



Merton's Forum for Parents of Children & Young
People with Disabilities or Special Needs



Merton's Forum for Family Carers of Adults with
Learning Disabilities and Autism

News and Information Spring 2022

Information for **Kids First**, Merton's forum for Parent Carers of Children and Young people with disabilities or special needs, aged 0-25, living or educated in Merton

Kids First welcomes 4 news steering group members

to our team of volunteer parent carers who drive forward the business and planning of Kids First and represent our members at Boards and forums in Merton! Welcome aboard **Gail, Louise, Melanie, and Sandra** who are joining our more established members, April, Fiona, Janina, and Melanie! This is great news, as we desperately needed more steering group members to fulfil all our parent representative roles.

But we can't stop here

We still need parents of children and young people of all ages and from all communities in Merton to join our steering group so that we are truly representative of all. Remember! You don't need to be an expert on anything. Your expertise is being a parent of a child or young person with SEND. **To find out more please contact Tracy, the Forum Manager on kids.first@mertonmencap.org.uk**

Merton Mencap services

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 can also 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.



South West London
Clinical Commissioning Group



To book a session contact

07709 715206 / maps.coordinator@mertonmencap.org.uk

ACES Youth Club for children and young people with high functioning ASD/Asperger's aged 14 – 18

The club runs on Thursday evenings from 6.45pm to 8.30pm either in the community or at our Phipps Bridge base. Participants must be able to use a mobile phone, use an oyster card/freedom pass independently and should be able to travel safely in

the community when part of a group. A weekly contribution of £4 is payable by termly invoice. The activities, topics and outings will be selected as much as possible by the participants themselves.

Buddies Going Out

Buddies Going Out provide opportunities for young people aged 16-25 with mild to moderate learning disabilities/ASD to take part in activities which

promote health, wellbeing, and their inclusion in the community. **6.30pm-8.30pm every Wednesday evening, term time only.**



The above clubs for children and young people are all self-referrals. A waiting list currently applies.

To find out more and be added to the waiting list contact **Niki Lowe**

office.manager@mertonmencap.org.uk / 020 3963 0599

<https://www.mertonmencap.org.uk/for-children-and-young-people/>



Independent Travel Training Service

Did you know that many young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities can 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 14-25, has an EHCP and is potentially eligible for home to school/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.

Merton Mencap also **offers an Independent Travel Training service for young people up to 18 years-old who do not qualify to travel on transport provided by the local authority.** Thanks to funds from BBC Children in Need, Merton Mencap can provide the training to young people who regularly attend a club, visit a friend/relative, or go to school within the London Borough of Merton. **For further information contact us: travel.trainer2@mertonmencap.org.uk**

MIASS (Merton Information, Advice and Support Service)

is co-commissioned by Merton Council and the NHS to provide free, confidential, and impartial information, advice and support to children and young people (aged 0-25) with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and their parents/carers who live in Merton. They are also running Early Years drop-ins at Newminster Children's Centre (next to Malmesbury Primary School), Newminster Road, SM45 6HJ.



These sessions provide free advice and guidance for families with children aged 0 to 5 and practitioners and run on Fridays during term time. For more information, please contact miass@merton.gov.uk

Polka Theatre reopened in August 2021. Did you know they offer relaxed performances?

For each Polka production there is a BSL performance, an audio described performance and a relaxed performance. Relaxed performances provide a more relaxed environment and may be suitable for children with autism or with sensory sensitivities. During these performances, the lights are not completely dimmed in the auditorium, the volume of the show is lowered, there is a reduced capacity in the auditorium and there is a screen outside the theatre to see the show should a child wish to take a short break but not miss what's going on inside. The team produce a 'relaxed pack' which includes pictures of the venue and production images, with a breakdown of who plays

which character, to help children prepare for their visit and what to expect during the production. Polka Theatre has new play facilities including dressing-up, books, ride-on toys, a popular 'magnet wall' and an outside playground. **Opening hours are Tuesday to Sunday from 9am to 5pm (from 9.30am on weekends) and facilities are free**, so the team hope you'll pop in with your children to play! A schedule of performances is available at www.polkatheatre.com. **Please contact Community Engagement Manager, Fran Chabrel at fran@polkatheatre.com / 07552808290** with any queries you may have about visiting the theatre.



