

# Merton Council Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Date: 3 November 2015  
Time: 7.15 pm  
Venue: Committee rooms C, D & E - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden  
SM4 5DX

## AGENDA

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| 4 Executive Response and Action Plan - Online Strategies in Schools | 1 - 6       |

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**This is a public meeting – members of the public are very welcome to attend.  
The meeting room will be open to members of the public from 7.00 p.m.**

For more information about the work of this and other overview and scrutiny panels, please telephone 020 8545 4035 or e-mail [scrutiny@merton.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@merton.gov.uk). Alternatively, visit [www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

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## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel membership

### Councillors:

Linda Taylor OBE (Vice-Chair)  
Charlie Chirico  
Edward Foley  
Joan Henry  
James Holmes  
Katy Neep (Chair)  
Marsie Skeete  
Dennis Pearce  
Jeff Hanna  
Agatha Mary Akyigyina

### Substitute Members:

Sally Kenny  
Peter Southgate  
Fidelis Gadzama  
Najeeb Latif  
Stephen Crowe

### Co-opted Representatives

Peter Connellan, Roman Catholic diocese  
Colin Powell, Church of England diocese  
Simon Bennett, Secondary and Special  
School Parent Governor Representative  
Denis Popovs, Primary School Parent  
Governor Representative

### Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. If members consider they should not participate because of a non-pecuniary interest which may give rise to a perception of bias, they should declare this, withdraw and not participate in consideration of the item. For further advice please speak with the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance.

### What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

For more information, please contact the Scrutiny Team on 020 8545 4035 or by e-mail on [scrutiny@merton.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@merton.gov.uk). Alternatively, visit [www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny)



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## Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015**

Agenda item:

### **Subject: Online Strategies in Schools – Executive Response and Action Plan**

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Assistant Director for Education/Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director for Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Lead member: Cllr Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt

**Reason for urgency:** The chair has agreed the submission of this report as a matter of urgency, to enable its consideration at the panel's meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015, to avoid delay in the implementation of the action plan attached to the report.

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#### **Recommendations:**

A. That the Panel notes the executive response and action plan.

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#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1. The report provides details of the executive response to recommendations made by a task group of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel into the issue of online strategies in Merton schools to safeguard pupils accessing the internet. The report also contains the action plan drawn up by officers to address the recommendations.

#### **2 DETAILS**

2.1. In September 2015, Cabinet received the final report and recommendations of the scrutiny task group established to examine the issue of the risks to young people accessing the internet and the role of schools in minimising and mitigating these risks.

2.2. Cabinet members agreed that the online safety of children and young people was of great concern and noted and endorsed recommendations made by the task group. The executive response to the recommendations and an action plan is contained at **Appendix One**.

#### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

#### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

4.1. The task group's work involved significant consultation with young people and professionals which informed the report's findings and recommendations.

**5 TIMETABLE**

5.1. The action plan will be taken forward over the course of 2015-16.

**6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

**7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. The report of the task group was informed by statutory and regulatory safeguarding responsibilities of local authorities and schools.

**8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

**9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. The focus of the task group report and the action plan put in place to address the recommendations is to minimise and mitigate risk to children and young people accessing the internet and other forms of digital technology.

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

- Executive Response and Action Plan

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

N/A

## Scrutiny Review of Online Strategies in Schools - Executive Response and Action Plan

| Recommendations   | Response/Actions   | Lead  | Timeline                           |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <p>Recommendation 1 - That Council work with schools that do not currently have an online safety strategy to develop this policy, providing advice and guidance and signposting to resources online where appropriate (paragraph 3.6).</p>  | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>Schools are expected by DfE/Ofsted to have online safety policies and in London LGfL have model policies for schools to customise as they wish.</p> <p><u>Actions:</u><br/>CSF Department will request copies of online safety policies from all schools and engage with schools which currently do not comply.</p> <p>Schools will be asked to examine online safety policies as part of their annual safeguarding audits</p> | <p>SMISS Team</p> <p>School Improvement Service</p> | <p>Nov 15</p> <p>Annual review</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 2 – That the council and schools provide more regular training for parents and carers to educate them on the risks that young people face, how to manage these and on the safe use of new technologies and discuss what training and awareness raising is required/appropriate, for example, bulletins (paragraph 4.7).</p> | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>CSF Department already offers this training to schools – in current year 6 sessions have been provided and 4 are already booked.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>CSF Department will remind schools of training offer and encourage take-up. Termly online safety bulletin to be sent to schools.</p>  | <p>SMISS Team</p>                                   | <p>Ongoing</p>                     |
| <p>Recommendation 3 – That schools and the council equip children and their families to remain safe online by signposting to, and providing, information and resources on new and potential risks to young people when online (paragraph 4.7).</p>  | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>CSF Department have produced an online safety booklet for parents/pupils.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>CSF Department will provide updates for booklet on emerging risks – eg radicalisation</p>  | <p>SMISS Team</p>                                   | <p>Ongoing</p>                     |

