

Newsletter

Issue 19: Summer 2018

With contributions from Kids First parents

Exclusions & Alternative Education

On 25th July Government published a document called '**Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions**' which for our online readers can be found using this link [Excluded Pupils are Being Failed](#)

1. The only lawful reason for the exclusion of a disabled or SEN child is physical violence or aggression.
2. Before excluding a pupil with a disability, schools must consider whether they have properly applied the Equality Act 2010 and should review a child's SEN needs and provision prior to permanently excluding them.
3. All 'informal' exclusions are unlawful – this is when a school finds a way for a child to be removed from school without using the formal exclusions process e.g. a staff member asks a parent to pick a child up early so they can 'cool down'.
4. Schools should make particular efforts to avoid excluding children with SEN or who are Looked After Children, however, the statistics show that these groups remain much more likely to be excluded.
5. Parents can use the disability discrimination SEND Tribunal process to challenge exclusions of disabled children where a child's SEN has not been properly provided for and this has triggered the exclusion, or reasonable adjustments have not been put in place that could have prevented it.

There is excellent information about school exclusions on the following organisations' websites: IPSEA, Child Law Advice, Coram Children's Legal Centre and ACE. Kids First are also running a session about Exclusions on Monday 12 November (see page 11).

Official guidance for schools can be found in ['Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England, September 2015'](#)

Alternative Provision means any education that is not delivered in a school or college e.g. a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), education provided whilst in hospital, or home tutoring during a period of exclusion.

The review found that the quality of education providers in this sector of education was not always good and sometimes extremely poor. The review recommended a Bill of Rights for pupils who are excluded and who find themselves being educated in this sector. The priority, however, is ensuring that exclusion is genuinely the last resort and that schools are as inclusive as possible.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

We have recently moved to the Chaucer Centre in Morden.

Photocopying and postage is no longer subsidised so we must reduce the amount of printed flyers and newsletters we send out.

From September 2018, we will only post information including newsletters to families who have confirmed that they have limited access to email and the internet.

Please let us know your email address if you wish to be kept up to date with events, reminders and other useful information.

SEN Support in Maintained Schools, Colleges and Early Years Settings

Merton's Local Offer website contains some useful guidance documents that Kids First parents requested and helped to design. Parents of children with special educational needs or disabilities who are accessing SEN Support in school or college and do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) may be particularly interested in the document with the same title as this article (click on title above to read more). This can also be found by searching the Merton Local Offer under 'SEN Support'.

It sets out the provision that Merton schools should have available to support SEN pupils. It breaks information down into categories so that parents can select those that particularly apply to their child:

- Communication and interaction including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Physical and / or sensory needs
- Independent living
- Participation in society
- Health

Within these categories, the detail is helpfully split into needs, interventions and resources. For example, interventions for ASD includes social stories / social review, cartoon conversations, peer support overseen by teaching staff, buddy systems, circle of friends, flexible grouping in class.

Similar guides on the Local Offer that parents may find helpful are: 'Funding for young people aged 16 to 25 with SEN or disabilities', 'Preparation for Adulthood Pathways', 'Speech and Language Therapy Pathways' and more.

Please look at the Merton Local Offer website regularly as it contains a wealth of useful information and do feedback to the Council if you can't find what you are looking for or if you know about a service that should be listed. Email them at local.offer@merton.gov.uk or use the link on the website itself.

About Kids First

Kids First is Merton's Forum for Parents and Carers of Children and Young People with Disabilities or Special Needs. Membership is growing all the time and we currently have over 550 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 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

Steering Group

The Kids First Steering Group 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 local policy-making level and we are fully involved on all Boards and Forums which design new services or review existing provision. We are 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.

If you do decide to volunteer, you will receive free training through Merton Mencap and you can claim expenses for your parking or public transport. We are also looking into reimbursing childcare expenses in the future to encourage more involvement from those with younger children who are not yet at school. Please let us know if this would help you get more involved.

Don't forget that Kids First includes anyone with a child or young person up to the age

of 25 with any disability or special need, who lives or goes to school/college in Merton.

