

## Committee: Council

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018

Agenda item:

Wards: ALL

## Subject: Strategic Objective Review – Children and Young People

Lead officer: Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families Department

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children Services  
Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education

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

### Recommendations:

A. That Council considers the content of the report.

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## 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Council at its meeting in March 2016 approved the Business Plan 2016-2020. The Business Plan represents the way in which the council will lead the delivery of the Community Plan via a number of thematic partnerships and strategic themes. Performance against these themes, plus an additional theme of corporate capacity, is monitored by Council.
- 1.2 Each meeting of Council will receive a report updating on progress against one of these strategic themes. This report provides Council with an opportunity to consider progress against the priorities under the 'children and young people' theme.
- 1.3 The ambition for the theme as outlined in the council's Business Plan 2015-19 is to 'improve health outcomes, maintain robust safeguarding, improve educational outcomes, promote children and young people's positive contribution and their economic wellbeing'.
- 1.4 By targeting our efforts at geographic, economic, health and other inequalities, our objective is to 'bridge the gap' between those children who are already likely to secure good outcomes and those who are prevented from doing so by disadvantage.
- 1.5 The portfolio holders are Cllrs Kelly Braund and Caroline Cooper-Marbiah.
- 1.6 The Business Plan can be viewed at [www.merton.gov.uk/businessplan](http://www.merton.gov.uk/businessplan).

## 2 DETAILS

### Background

- 2.1 The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) provides the main strategic focus for the council and partners in working with and supporting young people across the borough. The current CYPP was established in 2015 for cover the period 2015-19 and is now being refreshed to provide a clear plan for the next 4 years through to 2023.
- 2.2 The Children Schools and Families Department aims to improve outcomes for children and young people in Merton through commissioning and providing a range of universal, targeted and specialist services. These include:
  - Early years services in children's centres and settings;

- Primary, secondary and special schools;
  - Services for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities;
  - School admissions, pupil place planning and school capital strategy;
  - Education Inclusion including universal youth services;
  - School improvement;
  - Social work assessment and casework – the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub; care planning; children in need; looked after children; and care leavers;
  - Adolescent and Family Services including youth justice and Transforming Families;
  - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service;
  - Commissioning, procurement and contract management; and
  - Policy, performance and partnership management.
- 2.3 The Department leads the Children’s Trust, a partnership of agencies from the statutory, community and voluntary sectors who are collectively responsible for the development and delivery of the Children and Young People’s Plan. As well as developing the overarching strategy, the Trust supports joint commissioning, integrated teams and multi-agency delivery of services: receiving update reports on outcomes of jointly commissioned services.
- 2.4 In 2013, the Merton Partnership refreshed the Community Plan: seeking to promote ‘better opportunities for youngsters’ with children’s services partners expressing the vision of:
- “We are committed to delivering outstanding services which improve outcomes and life chances for all the borough’s children and young people. We are also determined to help those facing real challenges to overcome them and narrow the gap in outcomes.”*
- 2.5 The vision recognises the need to provide the highest quality universal services while focusing particularly on more vulnerable children and young people to ensure that collectively we close the gap and enable them to achieve comparable outcomes. This more targeted approach, prompted not least by the financial pressures faced by the public sector, has been reflected in the borough’s Children and Young People’s Plan for some years now. The plan, which is currently being refreshed for the period 2019-23, established the following key priorities, when written in 2015:
- Children in need of early help;
  - Children requiring timely and effective safeguarding;
  - Children looked after and care leavers;
  - Children with special educational needs and disabilities;
  - Improving overall and narrowing gaps in educational outcomes and opportunities; and
  - Preventing, diverting and deterring young people from criminal behaviour to enable better outcomes.
- 2.6 Strong partnership working is at the heart of our approach to ensuring that children and young people are healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and enjoy economic wellbeing. In addition to the Children’s Trust Board, governance of local children’s services is undertaken by Merton’s Local Safeguarding Children Board; the Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Merton.

### **Performance relating to Children and Young People**

- 2.7 Children’s services are amongst the most highly regulated of public services with a range of performance measures applied by government departments and coupled with statutory returns and data needs for Ofsted. At a local level, relevant performance data is used routinely by managers and is monitored by the Children’s Trust, Merton Partnership, Merton Safeguarding Children Board, Corporate Parenting Board,

corporate, departmental and divisional management teams and by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel. Key performance data has been extracted for the purposes of this report and is contained in appendix one.

