Merton’s SEND Area Inspection

Submitted by the London Borough of Merton

Merton’s SEND Area Inspection letter was published on the 18th September 2019. Overall the letter outlines in detail the many strengths of our work and the work with partners here in Merton.

However, in common with more than two-thirds of authorities inspected, we have also been required to provide a ‘Written Statement of Action’ (jointly with the Clinical Commissioning Group) outlining in particular how we will work together to ensure improved health input to Education, Care and Health Plans in the context of an overall improvement to the quality of those plans.

We have particular strengths in the identification of young people with additional needs, and the outcomes for those children in Merton are generally better than for similar children across the country.

The more we can do to plan for and meet those needs, the better those outcomes will be, so we will continue to work to improve with the support of parents and carers who are actively involved in the development of the Written Statement of Action and improvement processes. Please find a link to the Ofsted website here: https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80510

Merton has refreshed their multi-agency auditing process for Education, Health, and Care Plans with a clear commitment from all partners to review their contributions to new Education, Health, and Care needs assessments and the annual review process to improve the quality of the plans.

A series of training events for professionals will be developed and delivered to support the improvement of Education, Health, and Care Plans. The Local Authority is seeking parent/carer volunteers to be on the termly Quality Assurance moderation group which will review the audits and make recommendations.

Kids First’s response to SEND Inspection

Kids First and the Steering Group were very happy to be an integral part of the SEND Inspection in Merton and found the whole process extremely beneficial.

The findings do resonate with many parents but we also understand that there are variable experiences throughout the borough that may not have been picked up.

Highlighting the areas of strength in Merton is helpful for all parents to be aware of, as Kids First continually wants to promote and spread good practice across the borough.

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The weaknesses identified also resonate with those that parents have voiced for some time. The fact that they have been highlighted by Ofsted/CQC can only be positive so that change across the borough (both in health and education) can be implemented at pace.

Kids First values the importance of being an equal partner around the table in the co-production of any service redesign, developments, and changes; and is pleased to be able to contribute to the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) process to plan Merton’s actions in response to the areas of weakness highlighted in the letter from Ofsted, which were:

- A lack of cohesive oversight of, and effective planning for, the implantation of some key aspects of the reforms, particularly by health partners.
- The inconsistent quality and contribution of health partners and the poor utilisation of health information in EHC assessment and planning.
- Poor quality EHC plans compounded by ineffective quality assurance.

We were pleased that the inspectors felt that Kids First understands the main concerns and positive views of parents, and provides a strong voice and important challenge to area leaders and is trusted by parents.

Ultimately Kids First wants to ensure SEND children and young people in Merton have the best possible life chances whilst ensuring their health and wellbeing is not compromised and at best enhanced. We look forward to working as a key partner with Education and Health on this.

Developing the Merton SEND Strategy 2020-23

Merton’s Children’s Trust is developing Merton’s strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people aged 0-25 years with SEN and/or disabilities. The strategy will set out partners’ shared responsibility to deliver effective services for children, young people and families emphasising that in Merton SEND is “everyone’s business”. The strategy is underpinned by statutory requirements, learning from the recent local area inspection of SEND services, and feedback from stakeholders including children, young people and families.

The work has been led by the local authority, the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, and with key contributions from the parent carer forum Kids First, working in collaboration to drive our improvement agenda, and in partnership with partners across Merton’s Children’s Trust.

A draft version of the strategy was sent out for consultation during September until mid-October 2019. This included discussion groups with children and young people, and parents and professionals, as well as online consultation. Key feedback themes include the importance of:

- Putting children, young people and families’ participation and engagement at the heart of identification, assessment and support for SEN and/or disabilities and overall strategic planning.
- Continuing to promote an inclusive culture across services and the community, with access to clear information about local provision.
- Clear information, advice and guidance about support for parents in their caring role, with a focus on early support.
- Access to effective health therapies and other support services in education settings, and a review of the impact of these.
- Clear guidance on all points of ‘transition’ for children and young people, including effective support for those who are eligible for adult services post 18 and those who are not, to support their move into employment, independent living, community inclusion, and health.

The Merton SEND Strategy will be taken to the Merton Cabinet meeting on 9 December for adoption across the borough. It will be published, along with an annual action plan of key activities to achieve the strategic objectives, in the new year.
About Kids First

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

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

Funding

Kids First receives funding from the Department for Education and the London Borough of Merton. Our money is used to support representative work, help members to have a voice in how services for children and young people with SEND are shaped and delivered locally, and run our very popular events and information exchange meetings listed on page 11 of this newsletter.