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 disabled children are shaped and delivered locally, and run our very popular **EVENTS** and information exchange meetings that are listed at the end of this newsletter. Our funding also pays for our website and newsletters. Please send us any of your problems, queries, and suggestions for the future so we can be sure we are working *for you*.

Help us recruit more members

Kids First reaches out to – and helps – a great many parents in the Borough, but we know that there are hundreds more that we don't reach. If you know someone who has a child with a disability or special need, please ask them to contact Kids First. ***Often the best sources of help are other parents who have been through the same experiences as you.*** Also, having more members gives us a greater voice when dealing with local government officers and other statutory bodies.

Membership is free

New parents simply download a word form from the website and email it back or you can fill one in at your first event – see page 11.

Is the newsletter useful?



We regularly receive feedback at our events but rarely ask for your views about newsletters, website and customer service.

Please take the time to send a tweet to @MertonMencap or an email to kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

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

Working with parents to embed and further develop the SEND reforms

Submitted by the London Borough of Merton

During a visit from Karla Finikin, Merton's Head of SEND Integrated Services, to Kids First on 12th October 2017 the group was advised of various initiatives occurring within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Service (SENDIS). Since her visit, the London Borough of Merton has taken significant steps to implement the initiatives Karla noted during her time with the group.

Working groups have now been established and are up and running. The 'Preparation for Adulthood' Working Group has been re-designed, and this new format group has been in place since December 2017 chaired by Jane McSherry, Assistant Director of Education. A sincere 'thank you' to those parents and carers who have joined this group. Your insights and support are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to progressing this initiative with you to ensure that young people moving from children's to adults' services are more effectively supported into adulthood.

We have established the SEND Implementation Reform Review Group, a small steering group of Kids First representatives that meets with senior Local Authority officers to discuss progress on implementing the reforms. The group has met twice during the summer term. Many thanks to those parents who have volunteered to join this group. Parents attending this group have recently fed back the findings from a session Kids First ran, which sought parent's views on the main areas to be explored in the SEND Area Inspection. This feedback and discussions following this have been very helpful in reflecting on strengths and next steps for further development.

The following provides some feedback on areas discussed and actions we are taking to address these:

Parents' experience suggests there is often a gap between the skill set and knowledge of SENCos and class teachers. This they feel can impact on staff confidence to identify needs.

We are reviewing our training offer with SENCos to make sure that across both the Local Authority and the Teaching Schools there is a sufficient training offer to upskill all staff.

We are also working with schools to develop a review framework for schools to evaluate their SEND provision drawing on the London Leadership Strategy SEND Review tool. The DfE has commissioned this tool. The review process will focus on systems for identification of pupils with SEND and the impact of intervention and class teaching on the progress of pupils with SEND. This will help to identify strengths and areas for development.

The review process will also look at how assessment information for pupils with SEND informs teachers' planning and provision in class.

Parents have asked about the consistency of identification of SEND across the Borough.

In 2018-19 we are looking to introduce moderation meetings between schools to move towards a more consistent approach to identification. These meetings will cover two areas. Moderation of identification and moderation of progress judgements including evidence used to make judgements. In this way, we hope to ensure more consistency across Merton's schools.

Parents have requested that schools provide an intervention menu for parents to use as part of the co-production process.

Through the regular SENCo Forum meetings and a smaller SENCo working group we will be

looking at ways to ensure that schools' SEND report and published SEND offer (on the school's website) provides clear information for parents linked to interventions. We hope this will provide more opportunities for effective co-production.

Parents would like to better understand how schools assess when EHCP targets are met and how this information is communicated with staff in school and in particular class teachers.

Our proposed moderation opportunities (mentioned previously) will help support consistency around this aspect of monitoring pupils' progress. We are working with SENCos to develop systems and processes for accurately tracking progress of pupils with SEND both at SEND Support and for children with EHCPs. The recent publication of the pre Key Stage teacher assessment framework, coming out of the Rochford review, will also support this work.

