



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

Newsletter

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



Join the Kids First or Adults First Steering Group!

Help us to improve services in Merton for children and young people with SEND, and adults with learning disabilities and autism, and their families.

We are looking for new steering group members NOW! We need parents and carers of children, young people and adults of all ages and from all communities in Merton, so that we are truly representative of all.

Our steering groups are made up of volunteer parents and carers who are members of our forums just like you!

The steering groups decide on the business and direction of each forum and represent you, our members, at meetings in Merton with the local authority and health. Their aim is to make sure the voice of parents and carers is heard in the design and delivery of services in Merton which affect you and the person you care for.

You are all experts by experience so please consider joining one of the steering groups and help us to influence improvements in local services for you and your families.

We couldn't run the forums without our amazing steering groups. Thank you so much for volunteering your time to improve services in Merton and achieve better outcomes for local families.



To find out more please contact Tracy Blackwell, the Parent & Carer Forums Manager on 07518 903260 or email kids.first@mertonmencap.org.uk.

We need

YOU!



Merton Mencap's services

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

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

Here are a few examples of our fantastic recordings below:

Adults First, Supported learning courses for adults with learning difficulties or disabilities

<https://bit.ly/407Q3Go>

Kids First, Information session about Education, Health and Care Plans

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

We have a number of helpful recordings plus more on the way! Keep an eye out by **subscribing** to our YouTube channel to stay up to date with our sessions & workshops.



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Kids First is Merton's Forum for Parent Carers of Children and Young People living or educated in Merton, aged 0-25, with a special need or disability (including mild to severe learning disabilities, complex medical needs, physical or sensory impairments, autistic spectrum disorders and others). We receive 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. We are members of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums.

The aims of the forum are:

- To make sure the voice of parent carers is heard in the design and delivery of services in Merton which affect children and young people with SEND
- To empower parent carers with information and knowledge
- To provide opportunities for parent carers to meet, share experiences and reduce isolation

The forum does this by providing regular educational workshops and events with experts, local service providers and key decision makers in the borough to give parent carers a voice and influence on local issues. We support parent carers to be representatives at all the important local meetings, committees and Boards in Merton, produce this twice-yearly newsletter, and keep our members up to date with the latest news throughout the year including forthcoming events and new local services.

The forum is run by a steering group of volunteer parent carers, who decide on the business of the forum and represent our members at meetings and focus groups in Merton. Our steering group members currently represent you at the following meetings:

- **Autism Strategy Partnership Steering Group**
- **CAMHS Partnership Board**
- **Employability Forum**
- **Steering group monthly meetings with Merton's Director of Education & Early Help, the Head of SENDIS, health and social care colleagues**

- **i-Thrive working group looking at the mental health support for neurodiverse CYP**
- **Merton Accessible Sports for SEND Working Group**
- **Merton's Children's Trust**
- **Merton Health and Care Community Voice Forum**
- **Merton Health SEND Network**
- **MIASS Advisory Board**
- **Preparation for Adulthood Board**
- **SEND Local Offer Focus Group**
- **SEND Strategic Governance Board**
- **SENDAP Strategy action Plan**
- **Short Breaks review**



Here's a few highlights of the work our parent representatives (reps) from the Kids First steering group were involved with last year!

- We ran 18 sessions for our members. **292 parent carers attended at least 1 session during the year, with many attending many more.**
- We published **2 forum newsletters** in collaboration with Adults First.
- 2 reps continued to attend **Merton's SEND Strategic Governance Board**. 1 rep attended the Boards development day and spoke to the audience of professionals involved in supporting children and young people with SEND across education, health and social care about the positives and negatives of her lived experience. **It was a great opportunity to share the highs and lows of the reality many families experience to an audience of professionals who support SEND families in Merton.**
- Every month our steering group met with Merton's Director of Education and Early Help, the Head of SENDIS and health/social care colleagues, to discuss ongoing areas of work. **The action log created and maintained by the LA, called the 'You Said We Did Log' continued to be used, reviewed and updated at these meetings.**
- Merton's Director of Education and Early Help made a commitment to improve co-production. **The steering group shared their views on where they feel co-production could be improved** and in February 2024 attended a workshop with key senior officers in Merton to drive home the value of coproduction and agree some key



principles going forward. This work continues.

- The steering group **provided feedback to help shape Merton's refreshed SENDAP Strategy**, alongside the engagement meetings open to all Kids First members. They suggested ways to engage with stakeholders and ensure an inclusive and effective approach to working in co-production with children and young people and parent carers and facilitated some of the breakout groups at sessions to capture parent carer views. The SENDAP Strategy was launched at Merton's SEND Conference in April 2024

https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/SEND%20Strategy_V5.pdf

- Steering group members from Kids First and Adults First **met with Merton councillors in a scrutiny task group looking at improving employment opportunities for people with autism** in the borough and shared their experiences.

