



This is a draft for consultation purposes only

Merton's strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (2019-23).

A place where children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities are valued, included, enjoy equality of opportunity and are happy and fulfilled in all areas of their lives – at home, in the community, at school and beyond

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How is the plan being developed?

Merton's Children's Trust is responsible for ensuring that services across the borough work together and in partnership with children, young people and their families to ensure improved outcomes for all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities – in Merton special educational needs and/or disabilities is 'everyone's business. Partners in the Children's Trust include children, young people and families, health, social care the voluntary and community sector, Police, early years settings, schools and colleges, and the local authority.

Merton's 'Strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (Merton's SEND Strategy)' is for all children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities – those with an Education, Health and Care Plan, and those without (SEN Support). It 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.

The strategy is aligned with the current [Merton Autism Strategy 2018-24](#), and feeds into the Children and Young People's Plan 2019-23. The 'strategic objectives' in the strategy ([the 'we will' sections](#)) are so far based on our 2019 'self-evaluation' of SEND services which was informed by a needs analysis of prevalence, outcome and 'user voice' data. The latter was taken from consultations with children's professionals in the local authority, health and education, and parents (High Needs review 2018), and with children and young people (Children and Young People's Plan consultation 2019 and the Young Residents' survey 2019), and on other feedback directly from professionals and families.

This draft version of the strategy will be further developed and tested through a range of consultations with stakeholders including an online survey and via discussion groups and meetings.

The strategy consists of the following sections:

Six outcome areas for children and young people:

Merton's SEND Strategy is based on the 'six outcomes' featured in the Merton Children and Young People's Plan 2019-23. These are the areas of children and young people's lives Merton's Children's Trust partners are committed to improving. The six outcomes were endorsed by children and young people themselves, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, through an extensive online survey and a range of focus groups. We have used the same outcomes as we have the same ambitions for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities as we do for all Merton's children and young people. The six outcomes are:

1. Being healthy;
2. Staying safe;
3. Enjoying and achieving;
4. Getting involved, having a say;
5. Becoming independent;
6. My Merton – connection with family, friends and the community.

What do our children, young people and families say?

Each section of the strategy includes key pieces of ‘user voice’ feedback data that has been collated from surveys and focus groups, and which has informed the development of the strategy.

We will:

Under each outcome area there are a list of ‘strategic objectives’ that partners are committed to delivering and which have been informed by statutory requirements, good practice and the expressed needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families.

How will we do this?

Merton’s SEND Strategy is a four year document delivered by Merton’s Children’s Trust. Partners are also developing an annual action plan with specific and measurable activities under each of the ‘strategic objectives’. Progress against the action plan will be regularly reviewed by Merton’s Children’ Trust and by children, young people and families via a range of stakeholder forums.

Consulting with children, young people and those who work with them:

Now that we have a draft strategy it is important to engage all interested groups – children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities, parents and carers, and professionals – to test, further develop and prioritise the strategic ‘work objectives’. We are doing this in the following ways:

