Keeping in touch
Supporting vulnerable people during COVID-19

How you can help your community
Volunteering and Merton Giving
We are currently facing the toughest test in living memory and during this unprecedented time, I am calling on everyone to play their part in helping to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The council’s top priority is to support the NHS and local Public Health teams and we are committed to ensuring that residents receive advice that is in line with Public Health England’s guidance.

This is a critical moment for our local public services and the council is doing all we can to ensure the services that people rely on continue as best as they can. Please visit the council’s website for all the latest updates and to access a wide range of services online, leaving our phone lines available for our most vulnerable residents. I would like to pay tribute to council staff, who have been working tirelessly to deliver vital support to those who need us more than ever.

We are seeing incredible efforts as people pull together to help and protect the most vulnerable people in our community. Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) is coordinating the effort for volunteers in the borough and the number of Merton residents who have already offered their time has made me very proud.

Businesses are another priority – our business community is the lifeblood of Merton and it is vital that local businesses, particularly smaller ones, are given the help they need to survive the coming downturn. We must ensure the local economy is in a position to grow again once this is all over.

We will emerge from this together. The council is doing everything we can to support our amazing community and I want to thank you all for the efforts you are making which will help us though.

Merton residents who are European Union (EU) nationals are being urged to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to ensure they can continue living in the borough.

To help residents successfully apply for settled status, the council has teamed up with Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth (CAML), South West Law Centre (SWLLC) and the Polish Family Association to provide free advice and support. The application deadline is 30 June 2021, but, depending on the outcome of negotiations with the EU, this could be brought forward to 31 December 2020.

A specialist advisor is on hand at CAML who can provide free advice on eligibility for settled or pre-settled status as well as help with making applications, appeals and judicial reviews.

South West London Law Centre is providing free help for EU nationals worried about their status in the UK, or who are in difficult or disadvantaged circumstances.

The Leader of Merton Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis, said: “EU citizens who are Merton residents are welcome in our borough. We don’t want our European residents, who have made such a big contribution to our community, to lose the right to remain here, their right to vote or their rights to free medical care and welfare benefits.”

“They have helped make our borough a great place for everyone to live in, and it is only right that we are here to help them when they need it.”

find out more merton.gov.uk/EUSS
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Joining forces to support vulnerable residents

In these toughest of times, heart-warming stories continue to emerge about how residents across the borough are volunteering to provide support for their vulnerable neighbours.

As the numbers of COVID-19 cases increase, it is important that we look out for vulnerable residents in the borough who are at risk of a serious illness if they catch it. Public health advice is that vulnerable people and their carers should make special arrangements to stop them coming into contact with the virus, known as shielding. This means not leaving their homes and minimising all non-essential contact with other members of their household. Some who are most at risk will require practical assistance so, if you are willing and able to help, here are steps you can take to support those in need, whilst adhering to the guidance on social distancing.

Connect and reach out to your neighbours – find new ways to stay in touch with neighbours you would normally see in person to check on their physical and mental health. Share contact details and call, video chat, email, instant message or text.

Make the most of local online groups – keep up-to-date, share information and be a positive part of your local community conversations.

Share accurate information and advice – support anyone who may be anxious about COVID-19 and advise them how to check the correct advice given by Public Health England. Encourage people to follow the correct hygiene practices.

Merton’s volunteer workforce

Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC), which is the umbrella body for voluntary and charity groups in Merton, together with the voluntary sector in the borough, the council, Healthwatch and Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, have mobilised the Merton COVID-19 Community Response Hub to help isolated households and those most at risk from COVID-19.

MVSC is connecting people in need of support with a volunteer who can provide assistance. More than 600 volunteers have already signed up but more are needed. Anyone who puts themselves forward may be asked to support people who are currently unable to leave their home by helping with essential tasks such as shopping, picking up prescriptions and helping to top up electricity and meter keys.

If you are able to volunteer, contact volunteer@mvsc.co.uk to offer your services.

If you need help with daily tasks and already receive support or services from a voluntary sector organisation in Merton, please contact them directly, and they will help to signpost you towards the support that you need.

If you are isolated and need support, or know someone that does, please email help@mvsc.co.uk or call 020 8685 2272.

Because of the expected high volume of calls, please be patient in getting through. We may need to take your details and ask a volunteer to call you back. Your assigned volunteer will take the time to fully understand your needs and how we may be able to help you through this difficult time. A dedicated, telephone-based keeping in touch service, linking individuals to our trusted volunteers, will allow changing needs or circumstances to be supported wherever possible.

Merton Giving Coronavirus Fund

A fund has been launched by Merton Voluntary Service Council to provide grants to charities and voluntary groups, which are working locally to support people who are at risk of becoming seriously ill with coronavirus. Please donate if you are able to. All money raised will help assist volunteers to deliver shopping and provide other vital support to vulnerable people who are isolated in their homes during challenging period. Find out more and make a donation.

www.justgiving.com/mvsc

Friends in St Helier (FISH)

Friends In St Helier (FISH), usually run five social clubs which offer more than 100 older people every week a chance to meet friends, participate in activities and enjoy a freshly prepared hot meal.

Now the group have adapted their services to make sure people stay connected whilst self-isolating, and are delivering meals to members of their group who are most in need. They are also providing assistance with tasks including shopping and collecting prescriptions.

www.friendsinsthelier.co.uk

www.friendsinsthelier.co.uk
Zac Dada, 18, launched the Merton Covid-19 Mutual Aid Group on Sunday 15 March. The group is working alongside the council and other organisations to provide vital support to isolated residents.

Zac said: “After reading about the relief effort across the country I was inspired to create a group – to make a difference and to support vulnerable people and those in isolation in my borough. I set up Merton Covid-19 Mutual Aid Group to fit in with the country-wide mutual aid network, which attempts to connect volunteers with local groups.

“The volunteers are all ages, and have come from many different backgrounds. They will be ensuring isolated people from vulnerable groups are supported, safely connected and able to get basics such as groceries and toilet paper.

He added: “At just 18 years old, I was in school and couldn’t have imagined I would set up such a group and receive so much support from people across the borough.”

Visit: www.mertonmutualaid.net There are a number of ways to support the effort, including dropping off supplies and administration work.

Merton Covid-19 Mutual Aid Group
A teenager has set up a support group which attracted more than 1,000 volunteers on Facebook in just three days, plus offers of help from a number of companies.

Adult social care and services for vulnerable residents
Our social workers and other professionals are continuing to support and safeguard our vulnerable residents. We are working very closely with all providers of adult social care services and our health partners in Merton, to ensure we are helping our most vulnerable residents in line with the latest government guidance. This includes work with residential and nursing care homes, as well as home care providers. All providers are doing everything they can to keep services running normally for people and are working to plan for possible staff shortages.

In line with the government’s measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus, we made the very difficult decision to close Merton Civic Centre to the public from 25 March until further notice.

