

Annual report of the
Merton Safeguarding Children Board
2015/16



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www.merton.gov.uk/lscb

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1.0 Chair's Introduction

2015-2016 has been a challenging year for the MSCB yet the Board has continued to rise to meet these challenges. Our challenges have included anticipating the pending Wood review of LSCB's which may mean significant changes in the way LSCBs do their work in the future.

At the end of the business year, in March 2015, the Board appointed a new Business and Development Manager, Paul Bailey. In order to ensure that Paul had a seamless induction we ensured that he was supported by the outgoing Business Manager for the first 6 months of his appointment.

MSCB, like other LSCBs, operates in the context of shrinking resources and expanding expectations and commitments. We have worked hard with partners to prioritise where limited resources can be targeted in order to have the maximum impact on the quality of safeguarding across the system. In October 2015, the MSCB commissioned a Serious Case Review (SCR), following an incident in which a young person who was known to Merton services, experienced significant harm as a result of being attacked by a parent with a mental health condition. This review is still in process and we are learning the lessons from this case.

The Board also took the decision to commission a Learning and Improvement Review (LiR) into a case of long-term neglect. This case did not meet the statutory threshold for a SCR; however, the Board considered that there was significant learning for the multi-agency safeguarding system in this case.

The Board remains committed to continuous improvement, and in common with all LSCBs, faces many challenges ahead, including the challenge for all partners of delivering high quality services within the context of increasing demand and reduced resources. However, this report demonstrates how much can be achieved when we work together, both as individual agencies and in partnership with each other. This report shows that the work that has been done in revising the constitution of the Board and having a more robust and rigorous focus on quality assurance is now embedded and is continuing to improve the way that the young and children are protected and their well-being is promoted.

The Board's strengths are identified

- Senior representation and engagement from agencies
- A strong performance focus including the annual QA process
- Annual conference and comprehensive training programme.
- An improved connection between the Board and frontline practitioners which has and will continue to improve; this includes the Board's responsiveness to and influence on multi-agency frontline practice.

Our agreed areas of focus during 2015-2016 included:

- Building on the annual QA meetings and multi-agency auditing to further strengthen peer challenge;

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- Implementing new sub Board structures¹ with a stronger QA Sub-Group;
- Reviewing our Board infrastructure to support the Board's extended role under Working Together 2015;
- Ensuring we maintain our focus on the voice of the child;
- Learning the lessons of SCRs nationally and from our local SCR and any learning reviews;
- Strengthening our links with the adult safeguarding Board; and
- Ensuring we are sighted on the issues for looked after children placed in our borough by other local authorities as well as maintaining our focus on Merton Looked After Children (LAC)

The focus of MSCB was to continue to drive through and embed the changes made as a result of the revised constitution and ensuring that the Board is able to maximise its impact. The questions that the Board is continuously seeking to answer are:

- Is there evidence that the right standards, policies, guidance, procedures, protocols are in place?
- Is there good evidence that these are being implemented and applied consistently?
- What impact/difference does this make in keeping Merton children and young people safe from harm and ensuring that their well-being is supported?

This report shows how the work we are doing as the MSCB seeks to answer these questions. The vision of the MSCB is that all Merton's children and young people are *Safeguarded, Supported and Successful*

I am a member of the London Group of Local Children's Safeguarding Board Chairs. As a group of chairs we are disappointed that the Metropolitan Police continues to choose to fund partnership safeguarding in London 45% less than all the other large urban Metropolitan Police Forces in England.² Safeguarding is a complicated and demanding partnership arrangement that needs appropriate resourcing if it is to be effective. If LSCBs are to be able to carry out their statutory duties they need proper support

The guidelines which we adhere to (Working Together 2015) makes it clear that funding arrangements for Safeguarding should not fall disproportionately and unfairly on one or more partner to the benefit of others. In London this burden does fall unfairly on Local Authorities because the Metropolitan Police does not provide rational or reasonable levels of funding to local safeguarding boards.

The Safeguarding structures in London are due to change in the next two years. When they do there will still be a need to resource whatever arrangements are put in place. The Police are a key partner in the future arrangements for safeguarding and we ask that the Metropolitan Police and The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime increase their funding to a level which is fair to the other partners and which will assist in keeping London's children safe.

¹ See Appendix 3: MSCB Structure

² Average of Manchester, Merseyside, West Yorkshire and West Midlands £510; 10,000 population compared to Met Police £281:10,000 population

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Finally I would like to thank all of the MSCB partner agencies for their hard work and continued commitment to making a difference for Merton's children, young people and their families.

Keith Makin

MSCB Chair

July 2016

2.0 Progress of MSCB Business Plan 2015 – 16

The MSCB is a statutory body established under Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 and the statutory guidance in Chapter 3 of Working Together 2015. The Independent Chair of the MSCB is Keith Makin.

The objectives of the Board as defined by statute are:

- (a) to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
- (b) to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes³.

The MSCB has a well established Business planning process, with the Business Plan receiving regular scrutiny at each meeting of the Board's Business Implementation Group. The last update received by the Board at its annual Away Day in March 2015 is attached as an appendix.

Key areas of focus in the Board's Business Plan between April 2015 and March 2016 have been:

- Quality Assurance – Multi-Agencies Audits/Learning reviews/Front line practice,
- To maintain strategic oversight of CSE including e-safety, missing young people, young people missing from education
- To have a strategic multi-agency response to the issue of neglect
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Prevention
- The Children's and Families Act 2014, Supporting Children and Young People with Complex Needs and LASPO⁴
- Ensure that there is a strategic focus on and all children are safeguarded from radicalisation and violent extremism
- MSCB Governance: implement the revision of the MSCB Governance, Structure and Board Business Processes
- Engage with Faith and Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) Communities on Safeguarding Issues

At its annual Away Day in March, the Board reviewed its performance against its agreed priorities and set priorities for 2016-2018. The Board's agreed priorities for 2016-2018 are as follows:

1. **Think Family** – supporting our most vulnerable families by addressing the 'trigger trio'⁵ and supporting parents with learning difficulties or learning disabilities.
2. **Supporting vulnerable adolescents** – especially young people who are at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), serious crime, youth violence or involvement in gang activity.

³ Children Act 2004 Section 14

⁴ Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012

⁵ The 'trigger trio', also known as the 'toxic trio', has been used to describe the issues of domestic violence, mental ill health and substance misuse which have been identified as common features of families where harm to women and children has occurred. They are viewed as indicators of increased risk.

3. **Early Help** – reviewing our early help in the light of changes in local providers and agencies and with changing levels of resources available we want to ensure our model continues to be fit for purpose.

These priorities are outlined in detail in section 11 of this report and the Business Plan is included as appendix 1.

3.0 Key Achievements and Challenges for the MSCB 2015 to 2016

The key achievements of the Board during this period are detailed as follows:

3.0.1. Quality Assurance – Multi-Agency Audits/Learning reviews/Front line practice

The MSCB is continuing to improve its effectiveness at monitoring the performance of each agency against national, regional and local Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). One of the Board's quality assurance priorities for 2015/2016 was to have in place a performance management dataset that included national, regional (London-wide) and local key safeguarding performance indicators. It was important that this was a multi-agency dataset which included Children's Social Care, Education, Health and the Police. The Board now has in place a robust performance dataset that provides the Board with a clear overview of safeguarding practice in each agency, with commentary which serves to provide the Board with good assurance with regards to the quality of safeguarding practice across the safeguarding system. Performance data is reviewed each quarter by the Board's Quality Assurance (QA) Sub-Group. The QA Sub-Group highlights performance issues at Board meetings and at the Board's Business Implementation Group (BIG) meeting.

The Board has completed 4 themed multi agency audits. The themes for each multi-agency audit are as follows:

- Child Sexual Exploitation February to April 2015
- Domestic violence and the effectiveness of core groups in April 2015
- Neglect in June 2015
- Inter-generational abuse and repeat plans August 2015

In addition this, the Board conducted multi-agency case audits of two cases that were escalated to the Board for review. The findings of each audit is analysed by a multi-agency panel of Senior Managers and Safeguarding Leads. These findings are then organised into key learning themes and are disseminated to Senior Managers and frontline practitioners by a series of briefings.

3.0.2 The Board's second priority was to maintain strategic oversight of CSE including e-safety, missing young people, young people missing from education

There is a full report of the Board's strategic management of CSE which is covered in detail under section 4.3. We are pleased to note that over the last year we have seen a 47% increase in CSE related referrals. This indicates that practitioners are more aware of CSE as a specific form of sexual abuse and are improving in their recognition and referral of CSE. There is a very strong offer of support to young people at risk of CSE and for those who have been victims of this form of sexual abuse.

3.0.3 To have a strategic multi-agency response to the issue of neglect

At its Away Day in March 2015, the Board established a task and finish group, monitored by the Policy Sub-Group, to produce a multi-agency strategy to address the issue of neglect. The task and finish group completed its work and a draft neglect strategy and its implementation plan were approved by the Board in September 2015. In order to establish a baseline measurement of multi-agency performance in relation to cases of neglect, the Quality Assurance Sub-Group commissioned an audit on the theme of neglect in June 2015. The Board will revisit this theme in 2017 in order to ascertain the impact of the strategy on multi-agency practice. The Board is assured that there is a continuously improving understanding of the issue of neglect and its impact within the MSCB Partnership.

3.0.4 To introduce a multi-agency strategy to prevent Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

The Board is committed to addressing the issue FGM. The Board commissioned a task and finish group to develop a strategic response and to develop a multi-agency FGM Strategy.

Goals of Merton Safeguarding Children Board's FGM Strategy are as follows:

- To create community awareness and to engage with local communities on the prevention of FGM
- To ensure that all multi-agency partners are aware of their statutory responsibilities and are fulfilling them.
- To ensure that there are safe pathways to protect women and girls who have had or who are at risk of FGM
- To provide multi-agency guidance for local safeguarding partners and an effective safeguarding response to the issue of FGM.
- To ensure that services are in place to optimise future reproduction and sexual function, psychological health and better quality of life for survivors of FGM

The FGM Strategy and its implementation plan were approved by the Board in March 2016; this is being monitored by the Board's Policy Sub Group (see also section 4.6 in this report).

3.0.5 The Children's and Families Act 2014, Supporting Children and Young People with Complex Needs and LASPO

The implementation of the major changes arising from the Children and Families Act 2014 relating to education, health and care planning for children with Special Educational Need (SEN) and disabilities remain on-going. With engagement of partners from the NHS, community organisations and parents/carers; we have established a integrated Education Health and Care service and published our Local Offer. We are now focusing on embedding new procedures and ways of collaborative working which will support more integrated planning and more effective working with this group of children, young people and their families.

After a period of employing interim staff, in 2015 we were successful in recruiting a social care qualified Head of Service. We have also appointed a permanent and appropriately skilled team manager to the social work team within SENDIS, thus strengthening social work management and oversight in the service following a diagnostic audit of Children With Disabilities (CWD) casework.

3.0.6 The Board also wanted to ensure that there is a strategic focus on and all children are safeguarded from radicalisation and violent extremism.

The Board commissioned a task and finish group to prepare practice guidance for professionals working with children who were vulnerable to messages of violent extremism and radicalisation. The task and finish group completed its working in May 2015 and presented the draft guidance and information for parents and carers, which would be made available to parents via schools and online, in May 2015. The guidance and information for parents were approved by the Board.

In addition to the practice guidance and information for parents, 459 Children Schools and Families Department staff members have attended PREVENT⁶ training (this figure does not include staff in Merton's schools who have also been trained in PREVENT). There are two further sessions arranged for 2nd November and we hope to have covered the whole department by this point. There is now a greater awareness of PREVENT and radicalisation across the children's workforce. This training is being rolled out to all Merton schools (see also section 4.5 in this report).

MSCB Governance: implement the revision of the MSCB Governance, Structure and Board Business Processes

The Board revised its constitution in 2014 and again in 2015 in the light of the revised Working Together 2015. In 2015-2016, the focus of the Board was to embed these changes. There continues to be strong multi-agency representation on the Board and its Sub-Groups. The Business Implementation Group is working effectively to ensure that the Board's Business Plan is implemented and that there is a clear line of sight and action between the Business Plan and the work of the Sub-Groups.

The Board has strengthened the representation of Education representatives on the Board: the Board has representation from the primary, secondary, special and FE sectors; in addition, the Assistant Director responsible for Education and Senior Managers within Education Department serve on the Board. The Board has continued to improve its inter-face with schools and the Board's Business and Development Manager attends the termly Designated Safeguarding Leads meeting; this enables to Board to give and receive key safeguarding messages relevant to education.

In terms of the impact of these changes, the Board continues to be positioned as a strong enquirer into the quality of safeguarding practice and the work being done by partners to promote the welfare of children and young people. The Board is increasingly able drive improvements in the quality of safeguarding practice through a more streamlined and focused Performance Dataset. The Board has in place a culture of robust challenge across the partnership; this is evidenced through our annual Quality Assurance and Peer Challenge process and the Board's risk and challenge log.

