

# This is Merton

Local Community Plan 2013

Working in partnership to improve  
the lives of everyone in the borough

Giving  
you the  
**bigger**  
picture

A healthy and  
fulfilling life



Better opportunities  
for youngsters



Keeping  
Merton moving



Being safe  
and strong





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# Forewords

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Welcome to Merton's new Community Plan. This shows how organisations touching the lives of everyone in our borough are working together to make Merton a great place to live and call home. A place where residents take responsibility for their own lives, their neighbourhood and their environment.

I'm proud to be part of a borough which harnesses the collective energy of so many people from across the public, private, voluntary and faith sectors. They all come together as the Merton Partnership.

This Community Plan shows what the Merton Partnership has achieved since the previous plan was updated in 2009, as well as our vision and priorities for the borough going forward.

Among the many achievements are school exam results going from strength-to-strength, crime rates showing a significant fall and town centres being transformed by imaginative projects. We also have a dynamic volunteering culture, with more people giving their time to the community than many other London boroughs.

However, we still face a number of challenges, including bridging the income, health and skills gap between the east and west of the borough. There is also more to be done on developing our town centres and improving transport links. And while we've been working hard on improving everyone's health and wellbeing, we think recent changes of responsibility in this area offer a massive opportunity to work together to better the health of Merton's residents.

I am grateful to the people that contributed to shaping this plan on behalf of the Merton Partnership – over 1000 residents gave up time to tell us what matters to them – as well as the many voluntary and community organisations who met with us. My thanks also go to Reverend Andrew Wakefield, the chair of the refresh process, who gave up many hours of his time.

Finally, I think it's important to point out that this plan not only sets out the key achievements and priorities of the Merton Partnership, it also tells the real-life stories of the many talented people who live and work in our borough. I hope you will find it an inspirational read.

**Stephen Alambritis**  
Chair of the Merton Partnership  
and Leader of Merton Council

I first came to Merton 35 years ago when I started work as a Church of England clergy person in Pollards Hill. I had a brief time working in Putney before returning to live and work in Wimbledon in 1986. I've been here ever since and if I'm asked where I'm from I say Merton: this is home.



For the last 20 years I have worked in the business sector as chair of Merton Chamber of Commerce; in the faith world convening interfaith activity; in the public sector working with the Merton Partnership, the police and many other agencies; and in the voluntary and charity life of Merton particularly bringing local business and local charities together. So I've been around most of Merton and met lots of people and organisations and I'm always struck by how much talent there is here, how much energy, how much hard work, how much dedication there is to make life here better and better every day.

So being asked to lead the process of producing our latest Community Plan for Merton was both a huge privilege but also great fun. I've had the chance to meet a lot of people, organisations and businesses hearing about the work they do, the vision they have for the future and the contribution they want to make to our life together in the borough. Thanks to all of you; without all of that there wouldn't be a Community Plan.

Please read through these pages, look up the websites of contributors, check out the other stories people tell on the Community Plan web pages and feedback your ideas and your offers to work together for an ever better Merton.

Of course the plan didn't just happen. My thanks go to those who gave their time and knowledge as members of the steering group; to those who have seen the plan as it emerged and have commented on it and helped improve it; to three local business people who produced the plan and are acknowledged on the back pages; and to staff at Merton Council who have assisted me with much skill and enthusiasm.

Now let's get on with making sure our plans and our vision comes to fruition – I'm going to enjoy working with you all to make sure it does.

**Reverend Andrew Wakefield**  
Chair of Merton Community Plan Refresh

# Working on bridging the gap

People are working hard across Merton to bring our community together. It's generally a safe and prosperous place to live with good transport links and green spaces which we all love. But there are significant differences between those living in the east and west of our borough. Bridging these gaps is one of our top priorities.

The average annual salary in the west is £40,000, compared to £28,000 in the east. The proportion of residents on benefits also differs, with 71% of residents in the east in receipt of benefits compared to 29% in the west. There is also a difference in skills levels, with 63% of working age residents in Wimbledon holding a degree qualification or better, compared to 36% in the east. Here are some examples of the work being done to improve the lives of those in the east of Merton.



## A new horizon dawns

Life is never dull at the New Horizon Centre in Pollards Hill where around 2,000 people come each week to take part in activities organised by around 90 different groups, or to visit the community café.



It's managed by the Commonsides Community Development Trust and Director **Naomi Martin** said:

*"Pollards Hill is like the tardis – there's a lot more going on in there than you might first think from the outside! Here at the Commonsides Trust, we think of ourselves as being at the heart of the community. We welcome and work with everyone who wants to improve their own lives and those of others in the community. It's a simple mission and it works!"*

Among their most popular groups is their Lunch Club, but they have a range of activities for all ages, which also provide volunteer opportunities for around 35 people. Their work also includes a 'Step Forward' scheme where they help around 100 families facing various challenges in life.



## Just a bus ride apart

**Dr Howard Freeman**, a Raynes Park GP and Chair of the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, said: *"The 200 bus journey of only a few miles highlights starkly the health inequalities across Merton. Working with its GP members, Merton Council, the public and other partners, Merton Clinical Commissioning Group's aim is to start to address these. We are the first NHS Health Commissioner ever with just a Merton focus and this, together with Public Health transferring to the council, gives us all a unique opportunity we must not miss."*

## Generating Business

The Generator Business Centre in Mitcham offers fully serviced office and light industrial units for 24 tenant businesses, collectively employing 100 people – with 70% from Mitcham and the surrounding area.

Merton Chamber of Commerce who runs the Centre on behalf of Merton Council, has developed the centre as a business hub, providing virtual office facilities, business advice, a business helpdesk, workshops and meeting and conference facilities. One tenant business said: *"Being a small business that started from home, I believe we were led to the right place. The Generator has friendly and professional staff and is such an asset to this locality, providing support for small businesses looking for growth as well as entrepreneurs who want to develop and push their ideas further."*

## Transforming the lives of families

**Transforming Families (TF)** brings together staff from various disciplines and agencies to work with families with a range of challenges and needs. Now working with 59 families, the team is already seeing improvements. Here is one example:

The TF team worked with single parent, Amanda to address her housing issues and improve her children's school attendance. Sally, aged 14 years, had not been in education since November 2012 and her younger brother Sam regularly truanted. Amanda's relationship with her children was strained and she said she couldn't cope with their violence. Since becoming part of the programme, Sally's attendance has gone from 0% to above 85% and she is also smoking less. Sam is working well with the family's TF Case Practitioner to address his school behaviour. The family's housing issues were resolved after a managed move.

## Constructive career help

The Merton Training and Employment Centre (MTEC), in Lombard Road, Morden, provides a free training and jobs service to those hoping to get work in the construction industry.

Soon after opening in March 2013, the Merton Priory Homes' scheme had 50 trainees enrolled and helped 21 people into work. Trainee **Matthew Marrow**, from Morden, said: *"We're working together to learn so many different skills. I'm really optimistic about my job prospects."*

# Merton: A place to work

As an outer London borough with a more residential feel, Merton has relatively fewer jobs – around 57,000 – than some areas in London. However, our residents are highly skilled and the borough has great transport links.

What's more, Merton has a strong small business base with over 7,420 Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME) operating in the borough.

To help promote Merton's economy, key growth aims include:

- Retain existing companies
- Support business growth and start-ups
- Increase inward investment
- Back town centre initiatives
- Provide support to key sectors
- Support residents into work

Here's how some local businesses are helping boost the borough's economy:

## Putting Wimbledon on the beauty map

**Gina Conway** came to London from San Francisco with the vision to offer American-style customer service to UK clients. The Wimbledon-based mother-of-three now has four salons, employing 95 staff.

She said: *"When I came over from the US, I started work in a Mayfair salon and I didn't like the attitude they had for customers. So when I opened on the Fulham Road in 2001, I wanted to make our guests feel they were being cared for."*



Salons in Notting Hill, Wimbledon town centre and Kings Road have since followed.

Gina, a director on the Love Wimbledon board, added:

*"Wimbledon is my home and I want to make a real difference. Making the most of the town centre is a real passion of mine."*

## Being local, behaving local

**Nicholas Samuel**, managing director of Samuel Estates, is proud to support the local economy by creating jobs and giving work to local contractors.

The estate agency opened its Merton Abbey Mills office in 2006 and now has three offices in south-west London, employing 13 people. It has given jobs to school-leavers under the National Apprentice Scheme and work experience to pupils from Harris Academy in Mitcham.



It's also active in community events, including the annual Wimbledon Winter Wonderland Parade and is a sponsor of the Kidsfest at Merton Abbey Mills. Nicholas is also a Director of Merton Chamber of Commerce.

He said: *"As a growing business, we think it's important to support the community. Everyone working here gets involved with local activities. We also support the local economy as most of our contractors are Merton businesses."*

## A flying start for care company

**Jay Patel** set up his Bluebird Care franchise at the Mitcham Generator Centre in 2012, and in less than a year was employing 30 professional carers, who provide quality care at home.

He said: *"I didn't want a 9 to 5 job, and wanted something I was passionate about. I only send out carers who I would use for my own parents, and we have a great team."*

*"I've had really good support at The Generator. If you need some advice here, you just knock on a door and someone will help. The office facilities are superb and it's really convenient."*

Jay also gets involved in community work, including offering his staff's time to help in a Mitcham community centre.



## Help is on hand for those with Ambition

Entrepreneur **Yohan Forbes** is an inspiration to young people with a vision to set up on their own. The Wimbledon-based film-maker and photographer set up Kumo Films in 2009 and has since won 'Best Film' at the BFI Future Film Festival as well as work on adverts for international brands.