- Steering group members from Kids First and Adults First **joined Merton's Employability Forum** which oversees employability support and the development of supported internships in Merton. A Pathways to Employment booklet was finalised as part of this work and circulated to Kids First and Adults First members:

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

- Our reps contributed **feedback and suggestions for the SEND Local Offer refresh**.
- Our CAMHS Partnership Board rep joined an i-Thrive working group to look at **improving the mental health support available for children and young people with neurodevelopmental needs** following issues raised by Kids First members. We hope this ongoing work will lead to better outcomes for families.
- We met with **Merton Social Prescribers to promote the forum** and reach more families.
- Steering group members met with **a Merton Participation and Engagement worker developing Merton's SEND Youth Advisory Forum** to share what they feel could be done to better support young people with SEND in Merton have their say.

- A steering group member joined the interview panel for **the full-time role of Merton's Designated Clinical Officer for SEND**. The role was recruited to, and the

new DCO, attended a forum session alongside Merton's Lead Integrated Children's Senior Transformation Manager to talk about priorities & future plans to improve health care services & outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Merton.

- Following our involvement in the Crisis Key Worker Programme in 22/23, **the Key Worker Service was fully launched last year in all six SW London boroughs (Merton, Croydon, Sutton, Richmond, Kingston and Wandsworth)**. We have been advised the service has successfully intervened and broken cycles of crisis and admission to mental health hospitals for a number of children.
- A steering group member met with **the Service Manager and Team Leader for Merton's Children with Disabilities Team** in March 2024 to discuss how families access the team, the need to clearly define eligibility criteria for all services, and to improve communication with families. Discussions continue.
- **We continue to collaborate with Merton IASS and run annual events for our members** providing information about the transition process from primary to secondary school for parents of children with EHCP's. These sessions are a great source of support and information to families and Merton IASS have seen a reduction in the number of school transition enquiries from families as a result. **(Continued on page 4)**

Recap



And here's a taste of what the steering group have been up to since April

- Reps attended a meeting to discuss **Merton's SENDAP Strategy** action plan.
- Reps attended a meeting with the Head of SEND and Executive Lead for SEND in the South West London Integrated Care System to present some of the key themes from families related to health in our local area, alongside representatives from other SW London parent carer forums. As follow up, we have been invited to **Merton Health SEND Network meetings**.



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Kids First Word Cloud



Key SEND statistics for Merton

Submitted by Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Director of Education and Early Help

These figures come from the national data collection for SEND children and young people, carried out by the Government. The most recently published data (summer 2024) covers the 2023 calendar year.

- The number of Merton residents with an EHCP rose by 3.9% across 2023, to a total of 2587, and Merton's EHCP rate remains one of the highest in London.
- This rise was underpinned by a rise in the number of requests seen and the issuing of 403 new EHCPs. The rise was offset by the cessation of some plans (which takes place when it is no longer necessary for the LA to maintain a plan)
- The rate of EHCPs being issued within the 20-week target, excluding exceptional cases, was 67.3% (well above the England average of 50.3%). We are pleased to report that this rate has risen further to 80%+ so far this year.
- The largest primary needs identified within new EHCPs are Speech, Language and Communication Needs, Social, Emotional and Mental Health and ASD.

Achievement of pupils with SEND in Merton schools in 2023

- In 2023, 33% of EHCP pupils met the year 1 phonics standard. This was 13% points higher than the England average, ranking Merton ninth of all England local authorities, and top among statistical neighbours
- The attainment of EHCP pupils at KS1 was also particularly strong, ranking within the top five local authorities in England for the proportions reaching the expected standard in each of reading, writing and maths.
- KS2 attainment of EHCP pupils was strong across the headline measures, with a particular strength in reading. The percentage of EHCP pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in reading (31.7%) was the third highest in England.

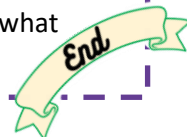


- At +0.15, the average Progress 8* score for SEN Support pupils was particularly high, placing Merton 6th among all local authorities in England.
- Similarly, the average Progress 8* score for EHCP pupils increased from -1.50 in 2022 to -0.37 in 2023, which is 0.75 points higher than the England average and the second highest among local authorities in England.
- At 22.1, the average Attainment 8* score for EHCP pupils was well above the England average of 14.0, placing Merton 5th among local authorities in England
- Both SEN Support and EHCP pupils performed well in the English Baccalaureate, consistently ranking in the top quartile of England local authorities. In particular, 6% of EHCP pupils achieved at least a grade 4 in the English Baccalaureate, which is 4% points greater than the England average and the 4th highest proportion among England local authorities.

* 'Progress 8' is a way of measuring the progress that pupils make from the end of key stage 2 (the last year of primary school) to the end of key stage 4 (when they take GCSEs).

The higher a pupil's 'Progress 8' score, the more progress they have made in comparison with pupils who started at a similar level.

Many, many congratulations to our children and young people, and we look forward to seeing what the 2024 exams and assessments bring!



Activities and other information

Merton's Sensory Libraries – Project Sense

All Merton children's libraries have a unique theme with sensory equipment and specialist SEND book stock, specially adapted toys and equipment that can be borrowed.

A few examples: Colliers Wood Library's Space theme, Mitcham Library's Arctic theme.

In addition to these facilities, they have a programme of SEND events and activities. All staff have received specialist SEND training.

