

Services for children from pregnancy to age 5

Gathering your views

July 2016



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What do we want Merton's services for children aged under 5 to achieve?

Every parent wants the best for their child. There are approximately 16,000 children aged under 5 living in Merton. We believe that every one of them deserves the best start in life.

We want to support Merton's families by providing all children and their parents with access to a range of services from the time a child is conceived up until the age of 5 when they start school – their 'early years'. How well a child does in their early years has a huge impact on how well they will do in the rest of their lives and their overall health and wellbeing.

When children get a good start in life, they are more likely to gain the skills and knowledge they need so that, by the time they start school, they are ready for learning, are healthy and can enjoy school life. Research shows that early life experiences affect a child's development more than experiences at any other stage of their childhood.

Every child and family is different, each with their own needs, strengths and aspirations. To provide opportunities for a good start to life, we need to tailor our services to fit individual needs, focussing our resources on the children and their families who need our services most.

So that we can best deliver the results we want for children and their families and make the very best use of our resources, we need to rethink and reshape how we will support young children and families in the future.

This document outlines our proposed principles for the future delivery of our services and we would like to invite you to share your thoughts with us. We will collate and consider your responses and use them to support us to develop a more detailed plan for our services for 2017 onwards. We hope to share this with you in October 2016 when we will invite you to share your views again.



What we know

How well children are doing at the age of five in Merton varies. Some children do really well, whilst others fall behind, including children who live in areas of deprivation or children who may have additional educational, health and care needs. We want to improve outcomes for all children and ensure that those most at risk of falling behind do not do so.

Merton is one of a few Local Authorities where 100% of children's centre services are graded Good or Outstanding by Ofsted

Many parents and carers like the services that they receive across our children's centres, including midwifery and health visiting services and activities all under one roof

Around 50% of children who are eligible for free early education for two-year-olds take up their free place in Merton. We would like this to be closer to 80%

There are geographical inequalities in the health and wellbeing of Merton's children, particularly for those children living within the east of the borough.

Around 58% of babies are breastfed at the age of 6-8 weeks (as of 2015). We would like this to be closer to 70%

18% of children aged 4-5 are overweight or obese at the end of their reception year and 25% of 5-year-olds have tooth decay (as of 2015). We would like to reduce these figures

Around 50% of children take up their 2 ½ year old Health Review (as of 2015). We would like this to be closer to 80%

Some families don't always know what is available and for children with additional needs it can be difficult to work out how to get the support they need

We must plan for reductions to our budgets and take the opportunity to work more efficiently so we can keep services running for those that need them

Why do we need to rethink and reshape our services for children aged under 5 years old?

There are a lot of great services across Merton which support children aged under five and their families. There are groups that provide opportunities for parents of young children to get together and for their children to socialise and play. There are voluntary and community groups which can be accessed at venues across the borough and offer support and advice for families with young children.

In addition to these, the council runs a number of early years services from children's centres and other community settings. These services are focused around the **Core Purpose for Children's Centres** and the **Healthy Child Programme** led by the Health Visiting Service. Further information about these can be found on the next page.

To deliver the results we want for children and parents and to make best use of our resources, we need to rethink how we will support families in the future.

Although we have to make savings in our children's centres, we feel confident that, by reshaping existing provision, we can continue to provide access to services such as midwifery, health visiting, good quality free early years education and easy-to-find information, advice and guidance, as well as providing additional services for families with extra needs.

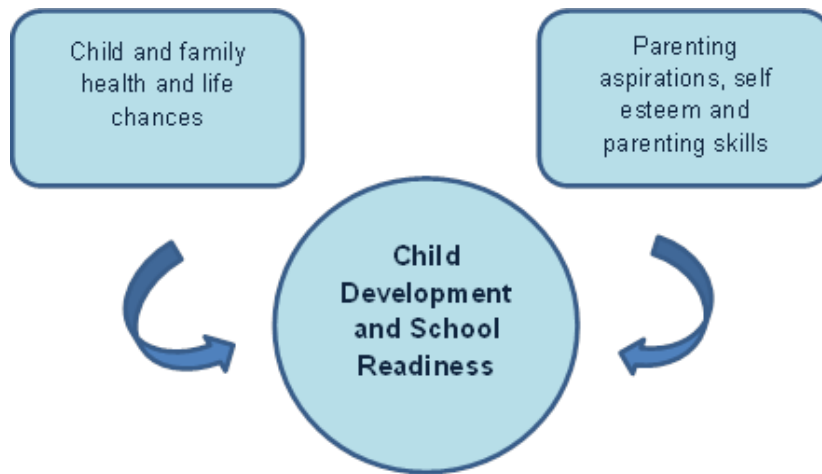
To do this we need to work with families and other organisations to develop our services so that we can really help to reduce the inequalities that some children experience.

Help us to shape the future!



Children's centres core purpose

Currently, children's centres have a clear core purpose, focused on improving outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged families, in order to reduce inequalities in child development and school readiness



The Healthy Child Programme (HCP)

The HCP is delivered by health visitors. It offers every family a screening programme, immunisations, developmental reviews and information and guidance to support parenting and healthy choices. These are services that children and families receive which support overall health and wellbeing.



Our proposed principles

We have outlined our proposed principles below and why we think these are important over the next few pages. We want to gather your views on these.

1. Provide support at the earliest age



Support families to take up the full range of universal services such as antenatal care, healthy child programmes and free early years education



Prepare children for school so they are ready for learning

2. Provide the right amount of support



Support families who may need extra help with parenting and supporting their children's development



Carry out our work in partnership with families, often working in their homes and in community settings

3. Work together



Provide opportunities for other organisations to deliver services in our children's centres, particularly midwifery and health visiting services



Provide information, advice and guidance about services available to families in Merton so that they know how to get the help they need when they need it

1. Provide support at the earliest age

Early identification of additional needs allows us to support children and their families to access relevant services in a timely manner. Intervening early makes sense, particularly in young children when we can really make a difference as the brains of babies and toddlers develop quickly.