### **Key achievements relating to Children and Young People**

- 2.8 Merton's children's services, in common with all local authorities are subject to regular inspections by Ofsted. In June 2017 we were inspected under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF), which raised the bar in terms of Ofsted's criteria for assessing the effectiveness of local services and arrangements for children in need of help and protection and looked after children and care leavers, and included an assessment of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board.
- 2.9 Ofsted found that our children's services are 'Good' overall, with the adoption service, and leadership and management rated as 'Outstanding'. The Merton Safeguarding Children Board was also rated as 'Outstanding': just one of five in the country at the time of inspection. The report highlighted many areas of good practice in Merton including: our support for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people; Effective Child and Adolescent Mental Health support in children's social care; and the support provided by Merton's Virtual School for Looked after Children. It also noted some innovations including the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC), and the 'edge of care' service – see 2.11 below for developments on these. During the last week of the inspection Robert Goodwill MP and Minister of State for Children and Families at the time, visited Merton. His letter of thanks to the Leader of the Council after the visit, and after the publication of the Ofsted report in August 2017, highlighted that ***'the services vulnerable children receive in Merton are often impressive and in some cases outstanding'***.
- 2.10 From the inspection, Ofsted made four recommendations within their report, which have now all been delivered. These recommendations were:
- Ensure that all plans, including child in need, child protection, care plans for children looked after and pathway plans, consistently contain specific actions, achievable timescales and clear, measurable outcomes.
  - Improve the use of return home interviews for each episode of missing for children missing from home or care and ensure that risks are understood and reduced for individual children.
  - Ensure that 'staying put' is made available to all care leavers who would benefit from this.
  - Ensure that all former relevant care leavers receive information on their health histories.
- 2.11 Inspection mechanisms are continually evolving and in January 2018 Ofsted launched the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS): its new framework for inspecting children's services for local authorities to replace the SIF. Ofsted described ILACS as a system allowing more contact between inspectors and local authorities, not always as part of an inspection, to help to 'catch local authorities before they fall' and prevent them becoming inadequate. This approach builds on and learns from the support previously provided to services judged as 'Inadequate' whereby regular support through targeted visits helps to aid improvement. The new inspection framework is proportionate to the needs of the local authority and for Merton consists of an annual engagement meeting based on a self-evaluation of practice, up to two focused visits on an area of improvement or strength, and as a 'Good' local authority a short inspection within a three year period.
- 2.12 Merton's annual engagement meeting with the regional Ofsted inspectors was held on 3 October, based on our initial self-evaluation that was submitted towards the end of September. The **key areas of strength** identified in our self-evaluation include:

- Outstanding management and leadership and committed political and professional leadership across parties;
- Outstanding MSCB providing effective challenge across the partnership;
- Strong and shared ambitions, values and challenge across Children's Trust, MSCB and the Health and Well-being Board;
- A tradition of partnership working: schools; NHS commissioners and providers; police; community and voluntary sector;
- Focus on continuous improvement – a learning culture - using evidence based practice; learning from Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Learning and Improvement Reviews (LiRs) and good and best practice – making improvements following internal and external reviews;
- Longstanding children, young people and families' voice framework of commitments with increased visibility of this work within political and management reporting to ensure that it is effectively challenged and embedded within our working practices;
- Building the prerequisites of good social work practice: recruitment and retention; fit for purpose structures; manageable caseloads; good quality professional development and support within a clear framework of practice standards including managing performance; and
- Innovative approaches: Positive Families Partnership; Multi Systemic Therapy; CAMHS single point of access; Family Nurse Partnership; Signs of Safety; multi-agency Education Health and Care team; and health co-location in children's centres.

2.13 These strengths have enabled children's services to deliver a range of service improvements including:

- **Children's Centres** – The focus continues to prioritise: increasing take up of 2-year-old funded places; working with partners to increase referrals for targeted work with parents and young children; and to increase our early help offer for families who have children with additional needs. Following the successful pilot of a new parenting programme, Incredible Years Autistic Spectrum Disorder / language delay, this offer will be embedded into the core timetable. The second cohort of eleven families started the programme in the Autumn term.
- **School places development** – Harris Academy Wimbledon has opened as planned in Whatley Avenue in September 2018 and is fully subscribed. The planning application for the permanent site is expected to be considered at the planning applications committee in November. Perseid school has been expanded for the current academic year and expansion of Cricket Green school is underway, enabling further much needed extra Special Educational Needs places to be provided.
- **Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) service** is delivered in partnership with Croydon County Court, West London Family Court and the Inner London Family Court. It offers an alternative form of care proceedings for parents and children, in cases where substance misuse is a key factor in the decision to bring proceedings. We have three referrals in the service, as at the end of October, and all boroughs are on track to meet their minimum referral numbers. The provider is meeting all contractual obligations and is currently looking for premises in Croydon. Partnership operational meetings are held on a quarterly basis, monitoring management information and data. Board meetings with judges are also planned to be held quarterly in line with the Operational Group meeting.
- **Positive Family Partnership Social Impact Bond (SIB)** – The Pan-London Care Impact Partnership involving Merton, Tower Hamlets, Bexley, Newham, Sutton and Barking and Dagenham councils was launched in January 2018. It delivers Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT) services for

councils within the partnership, leveraging in financial resources using a social impact bond (SIB). The aim of the programme is to keep vulnerable families together and prevent children from being taken into care. Merton now has 16 accepted referrals, as at the end of October, which is above the target expected at this stage of the year. This is excellent news and we are strongly predicting that we will reach above our minimum referral numbers of 16 per year. Amalgamation of the current Panel into an Edge of Care panel has been approved and is currently being mobilised by teams. The SIB operates by paying for periods when the young person is kept out of care in the two years following their completion of the scheme.