Contact: marketing.assistant@merton.gov.uk

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/47Aj9Qy>

Open the document here: <https://bit.ly/3NzvgMS>



Merton SEND Youth Advisory Forum

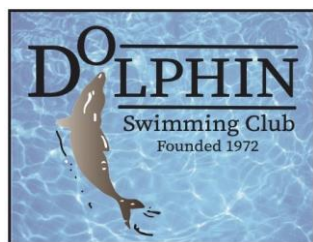
This is a new forum for young people that meet once every half term (currently online), to discuss the matters that are most important to them in Merton. At the moment, this group is only open to those attending Merton special school councils, but it is hoped the group will be expanded to include more young people. Watch this space!



Dolphin Swimming

<https://www.dolphinswimming.co.uk/> located in Wandsworth and Putney

The Dolphin Swimming Club was founded over 50 years ago by parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities, aged 5+ years who saw a way for their children to learn to swim, be active and break their social isolation.



The club's sessions take place at the Latchmere Leisure Centre in Wandsworth on Friday evenings and at the Putney Leisure Centre on Sunday evenings, both during school terms.

Royal Mencap Supported Internships

Supported internships are open to young people aged 16-24 with an EHCP. They may be the ideal programme for young people not currently in employment, education or training who want to work.

Mencap's supported internships are delivered to small groups and provide access to work experience opportunities with a wide range of employers across lots of different sectors, supporting people to find paid work at the end of the programme. To find out more about the programme, please visit their website: <https://bit.ly/4e2z6k5>

Free swimming for under 16s in Merton

Swim for free at the below leisure centres:

Canons Leisure Centre, Mitcham

Every weekend: **1.30pm-3.30pm**

Term time: **Wednesdays 4-6pm**

School holidays and public holidays: **9am-11am and 1pm-3pm**



Morden Leisure Centre

Every weekend: **1-3pm**

Term time: **Monday-Friday 4-5.30pm**

School holidays and public holidays: **9am-11am and 1pm-3pm**

Wimbledon Leisure Centre

Every weekend: **1-3pm**

Term time: **Fridays 4-6pm**

School holidays and public holidays: **9am-11am and 1pm-3pm**

Book here: <https://bit.ly/3Nsliok>

The Giving Back club

The Giving Back Club supports young people aged 16-24 with a learning disability or autism to 'give something back to their communities', by undertaking volunteering and work experience placements, support local campaigns, and helping others in our communities and more.

Taking place on Saturdays, all year round, 10am-2pm.

Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/4dYUfeU>



ACES Active

A weekly club running term time, for young people aged 16-24 with a mild / moderate learning disability and / or autism.

Participants spend the first hour in the gym, followed by half hour socialising with friends and for the final hour, we have a sports coach who runs different sessions each week.

The purpose of the club is for young adults to develop friendships and social networks, improve health and wellbeing, and to enjoy themselves.

For further information visit:

<https://www.mertonmencap.org.uk/services/aces-active/>



Emotional health and wellbeing support and advice

Parent Carer Needs Assessments

If you are a Parent Carer of a child with a disability you are entitled to an assessment of your own needs. This is called a Parent Carer Needs Assessment (PCNA).

In practice, an assessment of your needs, and the needs of any other adults or children in the family, will be combined with an assessment of your child with a disability. However, you do have the right to ask for an assessment of your needs separately from that of your child, if you wish. The assessment should discuss the help you need to look after your child, and your own wellbeing. If you would like to request an assessment of your needs, you should contact the Children with Disabilities Team at Merton Council.

Tel: 020 8545 4200

Email: Children.WithDisabilitiesDuty@merton.gov.uk

<https://contact.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Carers-assessments.pdf>

<https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/caring-for-someone-with/preparing-for-a-parent-carer-needs-assessment/>

Autistic Girls Network

A charity working to support, educate, and change the way that autistic girls are assessed and subsequently supported. Girls are diagnosed later (on average up to 6 years later) than boys, missed or misdiagnosed, causing long term mental health problems.



The charity offers support through a number of resources, which can be accessed through different 'routes' on their website depending upon what support you may need. **Some of the routes include:**

- autistic girls
- gender diversity among autistic people

And routes to follow if you're:

- an autistic woman
- a parent
- friends and family
- teachers and
- other professionals or
- employers.

They also offer post diagnostic support, peer group support, training for schools and more.

See their website here:

<https://autisticgirlsnetwork.org/>

Young Carers service

<https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/young-carers/>

The Young Carers team at Carers First work with Young Carers aged between 5 and 18. A Young Carer provides unpaid care for a friend or family member who is disabled, ill, has a mental health condition or misuses alcohol or drugs. Carers First can provide Carers Assessments, information and advice, 1-1 sessions, group events, trips and youth clubs for Young Carers in the Borough of Merton. Further information on how we support Young Carers can be found at: <https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/young-carers/>.

Referrals can be made by professionals, family members/ guardians or by a self-referral. This can be completed online at:

<https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/get-support/#Referral>

Email: mertoncarers@carersfirst.org.uk or call our Helpline: **0300 303 1555**

Carers First



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). Parent

Advisors offer support on communication, challenging behaviours, self-harming, sleep issues, anxiety and many other challenges.