Steering Group

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

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

It is never too late to volunteer; you are always welcome – why not try it out? You can just come along and meet the team. You can play a very small part or a larger part; it is up to you!

The Kids First steering group and reps win the Merton Mencap Volunteer of the Year Award 2019

The Kids First steering group and reps have been very busy over the past year. There has been a significant increase in the work that they do including engagement and co-production with the local authority and the Clinical Commissioning Group with many parents giving up their time to attend meetings and write up notes afterwards to keep everyone informed.

They have done a great job representing the views of parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities in Merton. They were presented with their award at Merton Mencap’s AGM in July by Tracy Weight, the Chief Executive Officer of Carers Support Merton.

We are very grateful for the work they do and the time they give to us.

Here are some of the things they did for us last year:
- Represented our members on 11 working groups/boards.
- Contributed to an engagement session with our members to prepare for the Ofsted and CQC inspection and with just a weeks’ notice made themselves available for various meetings with the inspectors and the LA/CCG during the SEND Inspection.
- Were involved in the recruitment process for the manager of Merton’s SEN Information, Advice and Support Service (MIASS).
- Met with Merton’s Strategic Operations Manager for Libraries to feedback their views which fed directly into a successful bid to develop Merton’s Libraries, making them SEND and autism-friendly.
- Attended Merton’s SENCO Forum where they shared their views on areas for improvement and critical intervention points as well as positives.
- Met with Merton Councillors to highlight issues relating to transition.
- Met with Merton’s Local Offer team to contribute to the PEER Review meeting in London.
Meet Merton’s School Improvement Inspector for SEND

Nick Flesher is Merton’s School Improvement Inspector for SEND. Kids First asked him some questions about his role which he has kindly answered below.

**KF: Can you explain a bit about the service and the different roles you undertake?**

Within Merton Children Schools and Families division we have a School Improvement team. In this team, we have several inspectors and consultants who provide support and challenge to Merton schools. Each inspector has an area of responsibility within our school improvement work. My area is SEND.

Each inspector provides a support and challenge role to a group of schools. I work directly with special schools in Merton, the Additional Resource Provision (ARPs) and several primary and secondary schools.

I work closely with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service (SENDIS) and the Merton Inclusion team. With colleagues from these teams, I run the termly SENCo forum, the SENCo working group and attend the secondary SENCo group meetings.

I support the wider community of Merton schools with a review of their SEN provision and carry out quality assurance visits, with neighbouring local authorities of the out of borough special school provision that Merton pupils’ access.

**KF: What is the most rewarding part of your role?**

Without a doubt, it is meeting with the children and young people in our schools and settings. I try always to understand what it is like to be a pupil at the school. What sort of experience do they have in and out of the classroom? The best way to do this is to talk to the pupils. Young people will always say it as it is!

**KF: From your experience in the role, what do you think are the main areas of concern that SENCos and parents have?**

I think one of the biggest challenges for both schools and parents is working towards a shared understanding of a young person’s needs. Both parties experience those needs in very different contexts. A piece of work we have discussed as a SENCo community and with Kids First is to look at how we achieve a joint understanding of the journey from identification to meetings of needs.

**KF: How accessible is your team to parents? Can parents contact the team directly if they have a concern about a Merton school?**

Both the SENDIS team and Inclusion team have many platforms for engaging with parents. The School Improvement team generally works directly with school leaders and staff but I have been attending the Kids First SEND Implementation Group for the last two years and this has certainly helped to add to my understanding of parent concerns and wishes.

This group receives an update for each meeting on issues parents have raised and the themes are feedback to the wider School Improvement Team to inform their work in schools.

**KF: Kids First has welcomed the opportunity for our parent representatives to be invited to talk to SENCO’s at Merton’s SENCO forums, and wondered if you had found this a positive experience too and if the SENCO’s found it beneficial?**

This was very beneficial. SENCos responded very positively and would very much like to continue working together. The more that schools and parents can understand each other’s challenges and perspectives the stronger our joint approach to meeting young people’s needs will be.
Information and Updates in the Borough of Merton

Discover your SEND Local Offer

Submitted by the London Borough of Merton

Do you ever have questions about the services children with SEND can access and how to access them?