Discover your SEND Local Offer

The Local Offer brings information together about support and services for children and young people with SEND up to the age of 25. If you are seeking information about how services might work to support your child or are looking for specific services to access, the Local Offer can help. This information can be found in one place - the Local Offer website at www.merton.gov.uk/localoffer.

The Local Offer belongs to you. It is here to help you and your child and other families with children and young people with SEND. If there are services that you are aware of and they are not currently in the Local Offer, then do let the service know by emailing localoffer@merton.gov.uk

Has your child or young person got an M-Card?

With services reopening, it may be a good time to apply for, or renew your M-Card. The M-Card is accepted in a range of places and by organisations that offer concessions or assistance, such as museums, theme parks, zoos, football clubs and more. M-Card holders also benefit from parking concessions, including 30 minutes free in pay and display zones at school pick up / drop-off times and 2 hours of free parking at children's centres. You can renew your child's M-card online: M-Card information on Merton's Local Offer.

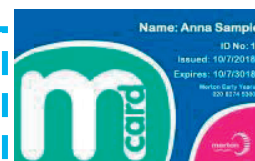
Find out more about parking concession for M-Card holders here

<https://bit.ly/MDIRECTORIES2>

2

Find out more about how to apply for and use your M-Card here

<https://bit.ly/MDIRECTORIES>





SENDIS Hotline!

To speak to your allocated EHCP Co-ordinator or if they aren't available, the duty EHCP Co-ordinator, please telephone SENDIS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service) on 020 8545 4810 or you can email sen@merton.gov.uk

SOS! SEN Helpline! Open 9:30am - 12:30pm and 1pm - 4pm Monday to Friday as well as Tuesday and Wednesday evenings 8-10pm during term time
T: 020 8538 3731



SOS! SEN is a national charity aiming to empower parents and carers of children with SEN to tackle successfully themselves the difficulties they face when battling for their children's rights.

Caudwell Children are offering charity-funded autism assessments with no waiting lists to eligible children ♥

- ☆ Available to families all across the UK, including Northern Ireland.
- ☆ Diagnosis recognised by the NHS.
- ☆ Assessment takes two days at our purpose-built centre with a full in-house multidisciplinary team.
- ☆ Assessments offered within three months of referral being accepted.
- ☆ 12 months of post-diagnostic support.

Find out more here: <https://bit.ly/AUTISMASSESSMENT>



MOVE MOOD

Move Mood is an app developed for teenage mental health charity stem4 by Dr Nihara Krause, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, and uses the evidence-based treatment Behavioural Activation Therapy to help you improve your mood by encouraging you to increase your motivation to carry out a variety of tasks in order to help you to move forward, take control and feel positive.

You can personalise the app by selecting a companion and you will be able to track your progress and notice change.

Please note the app is an aid in treatment but does not replace it. <https://www.movemood.co.uk/>

contact For families with disabled children

Government announces £30 million for short breaks for families with disabled children

On the 1 February the government announced [£30 million for additional short breaks for families with disabled children](#) - a welcome step towards creating a better system of health and care support for every family with a disabled child.

The [Disabled Children's Partnership \(DCP\)](#) - a partnership of over 100 disability charities, which Contact's CEO co-chairs - has for years been calling for more dedicated funding for social care to support families with disabled children including short breaks and respite care. This new funding also includes an additional £18 million for supported internships.

Read the [government's press notice](#) about the new funding: <https://bit.ly/gov-new-funding>

Updates from the local Authority

Submitted by the London Borough of Merton



SEND Inspection Re-Visit

The local authority and health partners are continuing to prepare for a re-visit from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, to check progress against their Written Statement of Action (WSOA) following the 2019 Local Area SEND Inspection. The focus will be on the three areas of weakness identified at the 2019 inspection. You can see the latest update on the WSOA and improvements [here: \(https://bit.ly/WSOAupdate\)](https://bit.ly/WSOAupdate). The local area will receive 10 working day notice of the re-visit, which gives inspectors enough time to run a week-long online survey for parents and carers. Schools will offer support to parents who can't access this themselves. The inspectors will then be on-site for 2 to 4 days, meeting with different groups of people to hear how SEND services in the local area have improved against the three areas of weakness. They will ask to meet with a group of parents and carers, as well as a group of young people, to hear their views in more detail. This could either be in person or virtual. For more details, please see the [full re-visit guidance here: https://bit.ly/REVISITMERTON](https://bit.ly/REVISITMERTON) or contact sarah.momber@merton.gov.uk