We run on Wednesdays during school term time, between 10am-1pm. To book a session, contact Maria Solari on 07709 715206 or maps.coordinator@mertonmencap.org.uk

Talk Autism

[Talk Autism - Merton Mencap](#)

A forum for parents and carers of children, young people and adults with autism in Merton. Talk Autism runs monthly events for parents and carers on autism-related matters – for example, a talk about managing behaviours, establishing sleep patterns and routines.

Meet with other parents at the social events and through the Talk Autism group chat.

Maria Solari on 07709 715206 or maps.coordinator@mertonmencap.org.uk



Family Fund

<https://www.familyfund.org.uk/grants/schemes/>
which offers a number of different grant programmes for families.

What they do:

- Give grants to families on a low income for items they may not otherwise be able to afford. For example, family breaks, digital equipment, white goods, clothing, bedding, furniture and play equipment.
- Offering services to help parents and carers to achieve the outcomes they want for their child and family. This includes where to go for support with money, benefits and budget planning, information on mental health and wellbeing. And practical workshops to help people get online and use digital tools.
- Providing ways for families to share their experiences, so they can influence lasting change on issues that matter to them

Merton Family Hub

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/family-support-parenting/hubs/overview>

The Merton Family Hub is a place where children, young people and their families can access the support, help and advice they need. They have brought together 24 'core' services to offer a variety of advice and support to families with children aged 0-19 (or up to 25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.)

Support available through Family Hubs includes:

- Midwifery
- Health Visiting
- Activities for 0-5s
- Infant feeding
- Mental health
- Youth services
- Debt and welfare
- Substance misuse support
- SEND support
- Relationship advice



Find them at:

- Phipps Bridge Youth Centre & Church Road Children's Centre
- Acacia Children Centre

Off the Record

Has online, telephone and face to face counselling for 11-25-year old's, 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



Merton Special Educational Needs Information, Advice and Support Service (MIASS)

MIASS 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.

Based at Joseph Hood Primary School

Tel: 0208 543 8854

Email: miass@merton.gov.uk



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



General Information & support from Merton Council via Merton Local Directories

Use the Merton Local Directory to find support, services and more.

Some examples:

- [Family Services Directory](#)
Support and information for expectant parents and families with children and young people aged 0-19
- [Young Merton](#)
Information on services and support for children and young people up to the aged of 25, including care leavers and young people with SEND, who are moving into adulthood and independent living.
- [SEND Local Offer](#)
Support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities aged 0-25.
- And Other Information

Find it here: [Local Directories \(merton.gov.uk\)](https://www.merton.gov.uk)

Adults First

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

The aims of the forum are to provide information to carers which supports them in their caring role and to make sure the voice of carers is heard in the design and delivery of services which affect them and the person they care for.

The forum does this by providing regular educational workshops and events with experts and local service providers, which also provides the opportunity for carers to meet each other, share experiences and practical support. We support carers to be representatives at all the important local meetings, committees and Boards in Merton and campaign on issues which improve the lives of carers and the person they care for. We also produce this twice-yearly newsletter and keep our members up to date with the latest news throughout the year.



The forum is run by a steering group of volunteer family carers, who decide on the business of the forum and represent our members at meetings and focus groups in Merton. Our steering group members currently represent you at the following meetings:

All Saints Respite Quarterly Monitoring Group: monitors respite care provision at All Saints Respite Centre in Merton.

Autism Partnership Steering Group: Oversees Merton's 5 year Autism Strategy and action plan which is due for a refresh. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that Merton is an autism friendly borough in which autistic people are able to reach their full potential at all stages of their lives, encompassing children, young people and adults with autism, and taking into consideration the needs of families and carers.

Carers Strategy Implementation Board: oversees implementation and progress of Merton's 5 year Carers Strategy launched in 2021 to improve the identification, recognition and support available to Carers in the borough. **This meeting is currently on hold.**

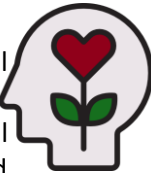
Employability Forum: Steering group members from Kids First and Adults First joined Merton's Employability Forum which oversees employability support and the development of supported

internships in Merton. A Pathways to Employment booklet was finalised as part of this work and circulated to Kids First and Adults First members:

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

LD Forum: A rep attends meetings as well as planning meetings of the forum. Highlights issues raised by forum members and updates attendees about forum work and upcoming forum events.

Merton Health and Care Community Voice Forum: hearing the voice of local people including the voluntary sector, faith groups, other community groups, patients, carers, people using adult social care services, etc. Discusses issues that affect all Merton residents and to ensure the voice of local people is heard, including those with LD/ASD and their carers.



Preparation for Adulthood Board: oversees and monitors work to improve transition planning and preparation for adulthood and highlighting areas for improvement.

Stakeholder Reference Group: overseeing Merton's review of day opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism to ensure the best possible outcome is achieved for people using the services and their families.

Supported Living Framework: oversees the work around Merton's commissioning of the Supported Living Services Framework. This work involved looking at the specification and expectations from providers, co-creation of tender questions to providers and model answers and the possibility of being involved in the evaluation of tenders and longer-term involvement in monitoring meetings.

This meeting is currently on hold.