We are continuing to work hard to provide vital services and to ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported. Alternative arrangements have been put in place for residents who require face to face services and we will provide further updates with details on this as soon as possible.

If you can, we ask you to make full use of our website, instead of phoning the council, as this gives us more capacity to speak to those who cannot access online services.

If the information you need is not online, please refer to the A-Z guide of services in this edition of My Merton for contact email addresses and telephone numbers for specific services, including those for vulnerable adults and children, people experiencing homelessness and residents who are being subjected to domestic violence. Our customer contact centre is open on weekdays between 9am and 5pm on 020 8545 4901.

We appreciate your patience and support. Please check our website merton.gov.uk and our Facebook and Twitter accounts for further updates.
Why social distancing is so important

It is vital for everyone to limit their contact with other people, as this will help to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Social distancing aims to help save lives by shielding those who are most at risk of becoming severely ill with the virus, including people aged 70 or over, people with underlying health conditions and pregnant women.

How to avoid catching and spreading COVID-19

The most effective way for you to protect yourself and others from catching the virus is by regularly washing your hands.

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and hot water. This is safer than hand sanitiser.
- Always wash your hands after using public transport, before eating or after blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue, and then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home.

How to cope with social distancing and self isolation

- Keep in touch with friends and loved ones via phone, internet and social media.
- Connect with local online groups and join in community conversations.
- Open your windows to let in fresh air.
- Spend time doing things you enjoy, such as hobbies, learning something new, watching your favourite TV shows, listening to the radio, reading or cooking.
- Try to eat healthy meals and drink plenty of water.
- Get in touch with the voluntary groups offering practical help, advice and support in your area. (See previous page for contact details.)

What to do if you have symptoms of COVID-19

- Since Monday 16 March people with symptoms that may be due to COVID-19, and all those they live with must stay at home. You should stay at home for seven days if you have either a high temperature or a new continuous cough. If you live with other people, they should all stay at home for 14 days from the day that you first had symptoms. This will help to protect others in your community while you are infectious.
- You do not need to contact the NHS 111 coronavirus service if your symptoms remain mild. Please do not visit your doctor’s surgery, a pharmacy or a hospital.
- Contact NHS 111 online if you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, if your condition gets worse or if you are not recovering after seven days. Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

Advice and information on COVID-19

- For advice on how you can protect yourself and others from coronavirus, visit nhs.uk/coronavirus
- The latest information on the Government’s response to coronavirus can be found on gov.uk/coronavirus
- For updates on Merton Council services, useful links and details about community action to support vulnerable people in the borough, visit merton.gov.uk/coronavirus
Business buzz for climate change action

More than 20 businesses attended the launch of Merton’s Business Network for Climate Action, organised by Merton Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Sustainable Merton.

The network aims to support businesses across the borough who want to take action to tackle the climate emergency. Businesses are invited to sign up and share the projects they have introduced to make the air cleaner in Merton.

A number of businesses told their climate change action stories at the launch including Kindred, which has installed beehives on top of its office roof in Wimbledon. Other highlights included Time & Leisure Magazine’s plastic-free Tuesdays, Positive Images’ Positive Planet campaign, and the introduction of bamboo cups for all students at Wimbledon School of English.

The event was sponsored by Wimbledon Centre Court Shopping Centre, which is taking steps to make the shopping area more eco-efficient.

Officers from Merton Council attended the event to give an update on the council’s work following its declaration of a Climate Change Emergency last summer. The council is currently developing a plan with businesses and residents to reduce the carbon emissions which lead to rising temperatures. Under the declaration the council has pledged to be carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and work towards carbon neutrality for the whole of Merton by 2050. To get involved, visit: merton.gov.uk/climatechange

To join Merton’s Business Network for Climate Change Action contact Merton Chamber of Commerce on 020 8944 5501 or email info@mertonchamber.co.uk.

Better working futures

Merton residents with health problems, disabilities or who have other barriers to employment can get individually-tailored support to help them back into work.

Delivered by Reed in Partnership and managed by Croydon Council on behalf of residents in Merton, Sutton, Kingston, Richmond and Croydon, the DWP Better Working Futures: Work and Health Programme is worth up to £1.4 million, part funded by European Social Fund.

The programme specialises in helping jobseekers break down the barriers facing them getting into, returning to, and staying in work. The barriers to work can include mental or physical health issues, homelessness or long-term unemployment.

On joining the Work and Health Programme, clients are assigned their own advisor who will work with them to understand their work aspirations and personal circumstances, which could impact on their working lives.

All-round support is then given, from skills training, job seeking, applications, interviews and guidance to other services to help with any personal circumstances.

A key feature of this programme, distinct from others, is that support continues for participants once they start and continue in work.

Reed’s local office is in Vestry Hall, Mitcham. Over 350 Merton residents have already started the programme, to which residents can either self-refer or be referred via Job Centre Plus.

To sign up to Better Working Futures, or for more information, visit: BWFsouthlondon.co.uk

Anti-idling campaign

Clean air championing students from Poplar Primary School took to the streets in February to ask motorists to stop idling. The budding environmental campaigners, accompanied by teaching staff and volunteer parents, made a real difference to the air quality outside their school by persuading multiple drivers to switch their engines off whilst stationary.

Idling is known to be a major contributor towards localised pedestrian-level pollution. Studies by King’s College have found a significant decrease in pollutants in the air during anti-idling action days.
Keeping Merton informed

**School’s new level**

A Wimbledon school has been selected to be among the first to offer the new post GCSE digital course, which give students a head start in skilled employment.

Ursuline High School is excited to be offering the two-year-long T Level course in Digital Production, Design and Development from September.

The new courses, which award qualifications equivalent to three A Levels, are being rolled out across the county over the next few years.

T Levels will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and ‘on-the-job’ experience from an industry placement lasting at least 45 days. As the students will spend 80% of their time at Ursuline, they will have the support of an outstanding Sixth Form.

The courses have been developed with employers to ensure they prepare students for work or further study – students will also be able to earn UCAS points so they can access university places.

**Celebrating local businesses**

The Merton Best Business Awards are back for 2020, bringing a great opportunity to celebrate the best businesses and entrepreneurs in the borough.

The awards, which are being organised by Merton Chamber of Commerce for the eighth year, were launched last month. The awards aim to promote excellence, innovation and best practice by businesses across the borough.

Merton Council, which recognises the important role businesses play in the borough, are this year’s headline sponsors alongside WSM business advisory. The council is looking forward to celebrating the best in Merton – from those who give exceptional customer service, to businesses who have a focus on sustainability, as well as outstanding women and small companies who are making a difference in the community.

Businesses have until midnight on Friday 19 June to submit entries and the finalists will be announced on Monday 20 July. The awards will be presented at glitzy Gala Awards Night at the All England Lawn Tennis Club on Thursday 17 September.

