

Newsletter

Issue 3: Summer/Autumn 2021

When you see this symbol, the information may be useful for parents/family carers of both children & adults



With contributions from Kids First and Adults First parents

Parent Carer Forum Update

by Tracy Blackwell, Parent Carer Forum Manager.



Welcome to the next edition of our parent carer forum newsletter which I hope you find helpful.

There's no doubt that this last year or so has been an extremely challenging time for many parents and carers and their families, but

we are hoping and keeping everything crossed, that we are now moving in a more positive direction.

Since the pandemic began, we switched to providing forum sessions via online webinars and meetings which were recorded so people who couldn't attend live could watch it later. From September, we plan to continue with this approach but we will be providing the opportunity for people without digital access to take part in forum events at the Chaucer Centre where sessions will be shown live on screen. Parents and carers attending the Chaucer Centre will be able to interact in the same way and ask questions to speakers. Places will be limited so pre-booking is essential. You can find out more about our forthcoming events on pages 15-16



We are in the process of transferring all our webinar recordings to Merton Mencap's brand new YouTube channel, Merton Mencap TV which brings a range of online

learning and activities people can access from home. You can check out the channel and subscribe here: <https://bit.ly/2X0QZ0I>



Kids First and Adults First continue to offer wide-ranging sessions for you, our members, which over the past year have included legal sessions, wellbeing workshops and health sessions plus our valuable meetings with senior officers from children and adult services in the local authority and CCG.

We've kept you up to date with information and signposting through our newsletter, regular emails and other resources about local services and support.



If you would like to contribute to future newsletters or have any useful information you think other parents and carers would like to read about, please let us know.

I would like to finish by saying a huge thank you to all our steering group parent/carers volunteers. Despite the challenges of the past year or so, our steering group volunteers have continued to represent you at local committees and forums in Merton, to make sure the voice of parents and carers is heard. Kids First and Adults First wouldn't be the large, representative forums they are without their support. They have volunteered many hours of their time on behalf of our membership and their continued involvement has been amazing and so appreciated. Thank you!

THANK YOU

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Merton Mencap's services

Information about all Merton Mencap services can be found on our website <https://bit.ly/2MuL66G>



Merton Mencap TV

Merton Mencap TV brings a range of FREE online learning and activities people can access from home whenever they like! Get our NEW free on-demand fitness activities! Subscribe to our YouTube channel Merton Mencap TV <https://bit.ly/2X0QZ0I>



MAPS – Merton Autism Parent Service

A support, information and advice service for parents of 0-25-year olds with a diagnosis of autism or who are likely to receive a diagnosis (e.g. referred for an assessment). We also can offer advice to parents of adults during the Covid crisis around vaccinations, testing and other health anxieties.

We run on Wednesdays between 10am-1pm. Parent Advisors offer support on communication, challenging behaviours, self-harming, sleep issues, anxiety and many other challenges. To book a session, call **07709 715206** or email maps.coordinator@mertonmencap.org.uk



LD Carers Support Service

We support carers of adults through the completion of carers assessments and reviews, help with problems and enquiries relating to your caring role, and offering a listening ear and emotional support. Contact **Yvonne Dawes** on **020 3963 0595** or ldcarers.support@mertonmencap.org.uk



Community Facilitator

Support for adults with a learning disability and/or autism to plan their lives, reach their goals and get the most from life. This may involve helping someone to be aware of services that are available and offering short-term support during a particular difficulty including Covid-related issues. Contact **Magda Faltynowicz** on community.facilitator@mertonmencap.org.uk

Suburbia Morden Hall Park Walk

Enjoy a wonderful walk and raise funds to help us improve the lives of children and adults with learning disabilities/autism and their parents and carers. Support us for our sponsored walk on **Saturday 2 October at 11:30am** meeting at the garden centre café or visit our Just Giving page and donate. <https://bit.ly/3iQkGuq> Thank you!



Contact **Maria Solari** on **07709 715206** or community.engagement@mertonmencap.org.uk for more information.

Can you help?

One of the important things Adults First & Kids First do is represent parents and carers at a range of meetings in Merton. And to do this well we need to ask you questions occasionally to find out what you think. We know you're busy, but the more people who get back to us the better. Then we can confidently say we are representing a wide range of parents and family carers. So next time you see an email from us asking for your input, please take a few minutes to reply – we'd love to hear from you.

Is this newsletter useful?

If you have any comments about this newsletter, our website or service in general, please take the time to email kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk or af.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk Feedback is essential for the continuation of our funding so... all comments welcome!



Could we send you this newsletter by email instead? If so, contact us at af.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk / kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk to let us know.

Help us recruit more members

If you know someone who lives in Merton and is a family carer/parent of a child, young person, adult with a special educational need/disability, please ask them to contact Kids First (0-25) or Adults First (18+). Membership is free, new parents simply download a registration form from the website and email it to the Kids First Administrator or Adults First Administrator, alternatively you can request one to be sent to you in the post.

Important note: Whenever we refer to 'parents' in our newsletters, flyers and emails, we mean **all** family carers of children & young people and adults.

Disclaimer: Any views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of Merton Mencap. Nor do we necessarily endorse the useful tips and contacts, many of which are recommendations from *Adults First & Kids First* members.

Kids First is Merton’s Forum for Parents and Carers of Children and Young People with Disabilities or Special Needs up to the age of 25, who live or attend school/college in Merton. It is a project of [Merton Mencap](#). Membership is growing all the time and we currently have almost 600 members!

Kids First’s strengths are:

- we are a local group;
- we welcome all parents or carers;
- we support all disabilities and special needs, including mild to a severe learning disability, autistic spectrum disorder, physical and sensory impairment, and other complex medical needs;
- we are a source of information and mutual support at our events and work with local providers on issues that matter to parents.

Funding

Kids First receives funding from the Department for Education and the London Borough of Merton. Our money is used to support representative work, help members to have a voice on how services for children and young people with SEND are shaped and delivered locally, and run our very popular events and information exchange meetings listed on pages 15-16 of this newsletter.



Steering Group

The Kids First Steering Group, made up of parent/carer volunteers, meets during the day once per term. The Steering Group drives forward the business and planning of Kids First. We also ensure the voices of all our parents are heard at the local policy-making level and we are fully involved in Boards and Forums, which design new services or review existing provision.

We are also part of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) through which steering group members can access free national training programmes or can attend meetings with other parent forums if they are interested.

The Kids First steering group needs YOU!

