

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 10 October 2017

Wards: All

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

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

Lead members: Cllr Katy Neep, Cabinet Member for Children Services
Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education

Contact officer: Mark Gwynne, Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments not covered elsewhere on the agenda and affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last meeting in July 2017.

2 DETAILS

2.1 **School Ofsted inspections** – Members were aware that Park Community School was inspected in June and has been judged as “Good”. Over a quarter of Merton’s schools are now judged to be outstanding. At the end of the Summer term, Harris Primary Academy was inspected and have been judged to be “Outstanding”. Aragon Primary School has converted to an Academy.

2.2 In recent weeks our Pre-school at the Abbey Children Centre has been inspected and we eagerly await the report: when last inspected in 2011 it was rated as “Satisfactory”.

2.3 **Harris Wimbledon Academy** – The school is advertised to open in in September 2018, and be located in the former Adult Education Building at Whatley Avenue, SW20 for two years before the new building at High Path is ready. An open evening was held on 3 October 2017. Merton primary schools have circa 250 additional year 6 pupils on roll compared to last year so it is essential for the new school to open in September 2018 to ensure the council provides sufficient places.

2.4 The council is managing the projects to ensure a clear site at High Path for which three separate users need to move. All the existing regular users can be accommodated elsewhere. The council’s day centre will locate to 21 Leyton Road plans are in development. The Elim Church will be relocated to Merton Hall and the design has recently gained planning approval.

2.5 **SEN school expansion** – There continues to be a significant increase in demand for special school places, especially for ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) and MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties) children, which continues to place pressure on budgets. The council is working on projects to increase provision in our special schools. Construction of the expansion of Perseid School has commenced to ensure that the

capacity of the upper school matches the previously expanded lower school, and detailed design is underway to expand Cricket Green School.

- 2.6 **30 hours** – Following on from the work of the summer term, early years providers, including schools, continue to engage with families and the local authority to facilitate implementation of the policy for 30 hours of free early education which came into effect in September 2017. The success of this will not be known until after the headcount returns have been completed.
- 2.7 **Collaborative school improvement** – The new model for collaborative school improvement in Merton is being established, and is called the ‘Merton Strategic School Effectiveness Partnership’. The new board, with representatives from all clusters, will meet for the first time in a few weeks.
- 2.8 **Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)** – has extended key development priorities for 2016/17 through to 2019. These priorities are:
- **Think family:** Actions a Think Family Coordinator has been appointed. The current focus is on adult mental health and embedding Think Family across adults and children;
 - **Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents:** The Self-harm protocol has been approved, along with Harmful sexual behaviour and Online Strategies, the focus is on contextual safeguarding – addressing adolescent risk outside of the home; review CSE Protocol and strategy; and
 - **Early Help:** The Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-Being Model has been approved. We are updating tools and looking at implementing the Social Work Practice Model (including Signs of Safety) across the system.
- 2.9 These also link with the MSCB business as usual activities (e.g. CSE, Missing, PREVENT, FGM, etc.) undertaken by the Board and its sub groups. The Board continues to seek to improve its links to practitioners and their managers as part of our quality assurance processes to inform service improvement and development as well as maintaining our strong focus on the Voice of the Child / Young person.
- 2.10 Addressing the incidence and impact of neglect, is a cross-cutting theme that runs across the work of the Board and each of the priorities. A plan is being finalised for the piloting of a Neglect Tool to be used across the system and an audit of neglect cases is being conducted alongside this.
- 2.11 **Merton Youth Parliament Manifesto 2017-2018.** Following their election earlier in the year, the Youth Parliament. have worked together to establish a manifesto setting out their priorities for the coming year focussing on:
- Preventing crime in Merton
 - Hate crime
 - Knife Crime
 - Theft in Schools
 - Gang Awareness
 - Health & Safety
 - First Aid Training
 - Area Youth Forums

- 2.12 This sets out how they intend to involve and engage with young people through leaflets and social media, as well as the Youth Forums and through schools as a means to spread awareness and examples of the priorities, encouraging socialising and sharing of views and ideas in the process.
- 2.13 **Wellbeing Model** – the Wellbeing Model has been updated and is being communicated across the partnership setting out the revised thresholds and model for service delivery.
- 2.14 **Adoption Agency** – London boroughs continue to work through the process for the establishment of a regional adoption agency from September 2018. This requires a business case to be presented to the DfE for approval by December 2017, enabling mobilisation of the new agency in September 2018. The new format will see Merton as part of the South London hub.
- 2.15 **Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)** – Working together with Croydon County Court, West London Family Court and the Inner London Family Court, the partnership will offer an alternative form of care proceedings for parents and children in those cases where substance misuse is a key factor in the decision to bring proceedings: known as the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC). Referrals will be made by children’s social care and will be agreed internally to ensure referrals meet the criteria for FDAC services. Work is at an advanced stage in development of this new service, which Merton is leading, across ten boroughs. The contract has just been awarded and mobilisation meetings are underway to ensure that the new service is up and running from January 2018.
- 2.16 **Contextual Safeguarding** - Merton is committed to the Contextual Safeguarding Framework, which will involve a system-wide application and implementation. Merton is working in partnership with other London boroughs to learn from Hackney’s innovation project and implementation. In parallel, Merton will be undertaking an audit to support effective implementation locally. The preliminary stages of this process have been completed: identified governance and reporting structure, choosing a single point of contact and setting up a steering group and deciding on a timeline for the audit. The MSCB subgroup, Promote and Protect Young People will oversee the timeline and audit, which involves three stages:
- Collecting and analysing strategic documents related to peer-on-peer abuse;
 - Observations of meetings and training from strategic to operational levels; and
 - Focus groups with young people and practitioners. The first stage is due to start week commencing 23rd October and is reliant on project support being recruited.
- 2.17 **Social Impact Bond (SIB)** – Merton Council is part of the Pan-London Care Impact Partnership - with Tower Hamlets, Bexley, Newham and Sutton councils - which was formed to deliver Multi-Systemic and Functional Family Therapy services for councils within the partnership, leveraging in financial resources using a (SIB). The aim of the programme is to keep vulnerable families together and prevent children from being taken into care.
- 2.18 The partnership has commissioned Positive Families Partnership to deliver the infrastructure of the SIB and to deliver the services. A SIB is a way of financing a ‘Payment by Results’ contract, which means Positive Families Partnership will be paid only if it succeeds in meeting certain milestones related to keeping the young person with their family. This contract has recently been awarded and mobilisation meetings are underway to ensure that the new service is up and running from January 2018.
- 2.19 **Structure changes** – there have been a few structural changes across the department recently and a new structure chart is contained as Appendix 1. This is the next stage in implementation of the changes in moving from three divisions to two divisions resulting in changes to some heads of service and the re-aligning of some functions.

3. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 No specific implications from this report.

4. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 No specific implications from this report.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

5.1 No specific implications from this report

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No specific implications from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 No specific implications from this report.

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

8.1 Appendix 1 – Revised Children, Schools & Families Structure Chart

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None