From finding out more about Education, Health and Care Plans, to locating a childcare provider with relevant experience of SEND, through discovering fun things for your child to do, to parenting advice and support and more, the Merton SEND Local offer can help.

The Local Offer brings information together about support and services for children and young people with SEND up to the age of 25. This information can be found in one place – the Local Offer website at www.merton.gov.uk/localoffer.

If you are seeking more information about how services might work to support your child or are looking for specific services to access, the Local Offer can help.

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 us know. Whether these are in Merton or elsewhere, we can contact the service providers and include them on the website if they are relevant to Merton families.

The Merton Disability Database

The Disability Database is a register for children and young people aged 0 to 18 years who have a disability or special educational needs. You can create an account and join the database at www.merton.gov.uk/localoffer via the My Account option.

When you join the Disability Database you can choose to sign up for an M-Card. The M-Card is a concession card that is an easy and discrete way to raise awareness that eligible children and young people have disabilities or special educational needs.

We are always working to find more benefits for our M-Card holders. Our latest new benefits are around parking in Merton. Just make sure your M-Card is displayed and visible on your dashboard to be sure to benefit from these offers:

- M-Card holders are now entitled to 30 minutes parking at school drop-off and pick-up times in pay and display and/or permit bays and on yellow lines only in the immediate vicinity of the school. Parking on the zig-zag lines at any time is strictly forbidden.
- Holders can get 2 hours’ parking in the immediate vicinity of children’s centres in pay and display and/or permit bays and on yellow lines.
- Buy one hour of parking and get one free at Peel House Car Park, lower level opposite Sainsbury’s in Morden (note: this can be used when visiting Merton Civic Centre). Parking officers have been asked to allow one hour extra on top of a valid ticket’s purchase time when displayed with an M-Card on your dashboard.
- Buy one hour of parking and get one free in Merton’s open spaces at Abbey Recreation Ground, Tamworth Recreation Ground, Wimbledon Park, Haydon’s Road Recreation Ground, and Morden Park. Parking officers have been asked to allow one hour extra on top of a valid ticket’s purchase time when displayed with an M-Card on your dashboard.

Please note that if a PCN (Penalty Charge Notice) is issued, you will need to appeal in the normal way to Parking Services, with a copy of your M-Card.
NEW Cricket Green Expansion

Contribution from Cricket Green School

We are delighted to share the wonderful news that Cricket Green School has expanded! Michael and his team at Diamond Construction have spent the last 11 months building us a beautiful two-storey building with 9 new classrooms, an ICT room, an ART room, a Physio and Occupational Therapy room, and some small workrooms.

Diamond Construction involved us all in the progression of the building works; the children had viewing windows on the playground, our Pupil Council members were able to visit the site and feedback to the rest of the school, the builders talked about site Health & Safety in one of our assemblies and they even joined us for our 2018 Christmas Lunch! It’s been a fun partnership!

The building works now turns its focus to our reception area which in time will be a new and improved main entrance to the school, and our Chapel Orchard building which will have a fabulous large new hall, music centre, and shop / café for the start of 2020.

Alongside the building works we are focusing as a Leadership Team and Governing Body, working with the Local Authority, to plan the expansion in our numbers so that we continue to meet local need and yet not lose the essence of what makes Cricket Green so successful.

There is much to be done but we remain excited about Cricket Green School’s future as the expansion progresses!

Project Sense – Merton Library Service

Submitted by Lisa Mustoe, Strategic Operations Manager, Merton Library and Heritage Service.

Merton Library Service was successful in winning funding from Arts Council England to launch its new project, Project Sense. Project Sense will see all seven of Merton’s children’s libraries transformed into seven uniquely themed sensory libraries. Themes include the Antarctic, circus, weather, jungle, under the sea, forest and space. There will be specialist sensory equipment, scents and sounds to match the themes and a dedicated SEND book section in every library.

All staff have been or are in the process of receiving autism awareness, deafness and visual impairment training to help and support children and families with additional needs.

Equipment such as ear defenders, pop up dark dens and a sunflower lanyard to make staff and customers aware of any additional needs can all be borrowed during visits to the library.

The Library Service has also purchased specially adapted toys and switches that will be used in activity sessions that will be run in the libraries and can also be loaned out and taken home. Toys include inflatable minions, racing penguins, aeroplanes and so much more!