3.0.8 Engage with Faith and BAME Communities on Safeguarding Issues

⁶ Prevent is part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy; represented by the 4 Ps: **Pursue**: to stop terrorist attacks; **Prevent**: to stop people, becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; **Protect**: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; and **Prepare**: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack., *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, July 2011

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The Board continues to work to engage with Faith Groups and BAME Communities on safeguarding issues; for example, the Board Business and Development Manger attends Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minorities and the Merton Voluntary Service Council's Safeguarding Leads meeting. The Board has also consulted with a range of community groups especially with regards to its FGM Strategy. There remains more work to be done to engage with Faith and BAME communities.

3.0.9 Other Achievements

The Board has also developed the following initiatives, Guidance, Policies, and Protocols:

- Established the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Group in partnership with Merton Safer and Stronger to oversee the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and VAWG related activities
- Revised its Constitution including the revision of the terms of reference for all sub-groups
- Re-issued our Information Sharing Protocol
- Revised the Performance Dataset
- Revised the Learning and Improvement Framework
- Re-issued the Safer Recruitment Strategy
- Revised the Participation Strategy
- Prepared Guidance for working with children and young people who are vulnerable to the messages of radicalisation and extremism and prepared advice for parents and carers which was approved by the Board in May 2015.
- The Board developed a Communication Strategy which was approved at its meeting in January 2015 which is being implemented

3.1 The challenges for the Board

Whilst the Board has made great strides in embedding improvements in its constitution, we are not complacent and we have a number of key challenges; these are described as follows:

3.1.1 Responding to the Wood Review

The Wood Review and the Government's response outline significant changes in the way that LSCB's operate. This presents the Board with an opportunity to review the nature and effectiveness of its partnership and priorities. These discussions are on-going and it will be some time before primary legislation is enacted to create a new statutory framework for LSCBs, however the Board is committed to staying ahead of the curve by considering the shape of the kind of partnership which will continue to drive improvements in the quality of safeguarding practice in Merton.

3.1.2 Continuing to Demonstrate Impact by Improving Links with Frontline Practice

The Board continues to work hard to ensure that there is a clear line of sight between the Board's priorities and improvements in the quality of frontline practice. To support this aim the Board has engaged in a range of activities to strengthen the link between the Board and frontline practice. For example, the Board provides a presentation at each Corporate Induction so that new members of Council staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, are introduced to the Board's key policies, the MSCB's multi-agency training programme and developments in policies. In addition to

this, the Board contributes to the induction of all new social workers by providing an overview of the Board at initial induction and a more detailed workshop about the work of the Board, our priorities and presenting learning from LiRs and SCRs. The Board also provides a termly briefing to all Merton Schools' Designated Safeguarding Leads these briefings include updates on the Board's key policies including introducing new policies, strategies and protocols; highlighting the MSCB's multi-agency training programme, we also present information on learning coming out of multi-agency audits, LiRs and SCRs. Finally, the Board has improved its links with the Merton Voluntary Service Council, which represents voluntary sector organisations and groups, by attending the meeting of voluntary sector's Designated Safeguarding Leads meetings; the Board also meets with the VAWG Practitioner's Group. This remains an area for continuous improvement.

3.1.3 Safeguarding In the Context of Increasing Demand and Limited Resource

Like many other LSCBs the Board is operating within the context of our current economic climate and trying to manage the difficult balance between rising public and government expectations of the Board and finite resources. The Board is currently in discussions with partners regarding the parity of contributions to the Board and how resources could be best targeted to maximise the impact of the work of the Board.

4.0 Local context and need of the childhood population for Merton⁷

4.1 Merton the place

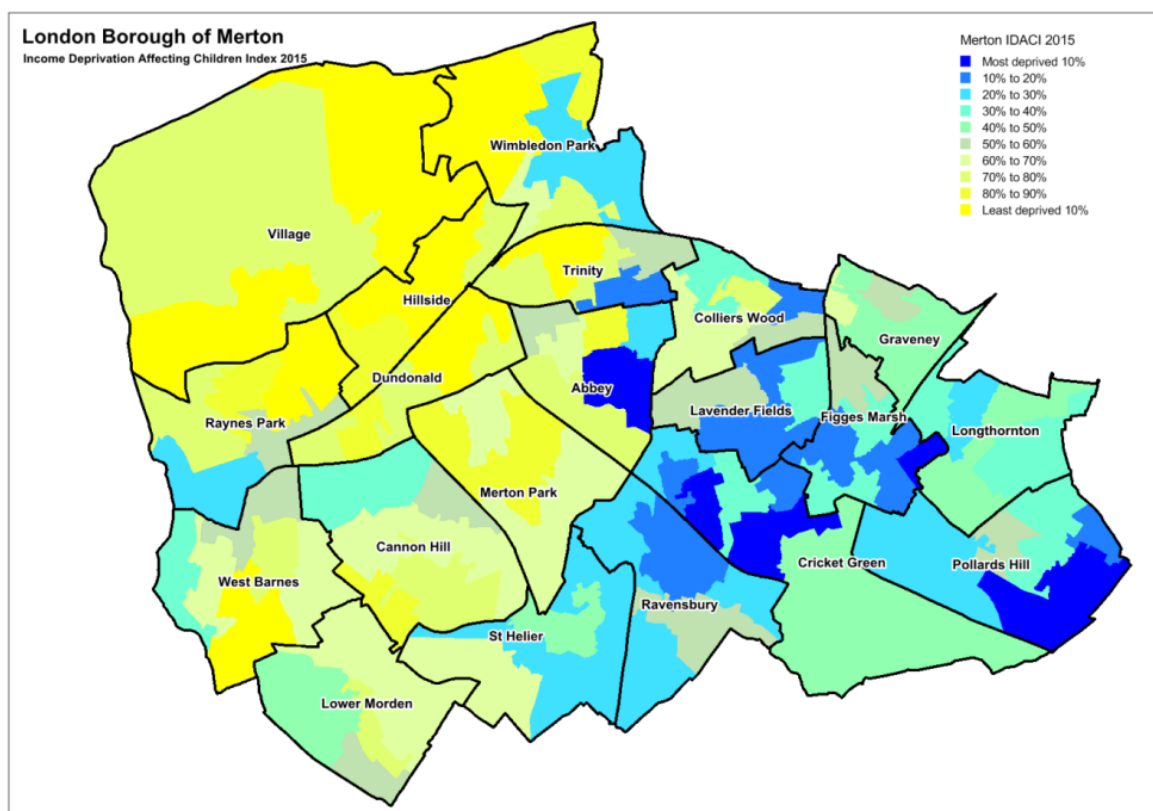
Merton is an outer London borough situated in south west London, covering 14.7 square miles. Merton has a total population of 200,543 including 47,499 children and young people aged 0-19 (Census 2011) this is predicted to increase by between 3% and 6% by 2020, based respectively on the GLA population projections for its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), and its alternative Trend forecasts, which take additional factors into account. Between 2011 and 2020 we can estimate the population of Primary School children aged between 5 and 10 will have increased by 21%, Secondary School aged children aged 11 to 15 will have increased by 11%. Merton has a younger population than the England average. Historically there was a 40% net increase in births from 2,535 in 2002 to a peak of 3507 in 2012 and approximated at 3178 by 2020. This historical increase in births in Merton, together with other demographic factors such as migration of families into the borough, has already created the need for more school places, put pressure on early years and pre-school services, children's social care and early intervention.

Predominantly suburban in character, Merton is divided into 20 wards and has three main town centres; Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden. A characteristic of the borough is the difference between the more deprived east (Mitcham/Morden) and the more affluent west (Wimbledon). There are a number of pockets of deprivation within the borough mainly in the eastern wards and some smaller pockets in the central wards. These wards are characterised by multiple deprivation, with high scores on income deprivation, unemployment and limited educational attainment. Merton has 39 Super Output Areas which are amongst the 30% most deprived areas across England for children. This means 45% of Merton school pupils are living in an area of deprivation (30% most

⁷ Statistical information regarding the demographic profile of the Borough is based on the 2011 Census

deprived, IDACI 2015). Since 2010 we have seen an increase of 31% of children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) (2010, 2881 FSM, 2015, 3796 FSM children).

Table 1: Merton income deprivation affecting children index 2015



Thirty five per cent of Merton’s total population is Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) - this is expected to increase further to 39% by 2017. Pupils in Merton schools are more diverse still, with 66% from BAME communities, 42% with a first language which is not English, speaking over 124 languages (2015). The borough has concentrations of Urdu speaking communities, Sri Lankan, South African and Polish residents. The most prominent first languages for pupils apart from English are Tamil 5.7%, Urdu 5.8% and Polish 5.7%.

The number of pupils with SEN is also increasing, with EHC plans rising from 668 in January 2011 to 880 in January 2015 (an increase of 32%).

There has also been a similar rise in pupils with School Action Plus cohorts in primary schools from 737 in Jan 2011 to 814 in January 2014 (+10%)

4.2 Merton’s Children in Need, Children with a Protection Plan and those Looked After

4.2.1 Children In Need

Merton’s Children in Need (CIN) rate per 10,000 (2014-2015, 335.8) is lower than the London average (367) and broadly in line with the National average (346.4), we remain close to our statistical neighbours (2013/14). Our CIN rate has increased over a number of years alongside our population changes. See table 2 below:

Table 2: Increases in CIN rate between 2008 and 2014

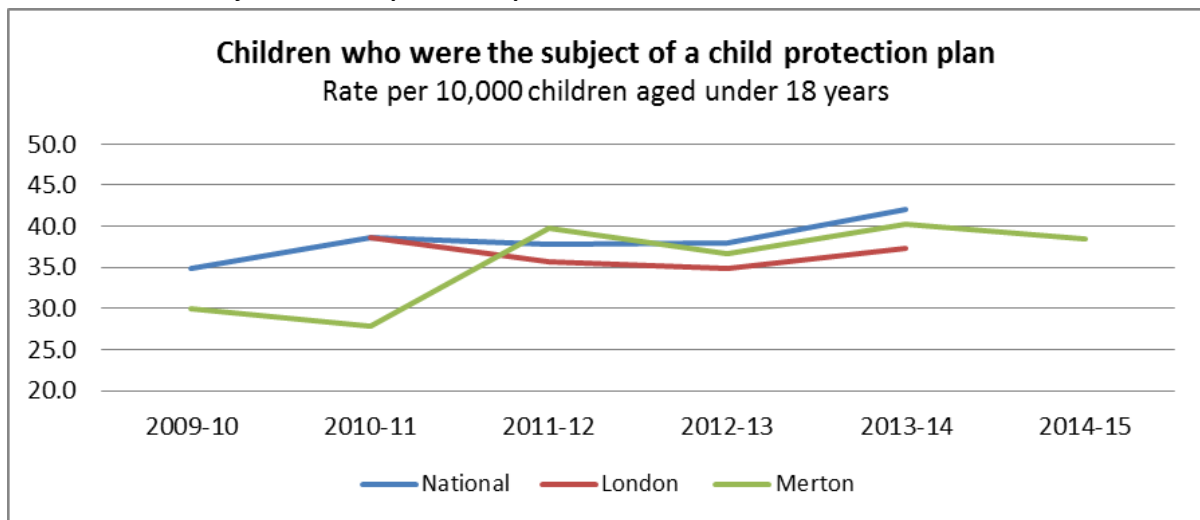
Year	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
CIN Rate	171.0	276.8	288.3	371.3	336.8	355.1

4.2.2 Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan

Rates of Children subject of a child protection plan in Merton (2014/15, 38.5) are similar to London (37.4) and national (42.1). As at the end of 2014/15 16.4% of children became subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time, this in line with the increasing national benchmark (15.5%) and London (13%) averages (2013/14).

Nationally 4.5% (2013/14) of children were subject of a child protection plan lasting two years or more, in Merton this was 4.3% (2014/15) relating to 10 children.

Table 3: children subject to a child protection plan

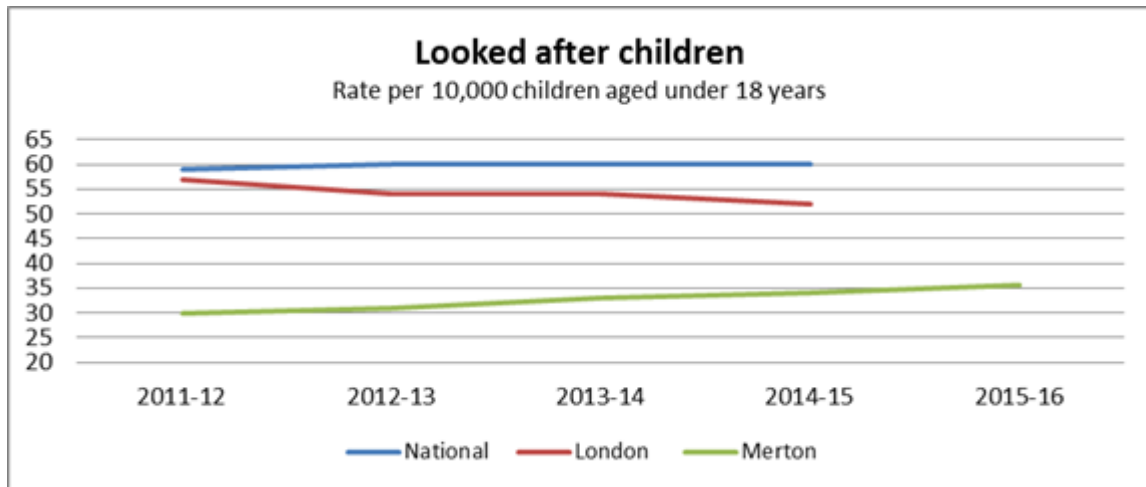


4.2.3 Looked After Children

As at 31st March 2016 there were 163 Looked After Children (LAC) in Merton. In addition Merton has 142 young people aged 18-27 years accessing leaving care services, making Merton a corporate parent to over 305 vulnerable children and young people.

