each place would have a different, but fair representation between young people. Each term for a person would last a year.

The priorities of the MYP, would be:

- Improve the facilities in Merton
- Giving access to young people to different places.
- Giving Young People what they need.

The MYP would meet once every two weeks and the meeting would be held in a place, which is easy to get to. Communications between the representatives would be kept through e-mail and the MYP website chat room.

The members of the UK Youth parliament would be part of the local parliament and take ideas on to the national parliament.

The MYP would like to meet councillors and the Merton Cabinet once every two months, at least some members from the Cabinet in order to have a good relationship.

The MYP would consist of high school representatives. How the elections are run would be up to the schools etc. Young People who live in Merton but don't belong to a place in Merton like a school can stand for their local area such as estates or a town like Mitcham.

***Merton Youth Parliament Steering Group (full document see Appendix B)***



A number of issues were discussed with the young people at the task group meeting on the 15 February 2006, including:

- Ensuring the fair representation of all young people essential
- Would prefer fixed budget per year, spending and allocation of monies be supervised by adult but decisions down to young people. Fixed amount per year will enable the YP to properly plan for projects and the future.
- Would like to appoint those adults who will be involved.
- Monies will be available from the Youth Opportunities fund to finance a youth parliament, may be available from April 06 (could be up to 40k per year), still awaiting guidance but will be based on young people have direct if not full control of that.
- A youth parliament would benefit the wider community improving the life of young people.
- Could generate own money in future, well look for sponsors, bid for different grants.
- Would like regular contact with cabinet member/s.
- In some schools a lot of work will need to done to make the election of a member happen.
- Idea of a young people champion in authority was raised.
- Compact with council.
- Equalities – representative will set guidelines so that all are respected and represented.
- Would like it to start in the new school year in September 2006.

## **11.0 THE WIDER CONTEXT**

### **11.1 Government Office for London (GOL)**

The Youth Service lead at Government Office for London (GOL) attended the meeting to discuss the Youth Matters Green Paper, GOL and youth service best practice, outlined the following issues:

#### **Key Points from Youth Matters Analysis**

- Young people now face more opportunities but also more risks.
- Most young people are doing well, high levels of volunteering and enterprise.
- Several key indicators are improving (educational attainment, employment and training, smoking, teenage pregnancy).
- Some public services have made good progress in supporting young people including those who are at risk.
- But some face challenges – and a number of indicators are static or getting worse (obesity, binge-drinking, volatile substance misuse, mental health).
- A small minority of young people get involved in offending or anti-social behaviour. While numbers are small overall, young people are responsible for a high proportion of crime.
- Public services often lack responsiveness, personalisation, and have fragmented accountability and delivery.

### **The Key Challenges to Youth Services**

- Empowering young people – particularly those who are disadvantaged or who do not participate, to become more involved in positive activities and to shape what is available.
- Encouraging young people to make a contribution and become more involved in their communities.
- Providing better information, advice and guidance on learning, careers and other key life choices.
- Providing better professional targeted support across the full range of risk factors to young people who need it.

### **Reforming principles of Youth Matters:**

- Services more responsive to what young people and their parents want.
- Balancing the right and responsibilities in the provision of opportunities, challenge and support.
- Making services more integrated, efficient and effective.
- Reducing the gap between those doing well and those who are not.
- Ensuring a diversity of providers.
- Building on the best of current provision.

### **Youth Service Best Practice**

- LA provides strong commitment, sense of identity, strategic direction & sufficient funding
- Curriculum policies designed in consultation with staff, partners and young people.
- Well-understood and consistently implemented quality assurance procedures.
- Strategic and Operation Management.
- Operational Managers involved in decision making.
- Supervision and performance management arrangements.
- Number and quality of staff.
- Improve quality assurance through needs analysis, planning and evaluation, budget monitoring and performance management.
- Focus on educational outcomes and accreditation.
- Leadership of the curriculum.
- Young people's involvement.
- Range of provision.

### **Issues arising from the discussion with task group:**

- Vibrant partnerships with other providers important.
- Information sharing with other local authorities.
- Working across borough boundaries with other local authorities and organisations
- Sutton received good OFSTED report for its youth services.
- Need services that attract young people, good example i.e.: MeMu – young people not only involved but set agenda.
- What do we want the youth service to do? Target most need or support and provide service across the borough? Need to do both.