He's had support from Merton Chamber of Commerce, which now runs an 'Ambition' initiative for aspiring young entrepreneurs in the borough.

Yohan said: *"When you are starting out, you are never on your own. There are plenty of people out there to help you. If you have a vision, don't give up – just keep going."*



# A healthy and fulfilling life

## Our vision

**We'll work with communities and residents to increase the opportunities for everyone to enjoy a healthy and fulfilling life, as well as reducing health inequalities.**

## Our pledge

These are our priorities for 2013/14:

- 1. Give each child a healthy start.** We'll ensure every baby has the best start in life. As they grow up we'll promote and improve their personal, social and mental wellbeing, including enabling them to make healthy life choices.
- 2. Support people to improve their health and wellbeing.** We'll increase the number of people achieving a healthy weight and taking part in exercise. We'll cut the number of people smoking, reduce alcohol and drug-related harm, as well as improve sexual health.
- 3. Enable people to manage their own health and wellbeing as independently as possible.** We'll improve health-related quality of life for people with long-term conditions. We'll ensure there's support for people with dementia and mental health issues, as well as enabling people to stay at home for as long as possible. We'll also increase the preferred place of care and death for those in need of end of life care services.
- 4. Improve everyone's wellbeing, sense of belonging and ability to cope with problems.** This will come through partnership work focused on economic development, safer communities, increased volunteering, better use of local facilities and access to learning, a healthy environment and improved community cohesion.

## What are we worried about?

- Most of us don't do enough physical activity to benefit our health, so it's no surprise that the obesity rate in adults is at 28% in some parts of Merton, and more than a third of our 10-11 year-olds are overweight or obese.
- In some parts of the borough nearly a quarter of the adults are smokers and across Merton, 28% of adults drink above recommended levels.
- Cancer is still the biggest cause of premature deaths.
- The second biggest cause of premature deaths is cardiovascular disease and for our under-75s this is higher than the average for England.

## What have we been doing?

- We've got a better understanding of health needs after NHS Sutton & Merton interviewed nearly 1,000 people across Merton and neighbouring Sutton in 2010.
- Merton Council funded **Ageing Well**, a programme to fund voluntary sector initiatives which will empower people to live independent and fulfilling lives, and live in their own home for as long as possible.
- Our '**Merton-i**' website gives you health information at your fingertips. See [www.merton.gov.uk/merton-i/](http://www.merton.gov.uk/merton-i/)
- We set up the **LiveWell** service to support people working towards better personal health.
- The **East Merton Community Health and Wellbeing Fund** was launched with £315,000 to spend on health and wellbeing projects in the east of the borough.
- More than half of residents suffering with long-term conditions have **personal budgets**, putting them in charge of their health and social care.
- We're meeting the needs of our local migrant communities through our **Health Diversity Project**.
- Our aims have been set out in our **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**.

## Headlines include:

- Merton is a healthy place to live with life expectancy for men and women higher than the regional and national average.
- Fewer people are dying from avoidable conditions. The major killers for those aged under 75 are cancer and circulatory diseases.
- Fewer children are living in poverty, there's less infant mortality compared with the national and regional averages, and educational achievement is in line with the average for England.
- There's less long-term unemployment than the national and regional rates.

### You told us

Nearly a fifth of people asked about their three biggest personal concerns in Merton's 2012 Residents' Survey said they were worried about the quality of health services. This was an increase on the 2011 survey when 12% put the quality of health services in the top three of their personal 'worry list'.

The same survey also revealed that overall health and wellbeing was generally positive, with only 3% saying they were dissatisfied, unhappy, or anxious when asked if they were satisfied with life.

Most people put happy family relationships and a good social life at the top of their wellbeing wishlist, with nearly a third hoping for an improvement. You're also looking for improvements in feeling safe in your areas and your finances, as well as your physical and mental health.

### The challenges ahead

Responsibility for public health moved from the NHS to Merton Council in April 2013. The council's new Health and Wellbeing Board is making sure there is co-ordinated work across all organisations to ensure the health and wellbeing of all residents continues to improve. Other recent changes have seen local GPs and other health workers setting up a Clinical Commissioning Group to commission health services for their communities. Proposals have also been made to reduce services at St Helier hospital. The Merton Partnership will work to ensure the people of Merton are able to access quality healthcare services within their local community.

The pace of the changes, coupled with a need to save money in the face of financial pressures, will be a challenge. We also think other legislative changes, including the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the legislation currently in the Care and Support Bill, will have an impact on factors which keep us healthy and happy – including where we live and our income.

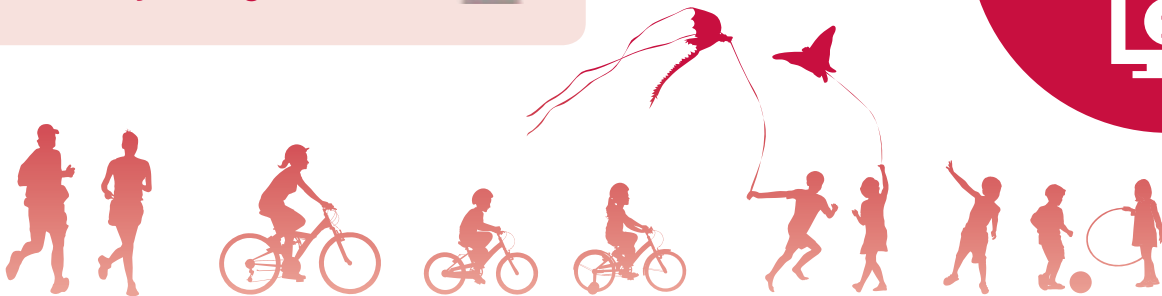
### Merton: A picture of health?

To give you the 'big picture' on the health and wellbeing of everyone in Merton we've put all the information in our **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:** [www.mertonjsna.org.uk](http://www.mertonjsna.org.uk)



**We're going to focus our attention on preventing ill-health, working alongside the community to reduce the number of people developing avoidable health problems.**

**'Merton-i'**  
Health information at your fingertips  
[www.merton.gov.uk/merton-i/](http://www.merton.gov.uk/merton-i/)



### The health of the whole community

The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community makes up 32% of Merton's population and 65% of the borough's primary school population is BAME.

Merton is already the only borough to have a comprehensive BAME strategy, aimed at making it a borough that is fair; where people from all walks of life take part in all aspects of society.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment highlights the health needs of BAME communities where data and evidence is available. However, it also recognises the need for more insight to better understand how the population is changing and how people are accessing and using services.



# Life stories

## Rethinking mental illness

Getting people together for social events which provide a chance to chat is a vital way to support those having a mental illness, and **Stephen Salmon** devotes his spare time to making sure that happens.

Stephen, who lives in Raynes Park, is the events co-ordinator for the **Rethink** Wimbledon Wednesday



Group a social and support group for adults, based at The Wimbledon Guild of Social Welfare, organising activities including day trips, holidays and quizzes.

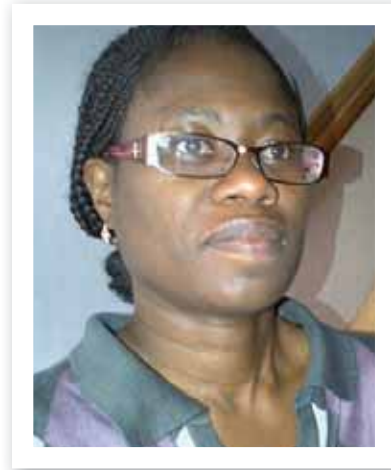
The 51-year-old is a service user himself and says giving his time to Rethink, a national charity supporting those affected by mental ill-health and their carers is the “most rewarding job he has ever had”.

The Wednesday Group is within the Rethink Mental Illness Merton and Sutton Carers and Users Support Group, a group within the national charity Rethink Mental Illness.

Stephen, who contributes about 10 hours a week to Rethink, was National Rethink’s joint winner of its 2012 Member of the Year prize for services to mental health.

**He said:** *“We bring people together and give them something to look forward to. For many it is a vital part of their week.”*

## A champion of community health



**Meet Kemi Oyebode. She’s a Community Health Champion, giving up her own time to encourage people in Mitcham to live a healthier lifestyle.**

Kemi signed up for the volunteer scheme, run as part of the **LiveWell Sutton and Merton Service**, to meet up with other people and get actively involved with her community.



Following her training, she’s been involved in many local events, where she helps deliver key health messages and encourages people to improve their lifestyle.

**Kemi said:** *“Getting involved in LiveWell has provided me with an opportunity to network. I’ve gained a lot from the training sessions and they’ve helped me understand the health differences that people have. I’ve also gained a lot of confidence. I’d recommend it to anyone interested in health and volunteering. It’s a great way to link in with your community.”*

## Getting around the language barrier

Accessing the right health care can be difficult when English is your second language. But the **NHS Sutton and Merton Bi-Lingual Health Advocacy Service** is there to help. The people it has supported include “Mrs S”, a 30-year-old Tamil woman from Mitcham.

Mrs S was attending the Weight2Go programme, a weight loss scheme facilitated by the Tamil Bi-Lingual Health Advocacy service. Although she wanted to get trimmer, the shy mother-of-two didn’t lose any weight at the start of the programme.

She spoke only in Tamil and during the sixth session she told the Bi-Lingual Health Advocate she was upset about her inability to socialise, her isolation and how her lack of self-motivation to lose weight was affecting her family life.

