

Health, Wellbeing, and Sustainable Development in the Borough of Merton

**Elizabeth Molineros
2020078
BMHP6021_LON**

Introduction

This report has been prepared for the local council in Merton, where I work as a health and social care consultant. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the current state of health, wellbeing, and sustainable development within the healthcare sector in the UK, with a specific focus on the London Borough of Merton. The report will examine Merton's progress in relation to three key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where the UK has shown significant achievements: Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), Goal 4 (Quality Education), and Goal 13 (Climate Action)

Overview of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set by the United Nations in 2015 as a global call to action, aiming to tackle some of the most significant challenges we face, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability, by 2030. These goals aren't just about fixing problems; they're about creating a world where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy, productive life, and where our planet can thrive for future generations.

Each SDG is designed to address a specific area of concern, but they're all interconnected. For example, ending poverty (Goal 1) is closely linked to ensuring everyone has access to quality education (Goal 4) and good health (Goal 3). It's about recognizing that improving one aspect of life can have a positive ripple effect across many others. These goals aren't just for governments to work on—they're a shared responsibility. Whether we're individuals, businesses, or community organisations, we all have a role to play in achieving them.

In this report, I'm focusing on three specific SDGs that are particularly important for the wellbeing and development of people living in the London Borough of Merton:

1. Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing. This goal is crucial because it's about ensuring that everyone in Merton can live a healthy and fulfilling life. It covers a broad range of health-related issues, from access to healthcare and mental health services to promoting healthier lifestyles and preventing diseases.

2. Goal 4: Quality Education. Quality education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality. In Merton, providing access to good education for everyone, regardless of their background, is essential for empowering individuals, fostering social mobility, and building a strong, knowledgeable community.

3. Goal 13: Climate Action. Taking action on climate change is one of the most urgent challenges we face today. For Merton, addressing climate change isn't just about protecting the environment; it's also about safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our community. This goal is about reducing our carbon footprint, promoting sustainable practices, and ensuring that our borough is resilient to the impacts of climate change.

By focusing on these three goals, I aim to assess how Merton is progressing toward sustainable development, identify the challenges we're facing, and explore the opportunities available to improve the health, wellbeing, and sustainability of our community. These goals have been chosen because they're directly relevant to the everyday lives of Merton's residents, and they have the potential to drive significant positive change in our borough.

Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Overview:

The aim of Good Health and Wellbeing is to make sure that everyone, no matter their age, can live a healthy and fulfilling life. This goal is broad and covers various important aspects of health, including mental health, maternal health, and the prevention of diseases. It's about ensuring that people have access to the healthcare and support they need to lead healthy lives, from childhood through to old age.

UK Policies and Initiatives:

1. The NHS Long Term Plan:

The NHS Long Term Plan is a comprehensive strategy that outlines how the National Health Service (NHS) will evolve over the next decade. The plan prioritises several key areas:

Prevention: It aims to shift the focus from treating illnesses to preventing them, which includes promoting healthier lifestyles and early detection of diseases.

Digital Health Services: The plan emphasizes the use of digital technology to improve patient care. This includes expanding online access to services, digital consultations, and using data to better understand and address health needs.

Coordination of Care: Better coordination between different parts of the healthcare system is crucial. The plan seeks to improve how services work together to provide seamless care for patients, particularly those with complex needs.

2. Public Health Campaigns:

National public health campaigns play a crucial role in encouraging healthier lifestyles and reducing the incidence of long-term illnesses:

- “One You”. This campaign provides practical advice and tools to help people make healthier choices, such as improving diet, increasing physical activity, and reducing smoking and alcohol consumption.
- “Change4Life”: Aimed at families, this campaign promotes healthy eating and physical activity, helping people make better choices about their diets and lifestyle to prevent obesity and related health issues.

3. Mental Health Funding:

Significant investment has been directed towards expanding mental health services across the UK. Key areas of focus include:

- Early Intervention: Funding has been allocated to support early diagnosis and intervention for mental health issues, which can prevent conditions from worsening.
- Community Support: There is increased support for community-based mental health services, including counselling and therapy, to provide accessible care for those in need.