The library service has also purchased recordable photo albums, voice recorders and other equipment to aid with support needs and these can all be loaned out to take home. From November, there will also be a dedicated events and activities programme for children and families with SEND.

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These will include specialist sensory story times, toy activity sessions, karate and drama workshops. The Library Service will also be working with all the SEND schools throughout the project and will be running sessions with the mainstream schools to promote disability awareness. Other aspects of the project include running family learning programmes and social events and activities for parents and carers of children with SEND.

The Library Service is looking for volunteers to help run some of the activity sessions for children and even as little as 1 hour per month to run a session can make a big difference. For information about volunteering or more information about the project, please contact Lisa Mustoe on 0208 545 3317.

People with hidden disabilities can access Blue Badges for the first time from 30 August 2019

New rules that will make it easier for many disabled children and adults to qualify for a Blue Badge came into effect on 30 August 2019.

The new rules are designed to extend the Blue Badge to people with invisible disabilities like autism or learning disabilities. The idea is that people with less obvious health conditions, such as autism, will have the same right to park in disabled bays as those with physical disabilities.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has issued new guidance to councils in England on Blue Badge parking permit eligibility, along with a new online eligibility checker to make the scheme clearer for people before they apply.

Automatic entitlement to the Blue Badge will be extended to those in England who score 10 points under the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) mobility test for being ‘unable to undertake any journey because it would cause overwhelming psychological distress to the claimant’.

Entitlement will also be extended to those who are assessed as having an enduring and substantial difficulty whilst walking, which may include very considerable psychological distress. Be at risk of serious harm when walking; or pose, when walking, a risk of serious harm to any other person.

Apply for a blue badge here:
https://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge

Launch of Autism Alert Cards

An alert card and a passport scheme aimed at improving how police interact with people with autism are being introduced.

The new Autism Alert Cards will be carried by individuals with autism and will identify the cardholder as having an autism spectrum disorder. It will also hold basic information including the individual’s name and contact details for an appropriate adult.

The aim is for cardholders to be able to readily produce the card when they come into contact with the police and provide officers and staff with information to aid understanding and effective interaction.

The cards will alert officers to the fact that the individual may have difficulty with communication and exhibit unusual or unpredictable behaviour. In turn, officers will be able to make appropriate and reasonable adjustments and interact with the individual appropriately.

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The card also details how autism manifests and provides practical advice for the officer involved.

The larger passports will include the same information and can be carried in bags or rucksacks for the individual to produce when required.

The scheme has been produced as a result of a collaboration between the Metropolitan Police Service, City of London Police and British Transport Police. It is supported by the National Police Autism Association and will be rolled out across London.

They will be distributed and made available through autistic partnership boards and local police across the capital.

It has been developed following extensive consultations with individuals with autism and their parents, the National Autistic Society, Autism Partnership Boards and other partner agencies.

For more information about the Autism Alert cards and how to obtain one, email: autism@met.police.uk

### Parent to Parent: Local parent groups

**adults first**

Adults First is a service for carers of adults with a learning disability aged 18 plus and is a project of Merton Mencap. Membership is free. Kids First parents of young adults aged 18-25 can be members of both Adults First and Kids First and so can benefit from the activities and support of both. Sessions are usually held at the Leyton Road Centre, 21 Leyton Road, Colliers Wood, SW19 1DJ.

For details, check the website [www.mertonmencap.org.uk/adultsfirst.html](http://www.mertonmencap.org.uk/adultsfirst.html) or contact us at [af.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk](mailto:af.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk).

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**M.A.P.S. – Merton Autism Parent Service**

*Submitted by M.A.P.S. coordinator*

Are you a parent who needs help and support with your autistic child?

**The NEW Merton Autism Parent Service – M.A.P.S. can help!**

In September Merton Mencap launched a new advice service for parents of children with a diagnosis of autism, or who are on the pathway awaiting a diagnosis.

The service has been commissioned by Merton CCG for 2 years initially and is being delivered by a group of trained parents offering practical advice and support about Communication, Positive Behaviour, Friendships, Anxiety, Sensory Needs and more. Experienced staff will be there to support and oversee the service.

**How will M.A.P.S. work?**

The service runs from 10 am to 1 pm on Wednesdays during term time. The team offers advice to help parents in their home environment and in the community when their child is out with their family.