Entry is free. For more information on the categories and how to enter visit [www.mertonbestbusiness.co.uk](http://www.mertonbestbusiness.co.uk)

**House of Lords honour for school governor**

Mansoor Ahmad, a governor for St John Fisher RC Primary School and Ricards Lodge High School, has scooped a British Community Honours Award.

Mr Ahmad, who has been involved in the committees of many Merton schools over the years, was honoured for his outstanding contribution towards British society.

The qualified accountant and member of the Commonwealth Journalists Association currently works for Al Shirkatul Islamiyyah, which is one of the UK’s largest charities.

**Holocaust survivor at 75th anniversary event**

A Holocaust survivor spoke at a poignant event to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. Guest speaker Annick Lever was joined by residents, politicians, community representatives, faith and belief leaders, as well as the Wimbledon Synagogue Choir, for the Holocaust Memorial Day event, held in the council chamber. Holocaust Memorial Day is held annually to remember those who were victims of terrible genocides in the Second World War and in more recent times. The council hosted the event as part of its ongoing commitment to its work to erase hatred, prejudice and discrimination in the borough.
Seven stunning sensory places for children launched

There was an icy official launch for a ground-breaking project to create seven different sensory areas for children in Merton’s libraries.

Project Space aims to provide places where all children, but particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), can feel comfortable and make discoveries. The project is the result of a successful £55k funding bid by Merton’s libraries for Arts Council funds. Children from Eagle House School attended the official launch in January, which featured a performance inspired by popular film *Frozen*, staged by Project Sense partners Magical Quests.

The event at Mitcham Library was also attended by Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, the Cabinet Member responsible for libraries, and Merton Mayor Councillor Janice Howard. Attendees enjoyed tours around the stunning Arctic-themed sensory space and demonstrations of the library’s specialist SEND equipment and toys.

The event attracted library service leaders from across the country, interested in the unique project run by Merton’s award-winning library service.

Project Sense also runs a programme of dedicated monthly SEND events and activities.

[find out more](merton.gov.uk/send-libraries)

Merton in top three nationally for pupils’ progress

School children, teachers and their families were praised as Merton was revealed to be in the top three in the country for the progress pupils make at secondary schools.

Merton was ranked third in national Progress 8 scores, published by the Department for Education. The annual figures chart the progress pupils make from joining secondary schools to the outcome of their GCSE results.

Schools are given a score to indicate whether pupils are progressing above or below the national average. Overall, Merton had a well above average score which ranks the borough’s schools third in England.

The figures, based on last summer’s exams, were published in February.

The council is hugely proud of the dedicated work at its schools, which contributes so much to making Merton a great place for families, and it is committed to continuing to further enhance the education provided in the borough.

Bridging the gap: £10m for local groups

Almost 70 voluntary and community groups across the borough benefited from £10m in funding this year, as the council continued its commitment to bridging the gap between the best and worst off in the borough.

The funding pot, shared between 68 different voluntary groups, increased by more than £107k compared to the previous financial year.

Funding during the year helped support holiday clubs for children with disabilities, care for vulnerable adults and projects to tackle social isolation as well as community theatre and the popular Deen City Farm.

The year saw an increase in funding for projects to address mental health issues and £300k was allocated to the Alzheimer’s Society to provide a Dementia Hub.

Commonside Community Development Trust was allocated £30,000 for its work to boost the employment skills and wellbeing of Pollards Hill residents.

In the past five years the council has provided funding of more than £60m to the voluntary sector.

[find out more](merton.gov.uk/vs-funding)
Merton wows parade crowds

Congratulations were expressed to all those who contributed to Merton’s entry to this year’s New Year’s Day parade, held in Central London.

Public voting placed Merton’s parade entry in the top ten boroughs, which secured winnings of £5,000 for the Mayor of Merton’s charities. Merton’s London Loves Life themed entry featured two giant alien tourist puppets created by talented students from UAL Wimbledon College of Art. Those taking part in the parade included children, staff and parents from St Mary’s School, Wimbledon, as well as councillors. The pupils from St Mary’s School also sang a song specially composed by Councillor Linda Kirby.

Mayor of Merton, Councillor Janice Howard thanked everyone involved with the borough’s successful parade entry. The Mayor’s nominated charities for 2019–20 are Macmillan Cancer Support and Faith in Action – Merton Homelessness Project.

Combating plastic pollution – one refill at a time

There’s now lots of places where people can top up their water bottles for free while out and about in Merton, thanks to a new network.

Refill Merton was launched by Sustainable Merton in January as part of the environmental charity’s #PlasticFreeMerton campaign. More than 50 businesses from across Merton have already joined the scheme to replenish re-usable water bottles at no charge.

Residents and visitors to the borough can sign up to the Refill App to find out which businesses will gladly provide free tap water and look out for the scheme’s window stickers.

Refill is a national award-winning scheme by City to Sea which aims to reduce the number of plastic bottles which are chucked away after just one use. The scheme highlights the catastrophic impact plastic pollution has on the world’s waterways and wildlife.

Sustainable Merton is working to further expand the network across the borough so filling water bottles on-the-move becomes widely available. To download the Refill App, visit refill.org.uk. For more information visit www.sustainablemerton.org.

Wimbledon Foundation offers funding to projects

Grants of up to £5,000 are available to charities and community organisations in Merton thanks to the Wimbledon Foundation Community Fund. Established in 2014, the Community Fund has supported more than 140 projects in Merton and Wandsworth with total funding of more than £600,000.

Helen Parker, Head of the Wimbledon Foundation said, “Our Community Fund is one of several ways in which the foundation is making a positive difference and helping to improve people’s lives in our local community. We are proud to be able to support the fantastic work local organisations are doing to tackle social issues from mental health and wellbeing to community cohesion.”

Details of how to apply can be found at www.wimbledon.com/foundation. The closing date is Thursday 16 April.
Spellbinding find by young reader in Wimbledon Library

A rare first edition copy of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* was discovered by an 11-year-old reader in Wimbledon Library.

Emily Siaban, who is a huge fan of the books on the young wizard, identified the rare edition after finding out the tell-tale signs from a YouTube video.

The signs of a first edition, for the book that introduced the world of *Harry Potter* and Hogwarts School, include the attribution of the copyright to ‘Joanne Rowling’ rather than ‘JK Rowling’. Another give away of the book’s rarity was spotted on page 53, where ‘1 wand’ is accidentally printed twice.

The book is in remarkably good condition, considering it has spent 22 years in circulation. The lack of wear and tear is likely to be due to the fact it had been part of the Schools’ Library Service, rather than available on the open shelves.

As the book found by Emily is potentially of very high value, it is now being kept in a safe place in Merton Council’s offices. However, Merton’s library service is reassuring readers there are plenty of other copies of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* available in Merton’s award-winning libraries.