SEN Service Feedback

The SEN Assessment Team are sending a feedback form to parents/carers following the finalisation of a new Education Health and Care Plan. These are sent out on a monthly basis. The feedback from parent's and carers helps the department to improve practice and celebrate what is working well. The SEN Service is developing a system to ensure that the feedback form is sent to parents/carers following an annual review to gain feedback on this process. These forms will start to be sent out after Easter following annual reviews.

Safety Valve Programme

Merton was invited in July 2021 to participate in the second round of the Department for Education's (DfE) 'safety valve' (SV) intervention programme which aims to reduce the historical deficit to the dedicated schools grant (DSG). Merton's deficit stood at £25m at the end of March 2021. The initial part of the process has now concluded, and Merton has been recommended for formal inclusion in the SV programme. A proposed recovery plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for Education, and a final ministerial decision is expected in March 2022.

The SV recovery plan has three key components: investing in additional staff, an increase in places for children with SEND and getting better value for

money when using non-maintained and independent schools. The council is investing £1.1m in additional staffing to support children and young people in schools, colleges and settings. The recruitment process has already started. Please see the Merton website for current vacancies. In conjunction with the SV plan we have been invited by the DfE to bid for capital funding to increase places for children with SEND. This high level bid will be submitted to the DfE in mid-March. Our key objectives are to improve Merton's "local offer" and balance the DSG by 2026/27. Contact Nick Wilson for any further information

Email: nick.wilson@merton.gov.uk

Merton's Home to School Travel Consultation

An update from Tom Procter, Head of Contracts and School Organisation

Merton Council ran a consultation on home to school travel that ran from 23 November 2021 to 5 January 2022. It took the form of a consultation paper, an on-line questionnaire, two webinar events with Kids First, and meetings with staff and students at three schools in Merton with specialist provision.

There were two main aspects to the consultation:

First, what do people think of more 'inclusive' forms of home to school travel for young people with special educational needs- Independent Travel Training and Personal Travel Assistance Budgets (PTABs). **Second**, what do people think of the 'discretionary' policies, where the Council has the choice to provide travel assistance or make its own decision as to what travel assistance is necessary. The discretionary policy applies to children of pre-school age (under 5) who have special educational needs and students of sixth form age (16-18) who have special educational needs.

There were 155 responses to the questionnaire, most of which were from parents of children with special educational needs. **In brief**, the consultation found that there was scope and support to increase travel training to encourage more independence while a high number of respondents did not know of, or understand, how personal travel budgets worked. Most consultees were keen to ensure there would not be reductions in the discretionary areas of the home to school travel offer that could affect young people with special educational needs and disabilities' ability to access school or college places. Since the end of the consultation two further consultation meetings were held with Kids' First to consider options.



At its meeting on 21 March 2022 a report was presented to the Council's Cabinet, who agreed the following:

- To increase investment in travel training by £50,000 per year to support more opportunities for the independence and well-being of the young person to travel to school/college independently rather than using supported travel, from the age 11 where it is appropriate
- To improve the offer of personal travel budgets (PTABs), by implementing a more transparent policy, making it easier for families to receive financial recompense and increasing their promotion
- Not to introduce charging for receiving travel assistance.
- Continue to support families with children of pre-school age and post 16 students with the most significant needs, especially for those with severe and profound learning difficulties →





- Travel support for post-16 students to be predominantly through independent forms of travel assistance, such as travel training and travel budgets, where this is possible. Organised transport when unable to use independent forms of travel or where educational placement agreed is too far away to be reached independently
- To update policies in relation to post-19 home to college travel on the basis of the same strategy as above

These changes are therefore an encouragement to independent travel for those that are able, with more investment to support it where it will help, rather than any withdrawing of support to children and families that need it. Merton officers will now be working through implementing these changes, including working to get more resource into travel training and updating the policy documents to be updated for new applications from September 2022.