The Bi-Lingual Health Advocate told her about the Tamil parenting and women’s groups in Mitcham which offered support she didn’t know existed. The following week Mrs S revealed she’d been invited to a dancing class. She made new friends, soon had more confidence in speaking English and lost 5 kilos.





She was put in touch with **Carers Support Merton** and went to a meeting of the women's group where she met others in caring roles and before long was attending its book club as well as enjoying therapies and outings, some with her father.

*"I've also got support from courses on dealing with stress and low self-esteem. I now feel more in control, less depressed and less likely to fixate on the negative side of my caring role. I've got back a confidence in my caring role, and now see it as important as being in paid employment and a mother. I do not feel invisible in the role of a carer,"* she added.

### A carer's story

**Joanne Hill**, from Lower Morden, cares for her father **Derek Haighton** who was diagnosed with vascular dementia more than a year ago. He has also been seriously ill with cancer and has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from his time in the Korean War.

He was already suffering with poor memory when his wife died unexpectedly in 2010. Although he was able to live alone, he needed a lot of support with day-to-day tasks.

**Joanne said:** *"I read up on dementia and it became my mission to keep him as happy and well as I could. I didn't realise the stress this was putting on me".*

### An independent life

Disabled activist **John Kelly** has given a voice to disabled people in the borough through the **Merton Centre for Independent Living (CIL)**, which he helped set up in 2012.

John, who has worked within the disability and independent living movement for more than 20 years, set CIL up as a grassroots organisation run by disabled people with the aim of assisting disabled people to take control over their lives.

The services it offers include a Peer Support Service where volunteers with experience of disability will offer support and advice to help others become more independent. It also runs advice sessions in different parts of Merton.

**John, vice-chair of CIL, said:** *"I had been passionate about disabled-led organisations for a long time, and the voice of disabled people in Merton had been missing. But I could see the real difference it would make to have an organisation which works from the perspective of disabled people."*

And John, who lives in Raynes Park and is a musician, artist, youth worker and facilitator, put his cause on the world stage when he put on a memorable performance of 'Spasticus Autisticus' at the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympics.



# Better opportunities for youngsters

## Our vision

We're committed to delivering outstanding services which improve outcomes and life chances for all the borough's children and young people. We're also determined to help those facing real challenges to overcome them and to narrow the gap in outcomes.

## Our pledge

1. We'll work together to ensure our schools, settings and services are all good or better and ensure our young people have the **very best education, health and wider outcomes**.
2. We'll implement a strategy for early intervention and prevention, aiming to **improve outcomes for families**.
3. Our focus will still be on safeguarding, including getting agencies to continue to work together to **help children at risk**.
4. For our 'Looked After Children' we'll speed up the adoption process and other ways of finding them permanent homes. We'll also aim to improve their health and education.
5. Our **Youth Transformation project**, aiming to offer young people the chance for personal development as well as build Merton's community spirit, will continue to progress.
6. We'll work with our partners to **prevent, divert and deter** young people from gang-related or **criminal behaviour**.
7. We'll play our part in getting children with **special educational needs and disabilities** to be fully included in the life of their community. In this area, we'll also work to new legislative requirements.



## Key achievements

- **200** new nursery places for Merton's two-year-olds.
- **75%** of our child minders are rated as "good" or "outstanding" by Ofsted.
- **86%** of our primary schools are "good" or "outstanding".
- **63** extra primary school classes created since 2008. By 2020, there will be an extra 203.
- A **46%** reduction in the under-18 pregnancy rate.
- Ofsted said we're a "**good**" parent to our Looked After Children.
- A **33%** reduction in first-time offending rates by young people.
- **96%** of our 16-17-year-olds are in education, employment and training.
- The number of children getting five or more GCSE A\*-Cs rose by **36%** in the last five years.
- **67%** of Merton students went on to higher education in 2010.

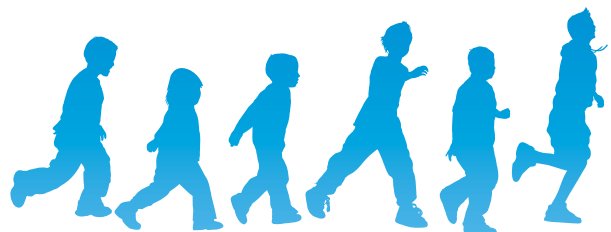
**200**  
new nursery  
places for  
2-year-olds

## What have we been doing?

### A healthy start

The Children's Trust partnership has focused on bettering the health of our youngsters. Improvements include:

- Our rate of **breastfeeding** is above the national average.
- **Obesity** levels are below the national average at reception class age.
- **Teenage pregnancy rates** are below the national average.



## Protecting our children

We're proud of our robust safeguarding arrangements for children who need our support, and the 2012 Ofsted report into our Looked After Children service said it was "good" in areas including ambition, leadership, quality of provision and overall effectiveness. The service's relationship with the community and volunteers was rated as "outstanding".

Our Transforming Families programme has seen us work with families in the borough in need of high levels of support. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), which started in 2013, is a single front door for all contacts to children's services where there's concern about a child and their family. It's staffed by social care, education, police, health and probation workers. We're also working with our young people to tackle key issues such as bullying, serious youth crime, gang-related activity and sexual exploitation.

## Top marks on education

Ofsted has said all our children's centres are "good" with "outstanding" features – significantly above the national average. The number of schools rated as "good" or "outstanding" is also above the national average.

Merton's children have performed above the national averages at the ages of five (Foundation Stage Profile) and seven (Key Stage 1). The results at ages 11 and 16 (Key Stages 2 and 4) improved in 2012, and were expected to be above national averages. The borough's established sixth forms also saw improved results in 2012.

## Contributing to their community

The number of youngsters joining in youth service activities exceeded the target set in 2011/12. The Merton Youth Partnership also won the National Compact Innovation award in 2012 for its collaborative work with other groups in Morden, including organisations involving volunteers. Its pilot project to encourage local groups to work together on young people's services was such a success that a Wimbledon Youth Partnership was set up.

## A better future

We're addressing child poverty by supporting parents and young people to get into work. Disappointingly, levels of young people not in education, training or work were higher than targets set for the start of 2012/13. We've set up the Family Poverty Partnership, with a focus on the needs of young people, single parents and maximising incomes to reverse this trend.

## You told us

**A survey of 1,000 residents carried out for the Community Plan revealed 26% of those asked thought one of the 'top five' areas they'd like to see improved was "things for young people to do".**

Merton Council's 2012 residents' survey asked 250 young people aged 11-17 what they felt about life in the borough. Crime is their biggest personal concern, with bad behaviour and bullying second and third on their list. Bullying was a concern for 21% of young people in 2011, rising to 31% in 2012.

Only 8% of the young people asked were worried about lack of recreational facilities, compared with 15% in 2011.

Most of those asked said they were generally satisfied and happy. Young people feel safe at home and at school but put "feeling safe in their local area" as the area they'd most like to see improved.

Adults were also surveyed by the council, and people with children in primary schools were more positive about school performance than the average in similar surveys across London. But for secondary education, the overall response on performance was below the London average. However on social services for children and families, the overall response on performance was in line with the London average.

## The challenges ahead

We need to maintain our partnerships and ensure the co-operation of all services involved in the life of our children and young people, despite financial pressures. Changes in the law will also impact on our work, as well as our key partners.

**Merton is growing and becoming more diverse. There are already more than 124 languages spoken in our schools, with nearly 40% of our children and young people using English as their second language. Our challenge will be to respond to changing needs and keep our services accessible to all.**



# Life stories

## Pupil-to-pupil support

Wimbledon schoolgirl **Yemima Erhabor** is just 11, but she spends every Saturday supporting younger pupils with their schoolwork and a range of other activities.

Yemima, a pupil at Ursuline High School, gives up her own time as a volunteer Peer Mentor at the weekly SHINE Saturday School, which aims to give a helping hand in the classroom to primary school children who are mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds.



It takes place at Bond Primary School in Mitcham, where Yemima says she likes getting to know the personalities of the pupils she is helping. *“By getting to know them I can do my best to help out. I really enjoy it, and I learn new skills as well,” she said.*

**Matthew Virani**, aged 18, also a volunteer Peer Mentor, dedicates two hours each week to helping pupils in the after school Study Support Group at Mitcham’s Cricket Green School.

The ‘A’level student at St Mark’s Academy in Mitcham said:

*“I just like knowing I have helped someone with their work, or taught them something new.”*



## The work of a young advisor

Young advisors are young people aged 14-21 who show community leaders and decision-makers how to engage with young people in community life, decisions and improving services. **Elias**, aged 18, tells us about his role:



“I volunteer as a Young Advisor for Volunteer Centre Merton in Mitcham. I help by giving ideas about services, helping with fund-raising and contributing to the community. I was also involved in the interviewing, recruitment and training of London Olympic Ambassadors.

*“I like to volunteer because it makes me feel good about myself and I enjoy the various roles that volunteering brings. It keeps me busy, off the streets and out of trouble. The most enjoyable aspect is when I complete the task I have been given to a high standard; this is when I know I am making a difference.*”

“As English is my second language, my biggest challenge was a presentation that involved writing. On the day of the presentation, I had to decide whether to be late for work or complete the training and presentation on the same day. Fortunately I was able to go into work a little later than usual. It is difficult to juggle school, work and volunteering, but I enjoy all of them and they help me in different ways.

“My volunteering as a Youth Advisor benefits Merton by being inspirational to young people. If young people are supported to achieve their goals, then it would help get more kids off the streets.”