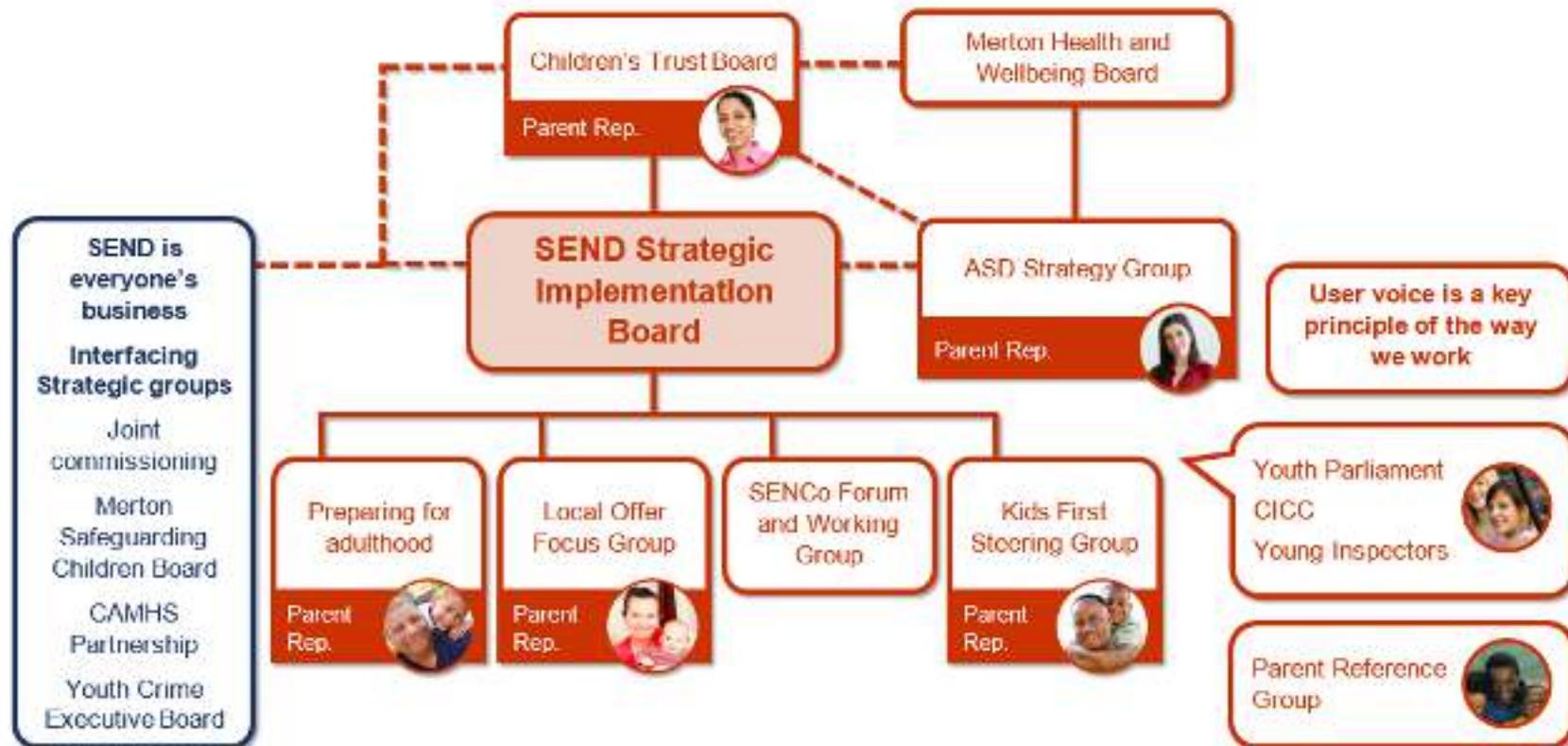
1. Online consultation for **parents and professionals/ staff** on the draft strategy – this will be emailed across the borough during the week beginning 23 September with a completion date of Monday 14 October 2019:

Here is the link to the consultation: www.merton.gov.uk/education-and-learning/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/sen-consultation

2. Discussion groups with **children and young people** in the schools/ groups that they attend, by their teacher/ lead worker – results to be sent in by Friday 11 October 2019.
3. Discussions with **parents and practitioners/ staff** via a number of our regular meetings and focus groups in the borough - results to be gathered by Friday 11 October.

If you would like more information about these consultations please email: cyp@meron.gov.uk

Leadership and Governance of SEND in Merton



Our 'vision' for Merton's children and young people with special educational needs and/ or disabilities.

Our 'vision' is that Merton is a place **where children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities are valued, included, enjoy equality of opportunity and are happy and fulfilled in all areas of their lives – at home, in the community, at school and beyond.** Our aspirations for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities are as **ambitious** as for all children and young people. In consultation with families and professionals we have agreed to work together to make sure that:

- Children and young people can build relationships and friendships with their peers in their local **community.**
- Children and young people **achieve well** in their local early years, schools and college settings.
- Children and young people can **attend provision close to where they live.**
- There is a sufficient **range and choice of provision locally** that **secures children's educational and health outcomes.**
- There is **seamless transition** from local education into independent living.
- Services are planned and delivered in collaboration and in partnership with children and their families.

Our SEND Journey

2013 – Publication of Merton's SEND strategy for 2013-2015, including implementation of SEND reforms

2016 – SEND included as an integrated part of Merton's Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019.