At the moment we do not have the capacity to be involved in all the roles we would like to, so we need your help!

We need parents of children and young people of all ages and from all communities in Merton, so that we are truly representative of all. You don't need to be an expert on anything. Your expertise is being a parent of a child or young person with SEN or a disability. But if you do happen to be an expert, and

would like to share your expertise, we would love to hear from you too!

This is an opportunity for you to increase your knowledge of what is available for children and young people in Merton, understand how the local authority and the CCG makes the decisions affecting families and work with them to shape and improve policies and services for the benefit of all.

The smallprint:

- Currently no travelling involved as meetings are online (ZOOM). Meetings are timed to fit in with the school day & during term time
- We aim to have at least 2 parent reps at each Board/Working Group meeting, so you should never be alone
- A willingness to co-write brief minutes of key points to share after these meetings
- You can shadow more experienced steering group members to gain experience & confidence
- We currently have roles available on the CAMHS Partnership Board, Merton's Children's Trust, the MIASS (Merton Special Educational Needs Information, Advice and Support Service) Advisory Board, the CCG's Patient Engagement Group (PEG), plus other roles becoming available soon. These meetings are usually held once per term.

Want to find out more about parent carer forums?

'Contact' administers and pays a grant available to one parent carer forum in each local authority area of England, funded by the Department for Education. The grant is used to strengthen parent carer forums, so that parent carers can participate in the strategic planning and decision-making around services for children and young people with SEND in their area.

Watch Contact's video, *What is a parent carer forum and what do they do?* <https://bit.ly/2YE3iRC>, to find out how parents across England are helping improve local and national services for children with SEND. Or watch *Making a Difference, Why Should I Join My Local Parent Carer Forum?* <https://bit.ly/2X0ZV6g> to hear parent carer forum members talking about why they got involved with their local forum. There are 151 parent carer forums (PCFs) across England. <https://bit.ly/3BV7DOq>

We need you!

It's never too late to volunteer so just get in touch if you would like to find out more. See contact details on page 15.

Integrated Care Systems (ICS)

What are Integrated Care Systems?

Integrated care is about giving people the support they need, joined up across



local councils, the NHS, and other partners. It removes traditional divisions between hospitals and family doctors, between physical and mental health, and between NHS and council services. In the past, these divisions have meant that too many people experienced disjointed care. With each part of the country now ready to function as an ICS, NHS England and NHS Improvement has asked the Government and Parliament to establish ICSs in law and to remove legal barriers to integrated care for patients and communities. Decisions on legislation will now be for Government and Parliament to make.

Why are integrated care systems needed?

Integrated care systems are a way for NHS organisations and councils to develop their own, locally appropriate proposals to improve health and care for residents. They work in partnership with democratically elected local councils, drawing on the expertise of frontline staff and on conversations about priorities within the communities they serve.

What does an integrated care system mean for people who use services?

The COVID-19 pandemic has given the NHS and its partners their biggest challenge of the past 70 years. It has shown that people need support joined up across local councils, the NHS, and voluntary organisations. The pandemic has shown that a commitment to collaboration between these organisations, based on the interests of the people they serve, is the best way to improve results.

Integrated care systems will look to deliver practical changes to improve peoples' lives. With a range of organisations and frontline professionals working together more closely, patients are seeing services work in a more joined up way, are only having to tell their story once and are receiving care better tailored to their individual needs.

Future plans

The House of Commons recently voted to give the Health and Care Bill a second reading. The Bill contains a series of measures which would formally establish ICSs and give their governing bodies – including an NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) for each area – a broader range of responsibilities, empowering them to better join up health and care, improve population health and reduce health inequalities.

If the measures relating to ICSs become law this will mean the NHS locally, regionally and nationally has a responsibility to prepare for when those measures are expected to come into effect, which is currently April 2022.

Merton are working towards becoming part of the new South West London Integrated Care System (ICS) with the aim of being operational by April 2022. For more information: <https://bit.ly/2WwHk1C>

Emotional Health & Wellbeing Support and Advice

Emotional Health & Wellbeing of children and young people (CYP) is a growing concern nationally. In Merton, the South West London Clinical Commissioning Group (SW London CCG) are keen to continue to support our CYP.

If your child has a mental health emergency, contact the Crisis Duty line, use this link to find the appropriate number depending on time and location plus other organisations that can offer help over the phone: <https://bit.ly/3gwT1N2>. If you are concerned about an immediate risk of physical harm, call 999 or go to A&E.



Off the Record has online, telephone and face to face counselling for 11-25-year olds, including self-help materials, webinars and workshops, <https://www.talkofftherecord.org/merton/> Saturday Support – talk to a counsellor on Saturdays from 10am-1pm, 020 8175 6776

KOOTH (Xenzone) online counselling and emotional well-being platform for CYP over the age of 11, accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop <https://www.kooth.com/>



Stem4 has apps and online information for teens with mental health issues. Please see their further information page <https://bit.ly/3BOLvp2> for excellent links to other organisations who offer crisis help in form of text, phone support, counselling and other formats. <https://bit.ly/38PpU1>



YOUNGmINDS *Young Minds* - whether you want to know more about how you're feeling, get information about a mental health condition or know what support is available to you, their guides can help. <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

You can also call **ChildLine** for free 9am to midnight: 0800 1111 or <https://www.childline.org.uk/>



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HOPELINE UK is a confidential support and advice service for children and young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide or anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide: 0800 068 4141 or <https://bit.ly/3jdQFoc>  **HOPELINEUK**

You can also contact the new **NSPCC's** Report Abuse in Education helpline 0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk for children and young people who have experienced abuse at school, and for worried adults and professionals that need support and guidance, including for non-recent abuse.

Digital resources

NSPCC

- UK Trauma Council, traumatic bereavement: <https://bit.ly/3BduBjw>
- Department for Education, mental health resources for children, students, parents, carers and school/college staff: <https://bit.ly/3D9WYRw> 
- SW London CCG, emotional wellbeing Covid-19 resource hub: <https://bit.ly/3DhDsCM>
- Returning to school or college: <https://bit.ly/3knBqZ6>
- Digital wellbeing mental health support for London: <https://www.good-thinking.uk/>

Video clips:

- CYP Wellbeing video clips, several topic areas: <https://bit.ly/3gy3p7d>
- Supporting your teenager with anxiety: <https://bit.ly/3zIOLZS>
- Parenting teens in times of uncertainty: <https://bit.ly/3kFjeun> 

Merton Autism Parent Service (MAPS) can offer support to parents of children aged 0-25 on a range of topics including self-harming, anxiety, and challenging behaviours. To book an appointment or find out more, contact details are on page 2.