**Finding space in our schools**

**Joseph Hood primary school in Wimbledon Chase was bursting at the seams, like many other schools in the area.**

But it's been doubled in size to cater for 420 children, with a £4.8 million new extension, including 12 classrooms, toilet blocks, a main hall, a dining hall, a kitchen and group spaces.

The popular school had a "We Love Joseph Hood" ceremony to mark the occasion. **Head teacher Anita Saville said:** *"I'm so pleased at how our new school building has turned out, and our opening ceremony was an occasion to remember!"*

**What's it like being a school governor?**

**Rob Mobile, a Parent Foundation Governor at St Teresa's Primary School in Morden since 2008, tells us more.**



"I was asked to join the governing body when the school was placed into special measures. I was also a parent of a child at the school, chair of the PTA and a parishioner of St Teresa's Church. This was a great opportunity for me to make a difference to a school I had a vested interest in.

*"As a Governor I help shape the school's future. Governors hold the school to account for the decisions it makes. This was very important earlier in the role as the school had to make some fundamental changes. At times I was supporting parents who were confused and fearful for the future."*

"My particular focus and input is via two sub-groups. I have direct influence on the issues and developments of the school's community involvement and the maintenance and progression of the school's Catholic ethos.

"My experience has been a mixed one with times of challenge and joy. All the hard work of everyone involved has been worth it and St Teresa's came out of special measures in 2011. It has recently been through a full Ofsted inspection and is now rated as a "good school" with a lot of areas of 'outstanding' practice. I feel proud to be a parent and a Governor at St Theresa's."

**From gang member to youth worker**

**Gogocha Lema-Lopes has overcome adversity after falling in with the wrong crowd and joining a street gang. It got him into trouble with the police and at school. But he realised his fellow gang members were not true friends and began giving his time at the South Wimbledon Youth Centre to help stop other young people following his original path.**

Gogocha, now 17, is Merton's youngest Youth Worker, working part-time at Pollards Hill Youth Centre and the YMCA in Wimbledon.

He's also studying Health and Social Care at Carshalton College and is a regular volunteer Peer Mentor at Morden's SMART Centre, his former school.

**He was named 'Merton Young Volunteer of the Year' at the 2013 Merton Partnership Volunteering Awards.**

**He said:** *"I used to be angry and in a gang, but something made me realise the friends I had then were not true friends and I found new friends through my youth centre work. My main goal is to stop others turning to crime, and I get a good feeling helping someone out."*



# Keeping Merton moving and developing, with a home for all

## Our vision

We'll make the best use of limited resources to deliver nationally and internationally recognised projects and developments through working in partnership. They'll meet the needs of our residents and businesses with the aim of securing long-term investment, sustainable travel, an improved physical infrastructure and a vibrant cultural offering.



## What have we been doing?

### Hitting our targets

The Sustainable Communities and Transport Board focuses on housing, transport, the environment and the local economy.

We set ourselves a number of targets in these areas, including:

### Housing

**Achieve the minimum housing targets for private and affordable housing set out in our Local Development Framework.**

- In 2011-12, **380** affordable homes were built, equivalent to almost three times the number of affordable homes expected to be delivered in Merton each year.
- In 2010-11, **32%** of extra homes built were affordable homes.

**Make sure there are no more than 87 homeless households in temporary accommodation.**

- This target was achieved up to the financial year ending March 2012, and continued to be maintained by the end of March 2013.
- New schemes will include the Empty Homes initiative, which will see the YMCA lead plans to acquire four empty properties to turn into homes for up to **16** people.

**Help at least 80 households get a privately rented home through the rent deposit scheme.**

- **128** households received help to access privately rented homes in 2011-12, and 123 households were helped in 2012-13.

**Improve 22 key Merton Priory Homes' estates.**

- **£211,000** is set aside for annual estate improvement and work has been carried out on bin stores, paving, fencing, play areas, parking and signage. Three estates have benefited from landscaping.

**Achieve the Decent Homes Standard for Merton Priory Homes.**

- By December 2012, **74%** of homes had been awarded the Decent Homes Standard.

**Improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty.**

- We've launched **three** schemes to help make our homes and businesses save money by being more energy efficient.

### Transport

**Getting people out of their cars.**

- We've launched an ongoing, award-winning, programme to promote "smarter" travel choices.
- We've increased awareness of the new Mitcham Eastfields station.
- We've worked across the borough to improve transport access for all. Town centre improvements in Wimbledon and Raynes Park have been tailored to transport needs.
- Merton Council's Road Safety Team has delivered regular safety presentation for road users.
- Merton Council has also supported borough-wide cycle improvements, through the introduction of new cycle routes, increased cycle parking and a tailored cycle training programme.





## You told us:

- A survey of 1,000 residents carried out for the Community Plan told us what you most valued about Merton were its green spaces, the ease of getting around, its friendliness, its shops and its accessibility.
- But you do feel our town centres need improving, and are worried about jobs and traffic congestion.

- A survey of businesses also found that good transport links were a positive part of life in Merton. Businesses were also concerned about traffic congestion, but were even more worried about business rates and parking issues.

- Traffic congestion was also the third highest concern in Merton Council's 2012 residents' survey. The same survey put 'lack of jobs' as the fifth highest concern.

- Residents have told us that the east of the borough could benefit from improved transport links, and we are working with partners to improve its connectivity. Long-term schemes include better tram, rail and bus links.



## Environment

### *Reduce the borough's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and our dependence on external energy.*

- Our domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were cut by **5%** between 2005-2010.
- The Greening Business programme will improve the efficiency of **15** local businesses in two years.
- We're tackling the efficiency of Merton Council's **12** most energy-hungry sites.
- Our team are working on a range of other schemes to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### *Make sure new private and public developments are designed and built to high standards of sustainability.*

- Good examples include new homes at Rowan Park and Brenley Park in Mitcham, as well as Waitrose in Raynes Park.

### *Reduce water usage and increase recycling rates.*

- Overall waste going to landfill has been steadily reducing. In 2012/13 we recycled **39.4%** of all household waste. The target is to reach 42% in 2013/14.
- We're also working on plans to reduce water usage.

### *Increase our food-growing capacity.*

- Community growing schemes across the borough are being developed.

### *Increase the number of trees in the borough, and make sure our green spaces encourage local biodiversity.*

- Merton Council has an annual tree-planting programme and encourages the creation of nature havens, including the re-introduction of wildflower beds in parks and the increase of meadow areas on local grassland.

## Culture and heritage

### *Merton boasts a wide-ranging and diverse cultural offering, which is readily available for all to participate in and enjoy.*

- As part of the Olympic legacy, Merton Council built London's **second-largest** BMX track in Mitcham, as well as **two** beach volleyball courts in Wimbledon Park.
- Merton Council also delivered **five** "Green Gyms" in its parks and open spaces at Figges Marsh, Morden Park, Donnelly Green, Oakleigh Way and Pollards Hill, with two more planned for King George's Park and Mostyn Gardens.

- A **£2 million** project at New Wimbledon Theatre, with £1 million in Merton Council funding, has improved the seating, orchestra pit, stage and back of house to bring the facility up to West End show standards.
- A **15-year** leisure centre contract between Merton Council and social enterprise company Greenwich Leisure Limited has seen an extension to the health and fitness facility at Canons Leisure Centre, Mitcham, and an upgrade to health and fitness at Wimbledon Leisure Centre. Tying in with Sport England's strategy of increasing participation by 14-25 year-olds, there's been a steadily increasing participation in health and fitness. In 2012-13 female participation increased by **49%** and male participation increased by **81%**.

## Local economy

We've got a range of plans to increase jobs and skills, as well as make better use of available land. We've already transformed Wimbledon and Raynes Park town centres. Mitcham, Colliers Wood and Morden are next on our list.

# Life stories

## Greening your business

Wimbledon-based printers **Creovation** turned to **Sunny Lee**, Greening Business Advisor with Merton Chamber of Commerce, when they wanted to cut energy bills and improve their environmental performance.

She offered them 12 hours of free support and soon found they were paying for a waste collection they never received, had inefficient electric heaters and lighting, draughty doors and windows, as well as a costly and unhelpful electricity supplier.

Sunny drew up an Action Plan including:

- A more appropriate waste collector
- Monitored energy consumption
- A cheaper electricity supplier
- Double-glazed windows
- Low energy lighting

Director Michael Woolsey said they expect to save around £1,500 each year on lighting alone, as well as £200 on waste disposal.

*“Thanks to the Greening Business Programme, we have identified numerous improvements that not only make us ‘greener’, but have also improved the workplace and – best of all – will save money,” he added.*



## Grow your own

A neglected patch of land at Figges Marsh in Mitcham has been cleared of brambles and rubbish to turn it into 65 allotments as part of the community-led **Sustainable Merton** initiative.

The work on the Tamworth Farm allotment site – funded by more than £77,000 from the Food Fund, part of the Big Lottery Scheme – also includes a new water supply as well as fencing and paths.

Sustainable Merton is setting up a community plot and providing tools, equipment and advice to allow all the volunteers involved to have fun, learn something and share their produce. **Pupils from St Mark’s primary school in Mitcham and a group of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds will also manage their own plots.**

They can take inspiration from the Phipps Bridge Garden Project, run by Sustainable Merton on National Trust land opposite Deen City Farm. This once-abandoned allotment site now provides three quarters of a tonne of fruit and vegetables each year, as well as teaching local youngsters about the joys of growing fresh, organic food.





## We love our green spaces!

We know you value our green spaces as 20% of those who responded to Merton Council's residents' survey said it was the feature they most valued about Merton – in fact, it was their favourite aspect of the borough.