We want to make sure that support is offered at the earliest possible age so that children and their families can really benefit from what is available to them. We know from research that if we can help children and families who need support from conception up to age two, these children are more likely to have a good start to life and do well at school. To do this we would like to develop our offer for children under 2 ½ years old.



The earliest support

'Offer support, where needed, at the earliest possible point by developing our offer for children under 2 ½ years old'

2. Provide the right amount of support for each family

We know that every parent and every child is different; each has their own abilities, needs and aspirations. We know that how well children achieve depends on a number of things, including:

- the abilities of their parents to help them learn and develop
- the child's own individual abilities and skills
- access to services and professionals who can support them
- whether they attend a good quality preschool/nursery

To help every child to have a good outcome, we need a new way of planning services so that the amount of support a family receives is relative to the amount of support they need.

We believe that all parents benefit from a little help and reassurance during their child's early years. Many value the reassurance provided by health and development checks, others want information about local support groups and parent networks. We are aware that there are some children and families who are more likely to require additional

support; these may include children with disabilities, children living in poverty or families experiencing issues such as domestic violence or mental health issues.

By targeting our services in this way, the types of services that individual children will be provided with will be different. Some children who require additional support will get more, whilst others who are doing really well may find services they accessed previously are no longer available to them. Families will still be able to access other groups run in the local community

We are therefore proposing a way of organising services so that every child would continue to receive a core level of service and parents and children requiring additional support will be identified early so that additional support can be put in place.



The right support

'Offer a core level of service to all families and additional support for those families that need it'

Examples of Core Services

- Antenatal service
- Healthy Child Programme (including health, developmental and immunisation checks)
- Information, advice and guidance
- Free early years education

Examples of Additional Services

- Parenting programmes
- Support for children with additional educational, health and care needs
- Home Visiting and Family Support
- Supporting children's language and behaviour

Some children will require a more specialist range of services, often provided by several professionals. This may include specialist health staff or social workers who work to ensure that children are safe and well. These specialist / complex services will continue as they do already and are not included in this review.

3. Working together

We know that when services work together to support families and their children, those that use these services do well. We have already taken steps to work more closely with our health partners and this includes:

- Antenatal clinics delivered in children's centres
- Healthy Child Programme delivered in children's centres
- Health visiting and school nursing teams having their offices based in some of our children's centres

By using our centres in this way it helps us to improve integration and joint working to bring services closer together for the common purpose of supporting children and their families. We feel that we can continue to find efficient ways of working with the health visiting service and other partner services to deliver an improved, seamless service to families.



Working together

'Continue to work efficiently with organisations to deliver services from pregnancy to age 5'

Your feedback

We would like to invite you to share your views regarding our proposed principles for London Borough of Merton's services for children from pregnancy to age 5. We have some key questions to ask you and would like your feedback and comments.

Parents and carers

Please complete the questionnaire online at www.merton.gov.uk/childrenscentres or you can complete a form at your local children's centre and hand it in at reception or post it to:

Early Years Consultation, 10th Floor Civic Centre
London Road, Morden, SM4 5DX

Professionals and practitioners

If you are a professional or practitioner working with children aged under 5, please complete the questionnaire online at www.merton.gov.uk/childrenscentres

Consultation key questions

1) Provide support at the earliest age

Do you agree that support for those that need it should be offered at the earliest possible point, focussing on children under the age of 2 ½?

2) Provide the right amount of support for each family

Do you agree that the level of support offered should be based on the need of families?

3) Work together

Do you agree that services should explore further ways in which they can work together to better support children and their families?

What happens next?

15 July to 9 September 2016

Parents and carers are invited to share their views about our proposed principles.

September 2016

We will evaluate your feedback, using it to support our decision making around the next steps for the service.

October 2016

We will launch a second phase of consultation, providing you with more detail around how we will reshape our services and ask you again for your thoughts on our proposals.

Request for document translation

If you need any part of this document explained in your language, please tick the box and contact us either by writing or by phone using our details below

- ☐ **Albanian** Nëse ju nevojitet ndonjë pjesë e këtij dokumenti e shpjeguar në gjuhën amtare ju lutemi shenojeni kutinë dhe na kontaktoni duke na shkruar ose telefononi duke përdorur detajet e mëposhtme.
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- ☐ **French** Si vous avez besoin que l'on vous explique une partie de ce document dans votre langue, cochez la case et contactez-nous par courrier ou par téléphone à nos coordonnées figurant ci-dessous.
- ☐ **Korean** 만일 본 서류의 어떤 부분이라도 귀하의 모국어로 설명된 것이 필요하다면, 상자속에 표시를하고 우리에게 전화나 서신으로 연락하십시오.
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- ☐ **Spanish** Si desea que alguna parte de este documento se traduzca en su idioma, le rogamos marque la casilla correspondiente y que nos contacte bien por escrito o telefónicamente utilizando nuestra información de contacto que encontrará más abajo.
- ☐ **Tamil** இந்தப் பத்திரத்தின் எந்தப் பகுதியும் உங்களின் மொழியில் விளக்கப்படுவது உங்களுக்கு வேண்டுமானால், தயவுசெய்து பெட்டியில் அடையாளமிட்டு, கீழுள்ள எங்களின் விபரங்களைப் பயன்படுத்தி எழுத்துமூலமாக அல்லது தொலைபேசி மூலமாக எங்களைத் தொடர்புகொள்ளவும்.
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