Merton Local Offer – information about services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities <https://bit.ly/2XVShuC>.

Tell us your issues!

Are you experiencing any problems with statutory services, the NHS, your child's school, etc? If yes please tell us about it. You can use one of our issues forms (download from our website) or just email us with the information. All issues are logged and used anonymously in our representative work with the LA and the CCG. We also record positive experiences, so please tell us about them too!
kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

SEN Support & Useful Resources



The National Association for SEND (www.nasen.org.uk) has produced this useful document on SEN Support. <https://bit.ly/3DRIHcB>

The leaflet, funded by the Department for Education, is intended to help build partnership between families and the school. The aim is to provide families with questions to ask of schools, and empower them in having successful discussions about whether additional input at the SEN Support level is required and what that might mean.

The questions, although phrased to be used by families, can also be used by young people to support self-advocacy. Effective partnerships can help to reduce misunderstandings, disagreements and help secure the best outcomes.

In the leaflet they have identified a range of questions that families may want to ask, to ensure that effective plans are in place where it is identified that their child needs SEN Support or they are worried about their child's progress at school.

Hopefully these example questions are a useful starting point for discussion, but if you need any further support there are some links at the end of the leaflet.

Merton Special Educational Needs Information Advice & Support Service (MIASS) can offer impartial advice and guidance to parent/carers and young people with regard to the identification of special educational needs and the requirement for multi-agency support and intervention in the form of an EHCP. **020 8543 8854** miass@merton.gov.uk

Education, Health and Care Plans:

Examples of good practice

Council for Disabled Children have produced resources to help practitioners write good quality EHC plans that meet both the letter and the spirit of the Children and Families Act 2014. These examples should be useful for parents and carers of children and young people. <https://bit.ly/2YosbR1>

Family workshops & events run by Contact

Contact run a range of fun workshops, information sessions and online events. Topics range from Money Matters, Speech & Language, and Encouraging Positive Behaviour. <https://bit.ly/3yQAQs6> 

Contact (www.contact.org.uk) is a great charity for families with disabled children, as well as their

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contact For families with disabled children

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workshops they have online resources & advice, and a helpline **0808 808 3555** <https://bit.ly/3iRnmrP>.

Guide to Adaptations for Children & Young People with Behaviours that Challenge



Foundations

Foundations – the National Body for Home Improvement Agencies in England has

published an excellent Guide to Adaptations for Children and Young People with Behaviours that Challenge. <https://bit.ly/3hcRbkk>

The guide highlights the role of adaptations in meeting the needs of disabled young people and emphasises that disabled facilities grants are not only to facilitate access to and around a property but also to make it safe for the disabled person and/or the other occupants. The guide has a particular focus on the needs of those with significant sensory and other impairments.

Independent Travel Training Service

Did you know that many young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities CAN and DO learn to travel independently? Merton Mencap's professional travel trainers have already supported a large number of young people to attain the skills they need to look after their own personal safety, negotiate roads and use public transport independently.

If your young person lives in Merton, is aged between 12-25, has an EHCP and is potentially eligible for home to school or college transport from Merton Council they may be eligible for travel training.

If you think your child has the potential to become an independent traveller and you would like to find out more, please telephone Merton Mencap's Travel trainers on 020 3963 0594 or email stream.leaderchildren@mertonmencap.org.uk



Local Area Updates

The Canons House & Grounds regeneration project



CANONS
HOUSE & GROUNDS

The Canons House & Grounds in Mitcham has been awarded £4.4 million raised by National Lottery players and awarded through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund. The house, grounds, dovecote, pond and recreation ground are owned by Merton Council, who will be undertaking the project.

The project includes:

- restoration of the house
- conversion of interior to office space for local businesses
- creation of a new community heritage interpretation centre
- a new café,
- comprehensive landscaping plan including pond improvements, walled garden, and running track
- a new playground space, with different elements targeted to the diverse range of playground users



The new playground was completed and opened in May and it's time to celebrate Canons House & Grounds and the completion of all the building and landscaping works! On Saturday 18th September, 1pm-4pm, there will be entertainment, refreshments and a fun family-friendly activity trail. No need to book, just join on the day. For more events and activities and more information about the regeneration project, check out their website:

<https://bit.ly/3h5iZHV>

Merton Sensory Libraries



Merton's Sensory Libraries are open! All of the children's libraries have unique themes with sensory equipment and specialist SEND book stock, specially adapted toys and equipment that can be borrowed. In addition to this we have an exciting programme of SEND events/activities available, booking for all of our SEND events is required via www.mertonlibraries.eventbrite.co.uk



Bag Books Storytime, 9:00-9:30am

Morden Library – 1st Saturday of the month
Mitcham Library – 2nd Saturday of the month
Wimbledon Library – 3rd Saturday of the month

Stay and Play, 8:45-9:30am

Wimbledon Library – 1st Saturday of the month
Morden Library – 2nd Saturday of the month
Mitcham Library – 3rd Saturday of the month
West Barnes Library – 4th Saturday of the month

Sensory Library, 8:45-9:30am

Colliers Wood Library – 1st Saturday of the month
Pollards Hill Library – 2nd Saturday of the month
Raynes Park Library – 3rd Saturday of the month

Coming Soon

Merton Libraries also have a number of different events and activities that they are busy finalising such as: Magical Quest performances, SEN Karate/Kung Fu, multi sports, music workshops, and so much more!



Polka Theatre re-opening in Wimbledon!



Polka Theatre are delighted to have reopened in August 2021 after a two-year redevelopment project.

During this time a new Adventure Theatre has been built and the Creative Learning department have a new workshop space, the Clore Learning Studio, equipped with multisensory technology that can be programmed to project different images on the walls and floor to create a fully interactive workshop experience. The playground has been redesigned with creative and playful structures, similarly, in what was the foyer space, the YC Chan Play Den, will be an exciting space for children to express themselves.



Staff at Polka have been busy not only preparing the building, but also designing an exciting programme of activities for children and families to take part in!

Do take a look on their website for more information. <https://polkatheatre.com/whats-on/> or contact Fran Chabrel, the Polka's Community Engagement Manager - fran@polkatheatre.com

Local Offer Update

A new section on the Local Offer website has recently been created all about concessions for children and young people with SEND – Using my M-Card. In this section you can find information about concessions available from activity and service providers for M-Card holders and for all children and young people with SEND. It is a working document, so if anyone knows of any concessions that aren't on the list, please do let the Local Offer Team know at Local.Offer@merton.gov.uk.