We would love to have more steering group members so that we are truly representative of our membership. If you'd like to find out more about joining the steering group, please contact us (see page 16 for contact details) or have a chat with us at one of our sessions. And don't forget to read the minutes of steering group meetings to keep up to date with everything that is going on.



Recap on AF sessions

Here's a recap from some of our recent sessions:

Carers First, 18 June

Carers First were awarded a 5 year contract by Merton to deliver carers services for adults from 1 April 2024. Carers First will also be the provider of the Merton young carers services for the 5 year period.

The session was very informative, so here's a reminder of some of the information:

Recap





Carers First have a helpline and there is also online guidance on a range of topics. They have some special money saving deals carers can access. You must register with Carers First to access these deals.



Carers First: <https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/>

Email: hello@carersfirst.org.uk

Carers can register with Carers First

here: <https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/get-support/>

Helpline: 0300 303 1555

Online guidance:

<https://bit.ly/3XOU6Ww>

Young Carers service:

<https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/young-carers/>

Carers First



FALCON FLYERZ

Don't forget to register as an unpaid carer with your GP

If your GP (General Practitioner) knows that you are a carer, they can provide you with really useful support, advice and information. For example, they can refer you to local support networks in your area or help you understand what you're entitled to as a carer – such as a free flu jab.

It's important to tell them about your caring responsibilities so that they can offer support and so that they know if you are suddenly taken ill, they will be aware that the welfare of a vulnerable person may be at risk because you are no longer able to care for them. It is simple to register as a carer with your GP. Some surgeries have a form on their website you can fill in to notify them. You can also download one of the GP letter templates below to complete and share with your GP.

Downloadable template letter to GP:

<https://bit.ly/3B8NVUD>

& [Talking to your GP | Carers UK](#)



Health and Fitness for adults with learning disabilities and autism, 27 June

Flyerz (adapted) Hockey is for people of all ages with any disability and was launched by Access Sport & England Hockey in 2012 as part of the London Olympics. As of June 2024, there are 35 Flyerz clubs across the UK.

See a little bit of information on some of the Flyerz Hockey clubs in London.

London Wayfarers Hockey Club has a pan disability hockey team where everyone is supported to play hockey. Sessions run Sept – July during term time.

Session details:

- Monday 7-8pm at Saint Francis Xavier, near Clapham South



- Thursday 7-8pm at Emmanuel School, Spencer Park & 6pm-7pm sessions for 16 yrs & over that some older participants attend
- Sessions are Free if you are not in a position to contribute.
- All kit is provided – wear comfortable clothes to be active

Contact Fi at: lwhc.flyerzmembers@gmail.com

More here: <https://bit.ly/LWaFH>



Falcon Flyerz SEN hockey weekly sessions are held during term time on certain Sunday's 9.30-10.30am at Ewell. No hockey experience is needed and the club is welcoming of everyone who wishes to participate including siblings & parent carers. The sessions, run by a team of coaches and volunteers, focuses on having fun, meeting new friends and being more active.

Contact them here: hockeyflyerz@gmail.com. For more information: <https://www.falconflyerz.com/>

Fulham Football Club Foundation

Fulham FC Foundation delivers various programmes for young people and adults with a wide range of disabilities. Some of their projects & clubs include Active Autism, Pan Disability Football Clubs, Blind and Partially Sighted Football, as well as many others.



Contact them here:

foundationinfo@fulhamfc.com / 0208 336 7547

Link: <https://www.fulhamfc.com/foundation/what-we-do/disability-programme-page>

Merton Mencap Better Gym

<https://www.mertonmencap.org.uk/services/better-gym/>

This club 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 the members to look after their health, nutritional advice is also offered.

Better Gym UK Inclusive membership

<https://www.better.org.uk/monthly-membership/better-hf-inclusive>

BETTER

Better Gym UK membership gives people who are registered as disabled access to their gyms, swimming pools, fitness classes and more for a reduced price. This gym and leisure membership for those with disabilities also provides access for carers/personal assistants (prices may vary between locations & services).





Housing Options, 16 July

Merton Shared Lives Scheme offers an accommodation based service for people that need some support in their everyday lives. The scheme is for adults aged 18 and over, with a learning disability or with a mental health issue.

Within Merton Shared Lives Scheme, you are helped and supported by a Shared Lives Carer. They may be sharing their own house with you, or they may offer you floating support in another property. You may be offered somewhere to stay for a short break or somewhere to live for a longer period. Shared Lives Carers can help the people they care for to: look after themselves, keep healthy and active, manage money, share domestic tasks like cooking and cleaning, complete forms, understand letters, learn new skills, meet new people, enjoy hobbies and activities.

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/4aIMcav>

Merton Supported Living Service

The Gables

The aim of the Gables is for transition from Children's Services or the family home.

Service Users at this site have a short-term license rather than a tenancy, as the purpose is for assessment and development of daily living skills in preparation for move on.

There are nine flats all with a kitchenette and bathroom and includes communal spaces, such as a sensory room, a TV lounge, more.

Haslemere Avenue

Haslemere Avenue in Wimbledon Park is owned by Wandle Housing and consists of two separate houses, with four bedsits in each house. The staff offices are situated in the middle of the property and have access to both houses via interconnecting doors.