Between 10 am and 1 pm parents who need advice and support are given a 1:1 pre-booked slot with a trained advisor. Parent advisors will also offer general information in the waiting area and will demonstrate useful materials, tools and websites.

All staff and parent advisors will be fully trained. Parent advisors will not be sharing their own knowledge and experiences but will work from a best practice toolkit.
Practices and information in the toolkit are defined by the National Autistic Society, British Institute of Learning Disabilities, National Institute for Clinical Excellence, and Merton statutory services who support good practice in our schools.

Advice will be person-centred and based on strategies that are recognised as evidence-based. The way the service works may be changed or adapted based on the feedback of users. The service will also consider whether expansion to supporting parents of adults with autism is possible – Watch this space!

To support the service, Merton Mencap will be adding a section to their website on supporting autistic children and young people within the family, which will contain useful tools, resources and helpful information.

If you are interested in finding out more information about the new service or have an interest in becoming a parent advisor, please contact Magda Faltynowicz on LDFacilitator@mertonmencap.org.uk, or if you would like to book a session to obtain some advice and support, please contact Tiggy Astle on 020 3963 0597 or email office.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

This service will not provide information about schools or deal with education or learning issues. Staff and parent advisors will not engage in discussions about social care services, health services, welfare benefits, or offer an autism diagnosis. We will not be supporting parents to complete official forms or make complaints, and this is not an advocacy service. We are a local service only focusing on one aspect of support and we are looking to provide practical tools and strategies, not service-related advice.

Is this newsletter useful?
If you have any comments about this newsletter, our website or service in general, please take the time to email kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

Feedback is essential for the continuation of our funding so... all comments welcome!

Useful tips and contacts

Caudwell Children want to help you! 🌐 caudwell children

They are urging parents or guardians across the UK to get in contact with them to apply for specialist equipment funding!

The funding is available for disabled children and young people up to the age of 19. They have accessed funding from several grants bodies and trusts that will enable them to supply 70%-80% of the cost of the equipment, including powered wheelchairs, buggies, rain covers, therapy tricycles, specialist car seats, car harnesses and multi-sensory equipment.

With power chairs costing over £20,000, tricycles up to £2,000 and sensory equipment costing upwards of £1,500 or more, the support could be the difference between children getting the equipment they need!

They want to hear from families across the UK whose gross household income is less than £45,000, excluding benefits. It’s a two-stage application process and you can apply online or you can request an application form to be sent to you by post. Once the supporting documents are returned decisions on the application are usually made between 4-6 weeks.

Also, if families cannot cover the rest of the balance they can point you in the direction of other agencies or charities who may support you with the rest!

To apply, ring 0345 300 1348 or email: charity@caudwellchildren.com

You can find out more about their full range of services here: https://www.caudwellchildren.com/services/

Disabled Students’
Allowances (DSA’s)

You may claim the DSA in addition to your student finance loans and grants to cover any extra study-related cost you incur due to an impairment, mental health condition, or learning difficulty.

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It is neither a benefit nor a loan, so it doesn’t need repaying. The amount you’ll receive depends on your individual needs not on your income, nor that of your parents or partner.

You are eligible for a DSA if you meet all the following criteria:

- You are taking a full time or part-time undergraduate or postgraduate course in the UK (including Open University and distance learning courses) that lasts at least one year.
- You normally live in the UK
- You qualify for student finance
- You can prove you have a disability, medical condition, sensory impairment, mental health condition, or specific learning difficulty which affects your ability to study.

For more details about eligibility, check out the gov.uk website.

IPSEA and model letters

IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice) offers free and independent legally based information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

They also provide training on the SEND legal framework to parents and carers, professionals and other organisations.

How they can help

IPSEA has a suite of free downloadable legal guides and resources available to parents and carers.

These guides are complemented by a free Advice Line which provides legally based information and next step advice on any educational issue that is a result of a child’s SEND. IPSEA’s Tribunal Helpline gives next step advice on appeals and disability discrimination claims to the SEND Tribunal and is also the gateway to their Tribunal Support Service where a referral can be made for more extensive casework support from a volunteer, including representation at the hearing.

Their advice services are delivered by a national network of around 200 highly-trained volunteers, supervised and supported by IPSEA’s Legal Team members.