- Diversity of service, some very innovative work going on out there.
- Funding: for every £1 spent by the Merton Council a further £14 is spent out in the community on youth services by the voluntary sector. So important to map all services so that monies spent by both the authority and the voluntary sector is spent effective, i.e.: cutting out duplication.
- Young people need to be aware of what is out there and how to access it safely.
- Information needs to be given to young people in the right way.
- Many children and young people become engaged through word of mouth or and brought along by a friend or relative.
- Image of young people in the media is generally can be negative, this needs to be combated.

### Appendices

- A** Scope and plan of review
- B** Notes of the Merton Youth Parliament Steering Group – 5 February 2006
- C** Financial Implications of the Recommendations

### Bibliography

Youth Matters Green Paper July 2005  
Hear By Right – standards for the active involvement of children and young people  
Merton OFSTED Inspection 2004  
Every Child Matters: Change for Children  
Youth Service Needs Analysis December 2005  
Annual Resident Survey 2005  
Cabinet Report – Youth Service Budget 14 November 2005  
Merton Open Space Strategy 2004  
Involving Children and Young People (June 2005) The National Youth Agency  
Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing Excellent Youth Services (DfES & Connexions)  
Local Democracy Campaign – Engaging with young people in your area (LGA)  
Citizenship for 16-19 year olds in Education and Training (DfEE)  
Making it real: Young people in democratic structures

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SCRUTINY REVIEW SCOPE/TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Life Chances Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Review Task Group Members: Councillors Pauline Dawkins, Dennis Pearce, Fiona Bryce, William Brierly, Nick Draper (in non voting capacity) and Dominic Leeson (Youth Forum).**

Title of Review	Youth Engagement
<b>Outline purpose of Review</b>	To determine ways to increase engagement with young people in Merton, including identifying mechanisms to enable them to actively participate in the democratic process and to give young people a vehicle for expressing their views.
<b>Expected Timescale (possible no of meetings?)</b>	The scrutiny review criteria states that a review should aim to be concluded within 5 to 6 months. This is an agreed review for the first half of 2005/6 Municipal Year (to be completed by October 2005).
<b>Terms of Reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To examine existing levels of youth service provision;</li> <li>• To examine the existing levels of youth engagement in Merton to determine the current position;</li> <li>• To identify best practice from elsewhere;</li> <li>• To have a greater understanding of young people's aspirations and identify the barriers to democratic engagement;</li> <li>• To develop and recommend a framework for improving democratic engagement for young people in Merton;</li> </ul>
<b>Key areas of enquiry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements of the National Curriculum in relation to citizenship;</li> <li>• Existing initiatives in the Borough's schools;</li> <li>• Beacon Councils/Best Practice;</li> <li>• Relevant reviews conducted by other authorities;</li> <li>• Government initiatives;</li> <li>• Youth surveys.</li> </ul>
<b>How review could be publicised</b>	Merton Website; Borough Magazine – <i>My Merton</i> Youth Service Magazine Local Press Connexions Schools Libraries
<b>Possible witnesses ( for written or oral evidence) e.g. council officers, individual residents, community groups, partner</b>	Young People; Youth Forum; Youth Parliament; Youth Service representatives; Merton Youth Partnership; Schools/schools councils; Safer Merton Partnership;

<b>organisations, other interested stakeholders, other external organisations</b>	Youth officers: e.g. Youth Participation Manager, Faith Groups Listening to Children Officer, Social Inclusion Manager Connexions; Hard to reach groups (e.g. disabled, bme) Cabinet Members
<b>What is to be included/excluded and any potential barriers</b>	Potential barrier may be possible apathy and disinterest within groups of young people which will need to be overcome.  <u>Include</u> in the review young people across as wide an age spectrum as possible – not just youth service age group.
<b>Expected Outcomes</b> (all linked to Merton's vision and strategic objectives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A set of recommendations to improve engagement in the democratic process for young people;</li> <li>• To give a voice to Merton's youth population;</li> <li>• To contribute to the agenda for promoting citizenship;</li> <li>• To enhance the community engagement role of local authorities;</li> <li>• To contribute to lifelong learning and promote access, opportunity and inclusion for young people.</li> </ul>
<b>Possible Sources of Information</b>	Review findings from other authorities; National Youth Agency; LGA survey material; Hear By Right Website Effective Youth Services (July 2005) Ofsted DfES Youth Parliament
<b>Lead Scrutiny Officer</b>	Michelle Roberts
<b>Lead Departmental Officer(s)</b>	Keith Shipman

## Merton Youth Parliament Steering Group

The group who have contributed to this document are representatives from Tamworth Manor, Ricards Lodge, Ursuline High School and Rutlish High School. As the Life Chances and Scrutiny Panel have asked, we have written a document on what we want our local Youth Parliament to consist of. These ideas have all come from Young People.