- **Contextual Safeguarding** – Over the past year presentations have taken place with Merton Partnership Executive Board, the Children’s Trust Board, schools and with parents in the community in order to raise awareness on issues including gangs, youth violence (including the rising instances of knife crime and stabbings) and County Lines (the supply of drugs from London boroughs to rural areas). This work recognises that whilst instances of knife crime within Merton are low and that gang culture is not the same as in some neighbouring boroughs, these issues make young people feel unsafe. Many young people know those affected by these issues through their connections and social media. The relationship between gangs and their respective alliances can cause rifts and engage Merton’s gangs in conflict outside the borough. This is a significant area of focus at the current time and further awareness raising activities and presentations will ensure that this remains a high priority and area for sustained focus.

Youth work, especially at our youth centres at Pollards Hill and Phipps Bridge helps us to tackle these issues proactively, at the same time as increasing engagement of young people in positive activities.

- **Knife Crime Action Plan** – The Mayor’s Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner has requested that each council produce a multi-agency and community partnership plan to prevent knife crime. This has been completed with a range of actions and activities across the partnership.
- **Think Family** – The Think Family Strategy has been developed jointly with adult social care, emphasising the ways in which we will work holistically with the family to address their needs and provide the support they require. The Think Family approach formed the focus for the MSCB annual conference in March 2018 and was well received by all attending, drawing a maximum attendance from a range of partners across the borough. The new strategy is being consulted on over the coming months, enabling the strategy to be ready for April 2019.
- The **Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)** is continuing to embed work on our Think Family approach, whilst developing proposals for the new partnership arrangements to succeed the MSCB during 2019 and revising the performance framework to deliver a new, more balanced, partnership dataset. The development of the new partnership arrangements of the MSCB builds on its many strengths and the ‘Outstanding’ Ofsted judgement. New arrangements will ensure that we retain the partners around the table and are able to have an effective dialogue to lead, challenge and deliver upon our safeguarding commitments within the borough.

2.14 We can also report a broad range of **performance improvements** including:

- **Early Years Foundation Stage** – 74% of pupils achieved a ‘Good Level of Development’ (2017 results) which is 3 percentage points above the previous year (2016), above national (72%) and in line with London (73%).
- **Provisional school ‘Key Stage’ results for summer 2018:**
  - **Key Stage 2** – 68% of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths: a two percentage point increase on the previous year and maintaining the four percentage point gap above the national average achieved in 2016 and 2017. Indicative progress scores are again strong, and it is hoped

that when these are published formally in December that Merton will retain its strong standing nationally: in 2017 the Borough was ranked 10<sup>th</sup> for reading and maths progress.

- **Key Stage 4** – 71% of pupils achieved grades 9-4 (grade 4 and above being broadly equivalent to a C and above) in both English and maths. This is once again well above the national average for 2017 of 59%. There were strong and improved outcomes in the English Baccalaureate or 'EBacc' (grade 4 or above in English, maths, science subjects, either history or geography and a language) with 37% of Merton students achieving these grades, keeping Merton well above last year's national average of 22%.
- **Provisional post 16 outcomes** – This summer students and teachers in Merton maintained schools celebrated another good set of sixth form results in A-levels. In a year which has seen more significant changes nationally, the proportion of A\*-C grades achieved by Merton students was 78%, which is above the national percentage of 77%, and a good increase on the Borough's performance last year. Final results will be published within the School Standards report in March 2019.
- **NEETs** (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and 'Unknown' performance has improved (aged 16-18) between 2013 and 2018. Performance places Merton in the first quintile nationally (2017/18). NEET in July 2018 was 1.4%, with unknown at 1.7%.
- **Ofsted inspections** – 91% of all schools are rated as "Good" or better; and 94% of pupils are educated in schools rated as "Good" or better (October 2018).
- 95% of all families attending a **children's centre** targeted intervention or programme reported improved outcomes (2017/18).
- 100% of Merton's **Troubled Families** 'turned around' in phase one, one of 51 local authorities in the country chosen as a pilot (or 'early starter') for phase two (42% target completed, excellent progress compared to other London Boroughs).
- **YOT (Youth Offending Team) First Time Entrants** remain low since a significant drop in 2012/13 (69) compared to 2011/12 (111), with only 54 in 2017/18.
- 91% of all **Looked After Children (LAC)** are placed in good or better placements (2017/18), and 77% of are placed within 20 miles of their home (2017/18) an improvement from 74% in 2015/16.
- The fostering recruitment strategy has been refreshed to build on recent successes and continue to increase use of in-house foster carers, which has risen from 66 children in April 2017 to 89 in June 2018.
- 82% of **care leavers** (aged 19, 20, 21) are in suitable accommodation (2017/18), representing a significant improvement from 2013/14 (66%) and in line with the national average 84% (2016/17).
- Top level educational outcomes have improved with 11 **care leavers** progressing to university in September 2018.
- There has been a year on year improvement in **adoption** proceedings, with the average time from receiving court authority to placing a child and matching them with an adoptive family (A2). Merton's 3 year average performance in 2009-12 was 297 days and this has improved significantly in 2014-17 to 110 days – better than the national average of 220 days (2014-17).

2.15 We are continuing implementation of the reforms for children with **SEN and disabilities (SEND)** set out in the Children and Families Act (C&F Act) 2014, ahead of an inspection likely to be within the next two years. This will be a joint inspection run by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission judging how well the local area, represented

by the council and Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), meets the duty to identify, assess and meet the needs of, and improve outcomes for, children with SEN and / or disabilities (SEND) aged 0-25. The multi-agency SEND Reforms Implementation Group (which includes parent representatives) is leading on this work oversees development of the ongoing self-evaluation process. The self-evaluation details our strengths, areas of focus and improvement activity across each aspect of our work to support children with SEND and their families. It is regularly reviewed and will be used to inform the inspection.