This group will continue to meet in the new academic year and will include sessions with colleagues from health and social care to further develop an understanding of how as a local area we are meeting the requirements of the SEND reforms.

Summer activities

The youth service is running a range of summer activities at Phipps Bridge Youth Centre, Pollards Hill Youth Centre and The Acacia Adventure playground at Eastfields. These sessions are largely all open access. If you are interested for your child to attend a session and feel that they may need some extra help please contact Carol Hemans, Youth Centres Manager, Carol.hemans@merton.gov.uk or Julie Henderson, Manager Adventure Playground, Julie.henderson@merton.gov.uk. We are aware that these sessions may not be suitable for everyone.

The adventure playground is open Monday to Friday from 11am until 5pm from Monday 13th August until the end of the summer holidays.

We have a youth club, MAGIC, specifically for children age 11+ with additional needs which runs every **term time** Saturday from 10am to 2.30pm at Phipps Bridge Youth Centre. Please contact Audrey Haswell MAGIC Manager, for further details Audrey.haswell@merton.gov.uk.

Merton SENDIS - Staffing Update

Chris Wilson, Merton SEND Information, Advice and Support Service Officer, is retiring after many years' service in Merton. Many of you know him and will join us in wishing him well in his next adventure, whatever that is. We are appointing to the Merton Information Advice and Support Service Officer post over the summer and will update you in the next newsletter.

John East is the new manager of the Language and Learning service which includes our education Speech and Language Team and took up post at Easter. John has been busy recruiting Speech and Language therapists and we have a new highly experienced senior therapist joining the team in September. The market for recruiting therapists is challenging and we have been proactively seeking therapists through many routes.

We would also like to welcome Crystal Minors, our newly appointed SEND Team Manager, to her role; she started on May 16th, 2018. Crystal has been with Merton Council for over a year and half, and has joined us from the Adults Learning Disabilities Team. She will be responsible for supporting the Senior Case Officers of SEND, and working with children/young people and their families in ensuring that their SEN needs are being met. Crystal is experienced in working with young people with learning disability, mental health and ASD needs.

Parent to Parent: *local parent groups*

Talk Autism

Talk Autism is a small, additional service for parents and carers of children, young people and adults with autism.

All sessions held at Chaucer Centre, Canterbury Road, Morden SM4 6PX.

For details of these meetings, please see www.mertonmencap.org.uk/talkautism.htm.

Adults First

Adults First is a service for carers of adults with a learning disability or autism aged 18 plus. 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. All sessions are currently held at High Path Community Resource Centre, 63 High Path, South Wimbledon, SW19 2JY.

For details, check the website www.mertonmencap.org.uk/adultsfirst.htm or contact us at af.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk.

NAS Merton (National Autistic Society)

A parent group run by local volunteers. We are looking to expand our group and plan to do more activities where children, adults and families can get involved.

We are an active community group seeking to raise awareness of Autism. We provide parent-to-parent links to help people to find the resources that they need quickly. We host play parties for children, and regular coffee mornings for the parents of children and adults with autism, and adults with autism in Merton.

Contact group Leader: Miranda Duffy
Email: Merton.Group@nas.org.uk
Website: NAS Merton



South West London Girls Connect

This group enables parents of girls with ASD to share relevant information, as well as to provide support to each other. This is facilitated through regular coffee mornings which take place across various locations around South West London, as well as through an invitation only Facebook group. The group is also open to older girls / young women with ASD. To find out more email swlondongirlsconnect@gmail.com.

Me too & Co, Richmond

We support and provide information for families with children with disabilities and additional needs including a free legal clinic (booking required), a home education support group, activities, therapies and more.

Tel: 07946 646033

Email: info@metooandco.org.uk

Website: www.metooandco.org.uk

21 & Co – Downs Syndrome Support Group

Email: tatty@21andco.org.uk

Telephone: Tatty Bowman 020 8549 6623

Website: <http://www.21andco.org.uk/>

SIFFS – for parents of children with a hearing, visual or multi- sensory impairment

020 8545 3780 E-mail: sen@merton.gov.uk

Ruth Bowman: Merton Sensory Team

Useful tips and contacts

Contact

Fully-trained parent advisers offer information and advice on a wide range of issues including welfare rights, short breaks, local services and local support. We also have advisers who can offer advice on issues related to special educational needs. There is a Facebook wall to post questions.

