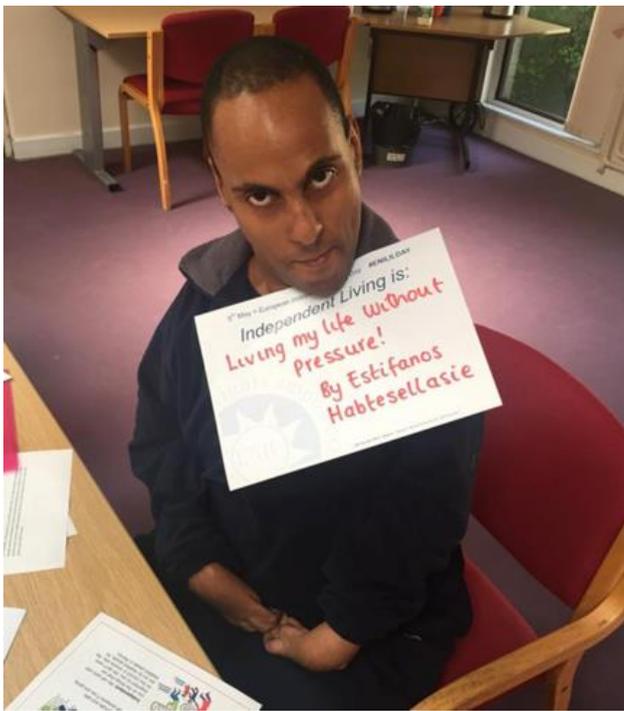


# A Volunteer Builds his Confidence Case Study 2015-16



Estifanos is one of our volunteers. He became involved in Merton CIL in late 2014 after being referred by Merton Voluntary Service Council. He took part in our 4 days of core volunteer training in May 2015, covering Disability Equality, Independent Living, Disability History and Activism, and getting ready for Merton CIL. He has also attended the volunteer support group and skills training sessions in confidentiality, boundaries and safeguarding, note taking, plus do's and don'ts of social networking, which led him to setting up a Facebook page.

"I didn't know anything about Merton CIL or what use I could be to them. I was given an interview to check whether I'd be up to scratch.

It seemed all very formal for a voluntary position, but then again I had very little experience of volunteering. It was decided that I'd do some admin work and take it from there. I was also given the chance to be a member and attend members meetings.

I got to see disabled people who were very different from me. Most of them live independently and had completely different life experiences. I had trouble relating to them initially, but through spending more time at Merton CIL and going through disability equality training I felt more at ease. I got to learn there is no one way of living, just one that suits you and allows you to have choice. I've come to understand the issues that affect us such as spending cuts. Although I tend to be more of a listener than contributor I feel comfortable participating at meetings. Having said that I was on one occasion a facilitator at one of the members groups, regarding the European Network on Independent Living."

Since coming to MCIL, Estifanos has flown through his training and become a committed member of our volunteer team and has been supporting admin and reception on a weekly basis utilising his clear IT skills. We have been so thrilled with the contributions that Estifanos has made that we nominated him for a community award

sponsored by the local paper, Wimbledon Guardian and Merton Council and he received a highly commended award!

“Merton CIL includes me not only by allowing me to volunteer but also giving me other opportunities. For example just recently I have been visiting residential homes with disabled residents on Merton CIL’s behalf. I’ve enjoyed writing reports and doing something for Merton CIL, in partnership with Merton Seniors Forum. There was also a time when I acted as representative for Merton CIL at a Merton Learning Disabilities Conference. This shows how inclusive Merton CIL have tried to be with me, somebody who only came here initially to do some admin work”

Estifanos also joined our user-led monitoring and evaluation steering group, and in 2016 he has gone on to interview staff and run focus groups with our members and service users to help evaluate our service.

Estifanos has clearly demonstrated that whilst without opportunities disabled people can be isolated, given the opportunity we will become well liked, well respected members of a team and active contributors to our community. He is therefore a great example of what we disabled people can achieve.

“To be asked to do things and complete them improves my confidence - just to know I can do things”