- 2.16 Overall strengths identified include: having a good relationship with parents via the Kids First parents' forum; strong early identification of SEND; expansion of specialist provision and additional resource provision in mainstream schools in line with need; strong partnerships within the council and with the CCG including joint commissioning and a number of joint posts; work with Merton Public Health on the ASD Strategy; and progressing the development of a SEND Strategy for the borough.
- 2.17 A new inspection framework has been introduced for **Youth Offending Teams** and traditionally we have been inspected early on in the programme, so preparation is in hand with developing the self-evaluation and compiling documentation.

### **Key Challenges**

- 2.18 We are focused on addressing the following overall challenges in children's services in order to ensure our continuous improvement agenda:
- Refining and reporting from the Mosaic case management system following 'go live' in May 2017 has presented significant problems with unsuitable reporting tools and difficulty in constructing reports from the system, with "out of the box" reports not being fit for purpose. Despite this our statutory returns were successfully submitted in July 2018, and we have restored regular corporate reporting. However, more work needs to be done to improve production and use of management information.
  - Responding to increased budgetary pressures within the department and across partners in relation to new burdens, increased cases and unfunded activity.
  - Maintaining effective strategic and operational partnerships in time of change and financial contraction and changing partnership boundaries, including keeping panels fit for purpose with appropriate partner representation.
  - Making most effective use of our school improvement resources to support all our schools to be "good" or better.
  - Maintaining momentum in effective recruitment, retention and development of social workers in an expanded workforce, whilst holding caseloads at manageable levels.
  - Supporting our schools to improve recruitment and retention of teachers and leaders.
  - Delivering our ambitious continuous improvement agenda – including making changes to secure more rapid improvement where necessary.
  - Continue to review the impact of our Quality Assurance (QA) framework and adopt any changes needed to increase the effectiveness of single and multi-agency QA processes.
  - Continue to implement changes to improve social work practice and timeliness of joint education, health and care planning for children with SEN and disabilities with engagement of Adult Social Care and Clinical Commissioning Group partners.
  - Supporting adolescents and enabling their smooth transition to adulthood, whether this entails progression to adult social care or mental health services, or a safe transition into independence.

- Refresh of CYPP for 2019-23 is in development to establish a new partnership vision and strategy for children, young people and families in the borough: setting a clear context for provision or services and support across the partnership.
- Establishment of new safeguarding partnership arrangements as a successor to the Merton Safeguarding Children Board, building on existing successes and harnessing wider engagement and ownership.

### **Significant public policy changes**

2.19 **Children and Social Work Act 2017** – the provisions of the Act include the following:

- Sets out corporate parenting principles for the council as a whole to be the best parent it can be to children in its care – this brings together existing duties local authorities have towards looked after children and those leaving care;
- Requirement for local authorities to publish their support to care leavers (the local offer) and to promote the educational attainment of children who have been adopted or placed in other long-term arrangements;
- Extension to the current considerations of the court when making decisions about the long-term placement of children to include an assessment of current and future needs and of any relationship with the prospective adopter;
- The creation of a new organisation, Social Work England, to take over from the Health and Care Professions Council as the profession's regulator;
- A requirement for the new regulator to obtain the education secretary's approval for professional standards;
- New powers for the education secretary to set 'improvement standards' for social workers, and introduce assessments for practitioners; and
- Revised arrangements for local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships to replace the previous model of local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) to come into effect during 2019.

2.20 **Working Together to Safeguard Children 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018, replaces the guidance issued in 2015.** Main changes include:

- **Assessing need and providing help** – practitioners should be alert to the potential need for early help for children in particular circumstances including: having SEN or Disabilities; young carer; involved in criminal behaviour; missing, at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, exploitation and radicalisation; affected by parental issues such as drugs, alcohol, mental health and domestic abuse; involved in substance misuse; has returned home from care; or is privately fostered.
- **Organisational responsibilities** – organisations and agencies working with children and families should have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. This includes: all schools; early years and childcare providers; health establishments; children's homes; and voluntary, charity, social enterprise, faith-based organisations and those in the private sector.
- **Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements** – Local Safeguarding Children Boards will be replaced by safeguarding partnerships with statutory partners comprising: the local authority; Police; and the Clinical Commissioning Group. They can also incorporate other named partners who can be invited to be represented within the new arrangements.
- **Local and national safeguarding practice reviews** – The child safeguarding practice review panel will be responsible for identifying and overseeing the review of serious child safeguarding cases which raise complex issues or are of national importance. The local safeguarding partners will do the same but for local cases

related to local issues. This will aid the sharing of learning nationally in order to continue to improve practice and responses to emerging issues.

- **Child death reviews** – Child death review partners (consisting of the local authority and the CCG) must make arrangements to review child deaths – replacing the requirement for these to be conducted by the child death overview panel (CDOP).