Historic Mitcham Common, once continuous pasture land stretching from Mitcham to Croydon, is an oasis on the edge of urban London. It has a variety of habitats and is home to many species of wildflowers and animals.

It's been managed by Mitcham Common Conservators since 1891 and is also supported by the Friends of Mitcham Common, which evolved from a society set up in 1956 to stop its increased use as a rubbish dump and to oppose several proposed road schemes.

**Melanie Nunzet, from the Friends of Mitcham Common, said:**

*"The common is a beautiful area, with fascinating wildlife and lots of history. It's enjoyed by many residents and I lead regular walks and talks so more people can discover the delights on their doorstep."*



## Art is for all

Creating your own work of art is beneficial to all ages, and the Woodlands Day Centre in Colliers Wood has seen 20 dementia sufferers make the most of a special art project.

With the support of Merton Council's Arts & Education department, it held a weekly art class with a professional artist, and put on a special exhibition of works created by people who use the centre.

**Karen Simpkins, daughter of Lilly who attended the art workshop, said:**

*"The classes really inspired my mum to be creative. Before she attended the centre, due to her aggressive behaviour linked to dementia – the doctor thought she might need to be referred to an acute ward. Attending the day centre provided me with respite and stopped my mum's condition from worsening."*



## Our solar schools

Pioneering Merton was the first London borough to give the go-ahead for the installation of solar panels on three of its schools.

Haslemere, Lonesome and Benedict Schools in Mitcham had the panels installed as part of a number of environmental initiatives during the work to set up Merton's Wandle Valley Low Carbon Zone.

The panels cost £66,000 to install, but Merton Council hopes to recoup its costs inside nine years and, through collecting the Government's 'Feed-in-Tariff' it will receive an income for 25 years. Each installation will also cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by five tonnes a year.

**Ross Mitchell, Project Manager for the Low Carbon Zone, said:**

*"Our idea behind the project is to use the money saved from electricity generation and income from the Feed-in-Tariff to financially support the installation of other energy and carbon-saving measures across the borough."*

The Wandle Valley Low Carbon Zone was one of 10 zones set up by the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, to cut carbon emissions by 20.12% by 2012.

By September 2012 it had actually achieved carbon savings of 12-16%, but other benefits included:

- A positive public response to the causes championed by the project, leading to a new community group – the Friends of Phipps Bridge.
- Increased environmental awareness in one in three homes in the area.
- The development of a successful youth employment scheme.



# This is Merton

Welcome to your Merton. We live in a growing borough and it's also getting more diverse. Alongside our map of the borough, you'll find some interesting facts and figures telling you more about the changing place you call home.



The Greater London Boroughs

## Voluntary Sector & Volunteering

- Merton's Voluntary Sector is thriving. According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) there are **302** local registered charities working in the borough.
- While many give more than **20** hours per month, a survey by Merton Voluntary Services Council in May 2013 showed that **20%** of volunteers give **6-10** hours each month.

### Wimbledon



### Raynes Park



## Population

- Merton's population is **199,693**. The number of people living in the borough has increased by **6%** over the last 10 years. Colliers Wood ward has grown by **15%**, the largest population increase of any ward.
- Looking ahead, the Greater London Authority predicts there will be **210,600** people living in the borough by 2021.
- Compared to the rest of London, Merton has a slightly higher proportion of children under five years old. In the last 10 years Trinity ward has seen a **45%** increase in this age group.
- The population aged 85 and over accounts for **1.6%** in Merton compared to 1.5% in London and is projected to rise by nearly **41%** over the next 10 years.

### Morden



## Colliers Wood



### Diversity

- Merton is a diverse borough. **35%** of our residents come from a Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority background.
- After English, the top three languages spoken from Primary School Census data in 2010 were **Polish**, **Urdu** and **Tamil**.
- After the UK, Merton residents' top three countries of birth are **Poland**, **Sri Lanka**, and **South Africa**.

### Inequality

- According to deprivation figures from 2010, Merton is the **fourth** least deprived borough in London.
- Overall, life expectancy in Merton is higher than the London and England average, however there is a difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in the borough of about **9** years for men and **13** years for women.
- **Three** of Merton's wards are in the top 15 least deprived wards in London: Village, West Barnes, and Dundonald.
- The **three** most deprived wards in Merton are **Cricket Green**, **Figges Marsh** and **Pollards Hill**.

## Mitcham



### Environment

- Between 2005 and 2010 our domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were cut by **5%**.
- There has been a steady decrease in the volume of waste going to landfill, with **39.4%** of all household waste recycled in 2012/13.
- **18%** of Merton is open space, compared to the London average of 10%. That includes **67** parks, **11** nature reserves, **17** allotment sites and many other small green spaces.

### Qualifications

- There has been a **24%** fall in the number of people with no qualifications.
- Abbey ward has seen the biggest fall in people with no qualifications – a **30%** decrease between 2001 and 2011.

\* Unless otherwise specified all data and comparisons are taken from the 2001 and 2011 Census.

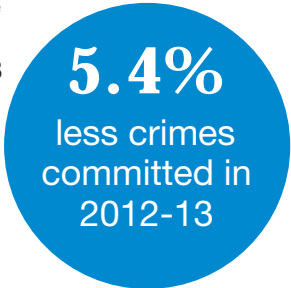
# Being safe and strong

## Our vision

We want everyone in Merton to feel safe in their community so we aim to prevent and reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and misuse of drugs and alcohol. To make our communities strong, we also want residents to play an active part in the life of the borough and to feel truly valued.

## What have we been doing?

Crime in Merton has dropped significantly in recent years. In 2006-7 there were 16,000 crimes committed, but this fell to 14,157 in 2011/12. In 2012-13 alone the number of crimes committed dropped by 5.4%.



Our multi-agency Safer Merton team is proud of the following initiatives:

### The One Stop Shop

In 2009 we set up a confidential service for people experiencing domestic abuse which brought together key agencies under one roof. It was re-launched in 2011 with a publicity drive, including posters translated into Urdu, Tamil and Polish.

The One Stop Shop is now open at a central venue at a regular time, and the support and advice it gives to domestic abuse victims helps keep them safe. In its first year it helped 100 people, and by June 2012 this had grown to nearly 250, including a number of men.

### Other work to keep our community safe included:

- The eviction of three aggressive rough sleepers from a car park under a Morden supermarket
- A crackdown on anti-social behaviour in King George's Playing Fields in Lower Morden, which resulted in a Safer Parks Silver Award.

We are also less likely to have a fire than ever before, after the London Fire Brigade in Merton carried out 1,196 home safety visits in 2011-12, with 859 to known vulnerable residents.

In the last decade, Merton has gone from more than 1,100 fires in 2001-2 to less than 500 in 2011-12. The number of accidental fires at home was just 105 – the lowest ever recorded. A number of road safety initiatives will also be introduced in 2013-14, which should reduce accidents in the borough.

### Under Stronger Merton, our work has seen us deliver:

- An award-winning model for volunteering in the borough's libraries.
- Work on 'community mapping' to give us a better picture of the changing make-up of the borough and the impact on future services.
- An active Inter Faith Forum.
- A Winter Night Shelter delivered by local voluntary organisations and faith groups.



## Our aims

Our priorities for 2013/14 are:

- Domestic violence
- Burglary
- Youth violence
- Knife crime
- Crime associated with drug and alcohol use
- Engaging with minority and new communities
- Supporting a vibrant and diverse voluntary and community sector
- Maintaining community cohesion and early identification of community tensions



## Moving out the squatters

Neighbours of two homes occupied by up to 20 squatters in Denison Road, Colliers Wood, had long suffered from problems including loud music, fighting in the street, vermin and an alleyway being used as a toilet and rubbish dump.

**The local Police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) worked together with Safer Merton's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and Merton Council's Environmental Health Team to tackle the problems.**

The SNT collated nearly 40 crimes committed by the squatters. Environmental Health Officers served legal notices in relation to the filth and vermin. When work started to clear the properties, it took a week and several tonnes of rubbish were removed.

The ultimate sanction was the issuing of a Premises Closure Order – a power of last resort which resulted in the granting of a three-month closure order. Both properties were boarded up that afternoon. The next stage involved Merton Council's Legal Services team organising the sale of the properties, with the remaining profits held in trust for their former owners.

***"We no longer feel an imminent threat to our safety when coming and going from our home,"***

**said one relieved neighbour.**



## You told us

**Crime is the number one concern for Merton residents, according to Merton Council's 2012 annual residents' survey.** Worry about crime has continued to steadily fall over recent years, but 32% of those asked put crime at the top of their list of personal concerns. It is also the top worry of our young people, with 45% of them rating it as one of their main concerns. The residents' survey also revealed that 52% of those asked were either 'very worried' or 'fairly worried' about crime, but that has fallen from 67% in 2005.

One of the things that many people value about Merton is that people are friendly and 87% of residents think people from different backgrounds get on well together.

A separate survey of 429 people carried out for Safer Merton showed that 63% of those asked in 2012 thought burglary was a 'very big' or 'fairly big' problem. This was an increase of 50% from 2011. Motor vehicle crime was reported as a problem by 59% of respondents, an increase from 43% in 2011.

## The challenges ahead

- We will continue to respond proactively to what happens in our community.
- We need to be aware of any emerging issues from demographic changes in Merton and make sure our communication is effective.
- Increasing financial pressures will make it a challenge to provide a good service and maintain good partnership working.
- Meet the expectation of residents to continue to deliver a safe place to live.
- Improve the perceptions of our work in some sections of the community, eg the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community.