A comment from the Kids First steering group: the Kids First Steering Group have some concerns that changes to SEN Transport policies may impact the access to education or wellbeing of children and young people in Merton and their families and outlined these concerns ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 21 March.



The full report of the Cabinet meeting, including the Kids First response in Appendix 4, is available through this link: <https://bit.ly/TRANSPORTREPORT>



New SEND provision in Merton opens September 2022!

The brand new expansion of Melbury College has been approved and The Whatley Campus, is due to open in September 2022 under the executive leadership of Carla Chandler, Executive Headteacher of Melbury College, and is part of the wider Melbury College Federation; so has wide experience of working effectively with vulnerable children including with medical needs.

Merton Council has agreed a budget of more than £1 million to adapt and refurbish the Whatley Campus to a high standard specifically considered for the needs of children with autism, to provide high quality teaching and therapy spaces for pupils in KS2, KS3 and KS4 on the autistic spectrum (ASD) and with Speech, Language and Communication difficulties (SLCN) social, emotional, or mental health needs.

Pupils will be supported in small classes (maximum 12 pupils) with highly specialist teaching and support staff as well as a wide range of therapeutic interventions, with on-site Speech and Language therapists, Occupational Therapists, CAMHS and Music Therapy.

Pupils in KS2 and KS3 will have access to a broad curriculum offer, including the core subjects of English, Maths and Science and pupils in Key Stage 4 will have the opportunity to take GCSEs and/ or Entry Level courses, and a range of other qualifications according to their needs and abilities. For more information, see the attached update.



Information for Adults First members, Merton's forum for family carers of adults with learning disabilities & autism, aged 18 and over, living or receiving services in Merton

Updates from the Local Authority

Submitted by Gill Moore, Head of Head of Integrated Learning Disabilities Service

Learning Disabilities Day Opportunities and Community Options in Merton

Our exciting work on the Learning Disabilities Programme is progressing and a number of pieces of work are underway at the present time



Work has been undertaken to identify how Merton day services are being used both pre and post Covid, so we have a full picture. It has been acknowledged that the post-Covid position will continue to change during the recovery phase and these changes will be

taken into account on any future modelling. We have been refreshing the picture of who is attending services and have been contacting people that could not or chose not to return, in order to look at their needs now. This is a small but significant group of

people. We have also identified reasons for not attending. We have collected additional information across our day resource including the age profile of customers; where people who attend council day services live, including the type of residence i.e., family homes, residential homes, supported living, shared lives etc, whereabouts in the borough people live, how many days customers attend and how this

was split over the days of the week. We are also looking at what other day services are being used by people who in Merton. The day opportunity providers currently used by Merton customers are split into those situated within the London Borough of Merton and those that are situated out of borough. All of this refreshed information will help us all make plans for the future.

Commissioning Framework: Community Offer

We are designing the framework for our future service commissioning, building on the work from the Big Explore. This means developing a new contract and commissioning model that supports flexibility and choice for individuals.

Stakeholder Reference Group

The Reference Group continues to meet bimonthly, but we have agreed the current, Learning Disabilities Day Opportunities and Community Options Reference Group is going to be split into two separate groups to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. The group will split into:

- A Stakeholder Reference Group which the Learning Disability Service will continue to support.
- A Provider Reference Group which the Commissioning Team will support.

We are also expanding the membership of the stakeholder's group to ensure we have good representation of all groups.

Further discussions will be timetabled as part of the Reference Group meeting to identify what is currently on offer and what is required as this user groups needs differed vastly.

Evaluation Plan and Principles

We are starting the work on the key principles, which we want to ensure we follow for commissioning and developing the new service model. Some of the material in the Big Explore can be used to establish a set of evaluation principles that can be used in as part of the Commissioning work when we choose providers.

What else is happening right now? We have let people know that due to the local elections you will hear less from us at the moment until after May when elections have taken place. This is quite a broad piece of work and there are many things to consider and so we are also setting out the proposal for changes and developments for various council groups as we need to get their backing for the plans we are making. We will keep everyone updated as much as we can and look forward to continuing to work with your representatives in the Reference Group to build a new model which meets the needs of people with a Learning Disability and Autism now and in the future.