## **Reports of Overview and Scrutiny Commission / Panels**

- 2.21 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has had an active year with some of the main activities undertaken summarised below, with a key focus on closing the gap:
- 2.22 **Harris Wimbledon Secondary School** – Following its reference to Cabinet in July 2016 on the new secondary school, the Panel has continued to work with officers to review progress on the delivery of Harris Wimbledon and to understand the associated issues. This has been achieved through regular updates from the Cabinet Member for Education, information in the Department Update Report, member questions asked through matters arising and through a dedicated item. Members have focused on admission criteria, demand for the new school and how the needs of Merton Abbey Primary are being accommodated through the shared use of the site. Panel members have resolved to visit Harris Wimbledon in its temporary site this year. Also, Sir Daniel Moynihan, CEO and Sarah Musgrave, Projects Director of Harris Group will attend the Panel to discuss the Harris model for ensuring good and outstanding schools.
- 2.23 **Health and wellbeing** – Officers from Public Health and colleagues from the Clinical Commissioning Group provided the Panel with an update report on health and wellbeing strategies for children and families. This focused on activity to address and progress being made on childhood obesity as well as looking at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Members sought to understand satisfaction with the CAMHS service. This is a new area of responsibility for the Panel and one in which it is growing in confidence. During this year, training has been provided for Panel members on those areas of the public health strategy that relate to children and young people. This year the Panel has resolved to establish a task and review group to look at children’s mental health. This has already established the impact of socio-economic factors on health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 2.24 **Education, Health and Care Plans** – Having carefully monitored performance in provision of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), the Panel requested a deep dive session to improve its understanding of why the 20 week statutory target wasn’t being met and what further work was in hand to improve performance. This established that whilst the target wasn’t being met, the number of tribunals had notably decreased and that performance was on track to transfer all existing SEN statement to EHCPs by March 2018. The Panel also learnt how the EHCP process was being streamlined to achieve the 20 week target including getting requests to the assessment panel quicker. At its final meeting of the last municipal year, it was noted that good progress had been made in transferring SEN statements to EHCPs (with only 20 outstanding). Also, between March 2017 and March 2018, there had been an increase in the number of plans being achieved in the 20 week timescale from 19% to 37%.
- 2.25 **Schools Annual Report** – The Panel took its annual schools report, dedicating almost an entire meeting to look in depth at the performance of Merton’s schools from September 2016 to August 2017. This covered achievement at each stage of education in addition to looking at attendance, exclusions and elective home education. It was highlighted that 93% of Merton’s schools are now judged good or outstanding with 95% of Merton’s pupils attending good or outstanding schools. Based on its key stage 4 results, Merton is placed first in England, above both London and national averages whilst progress in maths and reading at Key Stage 2 places Merton 10th in the country. School attendance has improved (moving Merton from 10th to 8th nationally) and

numbers of those not in education, employment or training are very low. Members noted the need to focus on the achievement of pupils in receipt of SEN support at all stages of education whilst officers were questioned on elective home education given this has increase by 174% over the last decade.

- 2.26 A task group of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel has undertaken a review of **Prevent** and made recommendations to Cabinet in June 2018. These are currently being pulled together into an action plan which is expected to be reported to the Panel early in 2019.
- 2.27 The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel made recommendations in January 2018 on aspects to explore and options to further improve the Council's approach into **improving routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts**. An action plan was presented to the Panel in January 2018, with a six month progress update presented in the June 2018. The main focus over the past year was continuing to monitor progress made against the recommendations of this task group. Members asked officers to clarify why it is not possible to ensure through standard terms that contractors and service providers offer apprenticeships for Merton residents. Dawn Jolley, Head of Commercial Services, has explained how working with Merton's contractors and suppliers to provide both traineeships and work experience is being built into a social value toolkit. This will be used as part of the commissioning process for contracts. This is yet to be finalised but is being revised following consultation with other boroughs. The toolkit will allow commissioners to evaluate bids received with ease and provide a framework that will mean using contractors to provide these opportunities will not be legally challenged. The Panel has resolved that data should be provided to the Panel including the number of apprenticeships by Directorate fulfilled by those within the vulnerable cohorts target groups
- 2.28 Progress updates on these recommendations has demonstrated that:
- **Better communications** – This has largely been achieved through improved information online and the working of the Economic Wellbeing Group, which is well supported and successfully allowing information to be shared by key partners.
  - **Traineeships and work experience opportunities** – The Workforce Strategy Board now has a focus on both of these and the council is working with contractors and suppliers to provide both traineeships and work experience through a social value toolkit. A number of excellent examples were provided of how some of the hardest young people have been provided with great opportunities and proved themselves within these roles to enable them to secure training or apprenticeships.
  - **Economic Wellbeing Group** – Attendance has improved enabling key groups to communicate and the Merton Employment Team that supports vulnerable adults into employment is a key participant in promoting opportunities.
  - **Care Leavers** – Commitment to these young people as a target group is being explored and included within the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Pledges. This will be embedded through the Care Leavers Strategy which is scheduled to be refreshed following engagement of Corum to undertake consultation with Looked After Children and Care Leavers which was concluded over the summer.
  - **Traineeships and apprenticeship advertised by the Council** – This is being covered through the Workforce Strategy Board now has a focus on both traineeships and work experience opportunities.
  - **Require contractors to offer apprenticeships** – This has been addressed through the aspects previously covered and the social value toolkit will be a key enabler in ensuring full consideration is given to the value of this throughout the procurement process.
  - **Annual data on apprenticeships achieved through the Council** – This was presented generally for all apprenticeships within the Council rather than the target

groups required. Further work remains to ensure that these apprenticeships are effectively targeted and fully meet the recommendation.