Crime is the  
**No.1**  
concern for  
Merton  
residents



# Life stories

## A night in the life of a street pastor

When most of us are tucked up in bed on a Friday night, the Merton Street Pastors patrol the streets of Mitcham and Wimbledon offering care, support and a listening ear. They work on most Friday nights in Mitcham and two Fridays a month in Wimbledon. Co-ordinator **John Goddard** tells us about a night in Wimbledon.

*“Our patrols in Mitcham run from 8pm to midnight, but in Wimbledon we start at 10pm and go on to 3am. There’s a team of 29 volunteers in Merton from 22 different churches. Our aim is to care, listen and offer help to anyone who needs us.”*



“When we’re working in Wimbledon we meet in the YMCA on The Broadway at 10pm. We’ll pray together and get ready to go out. There’s usually four of us and we’ll go out in pairs wearing high visibility jackets. Around 10.30pm we ring the police to tell them we are off out – they’re very supportive.



“We’ll walk up The Broadway and talk to businesses. When it gets to 11pm, the queues start forming outside the clubs and it gets busier. By midnight we find many women are struggling to walk, so we hand out flip-flops – up to 15 pairs in a night. We get quite a positive response from that!

“We also have ‘space blankets’ for people who might need them to keep warm. When it gets to 12.30am there might be people feeling unwell outside and we check their friends are near or they are being picked up, and give them water.

“We’ll then take a tea-break before going back - probably heading down towards the Polka Theatre end, where the last club opens until 3am. We’ll then take one final loop around the town centre.

“The most troubling is when women get separated from their friends. We’ll keep an eye on single women waiting at bus stops on their own. At 3am we’ll go back to the YMCA for a de-brief and close the night with a prayer.”



## Tackling prolific and priority offenders

**Merton’s Prolific and Priority Offending (PPO) Team aims to stop repeat offenders from committing crimes. Here is just one example of what their work has achieved.**



A 38-year-old Merton-born man had been convicted of 83 offences, including 18 burglary and robbery convictions. In February 2011, the Merton PPO team secured him accommodation at a resettlement house run by The Langley Trust, a charity which helps drug addicts. It was at no cost to Merton residents and, as the house is near Winchester, it gave him a chance for a fresh start in a new area.

He had to follow strict licence conditions, he developed an interest in fishing and tackled an addiction to crack cocaine.

He used to commit up to five house burglaries each week, mainly in Merton, to fund his addiction. But he has not offended for more than two years and has been de-registered as a PPO.

## Turning your life around

Young offender 'H' had been put on probation after being convicted of a crime. He went to **Volunteer Centre Merton (VCM)** for help in turning his life around and told them about his passion for catering. He was offered a volunteer placement at **The New Horizon Centre**, Pollards Hill. He started the same day and, with support from VCM's youth action co-ordinator, he soon picked up the basic skills. Motivated by his experience, he has gone back to college to study catering.

## Paying the price

Merton Council's **Reparation Scheme** aims to divert young people from a life of crime through community work. The 13-18-year-olds taking part in the scheme have all been given a court reparation order after committing an offence. They take part in a range of local projects, and one of the most successful saw them join a group of volunteers clearing the graveyard at St Mary's Church in Merton Park. It was such a success that the church wrote to the Reparation Team to thank them.

## Watching our community

Merton has nearly 600 voluntary **Neighbourhood Watch** co-ordinators looking after 30,868 properties, covering around 40% of the borough. Merton was the first borough in London to achieve 100% coverage in one ward (Lower Morden) and now has two wards, including Cannon Hill, with almost 100% coverage.



NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

## There's just 1Way for Deborah

**Deborah Kormi** is only 16, but she's on a mission to keep young people in Mitcham and surrounding areas off the streets and away from a life of crime.

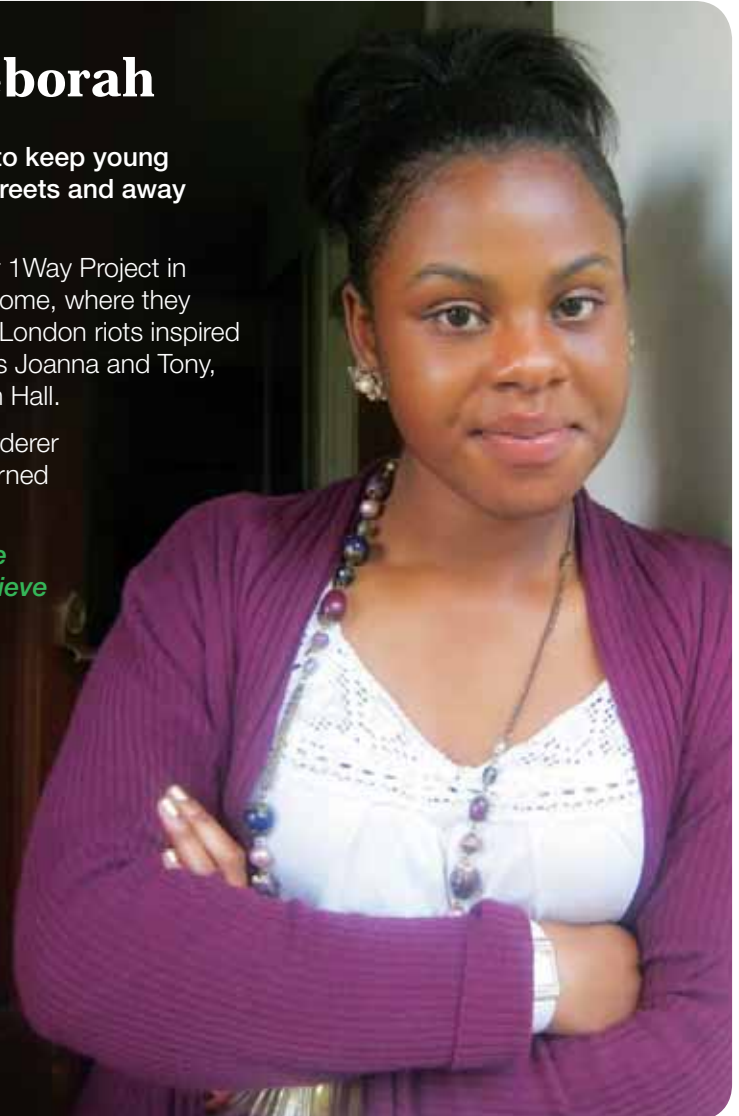
The pupil of St Mark's Academy in Mitcham started her 1Way Project in 2010 by organising meetings for young people at her home, where they discussed work, school and faith issues. But the 2011 London riots inspired her to grow her project and, with the support of parents Joanna and Tony, she started holding monthly events in St Mark's Church Hall.

She invited ex-gang members, drug-dealers and a murderer to talk to young people about how – and why – they turned their lives around.

*"I want to encourage young people not to go on the streets, and also inspire them to think they can achieve their dreams. I had up to 80 people coming to the monthly events," she said.*

Deborah put the 1Way project on hold when she concentrated on her GCSEs, but plans to set up a Chef Academy so 16-19-year-olds who are about to leave home are taught how to cook for themselves.

As if that wasn't enough, the talented teenager has published her own 70-page faith-based book, 'Walking the Walk'. *"I am trying to get people going in the right direction. It is never too late to get back on track," she added.*



# Contributing to your community

## Giving your time

Volunteers are at the heart of Merton and play a crucial and invaluable role in making the borough the success that it is. Those who live and work in our borough want to take more ownership of how they spend their time, their money and live their lives. Volunteering gives them that opportunity, and the Merton Partnership works to encourage a dynamic culture of volunteering.

In the annual residents' survey 2012, 19% of adults said they had given their time to voluntary work in the previous year. A separate online survey conducted in January 2013 showed that 39% of those who give their time contribute more than 16 hours per month. The survey also showed that those who give their time come from all age groups across the borough. All will benefit from improved health and wellbeing and diverse social networks.

## Our vision

**We want all individuals, groups and organisations to actively contribute to their community, whatever time they have available. We have a mission to enthuse and enable people and organisations to get involved by ensuring there are accessible and effective opportunities.**

One way we are going to achieve this is by developing a single website where volunteers and organisations will be put in touch with each other swiftly. It will tailor opportunities to what people giving their time are looking for – be it a long or short-term commitment.

Along with many of the case studies featured throughout this Community Plan, opposite are further examples of people who have contributed to their community.

## A helping hand for our libraries

More than 700 volunteers have contributed their time to our borough's libraries since April 2011, and their work has improved the range of services and increased opening hours.

We now have the most efficient library service in London and the award-winning project has been used as a volunteering model for libraries across the capital.

Author **John Potter** has been volunteering at Pollards Hill Library since 2010, when he began supporting children who struggle with reading.

He has since become involved in other library services and is a popular speaker for coffee mornings, where he talks about his books and other areas of expertise. In 2012 he won Merton Partnership's Volunteer of the Year Award for 2012 and a Special Recognition Award from Merton Libraries.



## Understanding the whole community

The latest addition to the community centres we have in Merton is the Morden Islamic Community Centre, which aims to offer much more than education based on Islamic principles.



**Imam Bilal Patel** explained that the centre in London Road, which officially opened in April 2013, aims to offer something to the whole community and is used by up to 400 people a day.

He said the centre, which was once the Crown pub, was already seeing its facilities used by a number of local projects

serving Merton's diverse communities – including groups from the Turkish, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan communities. Development plans for the future could also involve the opening of a gym.

***"We are an education centre, with an holistic approach to education. We also want to serve the local area and gain an understanding of the whole community. We have space here for the community to use,"*** he added.