<https://www.facebook.com/contactfamilies/>

Email: emailhelpline@cafamily.org.uk

Phone: 0808 808 3555 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm).



A Dating Agency for People over 18 with a Learning Disability or Autism

A safe environment to make new friends and start relationships. We are a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC) with the aim of bringing people together from all over London. We focus on dating, but we believe friendship is just as important! We meet all our members face to face so that you can feel confident about our matches.

Email: hello@happilydating.co.uk



Waving *not* Drowning

A website and helpline advising working parents of disabled children and a free newsletter for parents of disabled children.

We also campaign for a better deal for parents of disabled children in the workplace.

Email: janet.mearns@workingfamilies.org.uk

Phone: 020 7017 0072

Website: www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Merton M-Card

Register your child on the Merton disability database and you can obtain a concessions card that offers cheap entrance to many locations and activities. An application form is available to download on the website below.

The M-Card identifies that the child has a disability or special need and is accepted in a range of places such as museums, theme parks, football clubs, etc. We will send you details when you apply for your card.

The M-card is valid for two years and may then be renewed.

E-mail: fsd@merton.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8274 5300

Website: [Merton M-Card](#)

NCS The Challenge - skills for life, work and adulthood

All 15 to 17-year olds in Merton are eligible to take part in the National Citizen Service (NCS) Challenge programme. It has three parts:

Get Active: an action-packed residential trip away from home.

Team Challenge: work as a team to develop new skills in subjects such as sport, media, drama, photography etc. in a university setting.

Social Action: make your mark. Use your new skills to design a social action project in your local area and pitch to win funding to make it happen.

The project is majority funded by the Government including additional support for special needs or disabled children.

The programme runs every Summer for 3 weeks but, if you're in year 12 or 13, you can take part in the Autumn half-term programme instead.

Register on the website:

www.ncsthechallenge.org/programme

For Special Educational Needs questions once you have registered, phone at 0333 150 2425.



Merton Mencap Movers & Makers Playschemes

For children aged 6 – 12 with moderate to mild special educational needs, playschemes run in the summer (end August), may run in October half-term and also Easter.

They take place at Albemarle Primary School, Princes Way, London, SW19 6JP.

They cost £70 per day and can accept up to 25 children each day. Wandsworth residents may receive a substantial discount as part of the short breaks programme run by the Council. We also accept childcare vouchers.

We may also be able to accept siblings on the camp if there are places available. This is a high quality, fun holiday scheme for children who need a higher staff to child ratio as a result of a special need or disability. The camp schedule is different each day and is designed by specialists who set out a clear structure, send out the timetable to parents one week in advance, and provide clear visual information during the camp. Staff can use Makaton signing and are able to support a range of medical needs.

The camp is run by trained staff including special needs teachers, therapists, teaching assistants and childcare professionals.

Each child must bring their own lunch and snacks. To book or to find out more, please contact Niki Lowe at Merton Mencap:

Email: office.manager@mertonmencap.org.uk

Phone: 020 3963 0599



ACES

New services for high functioning autistic teenagers & young adults

These services are for ages 14 – 18 and 18 – 25. Members must be safe when out in the community with a group, must be able to use money and travel cards independently, and also be able to use a mobile phone.

14 - 18 year olds meet every other Thursday 6.45pm to 8.45pm at *Phipps Bridge Youth Centre, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham CR4 3TY* and every other week out in the community on an outing chosen by the group.

The service is run for and by young people themselves with support from our specialist staff. It is aimed at young people who find it difficult to make friends or join in social groups and activities and would like a place to go where every effort is made to accept each person as an individual and where care is taken to adapt the environment to reduce anxieties.

A voluntary donation is requested at the end of each term. Up to 20 people can be registered in each service.

The clubs aim to have a mainstream approach doing the same things as any typical youth club and we welcome other young volunteers who are willing to come along as participants (expenses are paid).