2.29 The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel made recommendations to Cabinet in October 2017 on aspects to explore in order to further improve the Council's support for **care leavers in gaining suitable independent accommodation upon leaving care**. A 'care leavers accommodation action plan' was presented to scrutiny in January 2018 and an update report on delivery of the nine actions in was presented in October 2018, demonstrating that:

- **HMO Provision** – The current project of 5 units is working well, although there have been some issues raised about anti-social behaviour. There is currently provider interest in offering additional units, although these are not local to Merton. Discussions are also in hand to explore further providers and understand if opportunities can be created for more local provision.
- **Lead Tenants** – Whilst shared housing takes place within HMO provision, the current cohort of care leavers are not suitable to make one vulnerable young person, as a lead tenant, responsible for the actions of other tenants. Where suitable candidates, and access to two bedroom properties is available, this will be considered as an option. Merton does not have a housing stock and one of the main barriers is that private landlords want guarantors: mechanisms to address this barrier are currently being explored.
- **Shared Lives** – This is now offered as part of the menu of placement options for young people with additional needs. Whilst referrals have been made, at present no referrals have been accepted, but we are working with some young people with mental health difficulties who turn 18 shortly and may benefit from this approach.
- **Building Schemes and Quotas** – Work continues along with the housing needs service to enable these young care leavers to be offered permanent tenancies through housing. This has currently been achieved for 28 young people. Further work continues to explore options within the private rental market, where some success has been achieved for individual young people.
- **Staying Put** – The number of young people 'staying put' is continuing to increase and currently stands at 14 as of September 2018. This is comprised of 9 with in house foster carers and the others staying put with independent fostering agency provision. This continues to grow from 5 young people as at the end of November 2017, and 2 in June 2017 at the time of the Ofsted inspection.
- **Young People in Foster Care** – These aspects and further opportunities are being picked up within the refresh of the Care Leavers Strategy, which is currently in development, and will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board for approval later in the year. The strategy will also take forward several of the other recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel, along with other priorities identified by our young people.
- **Pre-Tenancy Support and ESOL Training** – The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs) has grown since the last update and stood at 34, as of end September 2018 (the council is on rota to take in a total of 33 UASC at any point in time). Coffee meet ups take place on a monthly basis for these UASCs. A Young Migrants Early Intervention pilot project has also been proposed to apply for additional ESOL support.
- **Peer Mentors** – Further work to develop peer mentors has not currently progressed, but instead care leavers are used to informally support other care leavers. With the Children in Care Council (CiCC) having recently been reinvigorated, they will consider some of these issues and determine their priorities for progressing and providing suitable support.
- **Encouraging Saving for Rent and Deposit** – Young people in care are already encouraged to save through a number of activities. Over the coming year, the

Children in Care Council will be engaged in reviewing this work and considering new opportunities such as independent living workshops will be investigated to help care leavers in developing the skills required to fund their accommodation needs and live independently once they leave care.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Not applicable – this report is for information only.

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

- 4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

### **5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The department continues to experience significant budget pressures across the local authority controlled and DSG budgets, in particular in respect of: placements for looked after children and care leavers; SEN Transport; and providing services for unaccompanied asylum seekers and families with no recourse to public funds. Whilst the Chancellor's recent budget has made small provision for some increased funding, this neither compensated for the reduced budget in recent years, nor the significant increase in numbers and costs associated with service provisions – particularly for those with Special Educational Needs and the large growth in children and young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- 5.2 Although targets for recruitment of in house foster carers have been met in recent years, ongoing use of independent sector fostering placements and residential care is needed because of the increasingly complex needs of some looked after children. It is predicted that with current recruitment strategies being met, that within 2 years the council will have all the foster carers required for predicted needs. The numbers of young people resident in semi-independent placements has continued to increase significantly in meeting our responsibilities towards care leavers and further options being explored to reduce costs of provision and ensure that semi-independent accommodation is only used when this is required to meet the young person's needs, with an increase in HMO provision being a preferred option for those for whom this is a viable option. As set out previously within the report, we are currently reviewing the use of these placements and exploring alternative housing options which could be more affordable to the council.
- 5.3 In respect of SEN Transport, further use of Personal Budgets and more efficient procurement of taxi provision through the Dynamic Purchasing System is continuing to have a benefit in slowing down the increase in costs for transport despite the more complex cases and increasing numbers on EHCPs.
- 5.4 More unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and families with no recourse to public funds have required support over the few years and this is likely to continue with Merton continuing to take responsibility for these young people and families through the London-wide rota and national dispersal schemes. Much of the spending by the council continues to be unfunded by central government and this means relevant budgets will continue to be subject to significant pressures going forward, with insufficient budget provision having been made in recent years.
- 5.5 The administration recognised the need to add growth into CSF department's budget and £2.5 million additional funding over three years was agreed in March 2017. Since that time, burdens have continued to increase and changes in government funding have created additional pressures. Earlier this year, Changes in the way the Delegated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block National Funding Formula is calculated has created significant pressures. Changes in DSG guidance would also suggest that

overspends could be met out of the Council's General Fund. The DSG is currently forecast to overspend of by between £4m and £5m during 2018/19.

