

Merton Council Council

7 February 2024

Supplementary Agenda 1 – Strategic Theme Motion & Amendments to the Strategic Theme Report

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Labour Strategic Theme Motion

Council 7 February 2024

Building a Sustainable Future For Younger People - Motion

Council notes:

- Equal access to local health services in Merton is vital to Building a Sustainable Future for all residents in Merton, including younger people.
- Young people in Merton should not experience inequalities in the accessibility of health services for any reason, including based on the type of health condition experienced or treatment required.
- The provision, quality, and accessibility of services for physical and mental health conditions are of equal importance to each other in Building a Sustainable Future.
- Reduced access to cancer services in Merton could cause negative, knock-on implications on the mental health and broader wellbeing of young people living with cancer in the borough.
- NHS England's shortlisting of the Evelina Hospital and St George's Hospital as options for the location of the new Children's Cancer Principal Treatment Centre for south London, Kent, Medway, Surrey, Sussex and Brighton and Hove, and the Council's firm predilection for children's cancer services to remain at St George's Hospital.
- NHS England's preference for services to be relocated to the Evelina Hospital, and the detrimental impact this would have on patients and parents in Merton and across the region.
- The shared view of patients, parents, and employees at St George's and affected local authorities in south west London that it would be significantly more sustainable, practical, and cost-effective to retain children's cancer care services at St George's.
- The experienced and excellent delivery of specialist cancer care at St George's Hospital for over 25 years, and the dedicated work of nurses, doctors and hospital staff in providing care to this vulnerable group of patients.
- The capital cost of St George's is estimated at £31 million compared to £44 million in transferring the service to the Evelina Hospital.
- Relocating services to the Evelina Hospital in central London would make it harder for parents and children to access treatment and reduce travel options and accessibility for patients.
- Services at St Georges are not stand-alone; specialist staff work across a variety of trauma cases. Therefore, the move of services to the Evelina Hospital may lead to cuts in funding, staff and vital services in south west London and Surrey.
- That one in four children with cancer will have neurooncological cancer that may require urgent neurosurgery, which is available 24/7 at St George's.
- The essential provision of experienced neurosurgeons at St George's Hospital and the lack of specialist neurological care at the Evelina Hospital, meaning ill

and vulnerable children will be transported to Kings College Hospital in Denmark Hill.

Council welcomes:

- The unprecedented support from neighbouring local authorities across Southwest London in campaigning for the consolidation of the Children's Cancer Principal Treatment Centre at St George's Hospital.
- The work of the Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillors and Council officers for their advocacy to the NHS Regional Medical Director and NHS England.
- Local cross-party commitments, coordinated by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride, to campaign to protect children's cancer services at St George's.

Council resolves to:

- Write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to urge her to enable St George's to become the Children's Cancer Principal Treatment Centre for south London, Kent, Medway, Surrey, and Sussex and Brighton and Hove.
- Continue working in partnership with other local authorities, patients, families, and hospital staff across the region to protect children's cancer services.

Cllr Agatha Akyigyina

Cllr Laxmi Attawar

Cllr Slawek Szczepanski

Liberal Democrat Amendments to the Strategic Theme Report **Council 7 February 2024**

Amendment 1: cost of living emergency - scrap the two-child benefit cap to help build a sustainable future

To add a new Recommendation B:

B. Council notes that child poverty has a significant impact on children and young people's mental health and wider-health outcomes. For example, according to research noted by the Mental Health Foundation, children living in the lowest 20% income bracket are 2 or 3 times more likely to develop mental health problems. Council further notes that according to CPAG, removing the two-child benefit cap would lift 250,000 children out of poverty and result in 850,000 children living in less deep poverty.

Therefore, Council recommends that Cabinet consider:

- a. Calling on the UK Government to scrap the two-child benefit cap, asking the Council Leader to write to Merton's Members of Parliament expressing the Council's support for the scrapping of the two-child benefit cap to request they vote for removal of the cap in any votes in the House of Commons; and
- b. investigating how Merton's Council Tax Support Scheme can be used to provide additional support to families affected by the cap if they do not otherwise qualify now or in the future, or other equivalent measures.

Cllr Anthony Fairclough

Cllr Jenifer Gould

Amendment 2: investing in our young people – outdoor residentials

To add a new Recommendation B:

Recommends that Cabinet consider ways to support the Outwardbound Trust's Campaign by working with schools and other relevant partners so Merton's children have more opportunities to experience the great outdoors during their education, helping young people leave formal education feeling more capable, curious and resilient – ready for the challenges of life.

Cllr Anthony Fairclough

Cllr Jenifer Gould

Amendment 3: investing in our young people – reducing the incidence of eating-disorders

To add a new Recommendation B:

Recommends that Cabinet consider producing a report within the next 12 months setting out a comprehensive plan, based on Merton-specific analyses, with targets and deadlines for improvement aimed at reducing the incidence of eating-disorders in young people.

Cllr Anthony Fairclough

Cllr Jenifer Gould