Sport for all award

A Merton sports hub used by more than 4,000 residents a week has netted a prestigious national award. Tooting and Mitcham Community Sports Club has been awarded Playfinder’s Outstanding Sports Facility of the Year.

The independently-funded not-for-profit venue, in Bishopsford Road, Morden, aims to serve the whole community by providing sport, health and educational activities for all.

The club, a pioneer of the Football Foundation’s project to increase grassroots football participation, is home to a host of youth sports teams which have more than 300 young players.

Last year, Tooting and Mitcham FC also enjoyed a fantastic FA Cup run to reach the third qualifying round in both the FA Cup and FA Trophy. Major expansion plans are afoot to build 77 affordable homes on the grounds of the sports hub and all money raised will be invested back into the club.

Queen honours Merton library head

Anthony Hopkins, Head of Libraries, Heritage and Adult Education, was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM), for services to libraries in the Queen’s New Year’s honours.

Anthony’s dedication to Merton libraries goes back to his visits to Pollards Hill library as a toddler.

His career of more than 20 years began with a stint of work experience at Mitcham Library.

Despite challenging financial times, Anthony has been instrumental in ensuring that all seven of the council’s award-winning libraries have remained open. Anthony also oversaw the planning and construction of a new building for Colliers Wood Library and the introduction of Arts Spaces into two libraries. Last year, Anthony’s team successfully bid for £95k of Arts Council funding for themed sensory areas in the libraries for all children, but to particularly appeal to those with special educational needs and disabilities. Anthony has also served as the President of London Libraries.
here's one way of helping to tackle the global climate emergency, which gives us all the feel-good factor – to plant more trees and care for the ones we have.

We’ve talked a lot in My Merton about council efforts to improve the air we breathe and address the challenges of climate change – by encouraging people out of their cars and being energy efficient at home, for example. But, according to scientists, planting billions more trees across the world is one of the cheapest and easiest ways of helping address this critical issue. This is because trees absorb and store carbon dioxide, taking the gases responsible for global warming out of the atmosphere. They can also trap harmful fine particles, purifying the air we breathe. Aside from their impact on reversing climate change, trees have many other benefits – from providing a haven for wildlife to boosting human health. Just being around trees has been shown to decrease blood pressure and stress levels.

As part of its commitment to making Merton’s air cleaner, the council always requests that trees are planted as part of new developments. Trees are being used as part of a green screen to improve air quality at the new building for Harris Academy in South Wimbledon.

Trees help make the air cleaner and boost the well-being of everyone. Read on to discover where you can find some of Merton’s most interesting trees and about the council’s work to promote tree planting across the borough.
Merton park top place for trees
A definite upside of living in Merton is the wealth of green spaces right on our doorstep – most of them packed with beautiful, air-cleansing mature trees. In fact, one Merton park has made it into the top three London green spaces for the diversity and botanical value of its tree specimens. Cannizaro Park in Wimbledon was bettered only by Kew Gardens and Syon Park (and beat Buckingham Palace) in the survey by the Tree Register, a charity which catalogues the trees across the British Isles.

Other recommended places to find the borough’s oldest and most interesting trees include The Canons in Mitcham, Morden Park, Cottenham Park, Ravensbury Park and Cannon Hill Common.

The council has a small arboricultural team of specialists who look after trees in its parks, school grounds and woodlands and work closely with Tree Warden Group Merton. Supported by the national charity, the Tree Council, this group of volunteers carries out planting and maintenance, as well as assisting park friends groups with their projects and scrutinising planning applications that might affect local trees. The wardens also organise the annual search for the borough’s best tree, which takes place each summer.

Tree planting
This year Merton’s tree wardens have planted 37 full sized trees in the borough plus 1,500 hedge trees and 1,200 saplings.

If you care about trees, and would like to get involved, more tree wardens are always needed. You can also contact the group if you think your street, park or school could benefit from more trees. Using their experience and knowledge, they can help you make an application to one of the local tree planting schemes.

When the weather is dry, you can also help young trees become established by giving them some water – look out for the signs on newly-planted trees around the borough.

Parking: Tell us your views
We want to hear your views on a proposal to increase the fine for a Penalty Charge Notice. The change would increase the deterrent for inconsiderate parking and help us to better manage traffic flow, reduce congestion and save protected parking spaces for those who genuinely need them, such as Blue Badge holders.

Our consultation on the proposal is open until 1 May. Have your say at merton.gov.uk/pcnconsultation2020
A budget to protect the services you need

Spring is when Merton Council has to balance its budget for the coming year so it can continue to provide the services residents value. Setting the budget involves agreeing any savings, how much to spend on each service and how much council tax residents will be asked to pay. My Merton takes a look at this year’s budget.

The council has been working to balance its budget for 2020 – always a difficult task, as we try to limit increases to council tax, while delivering the services residents love to the standard they expect.

The money which councils receive from central government has decreased substantially over the past decade, meaning we’ve had to make tough choices and totally change the way we work in some areas. Thanks to longstanding financial self-discipline, this year we’ve also been able to put more money into the budgets of our most important services, such as those for children with special educational needs, disabilities or other care needs.

The council’s business-like approach to long-term financial management has already seen it protect many services in recent years – such as libraries, where councils across the country have closed them down.

Council tax in Merton will rise by 3.99% this year, representing 95p more a week for a band D property. Of this rise, 2% will be exclusively used for adult social care, increasing the amount we can spend on these vital services.

Cllr Mark Allison, Cabinet Member for Finance, said: “Since 2010, our aim has been to make Merton a great place for families, but thanks to austerity and cuts to the grants we receive it hasn’t been easy.

“That’s why we have sought to run Merton’s finances in a disciplined and business like way. Nowadays we budget for the medium-term over four years rather than just one, and that has helped us to plan ahead. As a result, we’re able to deliver better services.

“We’ve already opened a new leisure centre, and our new school’s buildings will be open in September. Now we’re able to provide nearly £4 million more for children’s services, at a time when, thanks to our decisions. Merton’s state schools are achieving their best ever results – in the top three in the country. That’s on top of keeping all our libraries running, and even opening a new one in Colliers Wood.

“We’re not out of the woods yet though, and there is even more uncertainty than usual. We’re having to set aside a further £37 million to educate children with disabilities and special educational needs, something it’s actually government’s responsibility to pay for. If they did the decent thing, we could do so much more.

“We’ve budgeted nearly an extra million pounds for the street cleaning and refuse collection service, including more to tackle the growing scourge of fly-tipping. But if the government treated us right, we would be able to do so much more to help us ensure our community remains a great place.”
A guide to key council services
2020–2021

Your pull-out and keep guide

merton.gov.uk
Parking permits
Buy, renew or change a permit.

Planning
Find and view planning applications, apply for planning permission and get planning advice.

Libraries
Renew items, download free ebooks and magazines, search for new releases and join the library.

Schools
Apply for a school place.

Council tax
Pay your bill, check your account, tell us you’ve moved and apply for discounts or exemptions.

