



Developing Merton's strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people who have Special Education Needs and/or disabilities (SEND) age 0-25 years (2020-23).

Consultation overview



Developing Merton's strategy for children and young people with Special Education Needs and/or disabilities (SEND) 2020-23:

What is the purpose of the strategy?

- Merton's Children's Trust is developing the **Merton SEND Strategy 2020-23**, to set out partners' shared responsibility to deliver effective services for children, young people and families with SEN and/or disabilities – in Merton SEND is everyone's business'.
- Partners in the **Children's Trust** include children, young people and families, health, the voluntary and community sector, Police, early years settings, schools and colleges, and the local authority.

Governance:

- The Merton SEND Strategy is coordinated and monitored by the multi-agency SEND Strategic Implementation Board and the Children and Young People's Integrated Commissioning Group. It is overseen by Merton's Children's Trust.

Developing the draft Merton SEND Strategy

Developed a draft Merton SEND Strategy for consultation September-October 2019

Feedback from parents and professionals.

Input from senior managers in CSF, adult social care and CCG.

Formal consultation with:

- Parents - High Needs review 2018.
- Children and young people (Children and Young People's Plan consultation 2019 and the Young Residents' survey 2019)

Statutory requirements:

- Children and Families Act 2014.
- SEND code of practice 0-25 years
- Equality Act 2010.

Data on prevalence and outcomes.

Learning from the recent local area SEND inspection

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Consulting on the draft Merton SEND Strategy in September-October 2019.

We conducted three consultations with key stakeholders:

1. **Online consultation** - Over 100 **parents of children with SEN and/or disabilities and professionals/ staff who work with** them, responded to the Merton SEND Strategy online consultation September-October 2019.
2. **Children and young people's (CYP) discussion groups** - Around 70 children and young people aged from 9-18 were involved in discussion groups across six Merton primary, secondary and special schools. The children and young people involved represented those supported at SEN support, and those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.
3. **Meetings and governance groups** - Discussions with **parents and professionals/ staff** via a number of our regular meetings and SEND governance focus groups:

- ✓ Portage drop in – 12 September;
- ✓ Primary head teachers' meeting – 25 Sept;
- ✓ Clinical Commissioning Group Patient engagement group (PEG) – 25 Sept;
- ✓ Kids First forum – 25th Sept;
- ✓ Kids First steering group – 26th Sept;

- ✓ Local offer focus group – 27 Sept;
- ✓ Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) early years settings managers' meeting – 2 October;
- ✓ Preparing for adulthood (PFA) board – 7 Oct;
- ✓ SEN Coordinator (SENCo) working group – 15 Oct.
- ✓ Extended Education Senior Leadership Team (SLT) 16th Oct.

Consultation overview

- The purpose of the three consultations (as listed above) was to discuss and draw out stakeholders' key issues and concerns, and to make sure that these are addressed in the strategy 'vision', and by the strategic objectives ('we wills') set out in the strategy.
- The following overview identifies the strategic objectives ('we wills') which the consultation process has identified as key areas of focus for children and young people, parents and professionals. It also illustrates examples of feedback themes from across the three consultations.
- As a response to the consultation the introductory narratives, 'vision' and strategic objectives (we wills) in the Merton SEND Strategy have been amended to reflect key feedback themes.
- In summary stakeholders have highlighted the importance of putting children, young people and families' participation and engagement at the heart of identification, assessment and support for SEN and/or disabilities and in our overall strategic planning; continuing to promote an inclusive culture across services and the community, with access to clear information about local provision; clear information, advice and guidance for support for parents in their caring role, with a focus on early support; access to effective therapies and other support services in education settings, and a review of the impact of these; clear guidance on all points of 'transition' for children and young people, and effective support for those who are eligible for adult services post 18 and those who are not, to support their move into employment, independent living, community inclusion, and health.

Being healthy

Some schools have OTs and some don't; they should share OTs across schools (CYP discussion groups).

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There should be a review of the impact of all therapies across mainstream schools (Kids First/ Patient Engagement Group/online consultation).

We will:

- ❖ Improve and offer a range of co-ordinated specialist child health services provided by community-based clinicians (doctors, nurses and therapists) that can be easily accessed in the most appropriate and child focused setting which is closer to home.
- ❖ Review and improve the nursing and health therapies offer across all Merton schools to enable it to better meet current and future needs.
- ❖ Make sure young people have easy and timely access to local health services including mental health, sexual health and substance misuse (including information, advice and guidance).
- ❖ Work with partners including schools and settings to support healthy eating in children and young people.
- ❖ Deliver improved and consistent services for children with autism, including delivering the children and young people's aspects of the Merton Autism Strategy 2018-23.

More support for children with mental health problems/ SEMH including trained staff in school (online/CYP).

Children need more support for healthy eating and access to healthy food (Portage drop-in/CYP).

Staying safe

Young people need access to 'life skills' training to help them build independence and prevent future escalation of need (CYP discussion groups).

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There should be a clear 'contact point' for families to get help; and they should be able to see a positive impact from the help that is given (Preparing for Adulthood board).

We will:

- ❖ Work together across education, health and social care to support young people to prepare for a safe and happy adulthood including employment, independent living, community inclusion and social life, and health.
- ❖ Create new referral pathways for swift and easy access to Merton's multi-agency 'early help' offer for families and professionals.
- ❖ Provide information, advice and guidance to parent carers to support their well-being and enable their caring role, with a focus on early support.
- ❖ Support children, young people and families to appropriately deal with bullying and staying safe online.

