

Merton's strong network of local partners has agreed health priorities for Merton, which include reducing health inequalities through:

- Leading the development of integrated services aimed at improving access, particularly for vulnerable groups and people from disadvantaged areas
- Providing opportunities for people, particularly those from disadvantaged groups and areas, to choose healthier lifestyles
- Targeting deprived communities and groups for investment with the aim of narrowing health inequalities

Almost all the Council's services potentially have an impact on physical or mental health of residents. Examples of the following however take a conscious and deliberate approach to their impact on healthier communities:

- ▼ Disabled Facilities Grants programmes
- ▼ Housing Needs Service
- ▼ Staff healthcare programme through Occupational Health Service
- ▼ Leisure Services – travel awareness, parks improvement programme
- ▼ Homelessness Services
- ▼ Library and Adult Education Lifelong Learning Services

The Council has a wide range of Strategies and Plans, many of which have an impact on health. However the following were identified as being particularly important:

- ▼ Mental Health/ Older People's/Ethnic Minority Housing Strategies
- ▼ Children and Young People's Plan
- ▼ Mental Health Promotion Strategy/Suicide Prevention Strategy
- ▼ Council No Smoking Policy
- ▼ Substance Misuse Policy
- ▼ Stress Policy
- ▼ Annual Flu Vaccination Programme
- ▼ Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- ▼ Annual Public Health Reports – Health inequalities and Choosing Health

The Council has many policy or strategy oriented partnerships, but delivering services requires links at operational level which are often not formally linked to the overall Merton Partnership. These are critical to successful action. The following were identified as being particularly important, often for only a small group of residents.

- ▼ Smokefree Alliance
- ▼ Child Concern Model
- ▼ Teenage Pregnancy Partnership
- ▼ Out of Hours Health and Community Care
- ▼ Taylor Road Centre
- ▼ HR's work step scheme and two ticks symbols
- ▼ Merton School Sports Partnership
- ▼ Merton Adult Healthy Weight Alliance

3.4 Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan sets out the Primary Care Trust's (PCT) proposals for the next five years covering specific local health issues for the PCT, its financial position, local primary care activity, local commissioning proposals and local area agreements in partnership with boroughs. Its vision is 'to improve the health and quality of life of its population through focusing on prevention of ill health and the commissioning of quality services that are clinically effective and provide value for money. People will be supported to manage their own health, and care will be provided in the most appropriate and accessible way. The PCT will strive to reduce health inequalities, working with other public services and third sector partners.'

To achieve this vision, Sutton and Merton aims to improve substantially by 2013 on eight priority health needs:

- Cancer
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Falls and dementia
- Mental health
- End of life care

In order to deliver this, the PCT aims to make major progress on delivering Better Healthcare Closer to Home. This will involve building a network of four Local Care Centres, doubling current capacity for the intermediate and post-acute care, and initiating a major redevelopment at St. Helier Hospital to substantially reshape healthcare services for Sutton and Merton residents.

3.5 The Third Sector

Merton has a dynamic and diverse voluntary and community sector (VCS) with about 450 independent voluntary organisations and community groups. The majority of these, about 300, work in the health and social care fields, providing essential services, identifying new needs and innovative projects and providing self-help, campaigning, lobbying and advocacy.

While there are some larger local voluntary organisations, most local groups have fewer than two paid staff or are small and unfunded, relying exclusively on volunteers. Voluntary and community groups of all types involve large numbers of volunteers. A 2005 study found that in Merton 40,000 volunteers support organisations and projects in the VCS and public sector, and 54,000 provide informal support to neighbours or friends.

The VCS plays a vital role in partnerships in the borough. The VCS brings close links to the community and grass roots organisations and a range of specialist interests and expertise to these partnerships. The VCS contribution includes participating in joint planning and commissioning services, community consultation and supporting Merton citizens to get involved and take responsibility; and achieving community cohesion and diversity objectives. The VCS plays a full role in the Merton Partnership and each thematic partnership, including Healthier Communities.

