

MERTON COUNCIL

Independent Advice and Support Services for parents and carers of Children with SEN and disabilities

2015 to 2016 Review

www.merton.gov.uk



To ensure that our advice and support services for parents, carers and young people are working well, London Borough of Merton reviews their effectiveness regularly.

National Development Team for Inclusion ([NDTi](#)) has evaluated Independent Support Services in England in some depth. Their report can be found on the [Council for Disabled Children](#) website.

Core Assets Independent Support Service

The uptake of the Core Assets Independent Support Service in Merton has grown steadily since 2014.

Headlines for 2015 / 2016

- 84 families were supported during the child or young person's transfer to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- 296 parents, carers and young people were provided with support and information at group events

This means that around a third of those transferring during the year received some help or information.

Comments from families and professionals

"Thank you so much for your help yesterday and for checking over what I've done. It was a long day and hard work but was certainly made easier and more pleasant by going through it with you yesterday. Thank you for your time and for helping me at short notice. It is really helpful to get input from someone who understands first hand about being the parent of a special young person. And yes I did mean it when I said it was fun!! It is important to have a sense of humour as a 'special' parent."

Merton parent

"Core Assets provided support to the family to complete Section A and also supported me as Inclusion Manager with the EHCP process as this was the first one I had completed. The process had been complicated by the fact that the parents had limited English and had struggled to answer the questions on the form. They were able to suggest strategies to support the family to enable them to engage fully with the process, such as giving them a list of questions before the meeting for them to think about and having a meeting in school prior to the meeting with the local authority to go through the reports from professionals, with the help of a translator, so that they fully understood what was being discussed. The support from Core Assets was amazing..."

SENCo in a Merton Primary School

"Feedback from parents and school staff has been positive and we look forward to our continued relationship with them."

Head of SEND Integrated Service

Merton Independent Advice and Support Service (MIASS), (formerly Parent Partnership)

This service supports parents and the Local Authority to work within the new statutory arrangements and effectively meet the needs of children and young people.

The service includes support for resolving disputes at an early stage, facilitation at potentially 'difficult' school meetings and resolution of complex issues around the assessment and identification of special educational needs (SEN) and provision that may be appropriate to meet these needs.

In many cases, by using this service, families can avoid a potentially stressful and costly appeal to SEND Tribunal.

Headlines for 2015 / 2016

A survey of a random selection of 50 parents and a range of schools and services (voluntary, Local Authority and NHS settings) showed:

- 100% of parents found it quite easy to access the service (they commented on the workload for one member of staff)
- They valued the use of email exchanges
- 100% of parents who replied said the service made a difference and 75% said it made a significant difference - better informed, more able to participate in the SEN process
- 100% of those who replied recognised the impartiality of the service
- 100% of those who replied would encourage other parents to use the service

Comments from families and professionals

"Thank you so much for all your help in today's meeting – the meeting went so much better than I anticipated with your knowledge and support. Many, many thanks."

Merton Senior Case Officer

"A huge thank you for the considerable part you played in supporting the family and our School. Great outcomes achieved for the child and your role was vital and you were incredibly helpful and an indispensable service!"

Merton Parent

"I would like to say BIG THANK YOU for attending our planning meeting... Your help, advice and support was very precious and valuable and I will always remember it. You are real credit to all those children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families. You are the one who makes a positive difference in lives of all those young people and I really appreciate it. THANK YOU."

Merton SENCO