

## Committee: Cabinet

**Date: 24 February 2020**

Wards: All Wards

**Subject:** Merton's Strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN and/ or disabilities age 0-25 (2020-23). 'The Merton SEND Strategy'.

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

Lead member: Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Education and Adult Services.

Contact officer: Lisa Deer, Head of Policy, Planning and Partnerships

### Recommendations:

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1. To approve for publication in March 2020 **Merton's Strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN and/ or disabilities age 0-25 (2020-23). 'The Merton SEND Strategy' – Appendix 1**
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## 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The report proposes that Cabinet approve Merton's Strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN and/ or disabilities age 0-25 (2020-23). This will be published via social media channels in early March 2020.
- 1.2. The report outlines the strategic context of the strategy and the involvement of key stakeholders in its development – children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities and their families and professionals and staff from Children's Trust agencies.

## 2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The Merton SEND Strategy 2020-23, sets out Children's Trust 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. The strategy has been developed by the local authority, the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, and with key contributions from the parent carer forum Kids First, working in collaboration to drive our improvement agenda, and in partnership with Merton's Children's Trust partners.
- 2.2 The strategy is based on the format and design of the new Children and Young People's Plan 2019-23, which was adopted by the council at their meeting on 18 September. This emphasises that we have the same aspirations for *all* our children and young people, and are committed to supporting those with SEN and/or disabilities to be *valued, included, enjoy equality of opportunity, feel safe and supported, and happy and fulfilled in all areas of their lives – at home, in the community, at school and beyond.*

- 2.3 The strategy is driven by statutory requirements as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 (reform for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities), the SEND code of practice 0-25 years, the Equality Act 2010 and learning from the recent joint 'local area SEND inspection' conducted by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. It is aligned with the current Merton Autism Strategy 2018-24, and feeds into the Children and Young People's Plan 2019-23.
- 2.4 The strategy is based on a commitment to support children and young people to reach their full potential across six outcome areas – being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; getting involved, having a say; becoming independent and My Merton – community connections. The strategic objectives in the strategy identify priority areas of work, based on statutory requirements and feedback from stakeholders including children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities and their families, and professionals and staff. The objectives in the strategy focus on supporting children, young people and families at the earliest point via inclusive, local services working together to maximise resources and impact.
- 2.5 A draft version of the strategy was sent out for consultation during September and October 2019. This was based on our 2019 'self-evaluation' of SEND services which was informed by a needs analysis of prevalence, outcome and feedback from all stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback can be summarised as follows:
- 2.6 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 'preparation for adulthood' - the move into employment.
- 2.7 The 'vision' and strategic objectives in the final version of the strategy directly address the concerns raised by stakeholders.
- 2.8 Once agreed, the strategy will be published via a range of the council webpages and social media channels that operate across the borough.
- 2.9 An implementation plan for year one of the strategy (2020/21) has been finalised and will be published with the strategy. This sets out SMART targets under each of the strategic objectives. It will be monitored by the SEND Strategic Implementation Group, which represents all stakeholders, and the Children and Young People Integrated Commissioning Board (LA and CCG), with oversight from Merton's Children's Trust.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

3.1. None.

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

4.1. As above – 2.5-2.7

#### **5 TIMETABLE**

5.1. Following Cabinet approval the Merton SEND Strategy will be published online via a range of channels.

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

6.1 The 'strategic aims' listed in the strategy highlight the priority areas of work, based on statutory requirements and feedback from stakeholders which focus on supporting children, young people and families at the earliest point via inclusive, local services working together to maximise resources and impact.

6.2 Our stated aims under each outcome area will be developed further as part of the local authority, CCG and other Children's Trust partners' planned business with the intention that the costs are met within existing budgets. Where the Children's Trust Partnership identifies that resource constraints are inhibiting the achievement of any particular aim, the Partnership will take responsibility for securing additional resources before progressing.

#### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. New duties on local areas regarding provision for children and young people with special educational needs were set out in the Children and Families Act 2014, which came into force in September 2014.

7.2. The Council's general statutory duties under the Children and Families Act include to support and involve children and young people; to promote the integration of educational provision and training provision with health care provision and social care provision; to make joint commissioning arrangements and to cooperate with partners; and to keep education and care provision in the authority's area under review and consider the extent to which it is sufficient. The Code of Practice under the Act states that: "Local partners should identify the outcomes that matter to children and young people with SEN or disabilities to inform the planning and delivery of services and the monitoring of how well services have secured those outcomes".

7.3. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010), public bodies (including CCGs, local authorities, maintained schools, maintained nursery schools, academies and free schools) must have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between disabled and non-disabled children and young people when carrying out their functions.

7.4. The Minister of State for Children and Families has tasked OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) with inspecting local areas on their effectiveness in implementing the Children and Families Act. These inspections are carried out under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. Ofsted and the CQC conducted a joint inspection of the local area of

Merton in June 2019. The outcome of the inspection was set out in a letter to the Council and to the CCG which required the local area to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action that explained how the local area would tackle areas of significant weakness identified by the inspection.

- 7.5. The Merton SEND Strategy addresses the statutory requirements to support and involve children and young people; to promote the integration of provision and to cooperate with partners; and to keep education and care provision in the authority's area under review and takes account of issues raised by the Local Area SEND Inspection.

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

- 8.1. The Merton SEND Strategy focuses on improving the life chances of children and young people with SEN and/ or disabilities. We consulted with a wide variety of stakeholders in the development of the strategy.

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. N/A

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

- 10.1. Risks to delivery of the strategic objectives will be reviewed and acted on as part of the governance of the Merton SEND Strategy by the SEND Strategic Implementation Group and the Children and Young People Integrated Commissioning Board (LA and CCG), with oversight from Merton's Children's Trust.
- 10.2. Any risks to the council will be managed via the existing corporate risk management process.

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

- Appendix 1 MERTON SEND STRATEGY 2020-23

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 13 N/A