A comment from the Adults First steering group - The total reorganisation of the Day Opportunities and Community Options for those with Learning Disabilities and Autism is an enormous and complicated task, made more difficult by being carried out at a time when, throughout the country, council finances are particularly stretched, and services are still affected by the pandemic. We are already aware of a number of serious issues and questions and are discussing these amongst ourselves and with Kids First so we will be ready to raise them at future meetings and via direct communication with officers. We'll keep all our members in touch with developments.'



Merton Mencap services

New post! LD Carers Caseworker

Meet Carolyn

My name is Carolyn, and I am delighted to have joined Merton Mencap in this newly created position. My role is to improve the lives of carers of adults with learning disabilities and/or autism in Merton. I do this through hands-on support, providing information and by signposting to other services. I provide a range of interventions which support carers, including encouraging them to have the confidence to engage in community life, discussing a longer-term care-plan for their son/daughter while also identifying any training, social or recreational needs they may have. I can also assist with small grants for essential home equipment and provide a listening ear and emotional support. I care for my 19-year-old son with autism so am familiar with this journey. I do hope to meet many of you on our 'Carers Group' days out which I am delighted to say have been resurrected after a forced break during the Pandemic. **Contact:**



Carolyn Doyle on 07815 462913 or

LDcarers.caseworker@mertonmencap.org.uk.

This new service compliments the LD Carers Support Service which supports carers of adults through the completion of carers assessments and reviews, whilst offering a listening ear and emotional support.

Contact Yvonne Dawes on 020 83963 0595 or
ldcarers.support@mertonmencap.org.uk



Community Café

Vocational training at our café in Wimbledon for adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities/ASD. The Café is run by adults with a learning disability, supported by Merton Mencap staff and volunteers. **Contact the café manager, Abby Herring for more information on 07592 378942 or**
cafe.manager@mertonmencap.org.uk.

Community Challenge

Our Community Challenge Club provides opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism to discover hobbies and interests, make new friends and enjoy community outings. The club runs sessions around a specific topic each term for 5 weeks with the 6th week being a community trip. The 'challenge' aspect of the club is that we involve our club members to take an active part in deciding, planning, and evaluating club activities! Runs on Tuesdays, term time only between 1pm-4pm. Weekly subs apply.

Meet Dymphna, the new Community Facilitator!

I started in January this year and am thoroughly enjoying being part of the team.

I have experience in working in social care and education. My experience in working in Social Care has been to support adults with learning disabilities and/or autism and their families in all areas of life and making positive choices by promoting independence and wellbeing.



The Community Facilitator service supports people with a learning disability and/or autism to plan their lives, reach their goals and get the most from life. This may include creating a life-plan, helping someone know what clubs, projects and services are available and making introductions, supporting someone into volunteering or short-term support during a particular transition or difficulty.

Access to this service can be made by the person themselves, their family carers, their GP or from another organisation (e.g. local charities, social services).

I look forward to meeting you all.

Contact Dymphna on 07592 042432 or
community.facilitator@mertonmencap.org.uk

Saturday Hub

Activities which promote health, independence, and friendships for adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities/ASD. Runs Saturdays in Wimbledon, 10am – 1pm. Activities at the club include workshops that aim to develop the knowledge of members around healthy food choices, exercise, arts and crafts, music, and other fun activities. Members are also provided with a healthy meal. Waiting list applies.

Community Sports

People with a learning disability often have fewer opportunities to participate in physical activity and as a result tend to have poorer health than the rest of the population. This club for adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities/ASD provides an opportunity for our members to take part in various sports activities to encourage them to keep healthy and active. As part of empowering our members to look after their health, nutritional advice is also offered. Runs Tuesdays, 10am-12pm term time only. Weekly subs apply.

Better Gym

This club provides an opportunity for adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities/ASD to take part in various sports activities to encourage them to keep healthy and active. As part of empowering our members to look after their health, nutritional advice is also offered. Runs Wednesday evenings, 7-9pm, term time only. Weekly subs apply. Waiting list applies.