Merton’s LAC rate per 10,000 of the population was 36 in March 2016. The DfE statistical release will not be available until September and therefore at this time we are not in the position to provide comparator statistics for 2015-16. However the data from 2014-15 is set out in the table below and indicates that Merton’s LAC population was low in comparison to our statistical neighbours (it is unlikely that this position will change significantly when the comparator data is released).

Table 4: Looked after children by 10,000 population



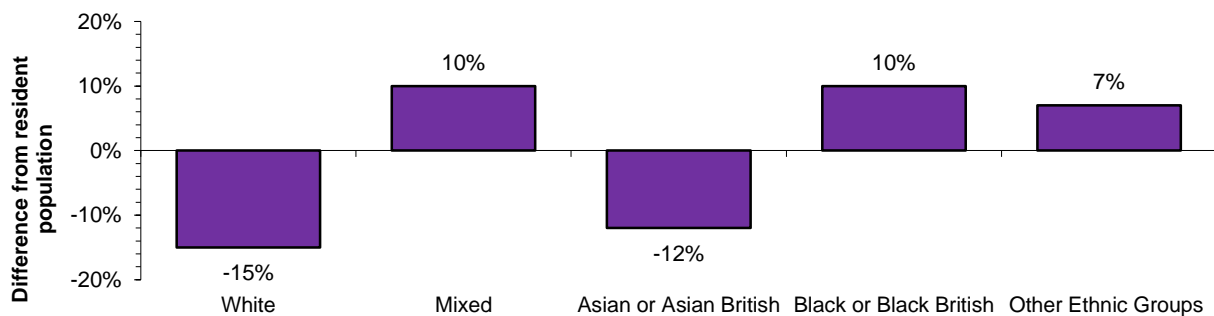
As highlighted in previous reports the age profile of our looked after child cohort varies from the national picture with Merton caring for a large number of older children aged 16 and over. In Merton 40% of our looked after children are aged 16 and 17 compared to 22% nationally (2015). On review of this cohort we can see that a significant number of these young people are entering care late in adolescence due to the following reasons:

- Young people presenting as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC)
- Young people presenting as homeless and meeting threshold to be accommodated under Section 20 Children Act 1989
- Young people being remanded to the care of the Local Authority

On 31st March 2016 63% of the LAC population were male and 37% were female. This is in line previous years and does reflect the national picture reported in 2015. The breakdown of the age/gender data highlights that our older LAC cohort is significantly over-represented by males. This reflects the fact that the majority of UASC and Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) referrals received relate to males.

The majority of looked after children in Merton are from a white background (47%) which is broadly in line with the general resident population (55%). As in previous years, there are fewer Asian or Asian British LAC (7%) than the Merton population (20%). Mixed ethnic backgrounds, Black or Black British heritage and 'other ethnic groups' have looked after children populations greater than the resident population

Table 5: Difference in Ethnic Group of Looked After Children from the Merton Resident Population



4.2.3.i Looked After Child Priorities for 2015-16

Specific areas of focus for us in the year 2015-16 were placement stability, participation in reviews and care leavers. As a result of targeted improvement plans being implemented we have managed to make improvements in all three areas as evidenced below.

LAC Priority Area 1: Placement Stability

In April 2015 we undertook a detailed analysis of LAC stability and the resulting report identified key messages in relation to what we do well, what our challenges are and such what we could do better. An improvement plan was put in place focusing on the following areas:

- The quality of placement referrals
- Closer scrutiny of fragile placements
- Scrutiny of children experiencing moves
- Increased placement choice

To ensure an improved offer to our looked after children we also established the LAC Permanence Team in October 2015. Whilst the review of placement stability both locally and nationally identified a number of factors were contributing to a lack of stability it was also apparent that changes of social worker had been a contributing factor. The development of the team has allowed the practitioners to focus on the specific needs of the looked after children with whom they are working and to embed a model of relationship based practice supporting children, their carers and their families. Initial feedback in respect of this team has been positive and we are in the process of undertaking a consultation/feedback exercise so that we can more formally evidence the impact of the team.

To support the relationship based/systemic approach we have also integrated a CAMHS Team within the service.

As a result of this we have seen improved stability for those children who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years, and we are now in line with the 2015 national average rate of 67%.

Table 6: Percentage of Looked After Children with Stability in their placement

	2011 (31 st March)	2012 (31 st March)	2013 (31 st March)	2014 (31 st March)	2015 (31 st March)	2016 (31 st March)
Merton	67%	68%	64%	55%	46%	67%
National	68%	68%	67%	67%	67%	not available

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Source: SSDA 903

Note: The percentage of Children Looked After aged under 16 at 31st March who had been looked after continuously for at least 2½ years, who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement last for at least 2 years

The percentage of children experiencing 3 or more placement moves in the year has remained stable at 14% (this is in line with the 2015 national average of 10%).

LAC Priority Area 2: Participation in LAC Reviews

The 'Voice of the Child' has been highlighted as a priority area in all Children's Social Care Service Plans 2015-16, and a key time for looked after children to participate is at their LAC Review. In July 2015 we developed an improvement plan which was put in place focusing on the following areas:

- Scrutiny on data quality
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities
- Promotion of the advocacy service

As part of the participation improvement plan we have also been working on a specific project to consult on and appraise the current review meeting process. Between September 2015 and December 2015 the IRO service worked with the Participation Apprentice in undertaking a number of consultation activities with young people. These included:

- Workshop with representatives at the Children in Care Council (attended by 13 young people)
- Workshop ½ day for younger children (attended by 15 children)
- Survey of experiences of children and young people who participated in a survey of LAC reviews

The key messages being fed back from these consultations were that children and young people wanted to be able to choose the venue for their LAC review and for the meeting to be held at a time convenient to them. There was also a request for children and young people to be more involved in the planning for the meetings so that there were child centred and strengths focused.

The children and young people stated that:

- They often don't know who is coming to the review and would like to more involved in agreeing who should attend.
- They wanted to meet the IRO prior to the LAC review meeting so that the ITO could get to know the young people rather than judge them on what they had read 'we aren't always as we appear on paper'.
- They wanted more forward looking reviews; they felt that all too often the reviews focused on the past.

The IRO Team are now looking to adopt a good practice model which has been successfully piloted by the Participation Service in Sheffield. This model will support children and young people to feel that they are at the centre of the review meeting and have a strong influence in the shaping of their care plan.

As a result of the focus in this area we have seen children and young people's participation in LAC reviews rise from 79% in 2014-15 to 96% in 2015-16.

LAC Priority Area 3: Care Leavers

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Children’s Social Care has a range of duties and powers to provide after care advice and assistance to care leavers. Good corporate parents will provide young people with help and support to access education, employment and training opportunities and to find accommodation suitable to meet their needs.

In 2015 we produced a Care Leaver Strategy which set out our aspirations to improve outcomes for young people accessing support as care leavers. The strategy is supported by regular themed meetings of the Care Leaver Task Force.

The work in this area is measured against specific performance indicators in respect of a specific cohort of young people (those aged 19-21 years) in the following areas:

- In touch
- NEET (young people Not in Education Employment or Training)
- Living in suitable accommodation

The 14+ Team work hard to maintain positive relationships and contact with all young people in the service and there is a practice standard in place to ensure that all care leavers are visited at least every 2 months. In addition to the statutory visits the team have also looked at more informal ways to support contact with their young people through informal drop in sessions at a local coffee shop and programmes such as the Independent Living Skills Workshops. As a result of this we have seen an improvement in performance in this area as set out in the table below.

Table 8: Care Leavers in Touch

	2014-15		2015-16	
	Number	%	Number	%
Merton				
Yes	72	77%	132	89%
No	9	10%	3	2%
Service No Longer Required	7	8%	3	2%
Young Person Refuses Contact	3	3%	7	5%
Young Person Returned Home	2	2%	3	2%

Source: SSDA 903

The number of care leavers who are NEET has become an area of focus for us as we have seen a year on year decline in performance in this area. As part of the Care Leaver Task Force we have reviewed the intervention resource in this area and a NEET/EET worker has been recruited to the Virtual School to work solely with the care leaver cohort. We have also developed links with colleagues in Environment and Regeneration, in order to ensure that the care leaver cohort are a priority area for focus in respect of apprenticeship schemes and ‘readiness for work’ programmes.

As a result of this increased focus and additional resource we have seen some improvement in respect of outcomes for young people in this area.

Table 9: Percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training

	2012 (31 st March)	2013 (31 st March)	2014 (31 st March)	2015 (31 st March)	2016 (31 st March)
Merton	70.6%	60.0%	47.0%	44.1%	64.5%

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National	58%	58%	45%	48%	<i>Not available</i>
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Source: SSDA 903

Note: In 2014 the DfE extended the care leaver cohort to include 20 and 21 year olds. As a result the figures for 2012-2013 include only to 19 year olds whilst the figures for 2014 - 2016 include Care Leavers of all ages.

Whilst we have made improvements it will be important to maintain an area of focus to ensure that we are providing all young people with appropriate levels of support in this area. Many of the young people who are not engaged in employment, training or education have a high level of additional need in respect of their emotional wellbeing and would benefit from a robust level of 1:1 support prior to them being considered for readiness to work programmes (this is being considered as part of the Task Force work).

The legal framework for care leavers aims to ensure that they receive the right support and services in their transition to adulthood, including access to accommodation. Our performance in this area is measured against whether or not accommodation is considered suitable.

Table 10: Percentage of Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation

	2012 (31 st March)	2013 (31 st March)	2014 (31 st March)	2015 (31 st March)	2016 (31 st March)
Merton	88%	85%	66%	76%	95%
National	88%	88%	78%	81%	<i>Not available</i>

Source: SSDA 903

Note: In 2014 the DfE extended the care leaver cohort to include 20 and 21 year olds. As a result the figures for 2012-2013 include only to 19 year olds whilst the figures for 2014 - 2016 include Care Leavers of all ages.

The improvement in performance in this area reflects both the fact that we are in touch with more of our care leavers and the work that has been undertaken with colleagues in our Access to Recourses Team and Housing Service.

We remain fully committed to achieving timely permanency for all our children.

4.3 Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation

Tackling the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) continues to be a priority for the MSCB. The strategic intent of the Board is to clearly identify victims and perpetrators of CSE; to ensure that victims receive appropriate support and that the perpetrators of this crime are disrupted and prosecuted; the Board also aims to monitor closely each young person at risk of CSE and to ensure that support is provided to prevent CSE.

Merton Safeguarding Children's Board's CSE strategy was launched in 2013 and refreshed in 2015 supported by intelligence from our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and 2014 peer review on CSE. Our Strategy provides clear and practical guidance for social workers and other practitioners dealing with cases where there is suspected and confirmed child/young person sexual exploitation.

The Promote and Protect Young People (PPYP) strategic group, a Sub Group of the MSCB, is chaired by the Head of Family and Adolescent Services (FAS). The PYPPS has an annual action plan that is regularly monitored by the MSCB. This thematic group also maintains oversight of other vulnerable groups such as those missing from home or care so that we can triangulate information across

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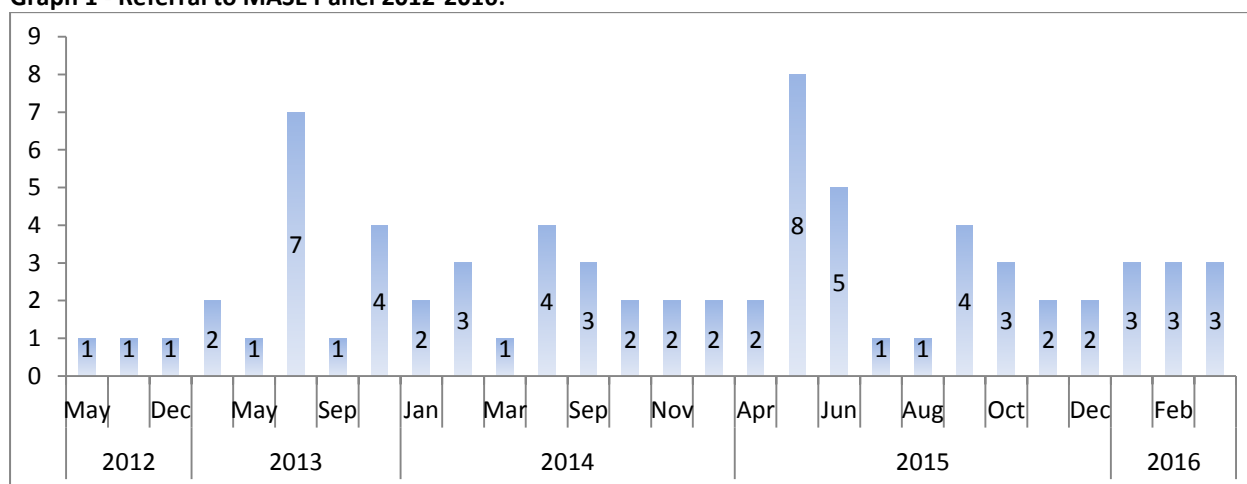
groups both strategically and operationally. PPYP oversees three multi agency panels where information is shared and considered.

- Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel (MASE), is chaired by a DCI from the Metropolitan Police.
- Missing from Home or Care Panel (Multi agency representation), chaired by the Head of Looked After Children.
- Children Missing Education Panel (Multi agency representation – chaired by Head of School Inclusion

The PPYP group has a broad multi-agency membership including representation from: Children’s Social Care including the MASH and the 14+ Looked After Team, Police (Missing Persons Officer and borough Police), Primary Health (Designated Safeguarding Nurse and Named Nurse), Education Welfare, Youth Offending Service, Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), Barnardo’s, Jigsaw4U and Catch22.

In 2015 we have been involved with a London Wide process for reviewing CSE across London. In February 2016 our MASE arrangements were reviewed externally and we have taken on board the findings of this review which have encouraged our MASE to operate a more strategic overview of CSE in the borough. Lessons from these peer and external reviews have been shared at PYPP.

Graph 1 - Referral to MASE Panel 2012-2016:



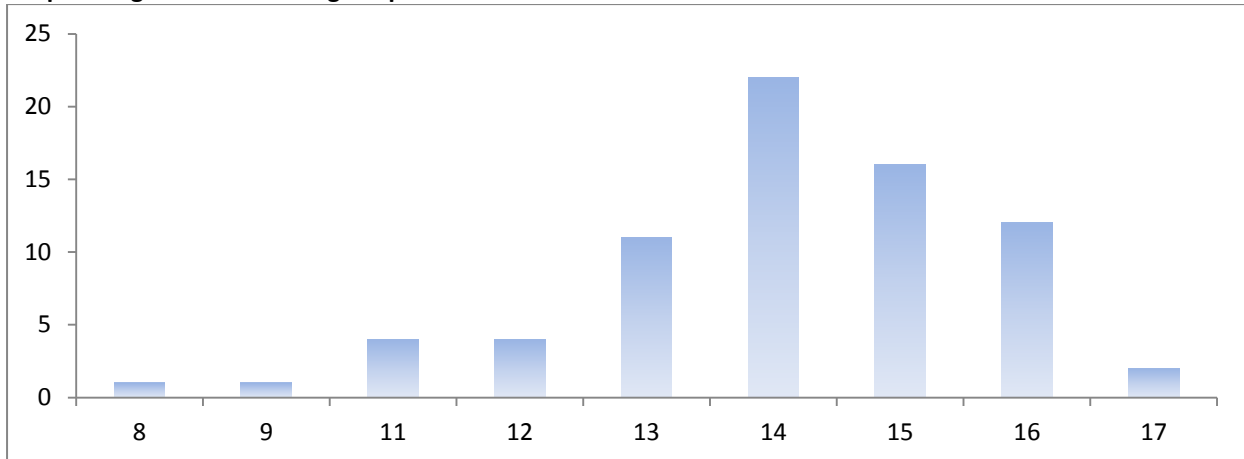
Merton had 25 referrals to our Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel (MASE) on average in the past 3 years. There has been a year on year increase to MASE following significant awareness raising activity.

In 2015-16, 37 young people were referred to panel. The majority of those referred are children/young people aged 13 to 16 girls (with a concentration on the 14 and 15 year olds) and White British. Merton MASE manages oversight of a small yet complex cohort of children; we have identified an overlap between children at risk/subject to sexual exploitation and those missing from home and care. Although the correlation with Children Missing from Education (CME) is not so evident, there are still some young people in both cohorts.

As can be seen from Graph 1 above the number of referrals to MASE has increased over the past 3 years as awareness has been raised of CSE and the operation of the panel. As at the 31st March 2016 there were 25 children open to the PPYP/MASE panel, 3 of which were judged to be high risk. At the most recent MASE meeting of these 25 young people 3 were considered to be high risk, 6 medium

and 16 low. The remaining ‘on ice’ cases represents those cases having been previously judged at risk of CSE that show no current indication but are scheduled for review before being considered for closure. There are currently 50 cases ‘on ice’ – on ice means that the case is inactive in relation to CSE and young people are being supported via targeted and universal services. The most recent dashboard of March 31st 2016 shows relatively high numbers of 14 and 15 year olds at risk of CSE and the prevalence of White/British victims.

Graph 2 - Age Profile of Young People referred to MASE Panel 2012-2015:



Of the 75 children open to MASE since 2012, 16 have been LAC during the period they were open and 8 young people were subject to Child Protection plans.

All 25 children open to MASE are or have been open to Children’s Social Care and Youth Inclusion at some stage. Of those currently open to MASE,

- 3 of the children were male.
- 4 children are subject to a child protection plan
- 6 young people are looked after young people.
- 1 child is both Looked After and currently also subject to a Child protection Plan.

The breakdown of ethnicity shows a prominence of White/British or White background. The age distribution shows 7 or 28% of young people referred for possible CSE are aged 13 and under currently and this is a concern. Many of the young people including this younger cohort have been identified because of concerns around use of social media and the internet. The majority at 10 or 40% were aged 14 at the time of referral.

4.3.1 CSE and Looked After Children

We have several young people who are in the at risk cohort who may be missing from care and the Jigsaw4U⁸ project works with these young people. All young people who were LAC and living in the borough were referred to Jigsaw4U. The project will also work with a small number of young people who are Merton LAC but placed outside of the borough. At present there are two children who are being worked with in this way. Furthermore we have also offered Return Home Interviews to 51

⁸ Jigsaw4U is a charity that provides a wide variety of services across five London Boroughs including advocacy, work with young runaways, young victims of crime, mentoring and other services.

individuals, relating to 89 missing episodes to young people who are at risk through running away who are placed in Merton but may be looked after by another local authority. In 2015/16 interviews were taken up by 5 young people and further support offered to two of these individuals. Currently, there are 6 out of 25 (16 out of 50 on ice) cases that are or have been LAC.

Due to our concerns about a cohort of children who go missing who are other local authorities LAC we have established a process with the Police to review this under our new joint protocol. Where our concerns are particularly acute we write to the Local Authority concerned. Data from our missing children dataset indicate that there are a small number of children who go missing regularly. In 2015-16 this has mainly been from Croydon, Sutton and Wandsworth who are neighbouring boroughs. We are currently working with the provider to improve equity of service to Merton young people placed out of borough and to ensure young people placed in Merton by other local authorities can access appropriate support.

4.3.2 CSE and Out of Borough LAC Cases

We have placed young people away from the borough because of our concerns about Looked After Children. For some young people placements away from their home community are a key part of the care plan as a result of anti-social behaviour/risk taking behaviours. For some the needs of the young people are such that they require specialist placements which are not available in Merton or surrounding boroughs. For all children being placed outside of the borough the DCS is required to sign off agreement for the placement. Care plans for these children and young people are reviewed to ensure that where possible young people are supported to return to their home community at the earliest opportunity.

The recent monitoring meeting tracked the progress of 6 current cases where there are known or suspected concerns for sexual exploitation and set out below are some of the key characteristics.

- All of the cases are of young girls; 2 aged 13 2 aged 15 and 3 aged 17 and 1 aged 18.
- 2 of the young girls were at risk of peer related sexual exploitation; 6 were at risk of sexual exploitation by an older male.
- 2 of the young people had been made the subject of full Care Order's linked to their CSE vulnerability and the remaining 5 were accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, that is to say with parental agreement.
- No significance could be assigned to the ethnicity of alleged perpetrator in the co-hort. For the victims ethnicity was spread: 5 White/British; 1 White/Other; 1 Black/African; 1 Black/Caribbean and White/British.
- In terms of proximity of placement to Merton 2 of the 8 cases are placed in excess of 20 miles from Merton.

One young person was placed briefly in secure as a result of concerns about child sexual exploitation but we have commissioned specialist placement support for the young person as the apparent risks substantially lessened.

4.3.3 Summary Activity During 2015 and 2016:

- Refreshed and re-launched strategy, protocol and tools in March 2015.

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- Increased identification of young people at risk, including more males, referred to and discussed at MASE
- Developed a JSNA CSE chapter February 2015
- Delivered CSE champions in Secondary Schools and within Health agencies
- Undertaken extensive awareness raising including; jointly delivering a CSE briefing with Barnardo's to 30+ Foster carers in September 2015 and ongoing development for Primary and Secondary schools including training to Heads
- Strengthened PPYP links to children missing from home, care and education
- Continued work with Redthread in St Georges Hospital in relation to young people who have presented with injuries from knife/gunshots and CSE/Sexual injuries. New screening process in place between local Sexual Health GUM clinics and Social Care
- MOPAC funded Young Women and Girls Worker in place – with complex caseload of very vulnerable young women
- MOPAC funded Gangs worker who works towards the main objective of disrupting gang related activity (including CSE)
- Development of Gangs and CSE victims and perpetrator mapping which includes cross-border activity
- On-going strengthening of 'Multi Agency Missing from Care and Home Panel' supported by a 'Missing dataset' which identifies other vulnerabilities including CSE and CME.
- Policies and procedures are in place to deliver a well-coordinated response to children who are reported as missing from home or care (refreshed in April 2016).
- Independent organisation (Jigsaw4U) commissioned to work as part of a wider interagency team to provide practical and emotional support and prevent/reduce episodes of going missing. Jigsaw4U also provide 'return home interviews'.
- With regards to children/YP known to Children's Social Care, case management of CIN/CP CYP missing from home is improving and recording and case management of Looked after Children missing or absent has improved over the last 12 to 18 months.
- All in-house foster carers have received 'missing and absent' procedure training.
- 'Children Missing' policies and procedures are checked as part of the placement commissioning process. Agency foster carers and residential placements are required to report missing episodes in a timely way to the Council and Police and are required to support the Council to implement safety plans.
- Strengthened the partnership approach of the multi-disciplinary Hard to Place and CME Panels
- Implemented a Chronic Absence Project in response to an SCR finding with a focus on pupils with chronic absence pre-transition to secondary school. Undertook a post implementation impact review to take forward the learning
- CME/Pupil Absence protocols between Education and Social Care services have been strengthened with regular reporting to CSF Continuous Improvement Board.
- Briefings provided to Primary and Secondary School head Teachers on safeguarding risks associated with absence from school and reinforced as appropriate in termly designated teachers' events.

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- Specific guidance provided to schools on forced marriage, female genital mutilation, child trafficking and Prevent.
- Developed a Schools and Early Years settings safeguarding audit tool and guidance.
- Adopted a vigilant approach to the quality of alternative education provision in the borough and the identification and notification of unregistered schools.
- Education Welfare Service supports the home education process where families opt to educate children other than at school (EOTAS). Action is taken by the authority in relation to unregistered schools, we are activity monitoring and liaising with Ofsted where necessary
- Establishment of a dedicated CSE Police team with the Merton arm of the Metropolitan Police

4.4 Children Missing from Home and School

Merton operates a Children Missing Education Panel. The purpose of the panel is as follows:

- To maintain a record of all pupils in Merton recognised as CME
- To provide a multi-agency panel to assess cases and to decide on most appropriate course of action to return pupils to education
- To safeguard pupils who are missing from education
- To consider whether cases need to be referred to Merton's Fair Access Panel
- The Panel also looks at high level non attendees and where home education has been judged to be unsatisfactory

The Panel discussed between 180 and 200 cases per academic year between 2009/10 and 2012/13 in 2014/15 academic year this number has risen to 249 (38% increase), we have understood contributing reasons to be increased awareness in agencies of CME and some additionality due to population growth (higher grow of SEN cases in line with SEN population). Please refer to the CME Annual review for a full analysis.

- Merton LAC can be referred to the panel if they have poor attendance, need a change of school or a permanent school place is not yet available. Other Boroughs LAC who are placed in Merton, may be referred to the panel if they are not yet in a school or have poor attendance. A total of 34 Looked after Children were discussed at panel in 2014/15 of which 16 were Merton LAC. Of the 16 Merton LAC seven were off roll none were of primary school age, nine were at risk of becoming CME but remained on roll.
- During 2014/15, 65 children with statements of SEN or EHC plans were discussed at the panel. Of these 16 were CME off roll and 49 were at risk of CME but remained on roll.
- For pupils who leave school and have no forwarding school address Education Welfare follow up cases on S2S. A high use of S2S is encouraged by Merton with an improved clean up rate from 66% in 2012/13 to 98% in 2014/15. We have also refreshed our off roll notification process.