The service for 18 – 25-year olds has not yet started but will begin very soon. The aim is to get to know each person's interests, do some structured activities together but then facilitate and encourage people to go out together out in the community between sessions.

To find out more and register interest, please contact Niki Lowe at Merton Mencap:

Email: office.manager@mertonmencap.org.uk

Phone: 020 3963 0599



STOMP Campaign

Stopping over medication of people with a learning disability, autism or both

By NHS England

This is a national project involving many different organisations which are helping to stop the over use of certain medicines. STOMP is about helping people to stay well and have a good quality of life.

Psychotropic medicines affect how the brain works and include medicines for psychosis, depression, anxiety, sleep problems and epilepsy. Sometimes they are also given to people because their behaviour is seen as challenging.

People with a learning disability, autism or both are more likely to be given these medicines than other people. Research shows that among adults known to their GP to have a learning disability (excluding only those in hospital as inpatients) on any average day:

- 17.0% took antipsychotic drugs
- 16.9% took antidepressants
- 7.1% took drugs used in mania/hypomania
- 4.2% took anxiolytics
- 2.7% took hypnotics

These medicines are right for some people. They can help people stay safe and well. Sometimes there are other ways of helping people, so they need less medicine or none at all.

It is not safe to change the dose of these medicines or stop taking them without help from a doctor.

Public Health England says that every day about 30,000 to 35,000 people with a learning disability are taking psychotropic medicines, when they **do not have the health conditions** the medicines are for. Children and young people are also prescribed them.

Psychotropic medicines can cause problems if people take them for too long, take too large a dose or take them for the wrong reason. This can cause side effects like:

- putting on weight / extreme hunger
- feeling tired or 'drugged up'
- serious problems with physical health
- enuresis (bed-wetting)

There is an [easy read leaflet](#) about it, [a booklet](#) and a new [online medication pathway](#) for family carers. The pathway covers topics such as:

- What you need to find out before your relative starts taking medication
- What the alternatives are to medication
- How medication should be monitored
- What to do if you have concerns about your relative's medication

Examples of these medications are: aripiprazole, risperidone, fluoxetine, sertraline, clozapine, diazepam and temazepam. (NB: This campaign only covers medicines prescribed by Psychiatrists).

If your child or young person takes some of these medications, do not be alarmed. In particular, the commonly prescribed sleep aid supplement melatonin is considered to be safe. You may wish to check the website and the medication pathway and when you next visit your consultant or GP take the information with you.

If your child or young person has some challenging behaviours as a result of their disability, and someone is or may consider prescribing medication for this, please refer to the leaflet on the website that you can take with you to an appointment.

www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/improving-health/stomp



Previous workshops – news, views and updates

A selection of previous workshops with a summary of their content

APRIL 2018: SEN Support in schools

For parents of SEN children in mainstream schools

with Paula Jewes and Merton SENCo Wendy Shepard

Wendy showed parents examples of provision maps that she uses in school to allocate provision and explained how children's needs are identified, assessed and how interventions are put in place, checked and monitored and then adjusted as necessary.

She discussed supporting children with medical needs and how it is possible to use adjustments to help children to cope with challenges in school.

SEN information reports were discussed (every school must have one on their website explaining their SEN support offer).

APRIL 2018: Implementation of the SEND reforms in Merton

Merton is responsible for ensuring the Children and Families Act 2014 is implemented appropriately and like other areas nationally will be inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Attendees discussed their experiences of the implementation of the reforms under 3 headings;

1. Merton's effectiveness in identifying children and young people's SEN and/or disabilities,
2. their effectiveness of meeting needs, and
3. their effectiveness of improving outcomes so that the chances of our children and young people participating fully in society improve.

These parental views were later fed back to a group of senior Local Authority officers in order to help inform future policy. Page 4 of this newsletter provides an update on how the London Borough of Merton has taken parental views on board.