A really useful resource are the model letters which can be downloaded and amended to use for your purposes.

https://www.ipsea.org.uk/model-letters

If you require information or advice regarding any educational issue that is the result of a child’s SEND you can book an appointment via their website.

https://www.ipsea.org.uk/contact-ipsea

‘Thinking Ahead’ - a comprehensive and practical planning guide for families looking at the future needs of their son, daughter or relative with a learning disability/SEND.

This guide was produced by Christine Towers and was developed with the help of Merton families. It includes information on making decisions in a person-centred way, building friendships and support networks, making financial plans, housing & support, planning for emergencies & more. It is a really useful resource for families to use in transition planning and beyond.

There are now two guides, ‘Thinking Ahead: A planning guide for families’ (blue guide) and “I’m Thinking Ahead” (red guide), a similar easy read version for people with learning disabilities to help them think about the future.

Guides are free to download at http://www.togethermatters.org.uk/resources-and-information/ and hard copies of the guides in ring binders that you can add your documentation to can be obtained directly from Christine for £15 each - christine@togethermatters.org.uk.
Workshops and events
All Kids First workshops and events are FREE. Those below will take place at The Chaucer Centre, Canterbury Road, Morden SM4 6PX.

Bookings
Please book as early as you can as not all events can accommodate last-minute attendees. Only 30 places are available at each session.

Please note, some details about the sessions below are not yet finalised but Kids First members will receive further information about each session when it is publicised.

Upcoming events in Autumn/Winter Term 2019:

Tuesday 19 November, 10 am to 12 pm
Managing Behaviour by understanding the individual
with Mark Brown, Special Help 4 Special Needs
The need to understand an individual’s behaviours & obsessions is central to helping them develop & deal with the world around them. Whether the person is anxious & needs to control their environment, or is in meltdown, possessing a greater understanding for all involved can dramatically improve the situation.
This workshop will explore the issues involved when someone displays behaviours that challenge, including areas of anxiety & communication, & consider potential strategies to support all involved.

Thursday 5 December, 10 am to 12 pm
Merton Autism Outreach Service (MAOS)
with Bonnie Brown, Assistant Head, Cricket Green School & Hannah Hime, Senior Educational Psychologist
MAOS supports the inclusion of pupils aged 4-18 years with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) & social communication difficulties in mainstream settings. It undertakes an advisory role in schools, supporting staff in developing their understanding of ASD, & sharing tools & strategies to enable pupils to access learning & social opportunities.

Recent Workshop on Mental Capacity & Powers of Attorney
Our recent workshop was run by Philip Warford, the managing director of Renaissance Legal. They are the legal partners of national Mencap, and have run previous workshops for us in Merton. For those who missed this great session, their website contains lots of useful information and an informative blog.
https://www.renaissancelegal.co.uk/resource/

Philip urged family members to sign their online petition about Child Trust Funds - money put into these by the Government cannot be accessed by many learning disabled children when they reach 18 without recourse to the Court of Protection, the cost of which may be greater than the amount of savings in the fund.

Renaissance Legal are trying to get the law changed. You can access their petition at https://www.change.org/p/office-for-disability-issues-child-trusts-funds-help-disabled-children-access-their-money
**Important note:** Whenever we refer to ‘parents’ in our newsletters, flyers and emails, we mean all carers of children and young people.

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

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**Contact Us**

*Kids First* is a project of Merton Mencap  
[www.mertonmencap.org.uk/kidsfirst](http://www.mertonmencap.org.uk/kidsfirst)

**Tiggy Astle**  
Administrative Assistant, Parent Forums  
Email: kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk  
Telephone: 020 3963 0597

**Tracy Blackwell**  
Stream Leader, Parent Forums  
Email: kids.first@mertonmencap.org.uk  
Telephone: 020 3963 0598

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**Tell us your issues!**

*Is there an issue that you think we should know about?* Are you experiencing any problems with statutory services, the NHS, your child’s school…? If yes please tell us about it. You can use one of our issues forms (available to download from the website) or just email us with the information. All issues are logged and used anonymously in our representative work with the local authority and the CCG.

kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

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**Help us recruit more members**

If you know someone who lives in Merton and has a child with a disability or special need, please ask them to contact *Kids First*. Membership is free, new parents simply download a word registration form from the website and email it to the *Kids First* Administrator or you can fill one in at your first event – see page 11 for upcoming events.

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Merton Mencap Registered Office Address: The Chaucer Centre, Canterbury Road, Morden SM4 6PX  
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