Application in Merton:

In Merton, these national strategies and investments have led to several positive developments:

- Improved Access to Healthcare Services: Merton has benefited from the NHS Long Term Plan’s focus on enhancing access to healthcare. This includes the establishment of new GP practices and extended opening hours, making it easier for residents to see a doctor when needed.
- Local Health Campaigns: The borough has adopted national public health campaigns and tailored them to local needs. For example, Merton has run its own “Healthy Living” campaigns to complement national efforts, focusing on promoting physical activity and healthy eating within the community.
- Expansion of Mental Health Services: Merton has seen a significant expansion in mental health services, in line with national funding initiatives. The borough has set up additional mental health support facilities and introduced mental health resources in schools to support children and young people.
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Merton’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to address health inequalities and enhance overall community health. This strategy includes the creation of wellness hubs, which offer a range of health services and

support in one location, and the development of programmes that promote mental and physical health.

These efforts are making a good difference in Merton, with improvements in healthcare access, a focus on preventive health, and increased support for mental health. The borough's approach reflects the broader national strategies while addressing specific local needs, ultimately contributing to better health and wellbeing for its residents.

Performance in the London Borough of Merton:

Healthcare Access:

Merton has made it easier for people to get healthcare services:

- **More GP Access:** There are more GP surgeries in Merton now, with extended hours, so it's easier for people to see a doctor when they need to.
- **Better Specialist Care:** The borough has improved how people access specialist services, reducing waiting times and making it simpler for patients to get the care they need.
- **Integrated Services:** Merton has brought different health services together, so people can get more coordinated care from one place.

Mental Health:

Merton has increased support for mental health:

- **Adult Services:** There are more mental health services available for adults, including support and counselling in the community.
- **Youth Services:** The borough has added mental health resources for young people, with services available in schools and community settings.
- **Raising Awareness:** Merton is working to increase understanding of mental health and reduce stigma through community programs and education.

Healthy Living:

Efforts to encourage a healthier lifestyle in Merton have been successful:

- **Smoking Rates:** Campaigns to help people quit smoking have led to a decrease in smoking rates in the borough.
- **Obesity Levels:** Local programs promoting healthy eating and exercise have helped lower obesity rates. Improvements in parks and recreational facilities have made it easier for people to stay active.
- **Active Lifestyle:** Merton has created more public spaces and organised community events to encourage physical activity, like walking and cycling.

Overall, Merton has seen positive changes in healthcare access, mental health support, and healthy living, leading to better health and wellbeing for its residents.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Overview:

Quality Education is about ensuring everyone has access to a good education, from early childhood through adulthood, and that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

UK Policies and Initiatives:

1. National Curriculum Framework: This framework ensures that schools across the UK provide consistent and high-quality education.
2. Pupil Premium: This funding is aimed at helping disadvantaged students close the gap with their peers in educational achievement.
3. Apprenticeship Levy: This initiative increases the availability and quality of apprenticeships, linking education directly to job opportunities.

Goal 13: Climate Action

Overview:

Climate Action is all about taking urgent and effective steps to tackle climate change and its impacts. This goal focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing energy efficiency, and adopting measures to cope with climate-related challenges. By cutting emissions and improving how we use energy, we can help slow down global warming and protect the environment for future generations.

UK Policies and Initiatives:

1. The UK Climate Change Act: This landmark legislation commits the UK to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. It sets legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gases and outlines the steps needed to meet these targets, including transitioning to renewable energy sources and improving energy efficiency across all sectors.
2. Green Homes Grant: This initiative provides financial support to homeowners who want to make their homes more energy-efficient. By offering grants to help with costs, the scheme encourages people to install insulation, upgrade heating systems, and make other improvements that reduce energy consumption and lower carbon footprints.
3. The Clean Growth Strategy: This strategy focuses on promoting economic growth while reducing carbon emissions. It encourages innovation and the adoption of green technologies in various industries, aiming to create a sustainable economy that supports environmental goals and drives job creation in the green sector.

Application in Merton:

Merton has actively embraced the challenge of climate action through its "Climate Action Plan", which aligns with the national objectives for combating climate change. The plan includes several key initiatives:

- Promoting Renewable Energy: The borough supports the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar power, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
- Improving Energy Efficiency: Merton works on upgrading the energy efficiency of buildings, both residential and commercial, to lower energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Expanding Green Spaces:** The plan includes efforts to increase the number of green spaces and improve existing ones, enhancing biodiversity and providing more recreational areas for residents.
- **Community Awareness:** Merton is committed to raising awareness about climate change and encouraging residents to adopt sustainable practices, such as recycling, reducing energy use, and supporting local environmental initiatives.