The Using My M-Card section comes under the category of Activities and Leisure on the Local Offer website. <https://bit.ly/3yTfcU7>



About the M-Card

The M-Card provides recognition of a disability even where this not obvious. It can help to avoid the need for lengthy explanations when asking for assistance. It can also allow the card holder to benefit from concessions on some services in the London Borough of Merton and further afield.

If your child does not yet have an M-Card, you can find out more about it and apply. <https://bit.ly/3tq0hi3>

The Role of a Disability Employment Advisor



Department for Work & Pensions

Submitted by Ayda El-Deweiny, Disability Employment Advisor Lead, Merton & Sutton DWP



After being the only DEA in Merton for the last 10 years, I am happy to say that I am now leading a team of DEAs in Merton and Sutton. As part of the Department for Work and Pensions, our main mission is to reduce the disability employment gap and support disabled people into work. All the evidence tells us that work is not only good for our health but it allows us independence, fulfilment and a sense of being part of the community in which we live. We are passionate that any disabled person who wants to work should get the support they need to achieve that aim.



DEAs mainly support work coaches in the jobcentres, offering some guidance and expertise about the opportunities on offer for people who require some specialist help. We have contracted provision that offers specialist employment support. We also promote training, volunteering and activities in the community. Anything that may help someone gain the experience, skills or confidence to move into a job or improve their quality of life.

In order to promote our service and keep informed about support opportunities, we get out into the community and engage with local organisations that support disabled people and those with health barriers. I've been a member of the Learning Disability Forum, the Mental Health Forum and contributed to various strategies in Merton. We stay in close contact with social prescribers, GPs, community mental health teams, Carer's support and various charities. We can also help with benefit enquiries or just be a point of contact at the jobcentre.



Over the last year and a half, it has been particularly difficult as we haven't been able to see people face to face, but we are now inviting people in to come and see us, all be it in a Covid safe environment. Due to increased demand, in addition to our Mitcham office, we now have a new office in Morden.

Our DEAs are Penny, Karen and Rosa. Email with any queries. penelope.hamill-baker@dwp.gov.uk (for ESA customers) Rosa.Erdogan@dwp.gov.uk (for Universal Credit) karen.lewis7@dwp.gov.uk (for carers)

Mitcham Jobcentre Plus – Boundary House, 317-321 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 4YF. Morden Jobcentre Plus – The Grange, Central Road, Morden, SM4 5PQ

Adults First is Merton’s forum for family carers of adults aged 18 plus with a learning disability/autism, and is a project of Merton Mencap. The purpose of the forum is to improve the lives of carers and the person they care for by providing the latest information, both local and national, which supports them in their caring role.



We do this by facilitating monthly workshops about specific topics with experts and local service providers. These workshops allow carers to meet each other, share experiences and practical support. We campaign on issues important to our members such as the diminishing provision in Adult Social Care and produce this twice-yearly newsletter. We also make sure the voice of carers is heard in the design and delivery of services.

Don’t forget to check out Merton Mencap’s website for details of future events. The session dates for upcoming events are listed on page 15-16.

Steering Group

We have a steering group of volunteer family carers who represent our members on many local bodies. As well as representing our members at these meetings, the steering group also make decisions about the work and direction of the forum.

We would love to have more steering group members so that we truly represent the opinions and problems of all. If you’d like to find out more about joining the steering group please contact us (See page 20 for contact details) or have a chat with us at one of our sessions.



Our steering group are still representing you at the meetings with the Local Authority and Health (CCG) and are able to feed in your thoughts and issues if you tell us about them. Please see below for information about our Issues Log which we will be using to inform our representation work.

Tell us your issues!

Are you experiencing any problems with statutory services, such as issues relating to day services, direct payments, support living, health, Merton Adult Learning, planning for the future, respite, transport, communication, etc? If yes please tell us about it. All issues are logged and used anonymously in our representative work. We also record positive experiences, so please tell us about those too!

Af.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

Meet the Steering Group



Alfredo Benedicto

I have lived in Merton for the past 27 years and had a long corporate career in Consumer and Financial services in several locations in Europe and America. Upon my retirement I have devoted my

time and energy to the voluntary sector. I represent Adults First on the Operational Committee of Healthwatch Merton (HWM) and represent HWM on the Council of Governors at St George’s University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

My 26-year-old daughter, Victoria, has moderate learning disabilities. Victoria has just completed a catering and hospitality programme at Nescot and is currently involved in the Merton Mencap community café, Richmond and Westminster Colleges Adult Education, and tennis and football practice with Fulham Football Club Foundation.



Sally Burns

I’ve lived in Merton for about 45 years, and have four adult children. I worked for many years as an economic advisor in the Department of the Environment, then later in local schools supporting children with special needs. I ran a group for carers of adults with a learning disability for many years until it finally merged with Adults First – I’ve always really valued being able to get together with other family carers.

I’ve been a member of Mencap since my son Tom was born – he’s now 42, has Downs Syndrome and quite a few health problems, and lives at home with us. He went to St Ann’s school then on to Richmond College, joining a group at a local day centre after that. Sadly, due to his extreme vulnerability he hasn’t been able to go back there since the start of the pandemic, but he does go out three times a week to do a range of activities with his support worker.

I currently represent Adults First on the Merton Patient Engagement Group and the All Saints Respite Care monitoring group, I co-chair one of the Task Groups set up to implement the new Carers Strategy and speak on behalf of Adults First at the Learning Disability Forum.



Jane Dowek

I have a 23-year old son with autism and moderate learning difficulties. Adults First and before that, Kids First, have been a constant source of support and key information since my son was small.

I joined the Adults First Steering Group because I

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believe that if you want things to get better, you have to join with others and be a voice for the people you care for as well as being an education source for decision makers. As a parent-carer I know that in a meeting with anyone who is in a position to direct resources, I have first-hand knowledge as to how a decision will impact a vulnerable person and am always happy to share my thoughts on that! I represent Adults First on a Carers Strategy task group, Merton's Autism Partnership Steering Group, the Direct Payments Forum and the Preparation for Adulthood Board.