-multi-agency governance via the Children's Trust

-SEND is 'everyone's business'

-focus on parent representation within the governance arrangements.

2018– Publication of Merton's Autism Strategy 2018-23 following extensive consultation and **high needs review undertaken.**

-Both of the above documents act as the basis for the revised Merton SEND strategy

2019 – New strategies: Merton Children and Young People's Plan 2019-23 and Merton's Strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (2019-23).

1. Being healthy

We are committed to providing effective oversight and planning to improve health services for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities as set out in statutory reforms, with the aim of delivering a choice of health provision locally, which meets the range of needs of children and young people and facilitates good outcomes.

What do our children, young people and families say?

- The current referral and assessment process for children with autism “*takes too long and there is no support available to those who are awaiting assessment*”. (Autism Strategy consultation 2018).
- “*Experience of having CAMHS therapists on site or all in the same centre really helps, for example at Cricket Green School which has a Speech and Language Therapy department in school*”. (Parent at a Kids First Forum).

Comparing young people with a disability to those without, recent surveys show:

- Fewer think that ‘*school supports healthy choices*’.
- Fewer know where to go for information, advice and guidance on mental health, sexual health and substance misuse.

We know:

- There is robust identification of health needs in the early years - 83.5% uptake of ‘Ages and Stages’ questionnaire at 12 months, and 80% at 2.5 years.
- Children and young people have good support from health visitors and school nurses including through open access drop in clinics (Local area SEND inspection 2019).
- Timely coordination of Care, Education and Treatment Reviews (CETR) ensuring that the child’s needs are central to the professional network.
- 60% of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are on the autistic spectrum.

We will:

- Improve and offer a range of co-ordinated specialist child health services provided by community-based clinicians (doctors, nurses and therapists) that can be easily accessed in the most appropriate and child focused setting which is closer to home.
- Review ‘children’s continuing care’ service provision (care packages for children with needs arising from disability, accident or illness that cannot be met by universal services alone) to improve the assessment and decision-making process and to inform the Education Health and Care Planning process where appropriate.
- Review and improve the nursing and health therapies offer (including occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language, and mental health) across all Merton special schools to ensure that it meets current and future needs.
- Review the school entry ‘health questionnaire’ process administered and used by the school nursing service, to make sure that the information gathered from parents is sufficient to plan appropriate services for children whilst at school.
- Deliver improved and consistent services for children with autism, including delivering the children and young people’s aspects of the Autism Strategy 2018-23.

We will (continued):

- Improve the quality and sufficiency of health advice included in Education, Health and Care Plans (Local area SEND inspection 2019)
- Make sure young people have easy and timely access to local health services including mental health, sexual health and substance misuse (including information, advice and guidance).
- Work with partners including schools and settings to support children and young people to choose healthy food.

2. Staying safe

We aim to deliver a range of services and pathways to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families to build skills and resilience to feel safe and stay safe from the early years up to adulthood and independence.

What have our children, young people and families said?

- *“This is a brilliant course. It helped me to understand my child’s behavioural needs. I am more confident to support/manage my child’s needs”* (Parent commenting on Incredible Years parenting course).
- *“This programme will change your outlook on parenting a child with special needs”*. (Parent commenting on Incredible Years parenting for autism and language delay).

Comparing young people with a disability to those without, recent surveys show:

- More feel worried about bullying.
- Fewer feel safe in their local area.

We know:

- 100% of our Children’s Centre are rated by Ofsted as ‘good’ or ‘outstanding
- 100% of families report improved outcomes from attending an evidence based children’s centre parenting course.
- 100% of families said that they were satisfied with the service they received from Merton’s Supporting Families Team.
- There is consistent participation of social care professionals in the identification and assessment of children and young people with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (Local area SEND inspection 2019).

We will:

- Create a single ‘front door’ for families to access education, health and social care and which enables multi-agency planning for early and effective support.
- Increase services across education, health and social care to support young people to prepare for a safe and happy adulthood including employment, independent living, community inclusion and social life, and health.
- Help children and young people to appropriately deal with bullying and staying safe online.
- Help build skills and resilience for children, young people and their families to feel safe and stay safe.