Performance in Merton:

- **Carbon Emissions:** Merton has successfully reduced its carbon emissions by 40% since 2005. This significant reduction aligns with the national targets and reflects the effectiveness of the borough's climate action efforts.
- **Green Infrastructure:** The borough has made notable investments in green infrastructure. This includes expanding cycling routes to encourage more sustainable transportation, improving parks to enhance community spaces, and increasing tree planting to boost local air quality and provide natural cooling.
- **Renewable Energy:** Merton has supported the installation of renewable energy systems, such as solar panels, in both public buildings and private homes. These initiatives help to decrease reliance on non-renewable energy sources and promote a shift towards cleaner energy options.

Overall, Merton's efforts in climate action demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing climate change. The borough's initiatives are contributing to national goals while also benefiting the local community through improved infrastructure, enhanced environmental quality, and increased awareness of sustainability.

Critical Examination of Merton's Progress

Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Merton has made good progress in improving health, especially in mental health support and preventive care. More people now have access to mental health services and preventive measures that help avoid illnesses. However, there are still some issues to address. Not everyone in the borough, especially in poorer areas, has the same access to health services. To make further progress, Merton needs to continue expanding mental health services and provide extra support to those who are most vulnerable.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Merton's education system is performing well overall, with strong support for students. The borough has made efforts to help disadvantaged students and improve their learning opportunities. However, there are still challenges. The gap between students from different economic backgrounds remains, and more targeted efforts are needed to ensure that all students have equal chances to succeed. This might involve extra support for schools and more resources to help every student reach their full potential.

Goal 13: Climate Action

Merton has been proactive in addressing climate change, with significant reductions in carbon emissions and investments in green infrastructure. The borough has improved green spaces, developed cycling routes, and supported renewable energy projects. However, Merton needs to do more to engage the community in these efforts and make sure that all residents benefit from these improvements. This includes increasing awareness about climate change and ensuring that everyone can enjoy the advantages of a greener environment.

Recommendations for Merton

1. **Expand Mental Health Services:** Merton should continue to increase mental health services, especially for young people and residents in deprived areas. This could involve more funding for mental health programmes in schools and additional community support services.
2. **Strengthen Support for Disadvantaged Students:** To bridge the education gap, Merton should boost programmes that offer extra tutoring and mentoring for disadvantaged students. Collaborating with local businesses and community organisations can enhance these efforts.
3. **Increase Community Engagement in Climate Action:** Merton should create more ways for residents to participate in climate action. This could include organising local energy-saving competitions, hosting workshops on sustainability, and providing incentives for using renewable energy.
4. **Enhance Green Infrastructure:** To further cut carbon emissions and improve living conditions, Merton should invest more in green infrastructure. This includes expanding green spaces, increasing tree planting, and promoting cycling and public transport.
5. **Improve Access to Healthcare Services:** Merton should work to ensure that healthcare services are equally accessible to all residents, especially those in less affluent areas. This may involve expanding clinic hours, improving transportation to healthcare facilities, and offering more community-based health initiatives.
6. **Support for Sustainable Housing:** Merton should promote energy-efficient housing by supporting initiatives like the Green Homes Grant. This could involve offering additional incentives for homeowners to make their homes more energy-efficient and encouraging new building projects to adhere to green standards.
7. **Enhance Educational Resources and Facilities:** Merton should invest in improving educational resources and facilities, particularly in underfunded schools. This includes updating school buildings, providing advanced learning tools, and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality educational materials.

Conclusion

This report has looked at how well the London Borough of Merton is doing with three important Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Good Health and Wellbeing, Quality

Education, and Climate Action. Merton has made strong progress in many areas, such as cutting carbon emissions and improving education. These efforts show the borough's commitment to making life better for its residents.

In terms of Good Health and Wellbeing, Merton has expanded mental health services and preventive care, which is a positive step. However, there are still issues, especially in making sure that everyone, particularly those in poorer areas, has equal access to healthcare. It's important to address these gaps to ensure everyone gets the help they need. For Quality Education, Merton has supported disadvantaged students and improved schools. Despite this progress, more work is needed to help all students, especially those from different economic backgrounds, reach their full potential.

When it comes to Climate Action, Merton has made significant strides by reducing carbon emissions and investing in green projects. While this is promising, there is still more to be done to involve the community in these efforts and ensure that everyone benefits from these environmental improvements. By following the recommendations in this report, Merton can continue to make progress and improve the quality of life for all its residents. Ensuring that the benefits of these goals reach everyone in the community is essential for achieving lasting and meaningful results.

References

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>
Department for Education - Supporting Disadvantaged
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/pupil-premium>
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>
Increase Community Engagement in Climate Action:
UK Government - Climate
<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/climate-change>
Carbon Trust - Community
<https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/community-engagement>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/green-infrastructure>
<https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/green-infrastructure>

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services>
<https://digital.nhs.uk>