There are communal facilities in each property, including a kitchen, dining and lounge area, laundry and a shared garden. All bedsits have individual bathrooms and kitchenettes.

Dolliffe Close

Clarion Housing own Dolliffe Close and the site is situated in Bond Road Mitcham, opposite Asda. The site consists of eighteen, one bedded flats, for people with learning disabilities. The flats are

Recap



situated over three floors and there is lift access to all floors. There is communal garden space and a staff office block. Flats have full facilities with kitchen, accessible bathroom and a balcony/winter garden. Tenants at this site have a tenancy and are supported by staff to manage this.

Learn more here:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/social-care/adult-social-care/supported-living>



Integration of commissioning functions between Adult Social Care and Public Health

Submitted by Councillor Peter McCabe, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care in Merton

At the Council's Budget Meeting on 6 March 2024, the integration of commissioning functions between Adult Social Care and Public Health was discussed. We asked Councillor Peter McCabe, Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care how this would work:

Every year the Council has a responsibility to produce a balanced budget. Whenever savings are required, we attempt to make them in a way that avoids damaging the interests of service users and carers.



The saving proposal for integrating the commissioning functions within **Adult Social Care (ASC) and Public Health for 2024/25** is intended to help the department make the most of the officer resource across these two areas. Commissioning is the process by which health and care services are **planned, purchased** and **monitored** to ensure that we have the services we need to meet the needs of our residents and to ensure that these services are of a good standard. The Council must purchase services and put contracts in place for a range of Adult Social Care services, such as **Care Homes, Homecare, Advocacy, Day services** and **many others**. Public Health teams also have the same responsibilities for things like sexual health, school nursing and drug and alcohol services.

Both teams also 'commission' services in the voluntary and community sector that help the



Council with its prevention and early intervention agenda and in this area, we believe there is greater benefit to bringing the service design and purchasing together. We are one department the plan is for these teams to work closer and to do things more efficiently in the best interest of our residents.

The proposal is to bring the currently separate teams, into one integrated commissioning team that will have responsibility for the design, purchasing and contract management of any services that are provided on behalf of ASC or Public Health. The saving is anticipated to come from a reduction in the management costs as a result of bringing the teams together. We envisage that we will be able to achieve better outcomes for our residents by more efficient management of resources.

End

Community Navigators

*Submitted by Neil Ellison and Michelle Brown,
Community Navigators, Merton's Learning
Disabilities Team*

Community Navigators work with people with a learning disability or autism to help them find things they would like to do.

Community Navigators can help you to:

- **Choose** the things you want to do.
- Try new **activities** and **learn** new skills.
- Find groups and **meet new people**.
- **Signpost** the way to the right people for **Travel Training** and paid or voluntary **work**.

To access our service, a person needs to be:

- An **adult** with a **learning disability**
- Have a Social worker to ensure either you assessment or review is up to date.

We have a Community Navigator referral form, which is usually filled in by the social worker. We can send this via email to anyone who wishes to refer to the Community Navigators.

We have a referral meeting every Wednesday – after that we will be in touch about the decision and next course of action. This is pilot project, for a year and we will evaluate along the way to see what works well and what needs to be developed.

When we meet the person, we are navigating with, we need to find out what they like to do. Our toolkit includes:

- Activity list
- Timetable blank.
- Talking mats
- Communication Profile blank

You and the people in your life will work with us to choose what you might like. We will do some research and make appointments so you can visit places in your area or nearby in your community with a navigator.

When you have made a choice a start date will be agreed, and you can sample your volunteering, activity, or course. A Community Navigator can be with you at this stage.

We'll discuss funding and your programme with your social worker.

We will monitor your navigation for several weeks to find out how things are going and if you feel that what you're doing is right for you. After a final meeting with you, we will ask you to fill in a survey and leave you to it! You will have our contact details if you wish to talk to us after this point. We may get in touch with you occasionally to see how you are and have a little catch up.

Some people, their families and carers just need guidance – signposting them to the appropriate situation, and others require a navigation where we are more involved. Everyone is different!

Relevant to the forum is our finding that family carers and parents all engage in Community Navigating, and we learn a lot from everyone we encounter. We would like to communicate more with parents & carers, so any queries are welcome. This is a pilot project and will be evaluated – during the evaluation process, we will discuss the possibility of website so that we can update on anything of interest, making it easier for people to share their findings and to facilitate their own Community Navigating!

Contact us here:

LDCommunity.Navigator@merton.gov.uk

07970 218372 – Michelle | 07917 266825 – Neil



St. George's Hospital Learning Disability Team

are here to support patients with Learning Disabilities and their families when they attend St George's Hospital.

We work Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excluding bank Holidays).

How the Learning Disability Team can support you:

- We can visit you on ward.
- Speak with ward staff to let them know what you need.
- Be there on visits with you if you would like us there.
- Speak with the clinics that you will be visiting so they know what you need.
- Our LD support worker can do activities with you, such as drawing, colouring, and word search.
- We can help you to understand information to help you make decisions about your care.