We have lived in Merton since before my son was born and have been through the often grisly experiences of recognising that something was not right, diagnoses and acceptance of those, the Statement process, mainstream primary, special secondary, transfer to EHCP, special needs college, adult social care assessments, applications for DLA/PIP, searching for appropriate placements, social opportunities and activities, carers/PAs, learning to be an independent traveller and now looking at the world beyond an EHCP (25 is the new 18) and trying to identify a purposeful way for my son to spend his time and be happy.



Mike Nelson

I have lived in Merton for 30 years and have 5 adult children and 2 grandchildren. Now retired, I worked in the health sector for 40 years providing clinical services including diabetic eye screening, mole monitoring and

medical photography throughout the UK. I have been a member of Adults First for several years and represent the group on the Carers Strategy Subgroup, a life alongside Caring.

My youngest son is 24 and has autism with moderate learning difficulties. He has recently finished education and attended the Link School, NEScot and lastly Project Search. He is currently undertaking voluntary work while we search for a suitable work placement, not easy post Covid!

I am interested in supporting the caring role, housing for those with special needs and making sure service standards are high and safe.



Kevin Sullivan

I am a retired chartered accountant, and now drive a minibus at Marymount International School. Patty and I have a 22-year-old son Oliver who has severe autism and

learning difficulties and attended Eagle House, Cricket Green and St Piers school/college.

Oliver recently transitioned to an adult residential house run by Cavendish Care in Surrey, which he is enjoying.

We very much appreciate the help of Merton Mencap and the mutual support and friendship of the Kids First and Adults First community. It is great to be part of this wonderful network helping our young people and their families.

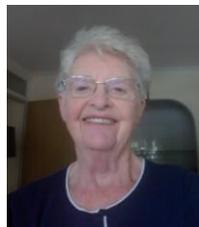


George McAdam

All my working life has been spent in education, mostly in Merton. Initially this was as a science teacher and then, after early retirement, as a school science technician. I was a member and

then the chair of the St Ann's Parents group (FOSTA) for several years. When Adults First was being set up I joined the Steering Group. As my daughter grew up the lack of easily found advice for carers was a particular problem and the development of Adults First with its meetings, emails and newsletters, was essential to plug this gap. There is now an increasing necessity for carers of those with LD and autism to have a strong voice to make the needs of our youngsters known and to argue for sufficient and suitable services. I have worked with Alfredo on the parent representative group in connection with the consultations organised by Community Catalysts and will be involved in the next two meetings with the LBM.

My daughter has severe learning disabilities and now relies on her wheelchair to get around following surgery. Elizabeth attended St Anne's School, Orchard Hill College and now attends JMC Day Centre, currently for one day a week instead of her usual three. She enjoys listening to music watching DVDs and studying books. She is now 36.



Angela Dorris

I have three sons, Antony, Richard and John. Richard has autism, and learning difficulties and he attended William Wilberforce school, a special school in Wimbledon.

I have always been involved with children and young people with special needs through my work in a special school and through my church. I joined Adults First in 2019 after I retired. Richard has always been very well supported by Merton Mencap and now I try to help, in a very small way, to support the work and care Mencap provides.



Interview with...

Gill Moore

Head of Service, Merton Integrated Learning Disability Service

Firstly, I just want to say that I am delighted to be working with Adults First in my role as Head of the Merton Integrated Learning Disability Service.

As many of you will know, I joined in mid-February, taking over from Carmen Gardier. I am not sure where the last six months have gone, but over that time, I have had the pleasure of meeting a number of you, and I look forward to working with you all. I have been very impressed with how Adults First is organised and the participation and co-production that is taking place with you.

You have asked me a few questions about my role and myself. Here goes...

Q. Tell us a little about yourself and your previous roles

I first trained as a social worker a long time ago, in the 1980's, and then moved to London to work in Wandsworth. At that time, we worked in small teams, but did not specialise, working with all vulnerable children and adults including people with a Learning Disability. I then moved to Australia where I worked in a large inner-city psychiatric hospital, and became the Deputy Head of Social Work. On my return, I worked in Kingston in mental health and began my management career, and have subsequently worked in Mental Health Services in South West London in the South West London and St Georges NHS Mental Health Trust.

In 2012, I started working in Merton as the Operational Manager for Mental Health Services in Merton and Sutton. I then became the Service Director for Merton and Sutton in 2015 and after a reorganisation in 2017 the Head of Service for Adult Community Mental Health Services across the five South West London Boroughs. Management of the Mental Health Learning Disability Services in Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth was part of that role.

As mental health services are also integrated, it meant that I already had a long experience of working within Merton borough as part of the council. If anyone is wondering, what integration means it is health and social care working together as one service. I have always been committed to this way of working and I do believe it is the best way to support people.



I have always enjoyed all of my roles and am passionate about both Mental Health care as well as supporting people with Learning Disabilities and Autism.

About me, well I am interested in many things but particularly gardening, walking, cooking and art, although I am no artist myself.

Q. Can you explain what your current job involves?

My current role involves being operationally and strategically responsible for the Learning Disability Service, including the evolving Transitions Team. That means I manage and oversee the performance and operational practice within the teams.

I am leading on a number of service delivery programmes with senior management colleagues across adult social care:

The Review of Day Opportunities and Community Options for People with a Learning Disability and / or Autism; the Development of the Merton Transitions Service to support young people transitioning from children to adult services and the further Development of the Integrated Service.

I am also involved in the Autism Strategy work and the development of the Autism Pathway with a number of colleagues and partners. I work closely with other Heads of Service both in Adult Social Care and in Children, Schools and Families particularly, the Head of the SEND Service, Karla Finikin. I am also the co-chair of one of the Carers Strategy sub groups and working closely with Carers has always been an area of interest to me. I work closely with the Learning Disability Commissioners in health, as we are the provider of the community health service and of course, our Mental Health Learning Disability Team colleagues.



Q. What are the most rewarding aspects of your job?

To be honest I find almost all areas of my job rewarding. My interests are wide, but mostly, working with a good team of health and social care professionals and learning more about this specialist area of work. The greatest reward is when I see an example of the team working alongside people to support them and enable them to have a better quality of life or address a difficult situation with a great outcome. Not least of course, I do enjoy working with a range of partners including Adults First and Kids First to co-produce and develop services.

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Q. What are your aspirations for LD services in Merton?



I hope we can develop and improve the service in a number of ways and it is very important that we have an accessible and responsive service for people when they need it most. I would like to see the successful development of the Transitions Service across partners to provide a clearer and more comprehensive service for young people and make Preparing for Adulthood a better and less scary experience for them and parents carers.