An Inclusion Officer sits on both CME and MASE panels to ensure effective information sharing. In 2014/15 we had 7 cases across the panels.

The Head of Education Welfare and Head of the Virtual School attend the Missing panel. The CME database is checked to ensure that all Missing / CME cases are flagged and advise social workers of issues related to Education that may reduce any risk from missing from Care and Home. Any issues related to Missing are therefore flagged at CME panel accordingly.

4.5 Prevent

Merton is not considered by the Home Office to be a priority Prevent borough. Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Channel referrals have been relatively low but as Prevent awareness increases the borough has seen an increase in the number of Channel referrals being made.

When referrals are made an initial assessment is conducted by the Metropolitan Police Service's Prevent Engagement Officer who undertakes low level intelligence gathering and contacts the subject to have a discussion. Often the referrals do not become formal Channel cases because they are assessed as not being a threat from a Prevent perspective. Most of the people referred have some form of mental illness and have been referred on to mental health teams in order to get the appropriate support from mental health practitioners.

Merton's Safeguarding Children Board has developed '*Guidance for working with children and young people who are vulnerable to the messages of radicalisation and extremism*'. This guidance was approved by the Board in May 2015 and developed in the context of the Government's overarching counter-terrorism strategy '*CONTEST*' and the '*Prevent Strategy*' which was developed in 2011 to respond to the threat of extremist activity; the *Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015*, which places the Prevent Strategy onto a statutory footing. In addition, the document is also informed by *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015* and the *Pan London Child Protection Protocols for safeguarding*, to ensure that it implements good and best practice in safeguarding vulnerable children and young people.

As part of our work to raise awareness and support parents and carers on this issue, the Board has developed advice for parents and carers, on *Keeping children and young people safe against radicalisation and extremism*. Following approval by the Board, this information was distributed to all secondary and primary schools, as well as to special schools and PRUs and has been made available online and in local libraries.

As noted earlier in this report, 459 CSF staff members have attended PREVENT Training⁹. There are two further sessions arranged for 2nd November and we hope to have covered the whole department by this point. There is now a greater awareness of PREVENT and radicalisation across the children's workforce. This training is being rolled out to all Merton schools.

In 2015-2016 Merton Children's Social Care had 3 cases where radicalisation and violent extremism was a feature.

4.6 Female Genital Mutilation

The Board now has in place a robust FGM Strategy and implementation plan. In 2015-2016 Children's Social Care dealt with 8 cases of FGM. Merton has had its first FGM Protection Order. This case was an excellent example of effective multi-agency practice between Children's Social Care, Health services and the Police.

⁹ This figure does not include staff in Merton's schools who have also been trained in PREVENT

5.0 Statutory and Legislative Context

Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) is the Local Safeguarding Children Board for Merton.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have a range of roles and statutory functions.

Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board for their area and specifies the organisations and individuals (other than the local authority) that the Secretary of State may prescribe in regulations that should be represented on LSCBs.

Children Act 2004 Section 14 sets out the objectives of LSCBs, which are:

- (a) to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
- (b) to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

The LSCB is not an operational body and has no direct responsibility for the provision of services to children, families or adults. Its responsibilities are strategic planning, co-ordination, advisory, policy, guidance, setting of standards and monitoring. It can commission multi-agency training but is not required to do so.

The delivery of services to children, families and adults is the responsibility of the commissioning and provider agencies, the **Partners**, not the LSCB itself.

Regulation 5 of the **Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006** sets out LSCB duties as:

5.1 (a) developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority, including policies and procedures in relation to:

- (i) the action to be taken where there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare, including thresholds for intervention;
- (ii) training of persons who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children;
- (iii) recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children;
- (iv) investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children;
- (v) safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered;

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5.1 (b) communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so;

5.1 (c) monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and their Board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and advising them on ways to improve

5.1 (d) participating in the planning of services for children

Regulation 5 (2) relates to the LSCB Serious Case Reviews function and regulation 6 relates to the LSCB Child Death functions.

Regulation 5 (3) offers that an LSCB may also engage in any other activity that facilitates, or is conducive to, the achievement of its objectives.

These duties are further clarified in the statutory guidance: *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, 2015, Chapter 3* (WT 2015)

LSCB duties are specified in WT 2015, Chapters 3, 4 and 5, with a responsibility to have oversight of single agency and multi-agency safeguarding and promotion of children's welfare (under Children Act 2004, section 11, see the footnote on page 33) as set out in WT chapters 1 and 2.

6.0 MSCB Inter-relationships and Influence with other Key Partners

The Board has a rolling 24-month Business Plan, to be refreshed each March for the business year starting each April. The update of the MSCB Business Plan for 2016-2018, agreed by the Board in June 2016, is attached as Appendix 1. The Business Plan outlines the Board's priorities for 2016-2018 and was agreed by the Board at its annual Away Day in March 2016. Priority items can be added within the year.

The MSCB meets three times per year in half-day business meetings; and in a Business Planning Away Day once per year, in March. The Business Implementation Group of the Board meets four times per year. The progress of the actions agreed in the Business Plan is reviewed at each meeting. Each Sub Group has an agreed Work Plan and each Sub Group reports to the MSCB at each Board meeting.

Membership¹⁰ of the Board includes the following statutory partners

- the Metropolitan Police Service, Borough Commander;
- the National Probation Service and London Community Rehabilitation Companies;
- the Youth Offending Team;
- NHS England and Merton Clinical Commissioning Groups including representation from commissioned Health Services;
- CAFCASS;

Membership of the Board also includes

¹⁰ The structure and membership of the Board is included in this report as Appendices 3 and 4

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- Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care and Youth Inclusion
- Assistant Director of Education
- The Director of Public Health, Merton
- Representation from the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Adult Social Care
- Representatives from Housing, including Housing Associations

There is also strong partnership and influence between the MSCB and the following strategic partnerships and their Sub-Groups

- The Health and Well-Being Board,
- the Corporate Parenting Board,
- the Children’s Trust,
- the Safer and Stronger Partnership

7.0 MSCB Sub-Groups

7.1 Quality Assurance Sub-Group

The purpose of the Quality Assurance (QA) Sub-Group is to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected by overseeing the quality of single and multi-agency work carried out in partnership across the children and young people sector.

The QA Sub-Group undertook the following activities in 2015-2016

- Completed 4 themed multi agency audits. The themes for each multi-agency audit are as follows:
 - Child Sexual Exploitation February to April 2015
 - Domestic violence and the effectiveness of core groups in April 2015
 - Neglect in June 2015
 - Inter-generational abuse and repeat plans August 2015
- Reviewed the MSCB’s Multi-agency Performance Dataset
- Monitored learning from SCRs, LiRs,
- Disseminated learning from multi-agency audits

7.2 Promote and Protect Young People Sub-Group

The Promote and Protect Young People (PPYP) Sub-Group met 7 times in 2015-2016. The purpose of the PPYP is to take overall lead responsibility on behalf of the MSCB to ensure that there are effective and up-to-date multi-agency policies, protocols and procedures to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected and their welfare is promoted; *concentrating on extra-familial* abuse where there is *risk of abuse outside the family*. PPYP is responsible for policies relating to issues like CSE, children missing from home, care or education, child on child abuse, other forms of exploitation (such as radicalization), e-safety, trafficking, abuse by those in a position of trust or in institutions – including faith organisations and community organisations; and policies and procedures in relation to allegations against those in a position of trust (Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) referrals).

In 2015-2016 PPYP undertook the following pieces of work on behalf of the Board

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- Completed *Guidance for Professionals Working with Children and Young People who May Be Vulnerable to the Messages of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism*
- Advice for Parents and Carers on *Preventing Radicalisation and Violent Extremism*
- Oversaw the work the MASE Panel and Persons of Concern Panel
- Monitored and ensured the implementation of the CSE Action Plan
- Ensured the delivery of the CSE Awareness Events across the Borough

7.3 Learning and Development Sub Group

The purpose of the Learning and Development Sub-Group is to take the overall lead responsibility, on behalf of the MSCB, to ensure that there are effective arrangements in place so that the multi-agency workforce is up to date in knowledge and skills for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The Learning and Development Sub-Group also plans and delivers the Joint MSCB/CSC/CSF Multi-Agency Annual Conference for practitioners and managers. The aim of the conference is to increase awareness developments in safeguarding and to engage in dialogue with frontline practice. We also aim, where possible, to involve children and young people.

7.3.1 MSCB Joint Conference With Children's Social Care and Children's Schools and Families Department

As noted above, the Learning and Development Sub-Group takes a lead on delivering the Board's Joint Annual Conference. The theme of the conference for 2015-2016 was *The Shared Journey to the Finish Line: Children's and Adults Services Working Together*. The event was held at Epsom Race Course and featured keynote addresses from Hugh Constant, Practice Development Manager for the Social Care Institute for Excellence and Dr Ruth Allen, Director of Social Work at South West London and St. George's Mental Health NHS Trust and Research Fellow at St George's University of London. The conference also included workshops on Family Group Conferencing, Substance Misuse, Mental Ill-Health, Learning Disability, Young Carers and Transitions from Children's to Adult Services. The event was attended by 107 professionals and was well received by attendees.

7.3.2 MSCB Training

At the beginning of the financial year 2015-2016, the MSCB published the yearly programme advertising 63 separate training events.

In the course of the year we added a further 27 events and cancelled 16 which meant that we run a total of 75 training events, attended by 1370 multi-agency professionals. The previous year the courses run were 95 and the attendance 1403.

The annual conference on 2nd March was attended by 107 professionals.

Table 11 below offers a quick overview of the training activities throughout the year, including cancellations of courses (mostly related to poor uptake) and new courses added to the programme.

Table 11: MSCB Training for 2015-2016

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MSCB Training 2015/16													
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Planned Events	2	8	8	5	0	5	6	7	3	6	8	5	63
Added events			4			3	4	5	2	5	2	2	27
Cancelled events	1	3	0				3	2	3	2	1	1	16
Actual events	1	5	12	5		8	8	10	2	9	9	6	75
Actual number of attendees	10	61	160	73	0	105	172	173	21	134	128	333	1370

MSCB, in line with other London LSCBs, have adopted the Evaluation Training Impact format, through which we attempt to capture the impact of training immediately after the event, and then 6-8 weeks later to measure impact. This is done through survey monkey.

Data on each individual event is available on our database and reviewed to consider lessons for any repeat of that session.

The Learning and Development (L&D) Sub-Group decided to identify a selection of courses that were repeated over the year and so produced a valid sample, and which sat within the MSCB priorities, and make a deeper analysis in relation to:

- Improved knowledge,
- Improved skills,
- Trainers' skills and
- Emerging recurrent themes in response to the following questions:
 - What difference do you think this training will make to your work with children, young people and their families?
 - How has attending this training impacted on your colleagues/team/service? Please give at least 2 examples.
 - How has your implementation of the learning from the training has contributed to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families/carers? Please provide at least 2 examples.

Impact with participants is good. Reach has been consistent and the continued take up in the voluntary sector is pleasing.

The L&D Sub Group has realised however that the reach of key messages from the Board needs to go much wider in the workforce as is evidenced by Prevent training this year which via police and LA trainers has been delivered to a much wider workforce. It has been agreed that the key messages from the Sub-Group will be cascaded by the members of the L&D Sub to their individual agencies through existing briefing and training channels – i.e. within Health Trusts, at Designed Safeguarding Leads events. This will include key messages around MSCB policies and messages from QA Sub Group. It is anticipated that the reach in 2016 – 2017 will be even greater.

The low take up of some courses also needs to be considered by the Board. The Sub-Group is considering the question of does the MSCB need to run a narrower range, but offer these more often and keep the breadth or focus on key change issues.

7.3.3 E-Learning

3,087 Course licences were allocated with 2,094 passes. These figures are broken down as follows:

- Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect 2,542 allocated with 1,793 passes
- Safeguarding Children Refresher Training 491 allocated and 281 passes
- Child Development or Early Child Development 20 allocated with 6 passes

The total number of licences applied for has increased considerably; with allocations more than doubling from September 2015. However, the figures indicate that a significant number of professionals do not complete the programme/ course once applied for. The Sub Group to consider effective promotion of e learning through cascade and supporting each agency to monitor and improve the courses completed by their members of staff.

The Sub-Group has focused on the following areas:

1. *Ensuring that MSCB training is relevant to the needs of the workforce.* The Sub-Group's has employed a range of strategies to conduct needs analysis with limited responses. The decision was therefore taken to focus on developments in legislation and policy, nationally and through the policy development work of the MSCB and to ensure that learning from the work of Sub-Groups such as, PPYP, Policy and QA, informed the training offer so that learning issues from QA audits, LIRs, SCRs, etc., and the dissemination and implementation of MSCB policies, protocols, guidance, etc.
2. *The quality assurance of training.* The Learning and Development Sub-Group is striving to increase the monitoring and evaluation of the quality and impact of training delivered by 'in-house' and external trainers. As part of this work, the Sub-Group takes the lead in quality assuring training by attending courses and providing feedback. The MSCB quality assured 4 courses this year.