## Out of the cold

**Talat Malik** is a research scientist and **John Bush** a film set decorator. They both live in Wimbledon Park and give their time to help the homeless in Merton.

They were two of the volunteer co-ordinators of the Merton Winter Night Shelter, which saw nearly 20 faith groups offer a bed, food and warmth to up to 13 rough sleepers from December-March.

The faith groups covered a wide range of religions, including those from the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities in Wimbledon, Colliers Wood and Morden. All offered to provide shelter and support those who would otherwise have been out in the cold.

Talat was the co-ordinator for the Wimbledon Mosque, which organised accommodation at a Salvation Army Hall elsewhere in Wimbledon, as they don't have their own hall.

He said the Mosque provided around 20 volunteers, as well as bedding, food and toiletries. *"It is good to show we are happy to help other people, and those we helped were really appreciative,"* he added.



John, who organised the night shelter with more than 30 other volunteers at Wimbledon's St Mary's Church, is also a volunteer at an all-year-round drop-in centre for rough sleepers in Wimbledon, run by Faith in Action Merton.

*"We offer clothes to the people who use the drop-in centre, and I usually run the clothes stall. But I get stuck in to any duty – be it clearing the tables, serving lunches or cleaning the loos!"* he said.



## Jackie Chapman, from Wimbledon

*"I started volunteering 18 months ago after my life was turned upside down by the sudden death of my husband. It was a very difficult time for me and I knew I needed to rebuild my life in a different way. Out of nowhere, the idea of volunteering came to me."*



I decided on three organisations I thought I would enjoy being a part of: The Met Police Volunteers, the Wimbledon Guild and Merton Libraries. I was accepted by all three, and I'm still volunteering with them all.

In a less formal role I joined the Friends of Ravensbury Park. We spend one Sunday morning a month helping to keep the views to the River Wandle clear. The most recent addition to my volunteering is as Secretary to the Wimbledon Community Association.

Voluntary work makes me feel good about myself. I am so obviously appreciated by those I give my time to and I can see the difference I make. I've also learned new skills, found out more about myself as a person and met some lovely people. Volunteering has seen me through the most difficult time of my life."

## Tony Cullen, from Wimbledon Chase

*"I give my time at Wimbledon Chase Primary School as their Wildlife Gardener. It's great to see children learning about nature."*

I enjoy introducing them to gardening by teaching them about the cultivation of flowers, fruit and vegetables as well as the actions their school takes to promote a sustainable approach to the environment.

The biggest challenge I've faced is the number of children now wishing to take part. So we are setting up a new gardening plot – 'Bramble Hedge Allotments'. This will mean more children can get involved."



## Toni, from Pollards Hill

*"Although I have health issues, it had always been on my mind to volunteer, but I didn't know how to go about it, so I contacted Volunteer Centre Merton (VCM). Because of my health issues there have been large gaps of not working and I also had bad GCSE results. VCM found me a placement at my local Oxfam shop. I've met some nice people, made friends and I'm picking up new skills. If I hadn't taken this first step, I would still be stuck at home. But now I can hold my head up high."*



# Destination Wimbledon

For a fortnight each year, Wimbledon puts our borough on the map when the All England Lawn Tennis Club stages its annual tennis championships. But 2012 saw it appearing twice on the world's sporting stage when the renowned venue hosted the Olympic tennis event.

We wanted to reflect the status of the town by creating a revitalised centre in time for the summer of 2012, as well as respond to complaints about the quality of the local street scene and its traffic problems. And so **Destination Wimbledon** was born.



## The two year programme included:

- **Wimbledon Hill Road and side roads** – this mainly improved the walking route to the All England Lawn Tennis Club. The new heritage walk was named the 'Wimbledon Way'. This stage of the project also included new paving, seating and cycle parking.
- **Wimbledon station and Wimbledon Bridge** – a new public space was created in the heart of the town centre, including art, trees, seating, lighting and new paving. The car-dominated five lanes of Wimbledon Bridge was replaced with a three-lane road, wider pavements and new seating.
- **Alexandra Road junction** – a crossing that was tricky for pedestrians was replaced with a clutter free and pedestrian-friendly diagonal crossing.
- **Hartfield Road and Centre Court Shopping Centre** – a crowded and cluttered area was improved with a wider pavement, more crossing opportunities, new seating and cycle parking.
- The £3m project, a partnership scheme delivered by Merton Council, Transport for London, Network Rail and South West Trains was completed in time for a summer that Wimbledon – and the world – would not forget! **It won the 2013 London Transport Award** for "Excellence in Walking and Public Realm".

### Winner

2013 London  
Transport Award for  
Excellence in Walking  
& Public Realm



## Love Wimbledon!

But there's much more to Wimbledon than the tennis, and other town centre activity in 2012 saw our local businesses get together to show that they **'Love Wimbledon'**.

Working alongside Merton Chamber of Commerce, more than 400 town centre businesses voted to set up a **Business Improvement District (BID)**. This involves them all making a contribution to the scheme, and deciding how they want to spend the funds to make the town centre more attractive and profitable. It will make Wimbledon an even better destination.



## Walk The Wimbledon Way

The **Wimbledon Way heritage walk**, developed by Merton Chamber of Commerce in association with its partners, guides you from Wimbledon town centre, through Wimbledon Village and on to the All England Lawn Tennis Club and Tennis Museum. It's a 2.012km route which walks you through some of Wimbledon's most notable heritage and culture.

The environmentally-friendly link between Wimbledon town centre and Wimbledon Village was inspired by a community debate about celebrating the Olympics. It has left Wimbledon with a legacy that cements the connection between all those who make it a great place to live, work and do business.

# Taking action in Raynes Park

When the Raynes Park Association was founded 12 years ago it was in the face of opposition to the extension of Controlled Parking Zones, but now it's an organisation which has a powerful voice in all the key decisions affecting the town centre.



Voted  
**London's Best  
Performing  
High Street**  
September 2012

Chair and founder **Chris Larkman** says that without the work of the Raynes Park Association, which champions the needs of both businesses and residents, there would probably have been no Raynes Park Enhancement Plan – the scheme which led to the recent transformation of the town.

The plan, put together and driven forward by Merton Council, has vastly improved the local street scene as well as access to a town divided by the railway line. The strengthening of its retail offering has also been enhanced by the building of a Waitrose supermarket, with accompanying car parking. Other new shops have since opened in the town, as well as a new medical centre in Lambton Road.



*"I enjoy making the best of where we live, and using opportunities to improve it by bringing people together to work for a common aim that benefits us all."*

**Chris Larkman**



So it was perhaps no surprise when in September 2012, a survey declared Raynes Park had **London's best-performing high street** after it found just 2% of its retail units were vacant, compared with the capital's average of 10%.

Chris, who has lived in Raynes Park since 1983, says there is still a small amount of work to be done to complete the Enhancement Plan, and the Raynes Park Association also has longer term visions to further enhance the town, including more public space around the "Skew Arch" railway bridge and Kingston Road.

For him a co-ordinated approach is important, and the Raynes Park Association makes sure all views are heard by managing the town's community forums, which attract around 80 people, as well as co-chairing regular business breakfasts with Merton Chamber of Commerce.

## Action taken:

- A new-look street scene
- New public piazza
- Tree-planting
- Benches
- Paving replaced or steam cleaned
- Advertising hoardings removed
- Cycle racks
- Improved cycle lanes
- Better lighting
- New pedestrian crossing
- Better signage
- A handy parking guide: [www.merton.gov.uk/raynespark](http://www.merton.gov.uk/raynespark)



## And still to come?

- Station kiss-and-ride drop-off
- Station improvements
- Removal of useless street furniture
- Better parking for business and customers
- Street enhancements on the south of the railway
- Moving the 200 bus stand to Pepys Road
- A farmers' market
- Rainbow Estate development

# Rediscovering Mitcham

Historic Mitcham was once a 'picture postcard town' with thriving commerce and pleasant open spaces, but it is now dominated by busy roads, declining quality of shops and deteriorating public spaces. However the Rediscover Mitcham project has secured £3m in funding to breathe new life into this unique town centre by 2015.

The vision is to revitalise the area with better shopping, restaurants, cafes, bars, offices and a vibrant local market. It's hoped the investment will lead to more money being spent in local businesses and more local jobs being created.



## There is specific funding for the following:

- Making existing community links stronger and more supportive of growth
- Reviving the night-time economy
- Bringing back empty shops into community use
- Improving and promoting the market place
- Tidying up shopfronts
- Providing Business Support for local shops and businesses
- Introducing community skills which could include local employment training
- Marketing a series of events to highlight Mitcham's qualities

An ambitious re-shaping of the town centre is being proposed, including significant changes to the road layouts aimed at making it easier for pedestrians and road users to move around the Fair Green area.

**Fair Green itself is the central part of the regeneration plans, with alternatives including creating:**

- An urban village green
- A community space designed for activities
- A park

Merton Council is consulting with residents and local groups about the vision, with work set to start at the end of 2013.

## One Mitcham

Community groups and Merton Council are working together to revitalise the town centre with a series of events and activities.

**The One Mitcham project**, which hopes to galvanise community action, has already staged a successful "Make Mitcham Your Valentine" event. Other planned activities include a **Spring Clean** event, the **Mitcham Carnival**, a **food festival** and a **Christmas market**.

## Be bowled over by Cricket Green

A community vision for Cricket Green is being developed with Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage in partnership with Merton Council. Ideas are in their early stages, but local people are involved in shaping how this Conservation Area will look. A number of key sites are coming up for development and the community will be having a say in how their area changes. Mitcham Green Community & Heritage have also secured Heritage Lottery funding to raise awareness of the area's history and plan conservation work, an audio trail and a photo exhibition.



