

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: September 17th 2013

Wards: All

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

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

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cllr Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Members of the Panel note the contents of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The report provides members of the Panel with information on key developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the Panel's last update report in July 2013.

2 DETAILS

2.1 At its meeting in July 2013, the Panel received a report on the Home Office led peer review of Merton's arrangements to reduce gang activity and serious youth crime which had been undertaken in spring 2013. Panel members requested sight of an action plan arising from the review findings which partners had agreed to establish. This action plan is attached in **appendix one**.

2.2 Provisional A-level and GCSE results for pupils attending Merton schools were issued in August 2013 and headline data is contained in **appendix two**. As in previous years this data requires validation and detailed analysis will be presented to CYP Panel within the annual school standards report in February 2014.

2.3 Since the last Panel meeting Abbotsbury School has been inspected by Ofsted and the report published. The school retained its rating of good.

2.4 Officers are working with staff of Chapel Street, the DfE's selected academy sponsor, to progress the academisation of Benedict School, now expected to be completed by January 2014.

2.5 A partnership event designed to engage other council departments and agencies in understanding the implications of the current Children and Families Bill is to be held in September 2013. Although the Bill contains broader provisions, it signals major changes in the way in which the local authority and other agencies assess and meet the needs of children and young adults with SEN and disabilities. The existing SEN and learning difficulty assessments are to be replaced by a single, integrated education,

health and care plan for 0-25 year olds; parents and young people are likely to be given the right to request personal budgets to meet assessed needs and the local authority will be required to publish its 'local offer' clearly publicising the services and support available to young people with SEN and disabilities and their families. The legislation is designed to improve co-ordination across a wide range of children's and adults' services and local arrangements will need to be in place by September 2014.

2.6 Following a successful bid for funding from the Department of Health, officers are working with colleagues in LB Sutton and NHS Trusts in preparation for the implementation of the Family Nurse Partnership model across the two boroughs. This evidence based model is designed to provide long-term and relatively intensive specialist nursing support to young parents in the early stages of parenthood and will become an important element in Merton's early intervention strategy when it becomes operational in late 2013 after the recruitment and training of staff.

2.7 Members of the CYP Panel may be aware that central government is committed to reducing unnecessary delays in care proceedings to enable permanency plans for children looked after to be implemented in a more timely manner. To this end, the Ministry of Justice has issued a new pilot 'Public Law Outline' to inform the complex court processes involved in care proceedings and to support a proposed target that proceedings are completed within 26 weeks. Courts in London are implementing the pilot from summer 2013 and Merton's social workers and legal advisors now need to comply with tighter schedules for the submission of applications, assessments, care plans etc. It is recognised that the proposed target is extremely ambitious for many local authorities – in the period January to March 2013 Merton's average time for completion of proceedings was in the region of 56 weeks – and represents a major challenge for all parties in such proceedings.

2.8 A stocktake of progress made in the council's overall transformation programme has recently been undertaken by the Chief Executive and the Merton 2015 Board. Following this review, all departments have been asked to refresh their 'Target Operating Models' by December 2013. This refresh will support the further reform and modernisation of services to children and families as well as savings the department will be required to make within the council's overall medium term financial strategy.

2.9 Events have been held to celebrate the achievements of Merton's looked after children and the contribution made by Merton's foster carers. A photo-opportunity for Merton schools' highest achievers will be held in September 2013. Members of the Panel may also welcome the award nomination made to the London Safeguarding Children Board (hosted by London Councils) for our work on child sexual exploitation.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. None for the purposes of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. N/A

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. No specific implications.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. No specific implications.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. No specific implications.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. No specific implications.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. No specific implications.

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

- Appendix 1: Action Plan from Home Office led peer review of Merton's arrangements to reduce gang activity and serious youth crime
- Appendix 2: Provisional A-level and GCSE results headline data

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None

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