Holidays away in the UK

We have just run 2 very successful holidays at High Ashurst, Activity Centre, Boxhill for adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities/ASD – the holidays are for up to 10 participants supported by our experienced staff to take part in activities such as archery, rock climbing, team building exercises as well as an opportunity to stay away from home and make new friendships.



For more information on the above clubs and holidays contact Niki Lowe at office.manager@mertonmencap.org.uk or telephone 020 3963 0599 or view our website here: <https://www.mertonmencap.org.uk/for-adults/>

Merton Mencap Community Café re-opens (10.30am-12.30pm)

From **28 March**, our Community Café is open to:



Members of Merton Mencap
People with a learning disability/autism, and staff supporting them
Parents & carers
We will extend our invitation to the general public at a later date.

Booking is essential

Here's how to book:

Contact us on 020 3963 0597 & office.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk



Please arrive only at your booked time



When you arrive, please confirm you feel well and have no Covid symptoms.
We will also take your temperature.



We require you to wear a face-mask when moving around our café.
This can be removed when eating and drinking.

We would prefer it if you take a LFT test on the morning and show us your results on arrival (we can provide a LFT on arrival if it's a help). This is only a request. Please help us keep everyone safe during your visit.

Bon appetite!

Our Community Café is at:

Holy Trinity Church
234 The Broadway
Wimbledon SW19 1SB



Carers Support Merton

Carers Support Merton are here to support you.

We can:

- Undertake statutory Carers Assessment to make sure you are getting all the help to which you are entitled
- Provide information, advice, and guidance
- Signpost to other agencies who can give more specialist help in a specific area of concern
- Provide peer support through our closed Facebook group and hosting Coffee & Conversation online peer support group
- Help you to access or learn to use digital devices to use the internet to support your caring role



News from St George's

Padraic Costello, who has led the excellent team of specialist Learning Disability Liaison nurses there, has taken early retirement and has left on March 25th. As many of you will know this service has expanded under his leadership and provided great support to both adults with a learning disability using the hospital and also their carers. We will all be very sorry to see him go but wish him a very happy retirement.

A new practitioner has just started with the team -her name is Dearbhla (pronounced Dervla) and Padraic's replacement will be Karen who is due to commence in post once she serves out her notice with her current employer. It sounds as if there are plans for further recruitment to the team - we'll keep you updated. In the interim, any referrals can be sent to learning.disabilityreferral@stgeorges.nhs.uk



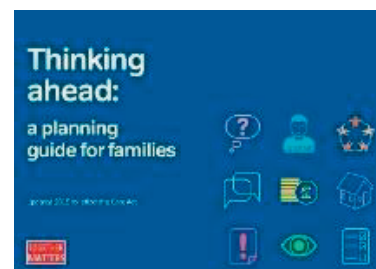
Together Matters

Together Matters is a small organisation built on the belief that talking and working together help to make better things happen in the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families. It was set up in 2016, by Christine Towers, who had previously worked at the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, where she began developing resources to help people plan. Christine has produced some great Thinking Ahead planning guides for families, covering things like **housing and support, and making financial plans, how to be part of the world of work, Annual**

Reviews, growing older and Dementia, Carers Assessments and more.

Follow this link to take you to all the guides:

<https://www.togethertomatters.org.uk/resources-and-information/>



Merton Carers Strategy 2021-26

Last year the London Borough of Merton launched a five-year Carers strategy to improve the identification, recognition and support available to Carers in the borough. The strategy identifies four priority areas for improvement:

Priority 1: Improve identification and recognition of carers and their opportunities to contribute to changes

Priority 2: Health and Wellbeing of Carers

Priority 3: Support carers to realise and reach their potential through improving access to work, education and training

Priority 4: A life alongside caring

Each area has a small working group of professionals from different organisations and Carers who meet monthly to plan the best way to implement change in each priority area. It is vital that a broad range of Carers representatives are involved in these working groups, so that any changes made meet the needs of all Carers. If you would like the opportunity to join a group and shape future services in Merton for Carers please email Tracy at

adults.first@mertonmencap.org.uk

You can read the strategy here:

<https://bit.ly/MERTONCarersStrategy>

Carers UK

Carers UK is both a supportive community and a movement for change. Their website is full of useful information including fact sheets and guides which can be downloaded as PDFs for free via the links here:

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-resources/our-factsheets>.