7.4. Policy Sub-Group

The Policy Sub-Group, formerly the Policy and Communication Sub-Group, revised its terms of reference in December 2014. As a result, the functions of this Sub-Group are focused on policies and procedures and not communication. The revised terms of reference were approved by the MSCB in March 2015. Under the revised terms of reference, the purpose of the Policy Sub-Group is to take overall lead responsibility on behalf of the MSCB to ensure that there are effective and up-to-date multi-agency guidance, policies, protocols and procedures to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected and their welfare is promoted. The Policy Sub Group also has lead responsibility for policies in relation to *safeguarding children from harm and neglect within their families or substitute families*. This includes core early intervention and child protection procedures and looked after children procedures; private fostering; the Sub-Group also leads on specialist areas such as parental mental ill-health, parental alcohol and substance abuse, and parental disabilities; FGM, cultural-based abuse and so-called 'honour' violence.

In 2015-2016 the Policy Sub-Group drafted or refreshed the following policies/strategies/protocols for approval by the Board

- The FGM Strategy

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- The Neglect Strategy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Reviewed the VAWG Strategy on behalf of the Board

7.5 CDOP

The Merton Child Death Overview Panel is shared with the London Borough of Sutton. The arrangements in place in Sutton and Merton to respond to and review child deaths in their borough include:

- A review of all child deaths (under 18 years, excluding those babies who are stillborn) in the LSCB area undertaken by a panel (Para 5.8 – 5.9); and
- A rapid response by a group of key professionals who come together for the purpose of enquiring into and evaluating each unexpected death of a child (Para 5.12-5.20).

36 Cases reviewed and completed by the CDOP during the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. 15 Cases were from Merton and 21 Cases from Sutton.

From 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, there were 28 child deaths reported to the Sutton and Merton CDOP. 16 deaths were of children resident in Sutton and 12 in Merton.

In 2015-16 there were no out of borough deaths of Sutton or Merton children.

There were four CDOP meetings held in 2015– 2016 and 36 cases reviewed in total, as per the breakdown in Table 2 below. The number in brackets beside the number of cases reviewed indicates in which year the child died: (13) for a child death from 1st April 2013 – 31st March 2014 (14) for a child death from 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015, and (15) for a child death that was reviewed in April 2015- to March 2016 year.

There were 9 unexpected deaths in Sutton and Merton in the 2015-2016 CDOP year. Nine rapid response meetings were held. Where a rapid response meeting was held, 1 case was referred to Merton Safeguarding Children's Board for consideration as a learning review. The case currently awaits the Coroner's Inquest and review.

There were 8 neonatal deaths reviewed in this period. Of these none had modifiable factors identified. Half of these children died on the neonatal unit. Three babies died in the delivery suite and one died in paediatric intensive care, three of eight babies were under 23 weeks gestation. Mental health concerns were identified with three families and one set of parents were consanguineous. In all eight cases no recommendations were made by the Panel.

No cases reviewed this year have been classified as Sudden Unexpected Death in an infant for Merton.

There were 14 deaths classified as "expected" reviewed in this period, all of which were considered to have "no modifiable factors". In 1 case, the parents are consanguineous and declined genetic testing antenatally. There were 3 sets of twins. One sibling survived of IVF Twins. Eight children had life limiting conditions. No recommendation was made in any of these cases.

7.6 Youth Crime Executive Board (YCEB)

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The YCEB is chaired by the Director of Children's, Schools and Families Services and the vice chair is the Chief Inspector of the Metropolitan Police (Merton). The YCEB is the governance structure for Merton in relation to the work of the Youth Justice/Offending Team (YOT), including the Youth Justice Annual Plan, performance and Quality Assurance. It also oversees the partnership response to Serious Youth Violence, Gangs and Troubled Families (known locally as Transforming Families) (TF). Membership includes Children's Schools and Families (CSF): Children's Social Care (CSC); Youth Justice; LAC, Education Inclusion, Police, Probation and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The YCEB reports to the MSCB and the Safer and Stronger Partnership reviews the performance of the partnership, the Youth Justice Service as well as wider youth crime issues.

The YCEB's key priorities over the past year have involved maintaining and monitoring the strong performance of the YOT (particularly in relation to the reduction of First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice System and the sustaining of low numbers for young people who are sentenced to custody); delivering and extending the TF programme and reducing the levels of serious youth violence and gang activity in the borough. The YCEB also seeks to ensure that key partnership work continues which ensures that the key aim of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) is achieved which is to prevent offending and re-offending in young people. We have also been overseeing the impact of the C&F Act of 2012 in relation to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) requirements. The introduction of this Act means that when a young person is remanded to custody for an offence, they become LAC.

Family and Adolescent Services is a strand within Social Care, Youth Inclusion and CSC that delivers a range of government prescribed and legislated functions to children at risk of harm, children in care, care leavers and young offenders, as well as wider services for families. A number of the interventions are targeted with the aim of providing an intervention before problems escalate within a family or that of a young person. This involves working closely with schools, academies, the Police and the Education Welfare Service. This work has included contributing to the CSF Equalities Action plan and actions are now in place to ensure that young people from deprived wards in the borough are supported. An example of this work is the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) Phipps Bridge (ward) work, which is focused on reaching and supporting young men from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and White working class backgrounds

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, the YCEB monitors the Youth Justice Team's Improvement and Development Plan, which was written before and updated after a successful inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in 2013. This Short Quality Screening concluded that Merton's Youth Justice Team had made "important changes" when compared to the inspection which took place in 2011. The improvement and development work includes the consistent use of auditing and the closer scrutiny of cases during the supervision process. We have also enhanced the quality assurance process within the YOT which includes adhering to the management auditing timetable and the use of thematic audits. All key documents, such as Pre-Sentence Reports, are quality assured. 'gate-kept' and monitored prior to presentation at court and there are regular reviews of work. There is evidence that Merton's low custody rates are influenced by thorough assessments and specific interventions which are presented as robust alternatives to custody. Feedback from the local youth court has consistently shown that the quality of Merton's Pre-Sentence Reports are strong and there have been a number of reports commended in recent times.

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The YCEB remains committed to the core value of ensuring the voice of the child (VOC) and that this is captured and acted upon. The Online Viewpoint Questionnaire is completed with young people and Merton has exceeded the required target. In addition to this, Youth Board Panels, comprising of young people, meet regularly with the FAS Manager and YOT manager. Feedback is received from young people and suggestions for change are acted upon in order to ensure that the service provided is in line with the needs of the young people that it works with.

The YCEB continues to focus on the Ending Serious Youth Violence (ESYV) agenda. The objective is to target more high risk offenders and Merton joined the Home Office's 'Ending Serious Youth Violence' programme in 2013. We recognise that a multi-agency approach is essential in tackling this issue. Subsequently, we continue to work closely with key partners such as the Police, CSF, Education, Health and the Voluntary sector. The MOPAC funded Gangs Worker continues to provide support to young men vulnerable to being caught up in gang-related crime and anti-social behaviour. Also a gangs' matrix has been developed between the Police and Family and Adolescent Services and assists with the review of cases at the Youth Offender Management Panel (YOMP). This year saw the launch of the MOPAC Projects and Gangs Multi-agency Panel (MOPAC/GMAP), in conjunction with CSF and the Police, which strengthens this work and focussing further on gangs nominals and those relevant young people who are transitioning into adulthood with significant concerns in this regard. The YCEB assists with the reviewing and monitoring of these essential pieces of work.

Assessment Intervention and Moving on (AIM) training has been delivered to CSC and members of the Youth Inclusion Team in order to support assessments, interventions and practice with young people who display sexually harmful behaviour. The Assessment Planning Panel (APP) has been launched and it will help plan treatment and support packages for young people who display sexually harmful behaviour. The YCEB also has oversight of this significant work and agenda., which is significant because sexual offences are one of the few types of offences which have seen an increase in London in recent years.

Merton CSF also focuses on the Child Sexual Exploitation agenda especially with regards to reducing the vulnerability of children and young people. This is done through the work of the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Panel and the Youth Offender Management Panel (YOMP). A MOPAC funded Young Women and Girls Worker helps support some of the most vulnerable young women in the borough who are affected by this area via criminal and/or gang links. The YCEB also has oversight of this significant work.

The YCEB and its oversight have proved highly effective in Merton, particularly in the past year. Indeed, despite significant challenges, where levels of youth violence saw an increase of more than 15% across London and despite Merton being bordered by boroughs with some of the highest levels of youth crime and violence in London (e.g. Lambeth and Croydon), Merton's performance in relation to the agenda has been strong. For instance, Merton's First Time Entrants figures are well below the London, National and YOT comparison data with a 9.7% reduction for the year. Similarly impressive is the fact that Merton has some of the lowest levels of young people sentenced to custodial sentences and of serious youth violence prevalence in London.

7.7 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Sub-Group

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The Merton VAWG Strategic Board meets four times per year. The VAWG Board's strategic aims are to engender an integrated, evidence-based and outcomes-focused approach to tackling all forms of VAWG across the borough. Over the next four years the partnership will foster and develop an approach which coordinates strategic and operational planning alongside activity from a wide range of partners involved in addressing VAWG issues.

The strategic aims promote closer coordination in the areas of identification and reporting of VAWG, strategic planning, commissioning, delivery of interventions and services alongside monitoring of outputs and outcomes. In so doing, they strive to create effective and efficient responses to VAWG. We aim to meet the needs of all those who are victims/survivors and/or perpetrators of VAWG, as well as those who are at risk of the same.

The strategic aims outline four priority areas in tackling VAWG and domestic abuse, which are:

1. Providing accessible, evidence-based, holistic support to people who have experienced or are at risk of VAWG
2. Implementing effective systems and interventions for working with perpetrators.
3. Fostering an integrated and coordinated approach to tackling VAWG.
4. In order to deliver the four strategic aims this action plan is split into to four priority themes;

1. Coordination: to develop a coordinated multi-agency approach by ensuring that the response to VAWG is shared by all stakeholders, embedded into service plans and coordinated effectively.

2. Prevention: to change attitudes and prevent violence by raising awareness through campaigns; safeguarding and educating children and young people; early identification, intervention and training

3. Provision: to improve provision and specialist support services which are essential in enabling people to end violence in their lives and recover from the damaging effects of abuse by providing a range of services to meet the needs of victims and survivors; practical and emotional support, emergency and acute services; access to legal advice and support, refuge and safe accommodation

4. Protection: to provide effective response to perpetrators outside of and within the criminal justice system through effective investigation; prosecution; victim support and protection; perpetrator interventions.

7.8 MASH Strategic Board

The purpose of the MASH Strategic Board (MSB) is outlined as follows:

- To provide assurance to the MASH Leadership Group
- To review the performance of MASH against individual agency Performance Framework and MASH Performance Framework
- To Review the function of the hub
- To identify future development/changes for the hub

The MSB meets each month and membership of the Board includes

- Merton Adult Services

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- Merton Borough Police
- Merton CSF: Children's Social Care, Education & Early Years
- Merton CCG: Commissioner of community health services
- Merton Housing Services

The MSB is accountable to the MSCB. An annual report will be submitted and presented to the MSCB and the MASH Group by the Chair who shall bring to the attention of the Board and the MASH Leadership Group issues relating to performance, the future direction of the MASH, operations, issues, blockages etc.

7.9 Structure and Effectiveness of the MSCB

In 2014-2015 the Board undertook a review of its structure and constitution. The focus of this review was to streamline the work of the Board for increased effectiveness (see appendix 3). These changes were embedded in 2015-2016 and there is evidence that these changes beginning to pay dividends in terms of the Board's increased effectiveness and impact.

The Board has 100% compliance with its section 11 process for statutory agencies. This was supported by a rigorous Peer Review and Challenge process to which challenged each agency to demonstrate their effectiveness in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children locally.

The MSCB has clear thresholds which are clearly understood throughout the safeguarding system. This is known locally as the Merton Well-Being Model and Common And Shared Assessment).

The MSCB has a robust Multi-Agency Training programme which works to ensure that the multi-agency children's workforce has access to high quality, multi-agency training. This programme is evaluated as being very good by the members of staff attending courses.

The Board is assured by partner agencies regarding their recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children as part of our Section 11 process. There are arrangements in place for the LADO and there has been a significant increase in LADO referrals and consultation in 2015-2016. The Board also receives the private fostering annual report in January each year.

The Board works in cooperation with neighboring children's services including peer review; joint services with Sutton, contributing to SCRs and learning (Croydon, Wandsworth, Kingston and Sutton)

The Board communicates with persons and bodies including schools, parents, educational settings, temples, churches, Mosques, other voluntary organisations, health providers and a range of other statutory and voluntary services by telephone, online, in person, through conferences, events, briefings etc. regarding safeguarding. The Board elicits feedback on its communications to ensure that this is effective.

The Board also quality assures the quality of safeguarding and promotion of children's welfare, through the monitoring of key performance data; multi-agency, single agency audits ensuring that the learning from audits and other quality assurance activity is cascaded across the children's safeguarding system.