Waste
Book a bulky waste collection or report a missed collection.

For a full list of online services go to merton.gov.uk/doitonline

Keeping in touch with the council
merton.gov.uk News Room: subscribe to our news updates by clicking on News Room on the homepage and sign up under email alerts

Follow the council on Twitter using the handle @Merton_Council

Keep up to date on Facebook @mertoncouncil

Find whatsoninmerton and follow us on Instagram

The borough’s quarterly magazine My Merton is also available on merton.gov.uk/mymerton

Adoption (South West London Adoption)
southlondonadoption.org.uk
0300 123 8085 or 020 7525 4491

Adult education
merton.gov.uk/adulteducation

Adult social care
merton.gov.uk/adult-social-care
020 8545 4388 9.30am–1.30pm

Benefits advice
merton.gov.uk/benefitsadvice
welfarebenefitsteam@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 4178

Blue Badge parking permits
merton.gov.uk/bluebadge
concessionarytravel@merton.gov.uk
020 8274 4900 11am–3pm

Bulky waste collections
merton.gov.uk/bulky
020 8274 4902

Cemeteries
merton.gov.uk/cemeteries
020 3876 8806 or 020 8545 3666

Conservation areas
merton.gov.uk/conservation_areas
conservation.areas@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 3657 or 3659

Childcare
merton.gov.uk/childcare
fsd@merton.gov.uk
020 8274 5300

Children’s social care
merton.gov.uk/childrensservices
children@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 4226/7

Out of hours contact:
020 8770 5000

Comments, compliments and complaints
merton.gov.uk/complaints
complaints@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 3060

Committees and meetings
merton.gov.uk/committees
democratic.services@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 3616

Council tax
merton.gov.uk/counciltax
local.taxation@merton.gov.uk
020 8274 4904

Council tax support
merton.gov.uk/cts
housing.benefits@merton.gov.uk
020 8274 4903

Councillors
merton.gov.uk/councillors
Conservative Group: 020 8545 3396
Labour Group: 020 8545 3424
Liberal Democrats Group: 020 8545 4770. The office is staffed Tuesday–Thursday 8.30am–2.30pm
Merton Park Ward Independent Residents Group: 020 8545 4026

Education welfare services
merton.gov.uk/educationwelfare
020 8545 4021

Electoral services
merton.gov.uk/voting
020 8274 4901

Emergency information
Information about emergencies and emergency plans affecting Merton residents or business.
merton.gov.uk/emergency
civilcontingencies@merton.gov.uk
020 8274 4901 or 020 8545 3476

Events
Find out about council events, or if you are running a community event you can advertise it for free on the Merton Council online events calendar.
merton.gov.uk/events
A guide to key council services

Fostering
merton.gov.uk/fostering
fostering@merton.gov.uk
0800 073 0874

Fly-tipping
Report fly-tipping on public roads and pavements using our online ‘report it’ function.
merton.gov.uk/flytipping
020 8274 4902

Freedom of Information
merton.gov.uk/foi
foi@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 4634

Freedom Passes for disabled people
merton.gov.uk/freedompasses
concessionarytravel@merton.gov.uk
020 8274 4900 11am–3pm

Freedom Passes for older people
londoncouncils.gov.uk/freedom-pass
0300 330 1433 (local rate) open Monday to Sunday 8am–8pm

Garden waste collection service
merton.gov.uk/gardenwaste
020 8274 4902

Graffiti removal
You can report graffiti online. Merton aims to remove graffiti from council property within five days and offensive, including racist, graffiti anywhere in the borough within 48 hours.
merton.gov.uk/graffiti
020 8274 4902

Homelessness
Advice and guidance for those at risk of becoming homeless.
merton.gov.uk/homelessness
housingadvice@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 3636
Out of hours contact: 020 8770 5000

Housing benefit
merton.gov.uk/housingbenefit
housing.benefits@merton.gov.uk
020 8274 4903

Housing register
merton.gov.uk/allocations
registration@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 3305

Leisure
Hall hire, school holiday activities, sports pitches and sport recreation
merton.gov.uk/leisure
leisure@merton.gov.uk

Libraries
merton.gov.uk/libraries
library.enquiries@merton.gov.uk
0333 370 4700

Litter bins
Report a problem with a litter bin.
merton.gov.uk/litter-bins
020 8274 4902

Local land charges searches
merton.gov.uk/landcharges
locallandcharges@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 3350

Local Studies and Heritage Centre
merton.gov.uk/localstudies
local.studies@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 3239
Morden Library
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden SM4 5DX

MASCOT Telecare
Helps provide safety, security and wellbeing, enabling people to live independently in their homes. The service is available 24/7 and uses simple technology linked to our response centre.
merton.gov.uk/mascot
020 8274 5940

Noise nuisance
ehealth@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 3025 9am–5pm
Out of hours, 11pm–4am Friday and Saturday 020 8543 9750

Occupational therapy
The occupational therapy service provides a range of services to people with a permanent and substantial physical disability living in Merton.
merton.gov.uk/occupationaltherapy
ssotduty@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 4428 or 020 8545 4477 (9.30am–12.30pm)

Parking
Penalty Charge Notices, parking permits and car parks.
merton.gov.uk/parking
parking@merton.gov.uk
020 8545 4661 (11am–4pm penalty charge notices/10am–4pm permits)

Public Health
merton.gov.uk/publichealth

Register office
Contact the register office if you want to get married, have a civil ceremony or civil partnership, register a birth or death, name a baby or take part in a citizenship ceremony.
merton.gov.uk/register
register.office@merton.gov.uk
020 8274 5777
Morden Park House
Morden Park
London Road
Morden SM4 5QU
9am–4.30pm

The information in this brochure is correct at the time of printing, but is liable to change.
Roads and highways
- merton.gov.uk/roads-highways-pavements
- trafficandhighways@merton.gov.uk
- 020 8545 3700 (10am–5pm)

Rubbish and recycling
- merton.gov.uk/recycling
- merton.gov.uk/householdwaste
- 020 8274 4902

Schools admissions
- merton.gov.uk/schools
- 020 8274 4906

Snow clearance
We take action, as far as reasonably practicable, to allow the safe movement of all highway users on important routes in the borough, and keep delays to a minimum. This work includes gritting and salting roads to reduce the risk of ice forming, as well as clearing roads and pavements of accumulated ice and snow.
- merton.gov.uk/wintermaintenance
- trafficandhighways@merton.gov.uk
- 020 8545 3700

Street cleaning
- merton.gov.uk/street-care-cleaning
- 020 8274 4902

Street lighting
- merton.gov.uk/streetlighting
- trafficandhighways@merton.gov.uk
- 020 8545 3700 10am–5pm

Trading standards
- merton.gov.uk/tradingstandards
- trading.standards@merton.gov.uk
- 020 8545 3025 9am–5pm

Tree preservation
A tree preservation order (TPO) is an order made by the council, intended to protect one or more trees or woodland if its removal would have a significant impact on the local environment and its enjoyment to the public.
- merton.gov.uk/tpo
- planning@merton.gov.uk
- 020 8545 3777 or 3815 1–3pm

A guide to key council services
The information in this brochure is correct at the time of printing, but is liable to change.