Partnership working with the VCS is underpinned by the Merton Compact – Working Together – Better Together. This agreement between the VCS and Merton Council, Sutton and Merton Primary Care Trust and the Metropolitan Police sets out the principles and values of the partnership and aims to ensure that all partners:

- ▼ Communicate better with each other
- ▼ Understand and respect each others views
- ▼ Work together more effectively to support the people of Merton

3.6 IDeA Healthy Communities Programme Peer Review and Overview and Scrutiny ill-health and early intervention review

The Healthier Communities Thematic Partnership has been working hard to establish an approach to embedding and promoting healthier communities through a number of key areas. As part of this continuing work, the Council requested that the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) carry out a peer review of the work done so far and to assess the capacity available for delivering future challenges in particular tackling health inequalities and to look at how resources are prioritised on influencing the health agenda across the council.

Key recommendations included:

- ▼ Developing a corporate healthier communities' strategy to drive the agenda across the council and its partners
- ▼ Ensure healthier communities is integral to joint commissioning
- ▼ Develop capacity to maximise impact of major changes on health of the communities
- ▼ Embedding the message 'health is everyone's business'

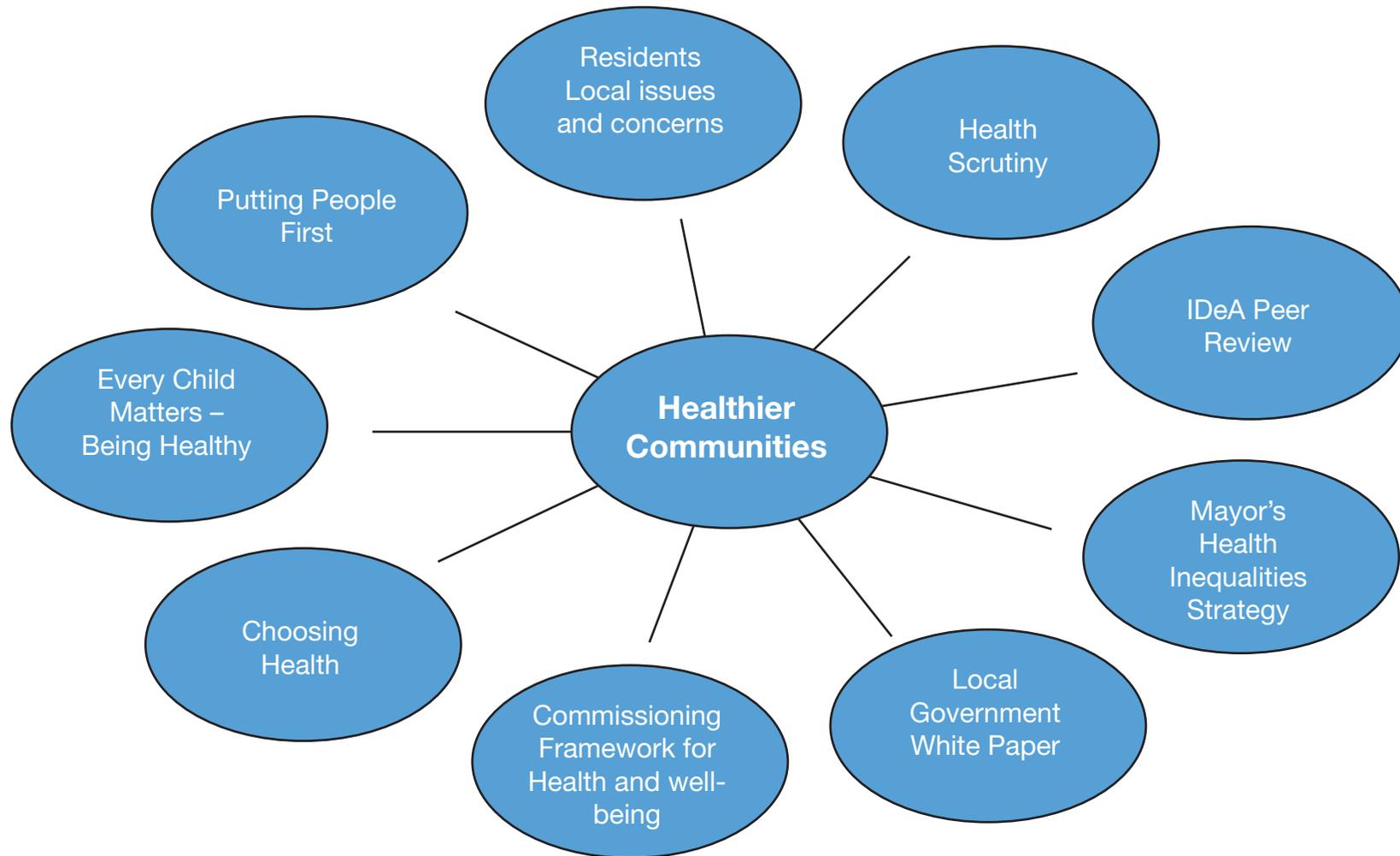
(Healthy Communities Peer Review, London Borough of Merton, 17-19 July 2007. IDeA)