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The Board contributes to the planning of services for children in highlighting priorities for service delivery and service design. For example, the Board's Annual Business Plan is informed by the Joint Needs Strategic Assessment

Since the last inspection (January 2012), the MSCB has

- 7 serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted by the MSCB
- completed one SCR (TS)
- The MSCB are currently conducting a SCR(Child B)
- The MSCB have completed 2 learning and improvement reviews (Child J and Baby PP)
- The MSCB are currently undertaking 1 learning and improvement review (Baby C)

7.9 MSCB Budget

The MSCB has an agreed budget and all agencies contribute. Its income for 2015/16 was £228,470. The MSCB Budget for 2015-2016 is detailed as follows:

Brought forward from 2014-2015 £18,642

Income for 2015-2016

Agency Contributions

CAFCASS	£550
London CRC	£1,000
London Probation Service	£1,000
London Borough of Merton	£142,030
Merton CCG	£35,000
Metropolitan Police	£5,000
Sub- total	£184,580

London Borough of Merton Baseline Supplement¹¹ £43,890

Total £228,470

Expenditure

Staffing	£144,170
Premises	£2000
Supplies and Services	£80,460
Transport	£1,840

Totals £228,470

Brought forward from 2015-2016 £0.00

8.0 Sub-Group Task and Finish Group Summary Reports/Effectiveness

¹¹ In 2015-2016, the MSCB Expenditure exceeded income from Agency contributions; LB Merton therefore supplemented the MSCB Budget

8.1 Prevent Task and Finish Group

The MSCB appointed a task and finish Group to review Merton's response to radicalisation and extremism and to develop some guidance for those working with children and young people who are vulnerable to the messages of radicalisation and extremism. This guidance was developed in the context of the Government's overarching counter-terrorism strategy 'CONTEST' and the 'Prevent Strategy' and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The group has completed its work and has prepared guidance for professionals and advice to parents and carers which were approved by the Board May 2015.

8.2 FGM Task and Finish Group

Public Health reported to the Board in September 2015 regarding FGM in Merton. Under the oversight of the Policy Sub-Group, the FGM task and finish Group was re-launched and commissioned to draft an FGM strategy that would be presented to the Board for approval in March 2016. The Strategy and its implementation plan were approved by the Board.

8.3 Neglect Task and Finish Group

A task and finish Group was also appointed to develop a strategic multi-agency response to the issue of neglect in March 2015. The Group reviewed data sources for monitoring neglect by child and by family, reviewing thresholds especially with regards to chronic neglect, exploring the issue of parental capacity, motivation and ability to sustain positive change with regard to providing good enough care, reviewing knowledge and skills across the CSF and proposing a draft MSCB strategy for tackling neglect: including parenting support and early intervention, health, education (across early years, primary and secondary phases) early help (CASA), MASH, CIN and CPP. As a result a MSCB's Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy and its implementation plan was approved by the Board in September 2015. We want to ensure that all people, including managers and practitioners, who come into contact with children and young people who may be at risk are able to

1. Identify children at risk of neglect at the earliest opportunity; in order to reduce the numbers of children experiencing neglect
2. Respond promptly and effectively to address the underlying factors;
3. Maintain our focus on the experiences of children;
4. Minimise the long term effects of childhood neglect and provide therapeutic support to overcome these;
5. To ensure that the importance of neglect and its incidence is recognised by all partners in the strategic planning and service design

We want to ensure that there is seamless provision of help and support for children, young people and their families across thresholds and pathways for help. We will do this by:

- Ensuring early help and identification regarding neglect are specifically covered within Partners' 'early help' protocols and procedures.
- Ensuring that there is a joint working protocol with adult services that is effective
- Tasking the Policy Sub-Group with working with the Children's Trust to review the Early Help Strategy to ensure that it is explicit about identifying and responding to childhood neglect

- Working closely with the Health and Well Being Board, the Safeguarding Adult Board and Commissioners in order to highlight the impact neglect can have on the wellbeing and safety of children

8.4 The Performance Management Dataset

The Board commissioned a task and finish group to review the MSCB's Performance Management Dataset. At the time the Board's Performance Dataset was unwieldy, characterised by being data rich and poor on analysis – the dataset comprised over 300 separate lines of multi-agency performance data. The task and finish group was tasked to reduce the KPIs and bring them in line with the DfE's *Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Framework*, published in January 2015. The revised Performance Management Dataset was approved by the Board in May 2015.

8.5 The Self-Harm Task and Finish Group

The Board also commissioned a task and finish group to draft a self harm protocol. The purpose of the protocol is to support all professionals working with children and young people (0 -18 in Merton) and to support young people in order to reduce self-harm incidents by:

- Supporting agencies to timely manage self-harm as it arises.
- Improving the response on presentation, disclosure or suspected signs of self-harm.
- Improving the quality of support, advice and guidance offered by all workers who work with children and young people.

The protocol is due to be approved by the Board in June 2016.

8.6 Learning & Improvement Reviews and Serious Case Reviews

A Serious Case Review is a case where the abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and either the child has died or has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern regarding how professionals and organisations have worked together to safeguard the child. The purpose of an SCR is to seek to understand what happened and why it happened in the context of local safeguarding systems rather than solely the actions of individuals relating to a single case. SCRs are an opportunity for multi-agency learning rather than blame. In 2015-2016 the MSCB commissioned a SCR. This SCR is referred to as Child B. This SCR is still in process and it is hoped that the report will be ready for publication in October 2016.

The Board also commissioned a Learning and Improvement Review (LiR). This LiR is referred to as Baby C. This case did not meet the statutory threshold for a SCR but the Board considered that there was significant learning from this case which would provide a 'window' into the multi-agency safeguarding system. It is expected that the LiR will be completed in November 2016

The key learning points emerging from the SCR

- Information sharing between agencies
- The effectiveness of multi-agency working

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- Domestic abuse (especially understanding of violence with the context of mental health), substance misuse and mental health – the need of updated protocols and to ensure that these are followed.
- Whole family assessments (especially the role of men within families)
- Use of written agreements especially with regard to mental capacity and poor mental health (monitoring and contingency planning)
- Effective use of escalation within the safeguarding system
- Management oversight and supervision
 - Multi-agency management of incidents of self-harm
 - The need to overcome errors in things such as rule of optimism (believing that things are alright despite evidence to the contrary) and confirmation bias (accepting only evidence which confirms professional assumptions)

The key learning from the LiR include

- Recognition of safeguarding concerns:
- Understanding parental mental capacity and how learning difficult impact on parenting
- The importance of bruising to pre-mobile babies, as an indication of Non-Accidental Injury (NAI).
- The need to recognise significant weight loss in babies as a possible indication of neglect.
- ‘Trigger trio’: depression; poor mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and domestic abuse and the risks these pose to children.
- Impact of learning disability on parenting capacity: the need for this to be sufficiently recognised or assessed?
- The voice of the child and consider their experience in the home environment.

9.0 Agency Effectiveness in Safeguarding – reports for each key agency drawing on Section 11 and QA and Challenge Meetings

Section 11

The Board holds partners to account through its Section 11 Quality Assurance and Peer Challenge Process. The Board also receives annual reports from the Children’s Trust, the VAWG Group and Public Health.¹²

The Board Section 11 process is robust and provides good assurance regarding the quality of partners’ commitment and prioritisation of safeguarding. All agencies support the work of the Board by attending and contributing at Board meetings and meetings of the Board’s Sub-Group. The Quality Assurance and Challenge Meetings for 2015-2016 were arranged as follows:

1. Children, Schools and Families (24 June 2015)
2. Health Services (24 June 2015)
3. Police, Probation and Community Safety (30 June 2015)
4. Community and Housing Services (30 June 2015)

¹² Evidence includes minutes of Board Meetings, the notes of the Section 11 Challenge Meetings, Section 11 Returns, QA Minutes, notes of multi-agency audits, the Board’s Business Plan

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5. Adult Social Care (19 August 2015)
6. Mental Health Services including CAMHs (17 November 2015)

These Challenge meetings included a review of Section 11 Compliance, analysis and discussion of each agencies' self-review of work to safeguard children during April 2013–March 2014; including relevant agency data showing impact of safeguarding children from the agency's perspective, the agency's performance against the MSCB dataset and key performance indicators. The Challenge meetings also considered each agency's implementation of learning from the TS SCR. Each agency was also asked to comment on its compliance to relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance including Working Together 2015 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015.

Twenty two Agencies/organisations completed twenty three self evaluation forms (the Metropolitan Police provided two Section 11 self-audits for CAIT and Borough Command)

These are detailed as follows

1. CAFCASS
2. Carers Support Merton
3. LBM Adult Social Care
4. LBM Children, Schools and Families (including Children's Social Care)
5. LBM Safer Merton
6. LBM Early Intervention and Prevention
7. LBM Early Years
8. LBM Education Inclusion
9. LBM Housing Needs
10. LBM Youth Justice
11. London Community Rehabilitation Company Probation
12. Merton Voluntary Service Council
13. MPS Borough-wide Command
14. MPS Child Abuse Investigation Team
15. National Probation Service
16. NHS Community Health, Royal Marsden
17. NHS – Epsom and St Helier
18. NHS – Merton Clinical Commissioning Group
19. NHS – South West London and St Georges Mental Health Trust
20. NHS – ST George's Trust
21. Public Health
22. Parkside Hospital

Overall good progress is being made in meeting the section 11 standards. Agencies were asked to submit additional evidence and this evidence was reviewed and challenged in the Challenge Meetings.

National or regional services (such as, CAFCASS and Probation) submitted more 'global' self-assessments were asked to ensure that there is an addendum which gives assurance for Merton.

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A challenge across a number of agencies was demonstrating how the views of service users were being taken into consideration in service design and service planning – although on challenge it was noted that more consultation and involvement with young people was being done than had been described in the self-evaluations.

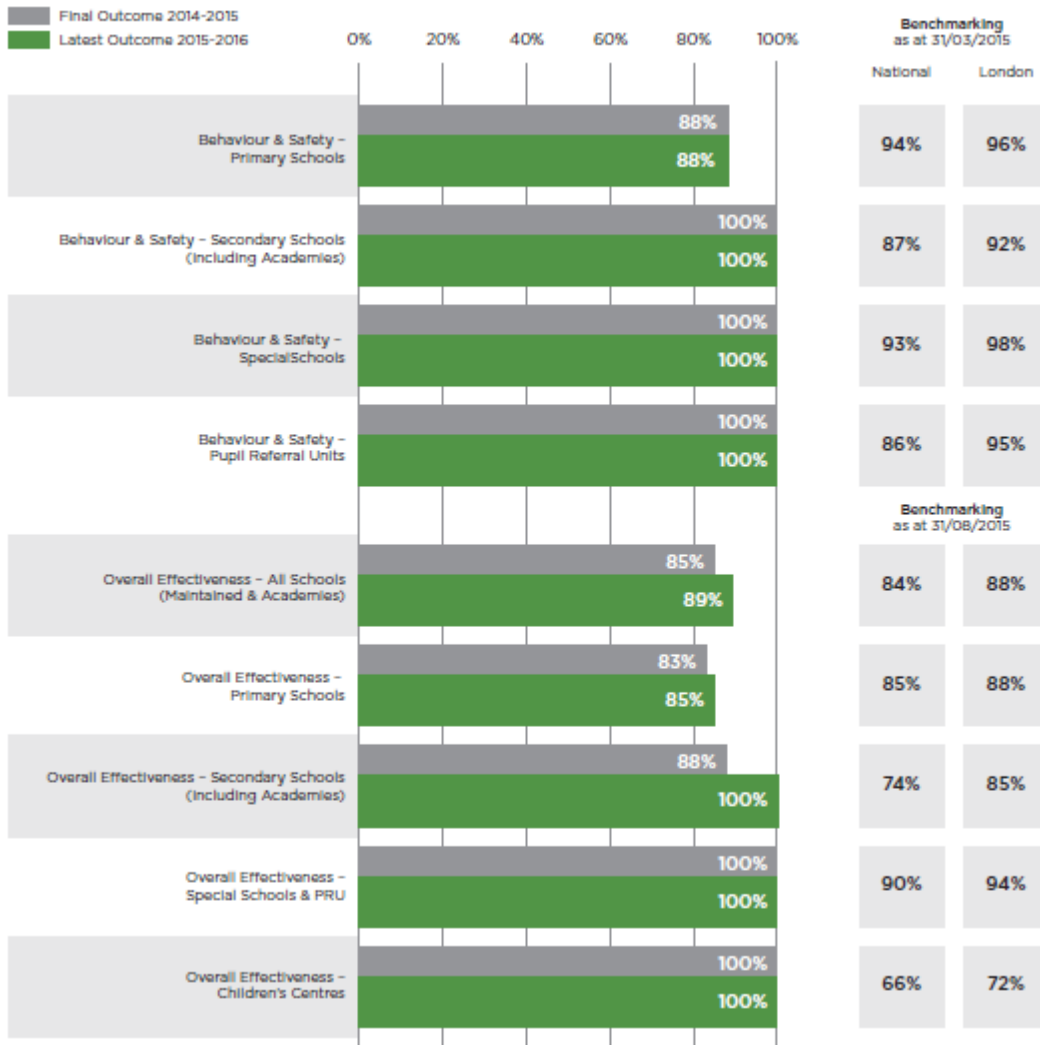
Schools were not asked specifically to complete a section 11 audit in this round. A safeguarding systems audit for each school had been undertaken in the Autumn term 2014 and reported to the MSCB In January 2015. This was repeated in the Autumn term 2015. This will be reported to the MSCB. In this round of audits the Local Authority and other Agencies' support to schools and involvement of schools in the MSCB was reviewed.