Getting stuff done online

Want to get online but don’t have a computer? Need help with using a computer?

If you’re a Merton library member, you can use the libraries’ computers and access the WiFi for free. Also, if you have your own tablet or laptop but struggle to get online, just visit your library and start surfing for free! Don’t worry if you’re not a library member, as registering is easy. Just pop along to your library and our staff and volunteers will be happy to help you.

Merton libraries also offer one-to-one IT support and a range of IT courses for beginners right the way through to the more advanced. To find out more or to book a place, either pop in or call the library and they will advise you when the next course is taking place.

Contact us:
Merton Libraries
0333 370 4700

Ref: 1107.71
Balancing the budget

Doing more of the things you love

In 2019 our residents’ survey told us what you think about the borough and the services we provide. The vast majority of you, 89%, love the place where you live with parks, libraries and schools all rated highly.

We want to make Merton a great place for families. For example, last year we opened the new, state-of-the-art Morden Leisure Centre. The modern facility, in the centre of a popular park, replaced the ageing and costly Morden Park Pool.

The residents’ survey saw 82% of you describe our libraries as good. In spite of pressure on budgets, we have managed to keep the borough’s libraries open, when others around the country are closing. Our innovative library volunteer programme, now 10-years-old, has won awards and allowed us to maintain opening hours, while offering valuable volunteering experience to residents and a range of well-loved activities.

find out more

You can read more about the council budget for 2020/21 at merton.gov.uk/budget

Please note that currently Merton’s libraries and leisure facilities are temporarily closed, in line with the Government’s measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

Bigger budgets for key services

In our spending decisions, we have allocated extra funding for our key priorities. This includes:

- Nearly £4m a year extra for children’s services, helping protect and care for vulnerable children
- £1m extra a year for the borough’s refuse service, including more to tackle the growing scourge of fly-tipping.
- Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, we are also investing £150k in emergency planning so we know that if the worst happened in our borough, we would have the right resources and skills to manage the situation and protect residents as well as is possible.

You can read more about the council budget for 2020/21 at merton.gov.uk/budget

Please note that currently Merton’s libraries and leisure facilities are temporarily closed, in line with the Government’s measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus.
Merton Council is committed to delivering care to ensure the borough’s most vulnerable residents can enjoy living independent lives as much as possible. *My Merton* looks at the figures and finds out more about this hugely important and highly valued service.

In Merton, our adult social care teams support around 4,000 people and their carers over the course of a year. The social care service is much more than council carers who visit people at their residential homes. They are just part of a large and complex picture. For example:

- We help 600 vulnerable people a year get back on their feet after a spell in hospital through the home from hospital care provided by our Reablement Team. This gives people their confidence back, so they can manage independently.
- We support more than 500 people with learning disabilities – often for the whole of their adult lives, enabling them to live independently in adapted housing, take part in education and training, make friends and find meaningful employment. Almost 75% of our service users with learning disabilities live independently or with families, instead of in residential care.
- As part of our safeguarding role, we investigated and dealt with 575 cases of neglect, physical, sexual, financial and other types of abuse of vulnerable elderly and disabled people in 2019/20.
- Our Mascot Telecare service provides reassurance at the touch of a button and attends more than 100 calls a week.
- We provide 8,850 pieces of equipment to enable people to live safely at home.

The council is committed to providing the level of service anyone would expect for a parent or vulnerable family member. Read more about this area of our work at [merton.gov.uk/adultsocialcare](http://merton.gov.uk/adultsocialcare). If you are concerned about the welfare of a vulnerable person, email safeguarding.adultsteam@merton.gov.uk or call 020 8545 4388.
Remembering Victory in Europe Day

75 years ago Merton residents partied in the streets to celebrate the end of Second World War hostilities across Europe. My Merton remembers the celebrations that took place.

Friday 8 May 2020 will be the 75th anniversary of VE Day (Victory in Europe Day). This marked the end of the Second World War in Europe.

For some families, the end of the war meant remembering loved ones killed in the conflict and waiting for news about those still fighting or held captive by the Japanese army.

However, millions of people took to the streets to celebrate the dawn of peace. Many people headed for the celebrations in Trafalgar Square, but others marked the day at home by throwing street parties. Eyewitness accounts describe feasts of food, hoarded ready for the occasion, including ‘gallons’ of ice cream. Entertainment included Punch and Judy shows and neighbours playing pianos in the street. Giant bonfires burned overnight, scorching the tarmac on the roads and there was dancing until the early hours.

As one lady, Irene Bain, described: “Trestle tables were set up down the centre of the road with chairs brought out of houses...An elderly lady of staid and sober habits, whom I knew from church, had on a smart new dark red dress for the occasion. I was so surprised to see her leading the line in the conga.”

To see more pictures charting the history of Merton during the Second World War, visit merton.gov.uk/heritage
WIN A FAMILY TICKET
FOR THE WIMBLEDON LAWN TENNIS MUSEUM & TOUR

The Wimbledon Foundation is offering one lucky winner the chance to see The Championships trophies and Centre Court on a tour of Wimbledon.

The Wimbledon Foundation, the charity of The All England Lawn Tennis Club makes a valuable contribution to meeting social needs and reducing inequalities in Merton and Wandsworth by awarding grants totalling over £400,000 a year to charities and community organisations.

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

Who won the 2019 Gentlemen’s Singles Final?
A) Rafael Nadal     B) Novak Djokovic     C) Roger Federer

Visit merton.gov.uk/mymerton to enter.

The closing date for entries is 30 April 2020.

wimbledon.com/foundation

 Terms and conditions: The competition is to win one family ticket (two adults and two children) to visit the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum and Tour, Church Road, Wimbledon SW19 5AE. The Museum is open daily except 24-26 December 2020 and 1 January 2021. Tours do not run between 1 June and 25 July 2020. For the tour schedule, visit wimbledon.com/museum. The prize cannot be exchanged or used in conjunction with any other offer. There are no cash alternatives, accommodation or travel included in this prize.

Courses for work, life and wellbeing

Distance Learning Courses

FREE short courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications which you can study in your own time.

We have a range of short distance learning courses from the awarding body NCFE, which can be completed in 4 – 8 weeks. These are fully funded, meaning there is no cost to the learner. On completion you will gain a nationally recognised Level 2 qualification.

