



# Top Tips for Staying Well

## COVID 19 Factsheet

May 2020

### Introduction:

Loneliness, living alone and poor social connections are as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Holt-Lunstad, 2010). Research conducted by Sense has shown that up to 50% of Disabled people will be lonely on any given day. The current coronavirus pandemic has amplified this. The causes of loneliness and isolation among Disabled people are complex and over the next few months we hope to work with Disabled people to identify the best ways to address this growing issue.

### What the Government is doing:

In October 2018, the Government launched its Loneliness Strategy. The Strategy sets out the measures the Government will put in place to tackle loneliness. These include giving GPs the ability to refer lonely patients to social activities (social prescribing) and trialling a partnership service with Royal Mail in a number of areas where postal workers will check in on isolated people and help them link up with their communities or family as part of their postal rounds. In addition, £1.8 million has been made available to increase community spaces by making use of under used areas and creating new community facilities such as community cafes and gardens.

### What Merton CIL would like to see:

We are calling for The London Borough of Merton to collaborate with local Deaf and Disabled people to develop accessible and effective ways of addressing the growing issues of isolation and loneliness in our community. We want appropriate funding for social care and more social opportunities to get Disabled people involved in their community.

We are also calling for The London Borough of Merton to work with Disabled people to ensure that the borough is fully accessible in terms of transport, local spaces and more, so that no social opportunities are inaccessible for Disabled people in Merton.

## **Merton CIL's Top Tips for Staying Well:**

### **1. Try and Stay Connected**

Social Isolation and loneliness impact on quality of life and wellbeing (Cattan et al. 2002). By taking a few of the steps below to stay connected you could reduce social isolation.

- Talk to friends and family when you can. Whilst staying home you could do this via telephone, video calling or whilst social distancing face to face.
- If you are staying home and isolating you could come along to our well-being check in's on video calling platform Zoom. You can chat with members and supporters about issues that matter most to you.
- Get involved with Craftivism & Chat from home. We have something exciting happening every month and it could give you something to look forward too. This is also another chance to chat with other Disabled people.
- Join our closed Facebook group where you can get support, feedback on your craftivism or join in on discussions started by Merton CIL or local Disabled people.
- Call us on 0203 397 3119 and ask for a bi-weekly call. You can also call us if you have an issue relating to community care, hate crime and benefits that you need help with.

### **2. Get Active, if you can**

Exercise and getting active releases endorphins that can make us feel happier and more positive. It can also boost our confidence and self-esteem. Getting active can also distract us from what is causing anxiety or worry. However, it is important to note that some Disabled people will need to consult a doctor or speciality before they take part in getting active to avoid causing injury. See some points below around how you can get active:

- Get outside in nature – walk/drive around your local field or common. Take pics and share in our closed Members and Supporters Facebook group – we would love to see where you visit.
- Do a workout on YouTube - search wheelchair Yoga or Disability exercise but please be conscious of causing yourself injury
- Keep track of your progress on an app or in your diary to stay motivated

### **3. Get involved and speak up through craftivism**

Combining activism and arts & crafts is a great way to attract attention & help your voice be heard more. It also provokes thinking & creatively encourages others to be part of improving our communities.

Sharing our creations and speaking vulnerably about our worries allows us to create something special to connect and converse with others respectfully. Arts & Crafts is also a great way to slow down, reflect and recharge.

Disability art can help to highlight the issues faced by Deaf & Disabled people, be a catalyst for thought & action and is therefore an important part of the Disability Rights movement. Together we can help to make change happen!

You can read more about how you can get involved from home here - <https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/getting-involved/craftivism-chat-packs/>

#### **4. Get involved in improving your community!**

You can get involved in improving your local community in a number of ways. You could volunteer, donate, support with fundraising for a local charity, join a litter pick, support small local businesses & more.

Research shows that getting involved & volunteering can result in higher levels of wellbeing. It creates a sense of purpose & belonging and reduces isolation.

So not only does volunteering give you the opportunity to develop personal and professional skills, meet new people, try new things, give you a chance to get out of the house & into your community, it also has a positive impact on our wellbeing. Doing good does you good!

If you are interested in volunteering at Merton CIL or becoming a trustee please visit our website for more information – [www.mertoncil.org.uk](http://www.mertoncil.org.uk)

You can also find out more about volunteering and helping out in the local community through the coronavirus pandemic by contacting MVSC they are managing a local taskforce – [www.msvc.com](http://www.msvc.com)

#### **Where you can get support locally:**

There are a number of organisations in Merton that you can contact if you need support around feeling isolated or lonely.

Merton CIL – Support for local Deaf and Disabled people – 0203 397 3119

Age UK Merton – Support for older people around benefits and pensions, housing options, social care and befriending - 020 8648 5792

Wimbledon Guild – Talking therapies, grief support and wellbeing support - 020 8946 0735

Merton Uplift – Mental health assessments and treatments via telephone. Self-referrals accepted - 020 3513 5888

Merton Adult Social Care – Social care and safeguarding concerns - 020 8545 4388

Carers Support Merton – Support for Carers of Disabled people - 0208 646 7515

You can also find out more about health services in Merton here – <https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/useful-information/chapter-5-health-services-and/>

We hope that following the coronavirus pandemic that there will be co-produced work with local Disabled people to understand how local services impact on reducing isolation and loneliness. Disabled people know better than anyone else what Disabled people need.