In addition to our inpatient support, we also provide in/outpatient support:

- Support patients with attending their outpatient appointments
- Help patients understand the information given and treatments recommended
- Make information service user friendly such as use easy read formats, easy read discharge or take-home information
- Request with clinics to make appointments longer or shorter, fast track appointments
- Ask clinics to offer patients a side or quiet room
- Reference alternative communication aids such as Makaton, talking mats, symbols, objects of reference
- Reference the use of multi-sensory aids to help patients manage and alleviate anxiety and worry
- Reference using an interpreter if English isn't the 1st language of patient
- Offer wide range of activities and social engagement whilst as in patient
- Coordinate and arrange special funding for families to stay in the hospital's hotel

Telephone Number: 0208 725 0097

• Bleep: 8386

• Email: learning.disabilityreferral@stgeorges.nhs.uk



Other information

Welfare Benefits & other info

Keep up to date with Welfare Benefits and obtain detailed advice from **Benefits and Work**:

<https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/>

Free detailed information is available in their fortnightly online newsletter which includes: **PIP** (Personal Independence Payments), **ESA** (Employment Support Allowance), **DLA** (Disability Living Allowance) and **UC** (Universal Credit) updates.

• You can register for the free newsletter here:

<https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/>

• Detailed guides to the various benefits are available for a small charge via a subscription. Find out more here: <https://bit.ly/3BagPUP>

• **Carers UK** provide information and guidance to unpaid carers. This covers a range of subjects including Benefits and financial support.

• Financial and practical help and advice:

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/>

• Factsheets: <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/guides-and-tools/our-factsheets/>

Examples of their downloadable free factsheets:

• PIP: [Personal Independence Payment | Carers UK](#)

• DLA: [Disability Living Allowance | Carers UK](#)

• ESA: <https://bit.ly/4evvUOI>

Universal Credit: [Universal Credit | Carers UK](#)

Carers Allowance: [Carer's Allowance | Carers UK](#)

Attendance Allowance: <https://bit.ly/4eISjhg>

Helpline: 0808 808 7777 (Mon to Fri, 9am – 6pm)

Email Helpline: advice@carersuk.org

General enquiry: info@carersuk.org

Merton Welfare Benefits Service (WBS) is for:

Welfare benefit enquiries, requests for a welfare benefit check, requests for welfare benefit appointments, requests for assistance to complete welfare benefit forms.

Opening times: Monday-Friday 10am-4pm

Tel: 0208 545 4178. Email:

WelfareBenefitsTeam@merton.gov.uk

Check what benefits and financial support you can get on the **Government Website** here: [Check](#)

[benefits and financial support you can get - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

CDARS Neurodiverse Service

For age 18 plus and not linked to the other services they run around substance misuse.



CDARS Neurodiversity Support Programme supports individuals with neurodiverse conditions such as ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia. The programme offers mental health support, support with financial and housing benefits, employment and interviewing practice, social engagement and building relationships.

More here: <https://bit.ly/3ZxP0zk>

Telephone. 020 85404023

Email. info@cdars.org.uk



Merton ADHD/ASD Diagnostic service for adults

The Merton Adult ADHD/ASD Service is based at Jubilee Health Centre and is a service for adults aged eighteen or over, who are registered with a Merton GP and who do not have a learning disability. It is an ADHD and ASD specific, non-urgent, part time service which offers specialist assessment and diagnosis of ADHD and ASD, ADHD medication initiation and titration focussed OT work for ADHD (group based for the majority) and specialist medical review for those with an established diagnosis who are taking medication for ADHD. Due to high demand, the service does operate with a significant waiting list. Referral is via your GP or other health care professional.

[Merton ADHD/ASD Diagnostic Service \(swlsthg.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swlsthg.nhs.uk)

Wimbledon Guild free counselling services

Counselling service for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups

Wimbledon Guild are offering 16 sessions of counselling free of charge with a counsellor from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background.

-You must be over 18

-Live, work, study or have a GP in Merton

-Be from a black, Asian or minority ethnic community

-Need help with mild to moderate mental health issues

-Be able to attend sessions at the same day and time each week

<https://bit.ly/3BK3vWZ>

Online counselling service for people who are housebound

Sessions will take place either online via Zoom or by telephone with a qualified Wimbledon Guild counsellor who understands the impact



that being housebound can have on mental health.



To be eligible for this service you need to meet the following criteria:

- You struggle to leave your home
- You're over 18
- You live, work or study in Merton
- You need help with mild to moderate mental health issues
- You can attend weekly sessions at the same day and time

Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/3UaZNvI>

Social/Leisure



Merton Centre for Independent Living

A pan disability organisation, run by and for Deaf and Disabled people, aiming to work with Deaf and Disabled people and supporters of their aims to create more inclusive and equitable communities. Their services and work support Deaf and Disabled individuals with a range of conditions. These conditions include physical conditions, long-term health conditions, mental health conditions, learning difficulties, sensory conditions and neurodiversity.

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/4gtAkav>

Generate UK

Works together with people with a learning disability, autism and other disabilities to have better lives and connect to the community. They focus on people's strengths and promote independence and inclusion, through learning, work and leisure opportunities.