Courses on offer include:
• Understand Specific Learning Difficulties
• Understanding Autism
• Understanding Behaviour that Challenges
• Understanding Children and Young People’s Mental Health
• Understanding Common Childhood Illnesses
• Understanding Nutrition and Health
• Understanding Safeguarding and Prevent
• Equality and Diversity

Eligibility

Lived in the EU for three years and aged 19+. You will need to be confident with written English in order to meet the required standards. For further information about the courses or enrolling, please contact martina.collett@stcg.ac.uk (020 8408 6620) or book your assessment via the website at merton.ac.uk/distance-learning

Merton Adult Education

Learn something new with one of our exciting Adult Education courses.

A wide range of subject areas are on offer, including:
• Business
• Cake Decorating and Cookery
• Childcare and Health Care
• Computing and IT
• Creative Arts
• Hair and Complementary Therapy
• Languages
• Music
• Musical Instrument Making and Repair
• Teaching and Training
• Training for Work
• Wellbeing

Courses that fit around your lifestyle and working day, including Saturday courses. The quickest way to enrol is online, but you can also enrol by phone. Whichever way you enrol you will need to show proof of your identity to complete your enrolment. Suitable ID includes a passport, birth certificate, driving licence or Freedom Pass. For the latest course information, check our website merton.ac.uk.

Merton College, London Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5QX
Tel: 020 8918 7777
Good marks for adult learning

Providing top class opportunities for everyone to experience the joy of life-long learning is a key priority for Merton Council. Read on to find out about the achievements of Merton Adult Learning.

Merton Council’s adult learning service has been praised by Ofsted for the opportunities it gives residents, especially those with learning disabilities. Ofsted highlighted the quality of teaching, venues and the curriculum in its report, which followed an inspection in October.

According to the report: “Learners gain a range of benefits from their courses. They enjoy the subjects they study. Those facing social isolation build their self-confidence and form new friendships.”

This was the first full Ofsted inspection, since a change to the service, which has seen courses commissioned by the council from a range of expert providers. The service was rated ‘good’ overall. The previous Ofsted report, in November 2017 recognised some strengths in the adult learning services in the borough, but gave the overall rating as ‘requires some improvement’.

Courses on offer range from cookery to photography, counselling to creative writing. There are opportunities to study for pleasure or to gain valuable qualifications.

Programmes for people with learning difficulties or disabilities have a considerable impact. Covering everything from maths, English and computing to wellbeing and citizenship, the courses help learners live independently and find employment, while discovering rewarding new hobbies and enjoying physical activity.

What the students say

For Dennis Shaw, studying health and social care has boosted his confidence, putting him on track for a career in the sector. He said: “I am very happy at the college and it is welcoming. All the staff are really helpful. My teachers give me excellent feedback and are very encouraging.”

Stained glass had always fascinated Wendy Day, and studying the techniques of this medium didn’t disappoint. “The course has been fantastic – creating the ‘me time’ I was seeking and a new skill and interest. I have met a fabulous array of different characters, always happy to lend ideas, encouragement and helpful opinions.”

find out more merton.gov.uk/adultlearning
Everyone can do their bit to help make Merton cleaner and greener

Residents have been showing their love and pride in the borough by teaming up with the council to help pick up the rubbish carelessly strewn about by others.

Every two months, members of the Friends of Moreton Green collect litter and fly-tipping from this well-loved Morden park and surrounding woodland. The group, whose membership ranges in age from five to 80, includes Sophie Goard, who told us: “We collect, easily, a van load of litter on each occasion. This time we pulled a mattress, a headboard, a hoover, an iron and several bin bags full of clothing out of the woods.”

The friends group was launched in 2015 by residents living around the green. Since then it has grown steadily, welcoming others who use the park regularly. As well as collecting litter, the friends organise community get-togethers, including a summer picnic on the green.

Sophie explained: “We care about the green and its history. Our biggest bugbear is the amount of green waste – people don’t realise that dumping their garden waste in the woods is fly-tipping and can encourage the spread of invasive species, pests and diseases.”

Friends of Morden Park pitch in

The group is not alone. For the past six years the Friends of Morden Park have been doing the rounds each Wednesday morning. Regular Liz Sherwood said: “We walk separately around the park picking up litter; mostly drinks cans, plastic bottles, crisp and sweets wrappers, but sometimes dumped clothing, and occasionally knives and tents. It is a large park and we feed back to the relevant council departments about other things we notice; when hedges might need trimming back or if a tree has come down or when there has been fly-tipping.

“In the winter months we meet at the end of the pick in the new leisure centre coffee shop for a chat but in the summer we bring flasks and sit out on a bench in the park.”

Mosque spring clean

It has become a New Year’s Day tradition for members of the Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden to gather after morning prayers and give the town an early spring clean. “The New Year’s street cleaning event has been taking place for more than a decade now,” says this year’s Morden event organiser, Waqas Bajwa. “This year we had more than 65 participants, including children, and we collected quite a lot of rubbish around London Road and the civic centre. We do other litter picking in our local areas and a lot of tree planting events.”

To keep your local area tidy, contact us to discuss your future plans. Email environmental.development@merton.gov.uk.
Go green this Easter

Aside from Christmas, Easter is the season responsible for generating the most unnecessary waste – unsurprising given around 80 million packaged Easter eggs are sold in the UK every year. Here are some top tips for an eco-Easter:

- A quarter of the weight of many eggs is single-use packaging. Consider buying a much cheaper chocolate bar and melting it into a reusable mould instead.
- Choose bought eggs with minimal packaging, which is also recyclable. Eggs and bunnies wrapped in foil are perfect.
- After you’ve polished off your Easter eggs, recycle the wrapping in the correct bin, whether it’s card or foil. Some moulded plastic can be recycled – check the information on the box.
- If your children are decorating eggs or bonnets, avoid plastic craft materials. Decorate boiled or blown eggs using paper, card or reusable scraps.

Fines for fly-tipping

The growth of fly-tipping is a major problem across the whole country. Dumped rubbish impacts heavily on everyone’s quality of life, and it costs the council hundreds of thousands of pounds a year to clear away. The council has pledged to use fines and prosecution against those responsible for fly-tipping in the first place.

Remember – leaving bags of rubbish or household items beside litter bins is fly-tipping and could result in a hefty fine. Dumping larger amounts could lead to prosecution and a criminal record. Since last November, 35 people have each been fined for fly-tipping and litter.

To report an issue visit merton.gov.uk/litter.

Bank holiday waste collections

Currently, the borough’s waste and recycling collections will continue as normal over the Easter and May bank holidays this year. Check our website near to the time.
Supporting our EU citizens to apply for settled status

merton.gov.uk/euss
Boosting the life chances of young people with autism

Ensuring every Merton child has opportunity to achieve their full potential is a key priority for Merton Council. My Merton speaks to Samantha Kuti about the dedicated work to support pupils with autism, at a secondary which has become the only mainstream school in London to be given a prestigious accolade.

“We have our own building but we are very much part of the mainstream school. Our students with autism are included in everything. If they so wish, they can join in with every aspect of the school’s enrichment activities and trips.”