I would also like to ensure that we are a learning service and that we keep on developing the ways we support and work alongside people and that staff are supported to deliver quality work.



I, along with others would like to develop a more robust and seamless service for people with neurodiversity needs (autism) that gives them a better start in adulthood or support in areas they require beyond what we can offer now. I want the service to be really person centred and to enable people to achieve the most they can, whatever that is, and to have better chances in life. One of the ways we are doing this is through the Day Opportunities Programme.

Q. There is a current project to review the provision of day services in the borough; can you describe the project and its objectives?

The programme is really reviewing what Merton provides in the way of community services. That is activity and occupation for people with a Learning Disability and /or Autism, including the current day services. Merton has a strong day centre offer but we think that the range of options and the availability of different options can be improved and a broader range of services offered so that a wider spectrum of needs can be met. That means looking at everything currently commissioned by the council including adult education, training and employment as well as all of the other skills and activity programmes. Day opportunities is a bit of a red herring too, as we know people want to do things at different times.



Q. What has been done/achieved so far?

Firstly, an engagement programme was set up because we wanted to hear how things are for people in Merton now, and what people would like to have available in the future.

That engagement, the “Big Conversation” took place over 2 months and we received a fantastic number of responses, 381 in total. This gives us very rich

information about what is important to people, and will then inform what we need to look at for future service commissioning. Reports are being prepared to summarise the “Big Conversation”.

The current work that is being done is the “Big Explore” this is looking at what people said; what is currently available; what the gaps are and what is happening nationally that is best practice and innovative. We have a social enterprise partner for this, Community Catalysts, **communitycatalysts**[®] who are experts in this work. unlocking potential effecting change

Q. What are the next steps?

The next step in September is to start developing a strategy for how services are commissioned in the future using all of the information gathered. Then we need to clarify what Merton Council will be able to provide and to expand the range of options for People with a Learning Disability and /or Autism. Then to design the overall service model for activity; occupation; learning, skills building and support.

After that, we need to make a plan for internal council committees to scrutinise and hopefully agree a modern and updated service that helps as many people as possible to achieve as much as they can, and increases the options for a fulfilling quality of life. It is quite a big programme of work and so it is taking quite a lot of time, as we need to get this right.



Q. What do you envisage the point of arrival could look like and when will changes, if any, be implemented?



I hope the result will be a clear model and structure of support, with a range of options to suit people’s different and diverse needs. Any changes that are planned will not take place until the spring of 2022 as making changes does take time, and if we want to commission anything new there is a very set formal process for doing that. However, along the way we will try to implement any developments we can that do not need that formal work.

Q. Finally, is there anything else you would like to share with the members of Adults First?

I would just like to say again that I am very pleased to be working with you all. Co-production is so important and you are the experts, so we all value your views and your support and look forward to making a difference alongside you and our other partners.

A Project Reference Group was set up to oversee the review mentioned in this interview. Adults First & Kids First have representation on this group, which will continue to meet to discuss Merton’s plans.

Update on Merton's Carers Strategy 2021-26



You'll have all heard about Merton's new Carers Strategy – a long time in the making, due to Covid, but finally launched on 9th June <https://bit.ly/3mAsOkv>. This strategy was drawn up by a group of people from many different organisations – the council, health services (including public health and mental health), voluntary sector groups like Merton Mencap, the Dementia Hub and Carers Support Merton, the DWP – and of course carers. Adults First has been represented in this group from the outset in May 2019. The strategy is based on what carers said they wanted in a wide-ranging consultation which ran in 2019, and was then updated to consider the impact of the pandemic.



Where has it got to? An Implementation Board meets regularly to check on progress – but the real work is being done by four Task Groups. These are covering each of the four main areas covered by the Strategy - recognizing and valuing carers, health and wellbeing, fulfilling potential and a life alongside caring.

Merton Mencap's Parent/Carer forums have representatives on each of these four groups – and here's what they've got to say about progress so far:

Task Group 1 – Recognizing and valuing carers

Gill Moore, Head of Integrated Learning Disability Services, LBM, and Rob Clarke, CEO of Age UK co-chair this group. Melanie Pheasant is a Kids First Parent rep on the group. The group's top priorities are to promote and increase carers identified via GP Practices, to develop a communication and marketing campaign to raise awareness and re-frame the message about what it means to be a carer and to ensure that people are offered carers assessments which are completed appropriately and proportionately in accordance with carers needs. So far, the group have looked at the first draft of the communication plan, training events facilitated by Carers Support Merton and Heather Begg (Commissioning Manager, Merton ASC) have been organised for professionals to raise awareness, and work is underway to review systems in place for carers assessments.



Task Group 2 – Health and Wellbeing

Sally Burns, an Adults First carer rep co-chairs this with Dan Butler, Merton Senior Public Health Principal. The group's top priorities for this year are setting up a system of carers' emergency cards, reviewing council processes that affect carers, and



working out how carers can have a range of affordable and flexible opportunities to take part in health and wellbeing activities.

So far, the group have looked at how carers' emergency cards work in other boroughs, who would collect the necessary information and run the scheme, and what questions need to be asked when carers register. We'll be asking carers' views on our draft format soon. The council is in the process of drawing up a business case for getting the necessary resources to put this into action and the aim is to get it up and running by the end of the year.

We've chosen parking as the first council process to look at – to date we've gathered information from carers about problems they have faced and are talking to parking services...we're hoping to get some concessions to ease parking problems, particularly for those who don't have Blue Badges. We will then move onto other council processes.

Alongside health colleagues we're looking at ways to make sure carers' own health (both mental and physical) is given enough attention as well as the health of the person they care for. This is at an early stage, but might involve, for example, carers' health checks being linked to those for the person they care for.



Task Group 3 – Fulfilling Potential

This group is co-chaired by Claire Migale, Interim Head of ASC Operations & Safeguarding, and Tracy Weight (CEO, Carers Support Merton). Jane Dowek is the Adults First Carer rep on the group.

The key areas we are looking at are:

- Digital Skills for Carers, recognising that digital access (skills, devices, data package) is key to being able to communicate with agencies and find information and identifying the support that carers might need with this.
- Learning and Development for Carers – reviewing affordable learning and development opportunities for all carers, with a separate focus on the needs of Young Carers and enabling them to fulfil their education and employment potential.
- Developing a carer friendly work environment – considering initiatives such as a 'Carers Passport' to enable carers to be clear about the impact their caring role might have on their working life.