3. Enjoying and achieving

We are committed to supporting children and young people to achieve well, enjoy themselves and be fully included in their local early years, schools and college settings, attending provision close to where they live. This includes all children with special education needs (SEN) – those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and those without ('SEN Support').

What do our children, young people and families say?

- 77% of parents said Merton needs to develop additional in-borough provision, the majority stating that this should be 'new specialist bases in mainstream schools'; 64% stated they have an educational placement 'a reasonable distance from home which meets needs'.
- 87% of head teachers say their staff would benefit from additional training to meet the needs of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- Feedback from parents/carers as well as front line practitioners identifies that inconsistency across different settings in interpreting and reporting on needs is a cause for concern.
- *"Make local parks more exciting with more equipment"* (special school focus group)

Comparing young people with a disability to those without, recent surveys show:

- Fewer agree that *'I am able to enjoy and do well in my education'*.
- More feel that there is a *'lack of opportunities to be physically active which makes it harder for young people to lead healthy lives in my area'*.

We know:

- 39% increase in EHC Plans issued since 2014; biggest increases in 12-14 and 15-20 age groups, and greater need in the east of the borough.
- 91% referrals for EHC Plan assessments reviewed at panel within 2 weeks; 58% EHC Plans completed within deadline.
- All Merton special schools, 93% of all schools, and 97.5% of EYFS settings rated 'good' or 'outstanding'.
- As a result of attending good or better education provision children and young people 'typically achieve well academically by the end of each key stage of education'. (Local area SEND inspection 2019)
- ASD and SLCN are the most common 'identified need' for children with EHC Plans, and SLCN and SEMH for those on 'SEN Support'.
- Increased capacity of specialist places in mainstream and special schools.
- More children in the early years with an EHC Plan and those on SEN Support achieved a 'Good Level of Development'.
- All key stage results improved for pupils at SEN Support, including strong Progress 8 score - higher than national.
- Above national for maths at Key Stage 1 for children with an EHC Plan, but reading and writing below.
- Lower than national fixed term exclusions for children with an EHC Plan and those on SEN Support.
- Above national attendance rates in Merton special schools with reducing persistent absence.
- All of our three special schools run the Duke of Edinburgh programme.

We will:

- Increase access to local, inclusive education provision for children with special educational needs and/ or disabilities.

We will (continued):

- Support mainstream schools to improve staff knowledge, understanding and skills and to develop an inclusive culture.
- Continue work to improve Special Educational Needs Coordinator practice across Merton's mainstream schools and settings, including consistency of identification and support, with a particular focus on children on 'SEN Support'.
- Raise attainment of children with special educational needs and/ or disabilities in schools and nurseries.
- Further develop schools' ability to evaluate and improve (self-evaluation) their support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans to make sure they set clear targets to support the child or young person's development. (Local area SEND inspection 2019).
- Monitor the impact of children's support therapies (including occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language, mental health and behaviour) in schools.
- Improve access to places where children and young people can enjoy themselves, socialise and access physical activities including after school clubs, youth clubs, parks and leisure.

4. Getting involved, having a say

We will support children and their families to be at the centre of decisions made about their education, health and care, and to have a voice as regards the strategic direction of services for special educational needs and/ or disabilities overall and other services in the borough.

What have our children, young people and families said?

- *“We receive information about what is on offer locally in terms of services, support, and advice and guidance; this is particularly useful to those who are new to the area, or to the issues”. (Parent attending a Kids First parents’ forum information session delivered by the local authority).*

Comparing young people with a disability to those without, recent surveys show:

- *More think that Merton ‘does not listen to the concerns of young people’.*
- *More think that Merton ‘does not involve young people in decision making’.*

We know:

- All Merton special schools attended the Youth Parliament ‘School Action Day’ where they discussed environmental issues, support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and young people’s participation and engagement.
- Merton Youth Parliament has representation from young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- All Merton special schools have a school council.
- Disabled young people responded to key surveys in 2019, which were used to inform the strategic direction of the local authority’s work to support all young people.
- Children, parents, and professionals gave their views to inform the development of Merton’s Autism Strategy.
- There is a whole hearted and effective commitment to ensuring children and young people have a voice in decision making. (Local area SEND inspection 2019)
- Merton’s parent carer forum, Kids First, understands the main concerns and positive views of parents in the area, providing a strong voice and challenge to leaders in the borough; it is trusted by parents who use the service. (Local area SEND inspection 2019).