# Make Colliers Wood happy

**Keith Spears is a man on a mission to 'Make Colliers Wood Happy' and since he set himself that target in 2005 – and helped harness the existing community spirit – there's an increased range of activities taking place to suit all ages and interests in the area.**

He set up the community building group 'Making Colliers Wood Happy' after watching a TV programme called 'Making Slough Happy', which aimed to improve the town's happiness levels.

Keith, who joined the Colliers Wood Residents' Association about 10 years ago and is now its chair, said: "Some people were saying there wasn't a lot to do in Colliers Wood. I felt inspired when I saw the TV programme, so I invited people to a meeting and we talked about how we could make a difference."

A survey of children and young people commissioned to find out more about the interests of local residents discovered many people had to go outside the area to take part in their favourite pastimes.

Since the launch of 'Making Colliers Wood Happy', the range of locally-based activities includes a variety of sports, dance groups, a chess club, a poetry group, a community choir, a ukele orchestra, litter-picking initiatives, gardening projects, walking groups and a yearly art festival. Around 500 people take part in the activities each month.

Life is certainly happier in the place they call "Collywood"!



*"A number of talented people emerged to offer their services, many as volunteer co-ordinators – there are a lot of unsung heroes. We're always adding new activities and aim to be as diverse and inclusive as possible."*

**Keith Spears**



## A new look for Colliers Wood

Colliers Wood has long been dominated by the empty **Brown & Root tower**. But plans to convert the tower and pump £3.6 million worth of regeneration funds into the area should see it transformed in the next few years.

Permission has been granted for the conversion of the tower and an extension providing 150 apartments, as well as ground floor shops. A second phase will add an extra 68 flats. In the meantime, an interim 'makeover' has improved its look.

Funding totalling £1.6 million from the Mayor's Regeneration Fund following the 2011 riots, with £1.6 million to come from Merton Council and Transport for London, will see the creation of a new town centre.

The vision is for a new piazza surrounding the tower and improvements to the rest of the street scene, including the gateway to Wandale Valley Park.

# Make more of Morden



**Morden is at our borough's heart and it's got the potential for a vibrant town centre – excellent transport links, beautiful open spaces on its doorstep, local job opportunities and modern leisure facilities.**

We want to **revive Morden** to make it an even more attractive place to live, work, shop and simply have a good time.

Merton Council and its partners are working together to create a vision that will be a framework for the town's regeneration over a period of 15 years.



## Morden's history

The town centre has changed little since it was developed in the 1920s when the arrival of the Northern Line led to farmland being turned into suburbs. But it's now in need of a facelift.

## A need for change

More than **10,000** people use Morden's tube station each day, but few stop for a browse in the shops or for a drink after work. To help it thrive, we're planning on how to make the commuters look at Morden with fresh eyes.

The suburbs around the town are dominated by family homes, and to build a vibrant community we also need a wider range of housing types.

## Our aims include:

- We want to make the most of its excellent transport links by encouraging intensive developments near the town centre, including commercial and retail properties.
- There'll be more ways of meeting and having fun in safe and accessible public spaces and facilities, so people will make the most of Morden's leisure and educational opportunities.
- We want a 'greener' town with more trees and better pedestrian routes, including improving the access between the suburbs and open spaces.
- We hope to reduce the impact of traffic driving through the centre.

## Ideas



We've got Morden buzzing with ideas, and you can see more at [www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden](http://www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden). They include:

**A covered shopping centre above the tube, as well as small-scale 'mews-style' shopping streets.**

**Encourage the development of town centre flats and mews houses.**

**Linking the town centre with Morden Hall Park and Morden Park.**

**A longer-term vision to extend the Tramlink network between Wimbledon and Sutton, via Morden, and remove the one-way system around the Civic Centre.**



## Lighting up the community

**John Merriman** has lived in Morden for all of his 34 years and since 2007 has run **Crown Lane Studios**, an inspirational "music house" for musicians including rehearsal space, video and management support and an educational programme.

He's also supported community activities in Morden, including co-ordinating the town centre's Jubilee street party and Christmas lights switch-on event.

He said: "Using my knowledge and skills to bring a community together, relationships are formed that wouldn't otherwise be easy to maintain. This, of course, helps business, but also changes the feel of the community for the better."

# We spoke to...

We spoke to many groups and organisations to help us produce our Community Plan. If you want to find out more about them, you can visit their websites.

## **Carers Support Merton**

[www.csmerton.org](http://www.csmerton.org)

## **Children In Care Council**

[www.awayahead.org.uk](http://www.awayahead.org.uk)

## **Colliers Wood Residents' Association**

[www.collierswoodresidentsassociation.org.uk](http://www.collierswoodresidentsassociation.org.uk)

## **Colliers Wood and North East Mitcham Community Forum**

[www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums](http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums)

## **Commonside Community Development Trust**

[www.commonside.net](http://www.commonside.net)

## **Faith in Action Merton**

[www.mertonfaithinaction.org](http://www.mertonfaithinaction.org)

## **The Friends of Mitcham Common**

[www.mitcamcommon.org/friends](http://www.mitcamcommon.org/friends)

## **Go Forum**

[www.go4m.org.uk](http://www.go4m.org.uk)

## **Grenfell Housing and Training**

[www.grenfell-housing.co.uk](http://www.grenfell-housing.co.uk)

## **Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations (JCC) London Borough of Merton**

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)

## **London Fire Brigade**

[www.london-fire.gov.uk](http://www.london-fire.gov.uk)

## **Making Colliers Wood Happy**

[www.makingcollierswoodhappy.org.uk](http://www.makingcollierswoodhappy.org.uk)

## **Merton Centre for Independent Living**

[www.mertoncil.org.uk](http://www.mertoncil.org.uk)

## **Merton Interfaith Forum**

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)

## **Merton Chamber of Commerce**

[www.mertonchamber.co.uk](http://www.mertonchamber.co.uk)

## **Merton Community Policing Partnership**

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)

## **Merton Community Transport**

[www.mct.uk.com](http://www.mct.uk.com)

## **The Merton and Morden Guild**

[www.mandmguild.org](http://www.mandmguild.org)

## **Merton LGBT Forum**

[www.mertonlgbt.org.uk](http://www.mertonlgbt.org.uk)

## **Merton Seniors' Forum**

[www.mertonconnected.com/msf](http://www.mertonconnected.com/msf)

## **Merton Street Pastors**

[www.merton.streetpastors.org.uk](http://www.merton.streetpastors.org.uk)

## **Merton Unity Network**

[www.mertonunitynetwork.org.uk](http://www.mertonunitynetwork.org.uk)

## **Merton Voluntary Service Council**

[www.mertonconnected.com](http://www.mertonconnected.com)

## **Merton Winter Night Shelter**

[www.roominthiscommunity.org](http://www.roominthiscommunity.org)

## **Merton Youth Parliament**

[www.youngmerton.co.uk](http://www.youngmerton.co.uk)

## **Metropolitan Police, Merton**

[content.met.police.uk/Borough/Merton](http://content.met.police.uk/Borough/Merton)

## **Mitcham Community Forum**

[www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums](http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums)

## **Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage**

[www.mitcamcricketgreen.org.uk](http://www.mitcamcricketgreen.org.uk)

## **Morden Community Forum**

[www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums](http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums)

## **Older People's Housing Forum**

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)

## **One Mitcham**

[www.onemitcam.com](http://www.onemitcam.com)

## **Positive Network**

[www.positive-network-centre.com](http://www.positive-network-centre.com)

## **Merton Priory Homes**

[www.circle.org.uk/merton-priory-homes](http://www.circle.org.uk/merton-priory-homes)

## **The Raynes Park Association**

[www.mertonconnected.com/RPA](http://www.mertonconnected.com/RPA)

## **Raynes Park Community Forum**

[www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums](http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums)

## **Rethink Merton and Sutton Branch**

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

## **Volunteer Centre Merton**

[www.volunteercentremerton.org.uk](http://www.volunteercentremerton.org.uk)

## **Wimbledon Foodbank**

[www.wimbledon.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.wimbledon.foodbank.org.uk)

## **Wimbledon Community Forum**

[www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums](http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums)

## **The Wimbledon Guild of Social Welfare**

[www.wimbledonguild.co.uk](http://www.wimbledonguild.co.uk)

## **YMCA London South West**

[www.ymcalsw.org](http://www.ymcalsw.org)

## **Young Carers' Forum**

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)

## **Your Shout Youth Group**

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)

## **Young Advisors**

[www.youngadvisors.org.uk/where-are-we/london](http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk/where-are-we/london)

# Working together – better together

For the past 10 years all the organisations involved in the public life of Merton have come together to work in partnership to improve the lives of everyone in the borough.

The **Merton Partnership** aims to achieve a vision of Merton as “a great place to live and call home, where citizens are also neighbours and take responsibility for improving their own lives and neighbourhoods”.

To help us meet this ambition we bring together organisations from the public, private, voluntary and faith sectors to harness our collective strengths and resources. We recognise that we achieve more by working together.

We also oversee the delivery of the Community Plan, which sets out the Merton Partnership’s vision and priorities for the borough until 2019.

To produce the Community Plan, we’ve consulted with residents, businesses, local groups and organisations to find out how the community is working together in Merton to make it a better and fairer place to live.

To view the Community Plan online, where it will be updated regularly, go to: [www.mertonpartnership.org](http://www.mertonpartnership.org)



Produced for the Merton Partnership by the following Merton-based businesses:  
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