## **6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no specific legal or statutory implications arising from this information report.

## **7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no specific human rights, equalities or community cohesion implications arising from this information report.

## **8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this information report.

## **9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no specific risk management or health and safety implications arising from this information report.

## **10 APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report**

**Appendix 1: Performance Data**

## **11 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 Council Business Plan 2016-20

11.2 Children and Young People's Plan 2015-19

## Appendix 1: Performance Data

No.	Priority area 1: Early Help - Deliver early help and improve outcomes for those subject to the effects of disadvantage	Benchmarking and trend				Target 2018/19	2018/19 Quarter 1	2018/19 Quarter 2
		Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England 2017/18	London 2017/18			
1	Number of Common and Shared Assessments undertaken (CASAs) YTD	289	422	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	n/a	n/a
2	Percentage of parents referred completing 'parenting programmes' – Early Years only	Review of 'parenting programmes'	79%	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	100%	Data not reported this period
3	Percentage of 0-5 year olds from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) accessing Children's Centre services (estimated Census 2011 population) YTD	58%	68%	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	22%	35%
4	Number of two year olds accessing 'Free child places'	Summer = 420 Autumn = 472 Spring = 450	Summer = 396 Autumn = 412 Spring = 408	72% of eligible population 2018	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	414 Summer	Data not reported this period
5	Percentage achieving 'A Good Level of Development' at Early Years Foundation Stage (4 to 5 year olds)	74% (AY 2016-17)	71% (AY 2015-16)	71% (AY 2016/17)	73% (AY 2016/17)	Not a target measure	2017/18 academic outturns to be published in School Standards report in March 2019.	
6	Percentage of Free School Meals cohort achieving 'A Good Level of Development' at Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (4 to 5 year olds)	64% (AY 2016-17)	58% (AY 2015-16)	56% (AY 2016/17)	64% (AY 2016/17)	Not a target measure		
7	Percentage of MMR1 coverage: 1 dose of MMR by age 2 years	85.2% (2017/18)	88.1%	91.2% (2017/18)	85.1% (2017/18)	Not a target measure	Annual measure	Annual measure
8	Percentage of MMR2 coverage: 2 doses of MMR by age 5 years	66.7% (2017/18)	80.4%	87.2% (2017/18)	77.8% (2017/18)	Target Required	Annual measure	Annual measure
9	Percentage of excess weight in children age 4-5 years (overweight and obesity)	21.5%	21.2%	23% (2016/17)	22% (2016/17)	Not a target measure	Annual measure	Annual measure
10	Percentage of excess weight in children aged 10-11 years (overweight and obesity)	34.4%	34.0%	34% (2016/17)	39% (2016/17)	Target Required	Annual measure	Annual measure

No.	Priority area 2: Safeguarding children and young people	Benchmarking and trend				Target 2018/19	2018/19 Quarter 1	2018/19 Quarter 2
		Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England 2017/18	London 2017/18			
11	Number of MASH initial contacts received	5,344	5,150	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	1487	3028
12	Percentage of Single Assessments authorised within statutory requirements of 45 days	89%	91%	83% (2016/17)	82% (2016/17)	93%	78%	81%
13	Percentage of quorate attendance at Child Protection Conferences	90%	89%	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	99%	96%
14	Child protection plan rate per 10,000	41.7	27.2	43.3 (2016/17)	39.1 (2016/17)	Not a target measure	37.4	37.9
15	Number of Children subject of a Child Protection Plan (as at 31 March)	196	197	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	176	178
16	Percentage of child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescale (cases open three months or more)	n/a	99%	92% (2016/17)	96% (2016/17)	96%	93%	91%
17	Percentage of Children subject of a Child Protection Plan who had a visit on time	n/a	94%	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	90%	79%
18	Percentage of Children who became subject to a Child Protection Plan for second or subsequent time	13%	13%	19% (2016/17)	15% (2016/17)	16%	17%	16%
19	Number of children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation	n/a	13	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	24	27
20	Percentage of reports to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day (Working Together 2014/15 requirement)	27%	27%	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	13%	