We will:

- Improve how we involve children, young people and families in the assessment, planning and monitoring process of their Education, Health and Care Plan.
- Continue to improve how we involve children, young people and families in service and strategic planning for special educational needs and/or disabilities services.
- Provide opportunities for children and young people with special educational needs and/ or disabilities and their families to directly talk to all types of service providers about decisions which affect them.
- Continue to provide access to advocacy, and information, advice and guidance, for children, young people and families going through the Education, Health and Care Plan planning process.

5. Becoming independent

We will work across education, health and social care and in partnership with young people and their families to embed the delivery of a multi-agency 'transitions' model which is integrated across services and supports young people through preparation for adulthood pathways – Employment; Independent Living; Community Inclusion and social life; and Health – taking an approach which is person centred, timely and enables independent choices.

What have our children, young people and families said?

- 69% of parents were satisfied or better with the qualifications on offer to their child by the school/ college. (High Needs Review)
- *“My son learning how to travel independently was the turning point for him and our whole family”* (parent whose child attended travel training).
- *“We need more services to help young people get jobs”* (special school focus group)
- 11% fewer young people with a disability than those without agree that *‘I feel supported to make decisions about my future’*.

We know:

- Lower than London average rate of young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities 'Not in employment education or training' (NEET) or 'not known'.
- 11% of young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan, and 28% with additional needs (SEN Support) support are 'not in education, employment or training' (February 2019).
- 'The children's community nursing team ensures that young people approaching transition to adulthood are appropriately prepared for the next step'. (Local area SEND inspection 2019)
- The timeliness of support for transition to adulthood in social care (and for those not eligible for social care – including ASD and specific learning difficulties) is an 'identified area for improvement'. (Local area SEND inspection 2019).
- Merton's Information and Advice Service for special education needs and/or disabilities supported over 300 families in 2018/19.

We will:

- Implement the borough's multi-agency (across education, health and social care) transitions project to develop a 'transitions model' to ensure that preparation for adulthood pathways – Employment; Independent Living; Community Inclusion; and Health – are person centred and timely.
- Ensure that the 'transitions model' incorporates a robust support process for looked after young people who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Promote good communication and coordination between the young person's family and service providers to promote choice and control for the young person.
- Simplify the process of transition from children's to adults' services in education, health and social care, to enable an integrated, seamless pathway for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

We will (continued):

- Support young people and their families, who are not eligible for adult services, with information, advice and guidance on preparing for adulthood, and to better navigate the transitions process.
- Work in partnership across agencies and teams to ensure that adult social care is able to plan and prepare for young people who may transition into the service
- Develop improved access to advocacy to ensure that young people who do not have families have an independent say in planning their future.
- Further develop the post 16 offer (ETE) including creating more supported internships, volunteering and employment opportunities.

6. My Merton – connection with family, friends and the community

We are committed to working in collaboration with children and their families to create an environment where children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families can feel part of their community and build relationships and friendships with their peers, through sufficiency of service provision and access to information, advice and guidance.

What have our children, young people and families said?

- “Get young people involved in local events” (special school focus group).
- A third of children and young people with a disability who were surveyed agreed that they are ‘treated differently’ because of having a disability.
- Fewer young people with a disability than those without feel ‘part of their community’.

We know:

- Good take up of ‘Magic Club’ at the borough’s adventure playground for children and young people up to 25 with complex needs.
- Children with autism access the ACES youth club in Mitcham, run by Merton Mencap.
- Increasing social capital is a key priority in Merton’s sustainable communities plan to strengthen community connections.
- Merton’s Health and Well-being strategy supports focus on creating a healthy social and physical environment in the borough.

We will:

- Undertake a review of the local offer of services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families to ensure that these are sufficient to meet needs.
- Improve promotion of and access to the ‘Local Offer for children with SEN and/or disabilities’ and ‘Young Merton’ to broaden awareness of the availability of local opportunities, support and advice and guidance.
- Support children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities to feel part of their community and that they are treated the same as everyone else.
- Improve opportunities for people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (including autism) to participate socially and work towards making Merton an autism friendly borough.