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|   | <p>via internet.<br/>Schools to be strongly encouraged to add ParentInfo (CEOP, Parentzone) icon with link and or RSS feed to school websites.</p>  |  |   |
| <p>Recommendation 4 – That schools brief new students on the positives and negatives surrounding the use of the internet, for example, profiles on social media sites and potential impact on future employment and educational opportunities, when they sign up to the schools acceptable user agreement (paragraph 4.10).</p> | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>See response to rec 3 above. Additionally schools have Acceptable Use policies and expect teachers, parents and pupils to explicitly agree the terms.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>CSF Department will continue to raise the profile of schools' role in advising pupils of safe use of internet.</p>  | School Improvement Service                       | Ongoing   |
| <p>Recommendation 5 – That Cabinet engage with the council's corporate communications team to consider how best to raise awareness of online safety issues and how schools and parents can best support young people when online (paragraph 4.10).</p>  | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>To date, there has been no formal corporate communications strategy in connection with online safety for children and young people.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>CSF Department will ask corporate communications team to develop and implement online safety communications campaign/strategy during 2016-17.</p>   | Commissioning, Strategy and Performance Division | During 2016-17 corporate service planning process |
| <p>Recommendation 6 – That Cabinet explore the use of existing volunteers in libraries being asked to include raising awareness amongst parents and young people on online safety issues and measures to their role (paragraph 4.10).</p>   | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>Libraries offer free BYOD (bring your own device) Wi-Fi access to library members as well as providing internet access from public access library computers. Equipping library staff and volunteers with advisory skills would appear sensible.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>Meeting with Head of Libraries has already been arranged to progress this recommendation.</p> | Commissioning, Strategy and Performance          | Nov 15  |



|   |   | Division                        |               |
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| Recommendation 7 - That Cabinet identify schools that are exemplars of good practice in relation to online safety to provide peer support to schools that require guidance, advice and support on online safety issues or policy paragraph 4.10).   | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>CSF Department already promotes the exemplar model in the context of school improvement. To extend the use of the model to incorporate online safety appears sensible.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>CSF Department will encourage Merton Education Partnership to focus on the issue of online safety in their broader agenda and will encourage exemplar school (s) to come forward.</p>                                | School Improvement Service      | Ongoing       |
| Recommendation 8 – All schools should be encouraged to undertake the safety audit developed by the council annually to ensure that their online safety strategies and measures are effective (paragraph 4.13).  | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>See recommendation one action: Schools will be asked to examine online safety policies as part of their annual safeguarding audits</p>  | School Improvement Service      | Annual review |
| Recommendation 9 – That schools notify the council's MASH team regarding any safeguarding issues concerning online safety and that the MASH team analyse that data to determine if any vulnerable groups or demographics require additional support to manage online risks. This should feed into schools online safety policies and action plans (paragraph 6.18). | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>Schools are already expected to operate within London-wide and local safeguarding procedures and to routinely refer to MASH any safeguarding concerns including in connection with online safety. Active commitment to partnership working is a requirement of the new Ofsted school inspection framework.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>MASH team to be asked to report any trend data to School Improvement Service</p> | MASH/School Improvement Service | Quarterly     |
| Recommendation 10 – That the council encourage schools to include online safety on every school council meeting agenda, as a standard item, to enable young people to raise any issues or concerns and for schools to then respond appropriately (paragraph 7.3).   | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>It is agreed that open communication in schools about online safety issues is inherently helpful for both pupils and school leaders.</p>  |                                 |               |

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|  | <p><u>Action:</u><br/>CSF Department will encourage Merton Education Partnership to raise the profile of the issue of online safety in their broader safeguarding agenda and to engage with Merton schools accordingly.</p>   | School Improvement Service | Ongoing |
| <p>Recommendation 11 - That Cabinet explore, with schools, the possibility of rolling out existing mechanisms to enable young people to raise concerns anonymously in the first instance to then allow a decision to be taken on how best to respond paragraph 7.3).</p> | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>Schools already have mechanisms in place to support anonymous raising of concerns eg re bullying.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>CSF Department will encourage schools to use existing channels for anonymous concerns re online safety issues.</p>  | School Improvement Service | Ongoing |
| <p>Recommendation 12 – That schools encourage young people to become online safety champions and to provide support and/or mentor other pupils to provide advice and guidance on any online safety issues they are encountering (paragraph 7.8).</p>                     | <p><u>Response:</u><br/>Peer support/championing models are often seen as more attractive to young people than alternative approaches led by adults. This recommendation, therefore, appears sensible.</p> <p><u>Action:</u><br/>CSF Department will engage with schools and promote a peer online safety champion model.</p> | School Improvement Service | Ongoing |