MAY 2018: Changes to the SEN and Disability Tribunal explained

with Gregg Burrough, Solicitor, Simpson Millar LLP, Wimbledon

From April 2018, the SEND Tribunal covers social care and health components of an EHC Plan, as well as education. This can only be included if there is also an appeal about the education content (sections B & F). The tribunal cannot require health and social care to take action but can make recommendations. It is not yet clear if this will improve the quality of EHC plans or make these different agencies to work together more effectively in the interests of the child.

JUNE 2018: Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)

With Laura Kerbey, Positive Autism Support and Training

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) is the Government's recommended approach to supporting children and adults with challenging behaviours. It aims to minimise interventions such as medication, restraint or seclusion, and replaces these with preventative measures, based on understanding the communication and sensory needs which often underpin the person's behaviours.

Laura gave parents some practical examples of PBS and useful ways to work with children in the home.

Kids First Events – Autumn 2018

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.

Autumn Term 2018 programme:

Tuesday 18 September, 10am to 12pm

Independent Travel Training

With Sally Taylor, SEN Transport Co-ordinator, SENDIS and Jane Birchmore, Travel Trainer, Merton Mencap

Merton Council commissions Merton Mencap to train young people with learning disabilities/autism to become independent travellers for their journey between home & their place of education. To be eligible for the service children should be between the ages of 12 & 25, and have an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP), and potentially be eligible for Merton Transport. Find out more and hear from a parent whose child is now an independent traveller as a result of receiving training.

Tuesday 25 September, 10am to 12pm

Neurodevelopmental Pathway for diagnostic assessment of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

With Claudia Tomlinson, Integrated Commissioning Manager – Children's Health and Abbas Mirza, Commissioning Support, Merton CCG

Following the engagement sessions last year, our health service commissioners from Merton CCG are returning to tell us about their plans for the neurodevelopmental pathway for diagnostic assessment of ASD/ADHD in Merton.

Thursday 4 October, 10am to 12pm

Meet the therapists - Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH)

With therapists from occupational therapy, physiotherapy, paediatric dietetics and speech & language therapy, plus Ruth Gladwell, Locality Lead for Integrated Complex Needs, Merton Community Services.

CLCH have been delivering community services in Merton since April 2016 & are responsible for the majority of NHS community healthcare services for children & adults in Merton. Meet the therapists & find out how they can help your child.

Wednesday 17 October, 10am to 12pm

SEND Update

With Karla Finikin, Head of SEN and Disabilities (SENDIS) and Crystal Minors, SEN Team Manager

An opportunity to meet the new SEN Team Manager & discuss SEND issues that will affect you and your child.

Monday 12 November, 10am to 12pm

Exclusions, Disability Discrimination and the Equality Act

With Gregg Burrough, Simpson Millar Solicitors

Children with SEN and disabilities are much more likely to be excluded from school than their classmates. Too many young people are being excluded illegally which may amount to discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. Gregg will explain the law around this topic and answer your questions.

Monday 26 November, 10am to 12pm

SEN Mediation – a disagreement resolution service

With Global Mediation, Merton's Mediation Service

Find out about the process of mediation & how it can help resolve disagreements between parents and local authorities / schools in relation to disputes for children & young people that are being assessed for or have an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP).

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.

HOW TO CONTACT KIDS FIRST

Kids First is a project of Merton Mencap
www.mertonmencap.org.uk/kidsfirst

Samantha Pickford: Administrative Assistant, Parent Forums (Kids First/Adults First/Talk Autism)

Usual working days (subject to variation): Mondays & Fridays

Email: kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

Direct: 020 3963 0597

Tracy Blackwell: Stream Leader, Parent Forums (Kids First/Adults First/Talk Autism)

Usual working days (subject to variation): Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays

Email: kids.first@mertonmencap.org.uk

Direct: 020 3963 0598

To join Kids First, general queries, to book a place on our sessions and for newsletter contributions, please contact Samantha Pickford.

We also want to hear about any challenges or positive experiences you are having as a parent. Case studies are always welcome and can be included in the newsletter anonymously, if you prefer.

Please also contact us with any feedback on this newsletter or any comments about local services for children with SEN.