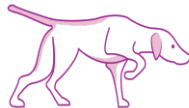
Supported Learning in Merton

There is a range of courses for adults 19+ with learning difficulties and or disabilities on offer, delivered by RHACC (Richmond & Hillcroft Adult Community College) on behalf of Merton Council. These include things like arts and crafts, independence skills, photography, gardening, and employment skills. You can get more information about all these courses and many others by following this link: <https://www.rhacc.ac.uk/supported-learning-merton>.

At present, due to continuing Covid restrictions, two of the usual centres – the JMC and Leyton Road – can't be used. But all the courses are now back on a face to face basis at Pollards Hill Library, Raynes Park Library and South Thames/Merton College.

The person who manages these courses locally is Sue Pritty (sue.pritty@rhacc.ac.uk), and she can organize advice and guidance, enrolment etc. So, contact Sue for more information about courses and for general queries use the following email address – mertonoutreach@rhacc.ac.uk.

The Benefits and Work organisation provides free fortnightly email updates on the constantly changing Welfare Benefits System. You can register for updates here: <https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk>. More detailed benefits advice can be obtained via a subscription. You can read their newsletter here: https://bit.ly/Benefits_Work

Benefits and Work
Guides you can trust 
SUPPORTING CLAIMANTS SINCE 2002

Merton Uplift



South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust

Free support services & access to therapy in Merton

Q & A with a Merton Uplift professional

Can you tell us a bit about the Merton Uplift service?

We offer a range of **free** talking therapies and wellbeing support all over the Borough to Merton residents experiencing common mental health problems like stress, anxiety or depression.

Talking therapies, or psychological therapies, are effective and confidential treatments delivered by fully trained and accredited NHS practitioners. They are delivered in different ways and could include guided self-help, counselling or an online course to name a few.

We know 1 in 4 of us will struggle with our mental health at any given time, and of course the pandemic brought a lot of stress and distress to many people. Our evidence-based therapies help people feel more in control of their lives, reduce worries and stress and improve mood.

Do I need a referral from my doctor?

You can contact Merton Uplift directly via telephone or via our website and don't have to be referred by your GP or any other healthcare professional.

Who does Merton Uplift help?

Free help is available to any adult (over 18) who is worried about their mental health and is registered with a Merton GP.

How do you assess patients?

Assessments are made during an initial 45-minute consultation with a Merton Uplift expert, usually by telephone. During the assessment you will discuss treatment and a collaborative plan for your care and support. If you have to wait a few weeks before starting your treatment, you will be offered access to our wellbeing workshops.

What do the workshops cover?

Topics include: Coping with stress, improving self-confidence, managing anger, getting better sleep and living with pain. All workshops are free to attend, and sign-up is quick and easy via Eventbrite.



Scan the QR code or access our Eventbrite link to book your space for free in our workshops.
mertonuplift.eventbrite.co.uk

@MertonUplift

For more information about Merton Uplift, or to self-refer, please contact mertonuplift@swlstg.nhs.uk or call 020 3513 5888.

Books Beyond Words are award-winning wordless picture stories covering topics including physical and mental health, lifestyle and relationships, abuse and trauma, grief and bereavement, employment, and criminal justice. Each story is co-created with and for people who find pictures easier to understand than words. This includes people with learning disabilities and/or autism, people with cognitive or communication difficulties, such as Dementia, people who have difficulty with reading, including some Deaf people, and people who do not use the language of the country where they are living.

Find out more here: <https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/>

Join the Adults First Steering Group!

Adults First have a steering group of volunteer family carers who represent our members on many local boards and meetings in Merton, as well as making decisions about the work and direction of the forum. We would love to have more steering group members, so we truly represent the opinions and problems of all. Find out more by contacting Tracy, the Forum Manager on adults.first@mertonmencap.org.uk

Calling all Kids First and Adults First members!