One of the 'strategic objectives' should be 'to support parent carers to maintain their well-being and enable their caring role' (Patient Engagement Group; Local offer focus group).

It's clear how to get help with bullying in school, but not if the bullying is online, or outside of school (CYP).

Enjoying and achieving

We need commitment to effective support for children in mainstream schools, and not necessarily with an EHC plan (Kids First).

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It's important that an inclusive culture is developed by school leaders, SEN audit processes are integrated into whole school self-evaluation, and schools work together to improve outcomes (SENCo working group).

Pupils with SEND in mainstream schools and ARPs should be supported to feel part of the setting, and not be made to feel uncomfortable – 'awkward and vulnerable from others' (CYP discussion groups/ online consultation).

We will:

- ❖ Increase access to local, inclusive education provision for children with special educational needs and/ or disabilities.
- ❖ Encourage and support mainstream school leaders to develop an inclusive culture, improve staff knowledge, understanding and skills and to maximise opportunities for schools to work together.
- ❖ Improve the quality, including monitoring, of Education, Health and Care Plans to make sure they set clear targets to support the child or young person's development. (Local area SEND inspection 2019).
- ❖ Improve access to places where children and young people can enjoy themselves, socialise and access physical activities including after school clubs, youth clubs, parks and leisure, and including effective promotion.
- ❖ Secure strong progress and achievement and raise attainment of children with special educational needs and/ or disabilities in schools and nurseries, and close gaps in education outcomes.

Improve timeliness of EHCP referral and assessment, and support schools in the meantime (Patient Engagement Group/ online).

We need access to inclusive clubs and activities after school and at the weekend (CYP/ online).

We want to do well at school and need more support (CYP).

Getting involved, having a say

We will:

- ❖ Provide opportunities for children and young people (in mainstream, special schools and colleges), and families, to directly talk to all types of service providers about decisions which affect them.
- ❖ Improve how we support children and families to make sure that their voices are central to identification, assessment, support and monitoring processes for children identified at SEN Support and those with an EHC Plan.

We need to work with partners including schools and the voluntary sector to build links with *all* families including those who can be under-represented in consultation and engagement activities (Education SLT).

Children and families voices need to be central to identification, assessment and support planning and monitoring (SENco working group).

Its good when we have input into our EHCPs (CYP discussion groups).

Parents with children on SEN support feel they are less well consulted than those with an EHC Plan (Kids First; Portage drop-in).

We like to be able tell people what we think, and like as many opportunities to take part as possible (CYP).

Becoming independent

We need clear visual representations/ process maps of 'transitions' for young people, families and professionals (PfA Board).

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We need information about jobs and careers, as well as work experience and volunteering opportunities (CYP discussion groups).

[the strategy] must address the 'cliff edge' when a high number of services stop at 18, including transitions from 'short breaks' (Kids First).

Roll out of the 'Thinking Ahead Guides' will help children, young people and families to drive 'preparation for adulthood' planning (Kids First/Patient Engagement Group/PfA board).

We will:

- ❖ Implement the borough's multi-agency transitions project across education, health and social care, to develop a 'pathways to adulthood' model which includes - Employment; Independent Living; Community Inclusion; and Health – is person centred and timely, and meets the needs of those who are eligible for adult services and those who are not.
- ❖ Simplify the process of transition from children's to adults' services in education, health and social care, to enable an integrated, seamless pathway which supports young people through significant changes. (Local area SEND inspection 2019).
- ❖ Further develop the post 16 offer (Education, Training and Employment) including creating more supported internships, volunteering and employment opportunities.
- ❖ Promote good communication and coordination between the young person's family and service providers to promote choice and control for the young person.

My Merton – community connections

**We would like clearer
information about events and
activities that are going on
(CYP discussion groups).**

**Non-SEND young people and
the local community should
be better educated on how to
understand and accept SEND
young people (CYP).**

**We need more community based activities
for young people with SEND to prevent
isolation (online consultation/CYP).**

**Raise awareness of online information and
support amongst senior leaders, and
amongst library staff so that they can
support young people and families to use it
(online).**

We will:

- ❖ Undertake a review of the local offer of services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families to identify whether these are sufficient to meet needs.
- ❖ Improve promotion and accessibility of the ‘Local Offer for children with SEN and/or disabilities’ and ‘Young Merton’ to broaden awareness of the availability of local opportunities, support and advice and guidance for children and their families.
- ❖ Support children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families to feel part of their community by promoting positive attitudes and understanding, and making Merton a friendly place for those with disabilities.
- ❖ Support service providers from all sectors to make reasonable adjustments (in line with the Equality Act 2010) so that children and young people with SEN and/ or disabilities can enjoy the full range of opportunities alongside their peers.

Next steps:

1. **Merton SEND Strategy currently being finalised after the consultation period, will be signed off by the Children's Trust (15 November) and adopted by Merton Council Cabinet (9 December).**
2. **SSIB to continue to develop the annual action plan, and develop a process for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress which involves key stakeholders - sign off at the SSIB meeting in November.**
3. **For further information please contact: Lisa.deer@merton.gov.uk**