The Healthier Communities and Older Peoples Scrutiny Panel undertook a cross-cutting review on prevention of ill-health and early intervention, in order to highlight how preventative measures can promote well-being, reduce pressures on local health and community care services and contribute to narrowing the health inequalities gap. The focus was on:

- ▼ Keeping fit and well (including physical activity and leisure opportunities)
- ▼ Breaking the habit (drugs, alcohol and tobacco addiction)
- ▼ Older peoples' health (including chiropody and dentistry)
- ▼ Young peoples' health (including healthy schools and immunisation)

An action plan was produced in June 2007 which has been referenced into themed priorities.

3.7 To summarise, the key drivers for healthy communities



Merton – a borough of contrasts



4.0 Merton – a borough of contrasts

The borough's population of 194,700 is expected to rise to 200,600 by 2011. Today, approximately 25% of the population is from black and minority ethnic groups.

There are increasing numbers of groups with particular needs, for example older people and people from black and minority ethnic groups.

Merton has three main town centres – Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden. There is good public transport in the west of the borough, particularly serving Wimbledon with easy access to central London and by the Tramlink to Croydon. Most of the east of the borough is less well-served.

The difference highlights the contrasts between the more deprived wards in the east of the borough (Mitcham) and the affluent wards in the west (Wimbledon).

Merton's Health Profile



5.0 Merton's Health Profile

This profile gives a snapshot of health locally. Further information is available from Sutton and Merton PCT's Annual Public Health Reports.²

Generally, the health profile in Merton is significantly better than the England average. Life expectancy in both males and females is significantly higher than England as a whole, and rates for deaths from smoking and early deaths from cancer is significantly lower.

There are health inequalities within Merton by location, gender, income and ethnicity. For example Ravensbury Ward appears relatively deprived, and men in the lowest income group have lower life expectancy than those in the highest income group.

Over the past ten years, the rate of deaths from all causes has fallen for both men and women, and is below the rate for England. The rate of early deaths from heart disease, stroke and cancer has also fallen.

Adults in Merton appear to lead relatively healthy lives, with rates for smoking, binge drinking and obesity significantly lower than England as a whole.

However GCSE achievement and rates for obese children are significantly worse in Merton when compared to the rest of the country.

6.0 Priorities for Merton

The Healthier Communities Thematic Partnership has agreed to focus its priorities around five themes:

- ▼ Smoking
- ▼ Obesity
- ▼ Mental health and well-being
- ▼ Increase choice and control for users and carers
- ▼ Wider determinants of health

² For further information, please refer to www.communityhealthprofiles.info or www.suttonandmertonnhhs.uk
Mid year 2007 estimate: 199,300 Merton Essential Facts http://intranet/essential_facts_leaflet.pdf

Smoking