Task Group 4 – A Life alongside Caring

This group is co-chaired by Keith Burns (Head of Commissioning & Market Development) and Andy

Whittington (CEO, Merton Mencap). Our rep on this is Mike Nelson from Adults First. One of its first discussions was around the need to get more carers involved – it was decided no decisions or actions should be made without proper carer representation in designing local health and social care provision.

Early work centred on what is meant by a quality service for both the cared for and carer, with much emphasis on safety in the light of the pandemic. The enjoyment of the cared for person, whilst the carer is taking a break without their loved one is important. It is crucial that staff are aware of the specific needs of carers when accessing any health or social care service.



With several largescale pieces of engagement/review work currently going on in Merton relating to both the impact of Covid on carers and the needs of adults with a learning disability, these should provide useful information for Task Group 4. The aim is to develop a clear understanding of the demographics of carers which will support service planning; and to start to develop a model for enhanced support and personalised care to carers in health and social care services.

Another aim is to work towards making sure support in the community provides a variety of options for customers and carers e.g., through befriending initiatives. This includes ensuring that Carers Assessments include creative support plans to give carers a short break in a way that meets their needs and supports their wellbeing – and make greater flexible use of Carers Discretionary Grants.



The group plans to refresh their objectives as many of the proposed outcomes are medium or long term in nature, and currently not relevant as carers can't access respite or short breaks at present.

We'll keep you updated on progress across all four areas – do let us have any comments you'd like to feed into any of the groups' work.

Carers Assessments

Merton Mencap LD Carers Support Service

Submitted by Yvonne Dawes, LD Carers Advisor, Merton Mencap



What is a Carers Assessment?

A carer's assessment is for carers over 18 years old who are looking after another adult over 18 years old with a Learning Disability and/or Autism. It is an opportunity to record the impact caring has on your life and what support or services are available to help. The assessment will look at for example,

physical, mental and emotional needs, and whether you are able or willing to carry on caring.

Who can have a carer's assessment?

Any carer who appears to have needs for support can have an assessment by our Mencap Carers Adviser. You will be entitled to an assessment regardless of the amount or type of care you provide, your financial means or your level of need for support. You don't necessarily have to live with the person you are looking after or be caring full-time to have an assessment. You may be juggling work and care and this is having a big impact on your life.

You can have an assessment whether or not the person you are looking after has had a needs assessment, or if the local council have decided they are not eligible for support. If you are sharing caring responsibilities with another person, or more than one person, you can each have an assessment

How can a Carers Assessment help me?

Completing a carers assessment may help in the following ways:



- Provide you with a Carers Grant. Carers can use this grant to fund a variety of things that will improve their own physical, mental wellbeing, help you to connect with others. E.g. to purchase gardening equipment, to fund trips/meals out, for haircuts/new clothes, attend an exercise or college course. You may be directed to other agencies in the borough offering small grants for essential items.
- Connect you to Merton Mencap Services. E.g. Groups for adults, help to find activities for cared for person, guidance and information on caring for an adult with a Learning Disability and/or Autism.
- Direct you to local organisations for help with a range of issues such as improving finances, mental health, physical health and connecting with others in the community.
- Information and advice on planning for emergencies and future planning for your cared for person should you become unable to continue in your caring role.

How do I get a Carer's Assessment?

Your assessment can take place over the phone or in person. Contact Merton Mencap Carers Advisor Yvonne Dawes for more information.

Email LDCarers.Support@mertonmencap.org.uk or call on **020 3963 0595**.



Jeanette Townley – a tribute

We were all incredibly sad to hear that Jeanette Townley, a long-term member of Merton Mencap, had died on 22nd July. Many of you whose children went to St Ann's school (now Perseid) will remember Jeanette from when her son Philip was a pupil there - she was an active parent, both working as a school governor and taking part in a major campaign to retain the summer playscheme. Others will know her from her time chairing Mencap in the 90s when she helped to obtain its first proper funding which enabled it to employ a family support worker and assistant – the start of Merton Mencap as we know it today.



She was also an active member of the Carers Partnership Group from 2002 which worked alongside the Learning Disability Partnership Board (now the LD Forum) to represent family carers. And was one of the first members of the steering group when Adults First was formed in 2016.

Jeanette was an extremely intelligent, thoughtful person with great integrity who had a very strong sense of what was fair and where injustices needed to be challenged – both in her personal life and more widely for carers and adults with a learning disability. She was a great campaigner – over the years she took part in a long running campaign to try to make sure enough good quality respite care was available in the borough. She spoke at Scrutiny meetings several times, wrote excellent letters to both the local and national press, and was willing to work hard to hold people to account and challenge decisions.

She also worked as a volunteer for Sutton Citizens Advice Bureau, where not only her breadth of knowledge but also her personal experience of things like the benefit system, adult social care, and the impact of government policies like the bedroom tax stood her in very good stead when it came to helping others. Despite her own problems – or maybe because of them – she always took an interest in the lives of her friends.

Over the years Jeanette turned her hand to a multitude of practical tasks like ambitious home improvements, decorating and gardening, alongside being an inveterate reader, particularly enjoying biographies and historical books. And above all, despite having had to face enormous obstacles in her personal life, she was a fantastic mother. She will be truly missed by so many people, both as friend and colleague, and as a fellow campaigner.

An update from Padraic Costello *Clinical Nurse Specialist, Learning Disability Liaison Nursing Team, St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*

Our team continues to see a high volume of referrals with 1,327 received during the last financial year. This represented a growth increase of 11.9% on the previous year.

COVID 19 has had a big impact on the lives of people with a learning disability (LD) and those providing care and treatment at St George's. Our team saw 39 adults with a learning disability who had COVID19. Sadly 12 of those people did not survive the hospital admission. Most people came from Wandsworth or Merton and 41% of all people we saw were from BAME communities. We noted that people with Down Syndrome were particularly susceptible especially during the second wave.



The Trust participated in this year's NHS England Learning Disability Benchmarking Standards Survey which involved us getting feedback from 100 people with a learning disability who had accessed St George's in the previous year, seeking the views of 50 members of staff at St George's about their perceptions of the needs of people who have a learning disability plus information relating to the numbers of people with a learning disability accessing the hospital, the reasonable adjustments available, the numbers of people with a learning disability who died at St George's, and how many staff at St George's received LD awareness training.

We hope to receive a report from NHS England and when we do, we would like to share it with the Learning Disability Patient Partnership Engagement Group for discussion on how we can make further improvements.



