

Merton CIL Welcomes New Merton Council Equality Strategy

24/04/2017

Merton Council has adopted a new Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy 2017-21. Community representatives, including our Merton CIL Members Group, contributed to the development of the strategy. Merton CIL raised a number of points which helped shape the draft strategy. These included:

- We recognised and welcomed the equalities achievements of the Council over the past few years, but also noted that very few related to disabled people and as disabled people make up 13.5% of the working age population in Merton, disabled people need to be more visible in the new strategy
- We highlighted the need to consider all aspects of how inequality can affect disabled people's lives, not just focussing on social care and health, but also considering employment, housing, transport, leisure, crime and more. We repeated our call for a council officer to have a cross-cutting role considering the access needs of disabled people
- Our members group raised concerns about a lack of access to businesses and services and wanted Merton's Planning team to address this. They also wanted Council staff to be more considerate of disabled people and recognise that people might have hidden disabilities, and finally, they asked the Council to do more to celebrate days and events important to disabled people, like Disability History Month

It might just seem like another strategy, but equality matters. Our members had lots to say on some of the inequalities which they face, here in their own words:

If I go to the library I can't use their IT equipment.
I just need something simple like a longer mouse
lead or a rollerball

Why are there no accessible public toilets in Mitcham?

Give me back my Freedom Pass!

Gyms are inaccessible. If I can't get in, I can't use the equipment. So I can't stay fit, it impacts on my health

When I wanted to find work, it was too difficult. My disabilities were seen, but my abilities weren't

There is a bias in Council forms that focuses on trying to get me out of using services

We're pleased to see some of the issues raised have been incorporated into the final strategy and we're looking forward to working together to make sure Council equality plans are carried out. After all, their action plan covers everything from housing to tackling hate crime to making sure that polling stations are accessible!

You can find out more about Merton Council's Equality Strategy on their website <http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/plansandpolicies/equality-strategy.htm>