Some students wear noise-cancelling headphones for lessons, noticeboards are kept uncluttered and the school offers alternative PE for students who struggle with the volume and competitiveness of mainstream sessions.

There are plenty of inclusive clubs from cookery and guitar to rebound therapy – therapeutic trampolining. Samantha said: “The students have a big say in our clubs programme. Attending these activities helps develop their social skills, an area they can find difficult.”

After 17 years, Samantha is proud of the centre’s record that has seen every student go on to education or employment.

“I visit primary schools to meet pupils before they join Raynes Park High School. I see them start here, settle in and eventually go on to study for GCSEs. They go off to college to do what they want to do and eventually enter paid employment. That’s our aim; for them to be independent members of society.”

Samantha Kuti is the Head of the Access Centre at Raynes Park High School, which supports 25 students with autism, aged 11 to 19.

Raynes Park has recently become the only mainstream school in London to be Autism Accredited by the National Autistic Society – and one of only three in the country – recognising its commitment to positive outcomes for autistic students.

Samantha is also acting head of special educational needs in the school – and she’s a maths teacher too. But boosting the life chances of students with autism is where her passion lies.

“Autism is such a complex condition, there’s so much to learn about it,” she said. “The Access Centre started in 2002 – in a little hut with a handful of students and I’ve been here since the start.”

The current centre was purpose built in 2004 as a calming environment with the right lighting and design. While some sessions take place in the centre, the school’s ethos is about enabling students to attend mainstream lessons, adapted to their individual needs.

“Team work gets things built in role playing activity.”

Pupils get together for a conversation promoting game.
Join Merton’s response to coronavirus

Volunteer to support our community
Contact the Merton Covid-19 Community Response Hub at: volunteer@mvsc.co.uk

Donate to the Merton Giving Coronavirus Fund
Money raised will go to local charities supporting vulnerable people. Please give if you are able to...
justgiving.com/mvsc

mvsc.co.uk
@mertonconnected Merton Voluntary Service Council
Community safety news

While Merton remains one of the safest boroughs, Merton Council is committed to further develop its work to keep all its residents safe. My Merton looks at some of the latest community safety initiatives across the borough and finds out how everyone can help make Merton safer.

Tackling antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour can make life a misery for people living close-by, but the message is that these issues will be taken seriously. The Safer Merton Partnership has legal powers to investigate and deal with cases – including closing down premises or banning individuals from certain areas.

For instance, last year the partnership closed down six residential properties which were being used as brothels. The action followed intelligence supplied by neighbours and their reports about the impact on the community.

While using these powers, we will always seek to support people who are vulnerable, whether because of homelessness, prostitution or drug use.

Visit the council website merton.gov.uk/asb for more about the types of activity which we class as antisocial behaviour. You can report an issue by emailing asbu@merton.gov.uk.

Scammers target vulnerable people with coronavirus fears

Police are warning residents to be vigilant as scammers try to cash on people’s fears about coronavirus. The majority of incidents reported relate to online shopping scams where people have ordered and paid for personal protective equipment, which has then never arrived.

If you get an unsolicited visit from anyone asking to be let into your home, immediately request and check their ID and credentials carefully. If you have doubts, shut the door and report the matter to police by calling 101 or 999 in an emergency.

If you receive a suspicious email, which may appear as if it is from your bank or another website which you regularly use, don’t click on the links or attachments, and never respond to unsolicited messages or calls with personal or financial details.

If you think you have been a victim of fraud or cybercrime, report it to Action Fraud online or by calling 0300 123 2040.

Local action on knife crime

Knife crime is a major issue for London that is rarely out of the news. While Merton is one of the safest boroughs, many residents rightly feel concerned about the threat knife crime might pose to young people.

The police are offering training to community groups prepared to conduct knife sweeps in their area. The sweeps help take knives off the streets, while providing reassurance to residents. To find out more, email safer.merton@merton.gov.uk.

New ways to report hate crime

We’ve covered a worrying national rise in hate crime before in My Merton, stressing how seriously the police and council take the issue – and how keen we are for victims to come forward. But for some people, making a report to the police can feel like a step they aren’t yet ready to take.

Local organisations have now come together with a new scheme, meaning victims and witnesses can report hate crime at independent venues, where they may feel safer and more comfortable. You can find a full list of participating organisations at merton.gov.uk/safermerton.

One stop shop

The One Stop Shop is currently suspended due to COVID-19. Please be assured that you can still access our services using the following details or visit merton.gov.uk/DomesticViolence. Always call 999 if you are in danger.
Open your heart and home to change a child’s life

Merton Council urgently needs foster carers for teenagers, siblings and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Foster for Merton and we can offer you:

- on-going comprehensive training
- 24 hour support, 365 days per year
- an allowance of up to £514 per week, per child

Call us today on 0800 073 0874 / 020 8545 4070
visit merton.gov.uk/fostering
email fostering@merton.gov.uk
Follow us on Facebook: Merton Fostering

At Merton we support our foster carers using an innovative approach called Mockingbird Family Model (MFM).
What, in a nutshell, do we need to know about MVSC?
MVSC is here to support the voluntary and community sector in Merton and help it grow. We promote partnerships with the public and private sectors, through initiatives such as Merton Giving – which connects businesses with charities to address local issues and reduce inequality.

What shape is the local voluntary sector in at the moment?
The voluntary sector in Merton remains vibrant, diverse and packed with great people who ‘go the extra mile’, really improving the lives of individuals, with positive effects on families and wider communities.

Why should people think about volunteering, if they don’t already?
Like a lot of things, you don’t know how rewarding it is until you give it a go. There are so many ways you can volunteer to suit your personal motivation, skills, experience and time. The satisfaction gained from supporting people, often much less fortunate than yourself, is hugely rewarding.

Tell us about a recent volunteering opportunity you’ve come across.
A friend of my daughter couldn’t get back to her home in France for Christmas because of Eurostar delays, so volunteered to serve Christmas Day meals in a homeless shelter in London. It shows how positive volunteering experiences can come out of the most unlikely situations.

What is your first job as chief executive going to be?
As I have not worked in the borough for a long time, I will be visiting as many of the voluntary sector organisations as I can to understand how MVSC can best support them in the coming years.

Find out more about MVSC, including hundreds of local volunteer opportunities at mvsc.co.uk or by calling 020 8685 1771.
Stay informed about coronavirus

Stay up-to-date with council service changes: merton.gov.uk/coronavirus

Follow the NHS guidance: nhs.uk/coronavirus

Keep an eye on the UK Government’s response: gov.uk/coronavirus

Merton Covid-19 Community Response Hub
To volunteer to support residents email volunteer@mvsc.co.uk
If you are isolated and need support, or know someone who is, email help@mvsc.co.uk or call 020 8685 2272

CORONAVIRUS
PROTECT YOURSELF & OTHERS