Please let us know if there are any sessions you would like us to run. If there is a topic you would like us to cover, please tell us using the contact details below.

Tell us your issues and share positive experiences!

Please let us know any issues you may be having with statutory services. We log all issues and use them to identify themes which informs our parent carer representation work with the local authority and health. Tell us about positive experiences too, or great services you have used!

Contact us!

Tracy Blackwell

Parent & Carer Forums Manager

E: kids.first@mertonmencap.org.uk /

adults.first@mertonmencap.org.uk

T: 020 3963 0598



Contact us!

Tuhina Shaikh

Admin Assistant for Kids First, Adults First

E: kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk /

af.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

T: 020 3963 0597

Upcoming Forum Events!

Tuesday 19 April, 10am to 12pm

Self-Care, Relaxation & Dealing with Isolation

with Jodie Hunt & Harriet Purvis, Wellbeing Practitioners from Merton Uplift

The past couple of years has been a challenging time for parents, carers & their families. Looking after your own wellbeing is important for you & the people you care for. This session will focus on the importance of taking care of yourself. Learning relaxation techniques & self-management skills to improve your overall wellbeing & dealing with feelings of isolation. Plus, time at the end to ask your questions. Merton Uplift offers talking therapies & wellbeing support for Merton residents experiencing common mental health problems, including stress, anxiety & depression.

Joint session with Adults First.

Joint
AF & KF
Event

Kids
First
Event

Tuesday 10 May, 10am to 12pm

Employment Pathways

with Melissa Shepherd from Orchard Hill College,

Bethany Madigan & Sarah Darby, Project SEARCH tutors at St Georges University Hospitals & Christine Towers, Director of Together Matters

An information packed session where we'll be hearing from Melissa, who oversees the Employment & Workstart courses at Orchard Hill, a specialist college offering social & vocational opportunities for students aged 16 plus with a range of special needs. Melissa will be providing information about the courses & some exciting new employment pathways the college are offering as part of the Workstart programme.

Bethany & Sarah will deliver information about Project SEARCH, a 9 month training & employment opportunity for adults aged 18-24 with a learning disability at St George Hospital & Christine is joining us to talk about the latest addition to the Thinking Ahead guides called 'How to be part of the world of work', one of a range of guides produced by Christine to help families looking at the future needs of their young people & adults with a learning disability.

Don't miss out! Register your place now!

Adults First members welcome!

Adults
First
members
welcome



Friday 27 May, 10am to 12pm

**Merton Mencap update on services for family carers
& adults with a learning disability or autism**

with Andrew Whittington, Chief Executive of Merton Mencap, Yvonne Dawes, LD Carers Advisor, Carolyn Doyle, LD Carers Caseworker & Dymphna Graham, Community Facilitator

Hear the latest news & information on Merton Mencap's services for adults with a learning disability or autism from Andrew & ask your questions!

Plus meet Carolyn, Dymphna & Yvonne & find out what support they can offer family carers & their relatives with LD/ASD.

A short message on NON-FORUM Merton Mencap Events

Submitted by Maria Solari, Community Engagement Officer

Following our wonderful community events last year, we are very excited about our upcoming Community Event Schedule for 2022!

Highlights include our accessible Dance in the Park event for people with *any* ability! This event is being run by our dance teacher, Olivia, and it will be filmed from above by a drone expert who'll be joining us! Apart from raising funds and awareness, we'll have a fantastic promotional film of the event!

Please keep an eye on our social media as we have lots of events coming up such as **our Easter events, art competition, online zoom sessions, auction & quiz night, & Christmas events** for all our services users to take part in.

This will all be on our social media & our website blog so look out.

To find out more:

Call Maria on 07709715206 or email: community.engagement@mertonmencap.org.uk

2022

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.

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.

Volunteer for Merton Mencap

Volunteer for Merton Mencap means that you donate your skills, experience, or knowledge to help children & young adults affected by learning and /or autism. Support children and adults with a learning disability who attend our clubs and activities, contribute time in other areas of our business, such as fundraising or administration. We will give you all the training and support you need. Meet new people and make friends. To find out more:
Call Maria on 07709715206 or email:
community.engagement@mertonmencap.org.uk



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

Thank You