No.	Priority area 3: Looked after Children and care leavers	Benchmarking and trend				Target 2018/19	2018/19 Quarter 1	2018/19 Quarter 2
		Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England 2017/18	London 2017/18			
21	Looked After Children rate per 10,000	33	33	62 (2016-17)	50 (2016-17)	Not a target measure	33.4	34.7
22	Number of Looked After Children	154	152	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	157	163
23	Percentage of Looked After Children in external foster care agencies	n/a	44%	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	40%	38%	40%
24	Number of 'In-house' foster carers recruited	11	15	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	15	3	5
25	Percentage of Looked After Children cases reviewed within timescales	88%	97%	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	96%	88%	94%
26	Percentage of Looked After Children annual Health Assessments completed within timescale	98%	96%	92% (2016/17)	89% (2016/17)	Not a target measure	Annual measure	Annual measure
27	Percentage of Initial Personal Education Plans completed within timescales	70% (AY 2016-17)	77% (AY 2015-16)	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	Annual measure	Annual measure
28	Percentage of LAC achieving GCSEs 9-4 in English and maths	n/a	n/a	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	Annual measure	Annual measure
29	Numbers of children who become Looked After due to a remand	2	6	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	0	1
30	Percentage of Care Leavers in education, employment or training (EET) (18 year olds and above)	64%	64%	62% (2016/17)	63% (2016/17)	70%	43%	35%
31	Percentage of Care Leavers living in suitable accommodation	91%	93%	84% (2016/17)	82% (2016/17)	Not a target measure	76%	77%
32	Number of Looked After Children adopted or receiving a Special Guardianship Order	12	17	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	5 (5 SGO)	6 (6 SGO)
33	Number of LAC children missing / number of missing episodes	29 cyp 202 episodes	50 cyp 273 episodes	7780 cyp 81050 episodes (2016/17)	3610 cyp 19230 episodes (2016/17)	Not a target measure	11 cyp 41 episodes	16 cyp 77 episodes
34	Placement stability performance (3 moves or more)	17%	16%	10% (2016/17)	12% (2016/17)	11%	1%	2%
35	Placement stability length (2 years or more)	69%	71%	70% (2016/17)	69% (2016/17)	65%	68%	66%

No.	Priority area 4: Closing the gap in educational outcomes and opportunity	Benchmarking and trend				Target 2018/19	2018/19 Quarter 1	2018/19 Quarter 2
		Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England 2017/18	London 2017/18			
33	Percentage of all Children's Centres graded good or outstanding by Ofsted inspections	100%	100%	66% (31/08/2015)	72% (31/08/2015)	100%	100%	100%
34	Percentage of all Schools graded good or outstanding by Ofsted inspections	93%	91%	86% (31/03/2018)	92% (31/03/2018)	91%	91%	91%
35	Percentage of all Pupils in Schools graded good or outstanding by Ofsted	95%	92%	85% (31/03/2018)	93% (31/03/2018)	Not a target measure	95%	96%
36	Percentage of Children achieving meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2	66% (AY 2016-17)	57% (AY 2015/16)	62% (AY 20116/17)	67% (AY 20116/17)	58%	Annual measure	Annual measure
37	Average Attainment 8 score for Young People achieving GCSE's	50.2 (AY 2016-17)	52.4 (AY 2015/16)	44.6 (AY 20116/17)	48.9 (AY 20116/17)	51	Annual measure	Annual measure
38	GCSE Pupil average progress 8 score	+50.0 (AY 2016-17)	+0.27 (AY 2015/16)	-0.03 (AY 20116/17)	+0.22 (AY 20116/17)	+0.51	Annual measure	Annual measure
39	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	1.6% (Q4)	1.5% (Q4)	2.8%	No relevant benchmarking available	3.0%	1.4%	1.2%
40	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) not in education, employment or training status 'not known'	0.9% (Q4)	1.5% (Q4)	3.2%	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	1.4%	15.4%
41	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) not in education, employment or training status 'not known'	n/a	n/a	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	3.0%	2.9%	16.6%
42	Percentage of surplus places at Reception year	7.7% (AY 2016-17)	3.5 (AY 2015/16)	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	8%	Annual measure	Annual measure
43	Parentage of surplus places at Secondary school Year 7 (Inc. Academies)	9.6% (AY 2016-17)	6.5% (AY 2015/16)	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	5%	Annual measure	Annual measure

No.	Priority area 5: Engage and enable young people to achieve better outcomes	Benchmarking and trend				Target 2018/19	2018/19 Quarter 1	2018/19 Quarter 2
		Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England 2017/18	London 2017/18			
44	Number of young people engaging in positive youth service participation	1967	1930	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	Annual measure	Annual measure
45	Number of first time entrance into Youth Justice System aged 10 to 17 (cumulative)	54	63	326.90 rate per 100,000 (2016)	405.50 rate per 100,000 (2016)	50	12	21
46	Rate of proven re-offending by young people in the youth justice system	0.50	0.55	1.04 (2013)	1.10 (2013)	Not a target measure	Binary rate 24% Re-offenses: 0.97 (whole cohort)	Binary Rate: 65.4% Re-offenses: 2.42 (whole cohort)
47	Percentage of young people requiring a First CAMHS assessment seen within 8 weeks of referral	DNR	DNR	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	Annual measure	Annual measure
48	Teenage Pregnancy conception rate per 1000 (under 18 years) (Average data 18 months in arrears)	16.5 per 1000 2016	14.1 per 1000 in 2015	18.8 per 1000 (2016)	17.1 per 1000 (2016)	Not a target measure	Annual measure	Annual measure
No.	Priority area 6: Children with special educational needs and disabilities	Benchmarking and trend				Target 2018/19	2018/19 Quarter 1	2018/19 Quarter 2
		Merton 2017/18	Merton 2016/17	England 2017/18	London 2017/18			
49	Number of Children or Young People with an Education, Health, Care Plan by Merton	1518 (Jan 2018)	1324 (Jan 2017)	319819 (Jan 2018)	53975 (Jan 2018)	Not a target measure	n/a	
50	New Education Health and Care Plans issued within 20 weeks (YTD)	34% (Jan 2018)	19% (Jan 2017)	61.3% (Jan 2018)	52.4% (Jan 2018)	55%	63%	60%