Agencies where offering services to children and young people was not a core task, were seen to have greater challenges in meeting the standards – it was agreed that the MSCB would offer them more assistance to understand and make arrangements to meet the standards, where necessary.

It was agreed that the Peer Challenge was helpful and that it was valuable to involve a Lay Member, where possible. The involvement of Commissioners was also seen as helpful as it enabled the Chair and the Director of Children, Schools and Families to challenge commissioned services regarding improving the quality of their safeguarding practice.

9.1 Schools

Ofsted Inspection outcomes rated Good or Outstanding



Merton Schools contributed to the Section 11 audit and formed part of the CSF Section 11 return.

9.2 CSF department

CSF department completed section 11 audits for CSC; Early Years; the Youth Service, Education Inclusion and the FAS (including Youth Justice).

We have evolved our structures to deliver to larger numbers of children and young people and meet the challenges of a range of initiatives. We have increased our number of social workers, provided reasonable caseloads and continue to focus on reducing agency rates. We will maintain our sharp focus on this going forward.

There has been a very challenging recruitment and retention context nationally, in London and particularly for SW London. Despite these challenges Merton has appointed 50+ permanent social workers since Jan 2015. We have endeavoured to maintain good quality of recruits and despite the challenges have rejected a number of candidates post references over the same period.

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We have a recruitment and retention action plan and will continue to maintain our focus generally but will also focus on specific hotspot recruitment areas such as: Children With Disabilities, MASH, Quality Assurance (QA). We now have a strong pipeline of student social workers including Frontline colleagues and a sufficient flow of ASYEs. We will continue to maintain our strong focus on this work.

Our professional development activity and strengthened approach to QA, combined with active performance management, are increasingly enabling the challenge and support for improving practice. We want to ensure that all practitioners are supported and work to the highest levels of competence in line with our ambitions and expectations; we both invest in the development of our workers and tackle underperformance. Our developing use of “Signs of Safety” and motivational interviewing techniques are providing useful tools for working with families and adolescents as well as enabling active discussion with regard to pedagogy and practice. This work will need to be sustained going forward.

The implementation of the major changes arising from the Children and Families Act 2014 relating to education, health and care planning for children with SEN and disabilities remain on-going. With strong engagement of partners from the NHS, community organisations sectors and parents/carers, we have established an integrated Education Health and Care service and published our Local Offer. We are now focusing on embedding new procedures and ways of collaborative working which will support more integrated planning and more effective working with this group of children, young people and their families.

To deliver our shared ambitions we will continue to provide leadership and governance through our MSCB partnership identifying and addressing our priorities for improvement. To support us in this we will utilise our anticipated new casework system to further develop our use of data both for identifying underperformance at a case, team or service level as well as for the development, commissioning and prioritisation of services. We will use our continuous improvement agenda to deliver sustained improvements where issues are identified and to maintain our ambitions for all our services to be good or better.

As we start 2016-2017 with a more stable workforce we expect to accelerate the pace of our improvements and will also be looking to implement improvements from a recent external review of our MASH as well as plans to review our Children and Young Persons Well-Being Model, the step up, step down process and the continuum of specialist, enhanced and wider services for children and families in line with the emerging MSCB priorities 2016-2017.

9.3 Acute Trusts

Merton does not have an acute trust located in the Borough however there is an effective relationship with acute trusts in the neighbouring boroughs of Sutton, Wandsworth, Croydon, Lambeth and Kingston

9.3.1 Sutton and Merton Community Health Service and the Royal Marsden Trust

The Trust and the service provider completed a Section 11 Self-audit and attended Quality Assurance Challenge meetings, which gave the Board assurance that the Trust is fulfilling its statutory duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

9.3.2 SW London & St George’s Mental Health Trust

South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust completed Section 11 Self-audit; this was undertaken at a time of considerable organisational change due to a major transformation programme.

9.3.3 Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust

The Trust and the service provider completed a Section 11 Self-audit and attended Quality Assurance Challenge meetings, which gave the Board assurance that the Trust is fulfilling its statutory duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

9.3.4 NHS Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

The Merton CCG has completed a Section 11 Self-audit and has attended Quality Assurance and Challenge meetings which gave the Board assurance that the CCG is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

9.3.5 St George's Hospital NHS Trust

The Trust completed a safeguarding survey as part of their Section 11 submission to the Board. The Trust also provided a range of supplementary evidence which gave the Board assurance that the Trust was fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

9.3.6 Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust

The Trust was awarded the community health care contract from the first of April 2016. The trust completed their Section 11 submission to the Board for 2016. The Trust also provided supplementary evidence which gave the Board assurance that the Trust was fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

9.3.7 Public Health

The Director of Public Health sits on the Board and is a strong partner. The Director of Children, Schools and Families is also a member of the Health and Well-being Board. The JSNA also informs the priorities of the Board's Bi-Annual Business Plan. Public Health completed a Section 11 Self-audit that gave the Board assurance that the Public Health is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

9.4 Community and Housing Dept. - London Borough of Merton

Community and Housing Department completed Section 11 Audits for Public Health, Adult Social Care and Housing and participated in the Quality Assurance Challenge Meetings. Representatives of the Housing Needs team and the Safeguarding Manager of Circle Anglia, Merton's largest housing provider attends meeting of the Board

9.5 Corporate Service – HR – London Borough of Merton

A section 11 audit of the council's safer recruitment and employment practices was undertaken. The council has also re-issued advice to schools in the period covering revisions to the vetting and barring arrangements and on the new DfE guidance on disqualification by association.

9.5 Metropolitan Police/Probation/Cafcass

Regional Section 11 returns have been completed by all three organisations. The Metropolitan Police have completed returns for the Borough Command and CAIT. The police have included local information and analysis.

10 Views of Children and Young People and the Community

Merton's Children's Trust User Voice Strategy implements one of the core ambitions of Merton's Children's Trust and the MSCB namely, demonstrating that the views and ambitions of children and young people have informed and improved our service offer.

The strategy is also part of the Children's Trust's implementation of key legislation, policy and guidance: The Children Act 1989 and 2004 recognises children as citizens with the right to be heard and requires that when working with children in need, their wishes and feelings should be ascertained and used to inform making decisions. The Children and Families Act 2014 section 19 requires that children, young people and families should be involved in decision making at every level of the system. And, Working Together 2015 states that one of the key principles for effective safeguarding arrangements in a local area is to take a child centred approach: 'for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children'.

Merton's Children and Young People's Plan 2016-19 identifies priority areas of work to close gaps and improve outcomes for Merton's most vulnerable groups. This year, we can report on user voice activity which has involved each of the vulnerable cohorts including: those in need of early help; children in need of help and protection; looked after children and care leavers; children with special educational needs and disabilities; those at risk of disengaging from school and beyond; and those at risk of offending.

This year we have ensured that children and young people's views are central to decisions about their care. A very high proportion of visits (94%) and reviews (100%) for children subject to a child protection plan, and reviews (99%) for those who are looked after have been conducted within timescales with 90% CYP participation at LAC reviews.

In order to ensure that the views of children, with all levels of ability, and their families inform the CP process social workers have been trained in the child/ family centred Signs of Safety approach, and have also been trained in gathering the views, wishes and feelings of children with disabilities/communication difficulties. In addition we have continued to support children and young people to participate in CP Conferences either by attending, or through an independent advocate.

Ninety per cent of LAC participated in their LAC review either through attendance, completion of consultation papers, or through an advocate (for additional information on LAC participation see section 4.2.3.i of this report).

Providing opportunities for children and young people to influence key decision makers

Through a range of forums and groups including the Children in Care Council, Merton Youth Parliament, Young inspectors, the Your Shout Group for learning disabled young people and school

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councils, Merton's young people's voices have informed and impacted on a broad range of issues which affect young people's lives including:

- review and refresh of licensing policy in town centres,
- feedback to Transport for London on the accessible transport for disabled people,
- the new 'Child House' support model for those affected by sexual abuse,
- LAC placements and Care leavers accommodation
- school reviews and improvement plans,
- Youth Generator funding for young people's activities,
- Merton's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Strategy (CAMHS),
- the Anti-Bullying Operational Group refreshed action plan,
- support for young LGBT people,
- and recruitment to senior positions in schools and children's services.

Merton's service user forums and target cohorts have been supported to feedback on the quality of our offer to them, and to effect positive improvements to our service provision. Notable examples include:

Children in need of help and protection – user views on the experience of our Social Work Intervention service is used to inform quarterly improvement plans for the service. Views of a number of children, who have used the commissioned service for missing children, have been used to inform recommendations for the Police service and the Home Office as featured in the HMIC report Missing Children: who cares? Feedback from users of our Contact Service has informed recommendations for improvements to the service including improved information about and scheduling of contact, and increased options for contact arrangements with older teenagers.

Feedback from parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) shows that our Information and Advice Support Service for SEND is invaluable for helping families through the EHCP process and preventing tribunals. Young people were consulted and contributed to the 'look and feel' of the refreshed Family Services Directory which includes Merton's 'Local Offer'.

Other vulnerable cohorts of Young People

- As a result of feedback from young people in the Youth Justice System, in their sessions with young people, workers have increased their to focus on the needs of the young person, identifying the skills they need and signposting to local projects that can help build these skills.
- Feedback from the forum for young people who are supported by the Education, Training and Employment team highlights that staff have an increased understanding that user views are key to ensuring that assessments and plans are as comprehensive as possible.
- In response to feedback from parents involved in the Transforming Families programme practitioners are now revisiting the 'family plan' at more regular intervals so that families are fully aware of targets and expectations.

11 Conclusions and Priorities for 2016 – 18 Business Years

The Board is on a journey of continuous improvement; seeking to sharpen our focus and streamline our processes so that we are increasingly able to fulfil our statutory responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare.

In 2015-2016 we embedded the processes agreed in the revised constitution of the Board in 2014-2015. As a result the Board has continued to be rigorous in its work. Our partnership is mature and robust and is characterised by respectful challenge and accountability. The Sub-Groups are purposeful and targeted on delivering on the Board's agreed priorities. The Board's Performance Dataset allows the Board to analyse trends and identify risk or gaps as well as prioritise areas for development.

At the Board's Annual Away Day it was agreed that the Board would focus on fewer priorities whilst continuing to deliver on a range of key 'Business as Usual' safeguarding issues. In agreeing the Board's priorities for 2016-2018, there was a robust discussion with presentations from partner agencies on their agency's strategic priorities. Members of the Board then agreed the following priorities for the next 24 months:

1. Think Family – to support children and adults in our most vulnerable families to reduce risk and ensure improved outcomes. Signs of vulnerability include

The MSCB wants to ensure that our partnerships continue enable the most vulnerable families to be supported; so vulnerable parents are supported to care for their children and children are in turn supported to thrive and achieve their potential. Evidence from local and national research tells us that our most vulnerable parents/families are those who

- Experience poor mental health,
- Struggle with substance misuse,
- Are affected by domestic abuse,
- Parents with learning difficulties or learning disabilities that may affect their ability to respond to the changing needs of their children

The evidence nationally and locally also shows that vulnerable families are best supported when there is effective joint working between adult and children facing services. When professionals understand the underlying causes of issues like neglect and other form of abuse and offer effective support early before these problems get worse.

2. Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents – adolescence is a time of significant change for all young people.

We know that, for some young people, adolescence is a time of particular vulnerability. We are determined to support adolescents who are at risk of

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE),
- Children who go missing from home/school/care
- Children and young people who are at risk radicalisation and violent extremism,
- Children at risk of serious youth violence and gangs

- Self-harm and poor mental health
- Suicide

3. Early Help – To develop an early help system that is responsive and effectively prevents escalation of concerns.

Merton has had a long-established child and YP Well Being Model which we last reviewed in 2013. With changes in local providers and agencies and with changing levels of resources available we need to ensure our Model continues to be fit for purpose. The evidence shows that timely and purposeful help or intervention at all stages of a child or young person's journey is the most effective way improving impact and outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families. As part of our review we will

- Take forward the learning from our recent MASH review
- Consider the interface between our MASH and EH arrangements
- Review our service offer at all levels of the Model and Engage partners in discussion on thresholds, Step-Up Step Down processes and the tools to support early help assessment CASA and intervention (Signs of Safety/signs of well being)
- Review our partnership quality assurance of EH

This Business Plan contains the MSCB priority actions. The on-going work of the MSCB and its Sub-Groups and Task Groups continues alongside it and will be incorporated into the Sub-Groups' annual work plans and reporting cycle to the MSCB.

The MSCB continues to work to drive improvements in the quality of safeguarding practice in Merton. The partnership remains strong and is well positioned to meet the challenges ahead.

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