Some of their activities include cooking sessions, footballing and dance sessions. Read more about this here: <https://generate-uk.org/cc/group-activities/>

They also support people to go on independent trips or trips with their friends. Some past destinations include Paris, Budapest & Centre Parks.

Tel: 020 8879 6333

Email: enquiries@generate-uk.org

Merton Supported Learning Courses for adults aged 19+ with learning difficulties, disabilities and complex needs

Richmond and Hillcroft Adult Community College (RHACC) deliver courses on behalf of Merton at a range of location across Merton.

RHACC provides an accessible curriculum and a caring environment for adults who have learning

generate
your life your support



difficulties, disabilities and complex needs and who need support to access learning.

See some of their courses below:

- An introduction to Employability, confidence and independence skills
- The skills for life of English, Maths and Digital Skills
- Wellbeing through activities such as Art & Craft, Cookery, Dance & Drama

Courses provide opportunities to socialise with other learners.

Examples of support provided:

- Small class sizes, usually of up to 10 learners
- Experienced and knowledgeable Tutors and Learning Support Workers

Contact 020 8891 5907 (ext. 5012)

Email SupportedLearning@rhacc.ac.uk to arrange a 1:1 interview to discuss support needs and find a suitable course.

Young Adult Carers service

<https://bit.ly/3Y95N9y>

The Young Carers team at Carers First work with Young Carers aged between 5 and 18. A Young Carer provides unpaid care for a friend or family member who is disabled, ill, has a mental health condition or misuses alcohol or drugs. Carers First can provide Carers Assessments, information and advice, 1-1 sessions, group events/ trips and youth clubs for Young Carers in the Borough of Merton. Further information on how we support Young Carers can be found at: <https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/young-carers/>. Referrals can be made by professionals, family members/ guardians or by a self-referral. This can be completed online at:

<https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/get-support/#Referral>.

Email: mertoncarers@carersfirst.org.uk or call our Helpline: 0300 303 1555

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

Carers Caseworker

We aim to improve the lives of carers of adults with learning disabilities and/or autism in Merton. We offer a range of support including a listening ear to talk through problems and possible solutions and help to understand more about local services for the carer and the person they care for. Contact Carolyn

Doyle on 07815 462913 or

LDCarers.caseworker@mertonmencap.org.uk

Community Facilitator

We provide 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 **Maria Solari** on 07709 715 206

Email: community.facilitator@mertonmencap.org.uk

Visit for more: [LD Carers Support - Merton Mencap](#)

Talk Autism

Talk Autism is a forum for parents and carers of children, young people and adults with autism. Talk Autism is free to join and provides monthly events for parents and carers on matters relating to autism – for example, a specialist speaker giving a talk on managing behaviours, establishing sleep patterns and routines. Talk Autism also includes social events where parents and carers may develop peer support and friendships.

Joining Talk Autism is free and easy. Simply contact Maria here: 07709 715 206 /

maps.coordinator@mertonmencap.org.uk

Read more here: [Talk Autism - Merton Mencap](#)

Carers First



A massive thank you to April McDevitt and Alfredo Benedicto who have volunteered on our forum steering groups, Kids First and Adults First, for over 10 years in April's case, and 8 for Alfredo.

After regularly volunteering a great many hours over a great many years, April and Alfredo have stepped down from their roles within

the steering groups earlier this year.



As carers themselves, they have played a huge part in helping other local parents and carers, and their children, young people and adults get the support they need.

Thank you so much April and Alfredo, for your invaluable support over the years!

We will miss you!





Upcoming Workshops & Events



Tuesday 12 November, 10am to 12pm (in person: Leyton Road Day Centre)

Performing Arts for adults with learning disabilities and autism

We have a great session lined up with some wonderful organisations who provide opportunities for adults with learning disabilities & autism to take part in dance, drama, singing & music!
Come along, meet other carers & hear from our fantastic line up of speakers

Tuesday 3 December, 10am to 12pm (in person: Leyton Road Day Centre)

Christmas Social

Join in on the festive fun with Adults First!

Friday 15 November 2024, 10am to 12pm (Zoom meeting)

SEND Update

With Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Director of Education & Early help and Karla Finikin, Head of SENDIS (SEN and Disabilities Integrated Service)

A great opportunity to hear the latest information from senior officers in Merton and ask your questions.

Thursday 5 December, 10am to 12pm (in person: The Chaucer Centre)

Police and Youth Engagement

with PC Sophie Lawrence 1395SW, SEND Youth Engagement and Diversion Officer
& Junior Cadet Leader at Cricket Green School & The Sherwood School

Sophie currently runs a Met Police SEND Cadet Unit for students at Cricket Green school & regularly supports Cricket Green, Melbury College & Raynes Park High School.

Stop & search is probably the most likely interaction a child or young person will have with the police. Sophie will also talk about the procedures followed if a child/young person is arrested.



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

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 SW London Integrated Care System. We also record positive experiences, so please tell us about them too! kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

Thank You!



Contact us!

Tracy Blackwell

Parent & Carer Forums Manager

E: kids.first@mertonmencap.org.uk

E: adults.first@mertonmencap.org.uk

T: 020 3963 0598 / M: 07518 903260

Contact us!

Tuhina Shaikh

Admin Assistant for Kids First, Adults First

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