Fourteen questions were set out in order to have a general structure of the Youth parliament. They were:

1. What would young people in Merton want from a Youth Parliament?
2. What places should have a representative in the MYP?
3. What should be the ration of representative to number of people at their place?
4. How long should each term last?
5. What would the priorities of the MYP be?
6. How often would the MYP meet?
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9. Where should the meetings be held?
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- Fairer treatment towards an average teenager.

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- Giving Young People what they need.

The MYP would meet once every two weeks and the meeting would be held in a place, which is easy to get to. Communications between the representatives would be kept through e-mail and the MYP website chat room.

The members of the UK Youth parliament would be part of the local parliament and take ideas on to the national parliament.

The MYP would like to meet councillors and the Merton Cabinet once every two months, at least some members from the Cabinet in order to have a good relationship. The MYP would consist of high school representatives. How the elections are run would be up to the schools etc. Young People who live in Merton but don't belong to a place in Merton like a school can stand for their local area such as estates or a town like Mitcham.

## **The full answers to the questions** **Given by the Young People**

### **Question 1:**

- More Teen Youth Groups
- Show consideration to Young People and less prejudice against them. This includes less bad publicity. Give teenagers more encouragement.
- More activities and leisure.
- More privileges
- Free public services
- Better facilities such as Basketball
- Inter-generational projects.
- Teen Police (officers)
- Helping the community for the better.
- More equality.
- More information for young people like leaflets, guides and magazines.
- More opportunities.
- A bar for teens.
- Fundraising events to cater for such as gigs.
- More involvement in the environment.
- Teen rehab
- Official website with information
- Raise the "child fare" to 16 as it's only up to under 16's.
- Certificates for taking part in the MYP.
- Non-alcoholic and drugs parties for Young People.

- Famous people talking to the younger generation in school.
- Adverts on TV.
- Set up a radio station.
- Encourage teens for positive motives.
- More money for facilities for children.
- Free travel for kids on the train (under 16's)
- More places teenagers can meet and have fun without having to involve alcohol and drugs.
- Walls for legal graffiti
- More patrol police
- The older generation not to put teenagers down for no reason

### **Question 2 and 3:**

- Schools, 1 per year group
- Youth Group, 1 per group
- KS3 + KS4 to be divided through elections at school. The younger/older student.
- 6<sup>th</sup> Form, 1 each.
- Religious and Cultural Groups
- Sport group, 1 from every sport.
- Estates, 1 or 2 teenagers.
- Scouts, 1 from each
- Youth Army etc.
- Max of 30 representatives in one area for instance Mitcham and Morden.
- Mixed ability groups so we have a range of strengths.
- Controlled number of representatives.
- Representatives coming from a central group such as a school council.

### **Question 4:**

Each term for a representative is one year.

### **Question 5, 6, 8 and 10:**

- Getting Young People views on certain problems/issues in society.
- Communicating within the Youth public and giving them what they need.
- Getting environment cleaned up.
- Changing stereotypes and intergenerational projects
- Set up Radio; have different representatives hosting it every day, once a week. Radio for teenager's problems. Like drugs, teenage pregnancy, STI's etc.
- Free phone calls to the radio station and to teenage social groups about problems.
- Promote the radio station.
- Leaflets in the local papers, London papers.
- Leaflets targeted at parents to clear with teenagers' situations, written by teenagers.
- From year 10 to sixth form have freebies, e.g. pens, condoms, pregnancy tests.
- Development for a place for teenagers to go.
- Intergenerational projects.
- We would meet once every two weeks.



- Vote for the most accessible place to meet.
- Meet in a place with windows
- Meetings to be held for two hours (3 hours max.)
- Meet in a warm place with radiators and cool air-conditioning.
- Places accessible to food and drinks so we do not get bored and don't die of thirst.
- Meet in a common known location within the community and a comfortable environment.
- We want to meet the cabinet every two months to bring new ideas to the Cabinet.

**Question 9:**

- The members of the UK Youth Parliament representing Merton shall be a part of the MYP in order to take our ideas to a national level and to the national cabinet.

**Question 7:**

- Group e-mail like e-group. Communicating by e-mail.
- Youth Forum online-discussions.
- Questions and Answers online. The young people can post questions and the representatives will answer together at regular meetings and post the answers onto the webpage.
- Webpage offering details and contacts.
- Certain place where teens can come at certain days and time to meet the representatives.
- Phone numbers to only the people we trust.
- Share Email addresses.
- Chat rooms on the MYP website which is connected to the Merton government website.
- A place with out adults, only supervision by a Youth Worker.