We know that our team needs to be doing more to make sure that information is accessible to people with a learning disability accessing the hospital. Reena, a Nursing Associate who joined us in February, to cover Shevon Dalena's maternity leave has been assisting us to develop easy read leaflets which will be available soon. Examples include how to access the MRI department, knowing what to expect at a pre-op assessment and how to make a complaint about care and treatment at St George's. This work will also help us in meeting the national Learning Disability Improvement Standards - <https://bit.ly/3gzblQg>.

Over 500 members of staff took part in face-to-face LD awareness training last year and our team will

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soon be developing an online training module for all 9,000 staff at St George's in preparation for the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training Programme. The LD information pack has been reviewed, updated and disseminated to all wards and departments and a new LD page on the Trust Intranet containing valuable information for hospital staff has been developed. All patients known to our team have a LD flag placed on their records. This alerts hospital staff that the patient has a learning disability and may need reasonably adjusted care. The flag can be removed for any patient or their family member not wishing to have this on record.



Finally, our team has a small account which is managed by St George's Hospital Charity containing donations from family members of people with a learning disability. We hope to use the funds for the benefit of people with a learning disability accessing St George's Hospital.



Padraic Costello

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[Merton Mencap | Donate or fundraise for us](#)

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To join **Kids First** or **Adults First**, general enquiries, book a place on our sessions, and for newsletter contributions please contact us.

Upcoming Events

Workshops & Events



All Kids First & Adults First workshops & events are FREE. We intend to continue our forum events online via Zoom webinar/meetings, but from September will be providing the opportunity for people without digital access to take part in our events at our offices at the Chaucer Centre where sessions will be shown live on screen. More information on how to participate using Zoom or at our offices will be attached to all event invitations.

Please note, some details about the sessions are not yet finalised but members will receive further information about each session.

Recordings

Some of our webinars will be recorded and posted on our YouTube channel Merton Mencap TV (<https://bit.ly/2X0QZ0I>) members will be notified when they are posted.



Kids First session

Friday 17 September, 10am to 12pm

SEN Support - For parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) or suspected SEN, who do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with Paula Jewes, Independent SEND Consultant

An information session covering the responsibilities of early years settings, schools & colleges to identify SEN, & support children & young people to progress. The session may touch on when & why a child or young person may need an EHCP, but will not be about the EHCP assessment process itself nor the content of an EHCP.

Adults First session

Friday 24 September, 10am to 12pm

Employment & Volunteering

with Daniela Woolston, Employment Advisor, Merton Employment Team, Ayda El-Deweiny, Disability Employment Advisor Lead for Merton & Sutton (DWP) & Kumiko Brocklebank, Project Coordinator, Fayre & Square Wimbledon CIC

Information on the help & support available in finding work & gaining new skills. Merton's Employment Team help people with learning disabilities into employment by providing support with CV writing, job applications, interview skills, a job club & more. Disability Employment Advisors support disabled people into work & volunteering, & have access to specialist employment support. Fayre & Square Wimbledon is an employability project & community run handmade craft shop offering flexible training placements to individuals with perceived barriers to employment, including people

with physical or learning difficulties, mental health challenges & language or confidence issues.
Kids First members with older young people welcome

Kids First & Adults First session

Tuesday 5 October, 10am to 12pm

Staying Well with NHS Merton & the Covid 19 vaccine

with NHS Merton, SW London Clinical Commissioning Group colleagues

Hear the latest information about healthcare in Merton, future projects, annual health checks for adults with learning disabilities plus an update on the Covid vaccination programme for adults & children & young people from age 12. Don't miss this opportunity to find out more & ask your questions!

Kids First & Adults First session

Wednesday 13 October, 10am to 12pm

Mental Capacity, Lasting Power of Attorneys & Deputyships explained

with Philip Warford, Managing Director of Renaissance Legal

If a person lacks ability to make a decision, then their Mental Capacity is questioned. Philip Warford, lawyer & specialist in planning for the future of disabled & vulnerable people, will talk through the key principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, who can make a Lasting Power of Attorney & how the Court of Protection might help. If you are a parent/carer of a child or young person who may not be able to make decisions about their welfare & finances now or in the future, this session will be beneficial for you too, as you will need to consider the best ways to protect them as they move to adulthood.

Kids First session

Thursday 4 November, 10am to 12pm

SEND Update

with Karla Finikin, Head of SEN & Disabilities Integrated Service (SENDIS)

An opportunity to hear an update on SEND issues & ask your questions.

Kids First session

Thursday 25 November, 10am to 12pm

Emotional Health & Wellbeing of children & young people with SEND in Merton

with Sarah Keen, Senior Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Transformation Manager (Merton), NHS SW London Clinical Commissioning Group & Off the Record, a charity providing free, professional support to young people in Merton

Sarah will provide a CCG CAMHS update covering how they are working together with partners to

support the emotional health & wellbeing of children & young people in Merton, including an update of i-Thrive (an integrated, person centred & needs led approach to delivering mental health services for children, young people & their families), mental health support teams in schools & other services commissioned. Hear from Merton's Off the Record service for young people aged 11-25 who live in Merton (or have a Merton GP). Find out how young people can access free & confidential emotional support & counselling

Adults First session

November (date to be agreed), 11am to 1pm

Update on Merton's review of day opportunities for adults with learning disabilities

with Phil Howell, Assistant Director, Strategy & Improvement & Gill Moore, Head of the Integrated Learning Disabilities Service

Merton Council is reviewing the future of day opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in the borough, which includes day centres run by the Council, services purchased from care providers & activities in the community. Following the 'Big Conversation', an engagement process which captured the views of people with learning disabilities, their families, carers & the professionals who support them, Phil & Gill are returning to share the latest information about this review & the next steps.

Adults First session

December (date to be agreed), 10am to 12pm

Arts Therapies for adults with learning disabilities & autism

with members of Merton's Arts Therapies Team & a representative from Nordoff Robbins, the UK's largest music therapy charity

Arts Therapies, such as drama, dance/movement, art & music are forms of psychotherapy which can help people with learning disabilities & autism to work through feelings that may not easily be put into words & discover fulfilling & resourceful ways of being, & interacting with the world. Find out about the many benefits these therapies can bring in terms of enriching someone's life, improving their health, wellbeing & personal growth.

Kids First members with older young people welcome

Merton Mencap Registered Office Address:

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Registration Number 5692213 (England)

Registered Charity Number 111344