**Question 12:**

- The age range would be within the age range of high school.

**Question 13:**

- The way the elections will be held is up to the local places

**Question 14:**

- If a person lives in Merton like in an estate but does not attend a school in Merton etc. can stand in their local area.

**Final Statement by the Merton Youth Parliament  
Steering Group.**

We as a team have come up with these ideas in order to benefit the young community within London, and change the views on young people in society. We have chose this role (Merton Youth Parliament Steering Group) and taken this responsibility in order to benefit the borough for youths. We are Youths, so we know what youths want to do in their community. We are speaking on behalf of the youths of today, for what they intend to want and need.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS

<b>Recommendations that fall within the remit of Children, Schools and Families Department</b>	
R1	The spend per head per young person be increased year on year with the commitment to reach the National Youth Association’s recommended spend (currently £100 per young person).
R2	The mapping exercise be ongoing and extended to include the private sector service provision available to young people in Merton.
R3	The authority be proactive rather than reactive in publishing its ‘youth offer’ to young people in Merton.
R4	The youth service, partner and other organisations work with young people through detached, centre and group work to ensure the services that Merton provides are actually what young people want, particularly in relation to the facilities and activities available. This should include systematic approach to detached work across the borough being developed.
R7	Consideration be given to increasing the amount of community development work around young people in the borough.
R8	Links and work with partner, voluntary and other organisations continue to be developed so that a full cross borough service can be provided to young people.
R9	The council adopt ‘Hear by Right’ national standards for the involvement of young people as a self-assessment tool for measuring achievements and aspirations in youth participation.
R11	<p>A co-ordinated approach to the consultation and engagement with children and young people be developed which should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing advice across the authority and to voluntary and community groups on how best to consult/engage young people.</li> <li>• Development of a set of guidelines on consulting with children and young people.</li> </ul>
R12	The council ensures that when it consults with children and young people that it provides feedback on the final outcome and any decisions made and that this be done in a manner and language that the is most appropriate to those consulted.

R13	<p>The Merton Youth Parliament (MYP) is established and it commences in the next school year (September 2006) and that it should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A constitution that is drawn up by young people in summer 2006.</li> <li>– Decision-making powers (which would be looked into by the Cabinet/department once the allocation of fund for Merton and the guidance on the allocation of funds becomes available from DfES).</li> </ul> <p>Timetable: September 2006</p>
R14	<p>Steps are taken where necessary to ensure that every school within the borough has a school council system in place so young people can be democratically elected to the Merton Youth Parliament.</p> <p>Timetable: Autumn School Term 2006</p>
R15	<p>The Cabinet Member for Schools meets with representatives of the Merton Youth Parliament every two months.</p> <p>Timetable: To commence in Autumn School Term 2006</p>
R16	<p>The youth service adopts a proactive role in developing the use of existing good and innovative practices both seen within the borough and beyond.</p>
R17	<p>Young people, through the Merton Youth Parliament, are the central drivers in the development of a website and radio station for young people.</p>
R18	<p>Continual development in the use of innovative ways of communicating with young people including through the use of new technology be encouraged.</p>
R19	<p>Consideration be given to drawing up a publicity strategy for raising awareness of youth services amongst young people including through schools.</p>
R20	<p>The youth service increases its involvement of young people in planning service provision.</p>
R21	<p>The youth service and the wider authority work with organisations, voluntary groups and young people to identify good news stories and positive images to help raise the profile of the important role young people play in our community.</p>

<b>Recommendations that fall within the remit of Environment and Regeneration Department</b>	
R6	<p>A co-ordinated cross borough competitive approach to football and ance activities be initiated.</p>

<b>Cross Cutting Recommendations – responsibility of all Departments to implement</b>	
R5	The use of Merton's existing facilities and expertise be maximised including the full use of public and privately owned facilities.
R9	The council adopt 'Hear by Right' national standards for the involvement of young people as a self-assessment tool for measuring achievements and aspirations in youth participation.
R10	Young people are routinely consulted as stakeholders by all council departments where there is an impact on young people's lives.
R11	The council ensures that when it consults with children and young people that it provides feedback on the final outcome and any decisions made and that this be done in a manner and language that is most appropriate to those consulted.
R18	Continual development in the use of innovative ways of communicating with young people including through the use of new technology be encouraged.
R21	The youth service and the wider authority work with organisations, voluntary groups and young people to identify good news stories and positive images to help raise the profile of the important role young people play in our community.