



CIL MATTERS NEWSLETTER

November 2020

Issue 25

This newsletter reflects the diverse views
of Merton CIL Members and Supporters

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1. The Merton CIL Update

Message from the Senior Management Team

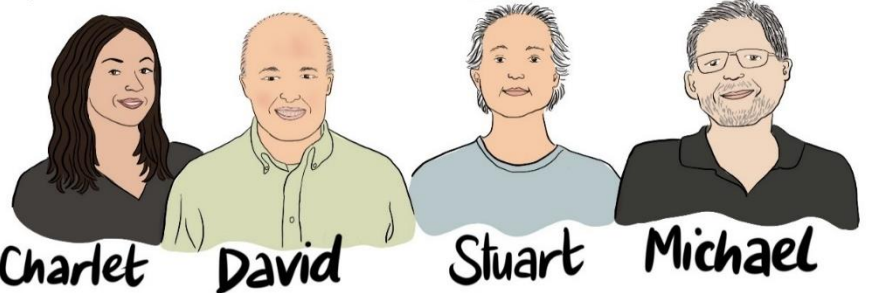
Dear Members and Supporters,

Welcome to the 25th edition of our CIL Matters Newsletter.

We are the Senior Management Team (SMT) of Merton CIL – Charlet,

David, Stuart & Michael. We are honoured and excited to be co-managing the organisation, following the departure of CEO Tom Lichy. You can read more about us individually here - <https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/about-us/team/>

Meet the Senior management team!



If you attended our AGM on the 28th October 2020, you will have heard from our vice chair Gina about how our board of trustees decided to move to an innovative and new management structure. This means that the organisation will be managed by all members of the skilled senior management team, who combined have a wealth of varied experience. This will ensure stability and consistency for the organisation during a time of unprecedented change. This structure will be kept under close and constant review by the board. You can read more about the AGM on page 8.

The crisis has caused some disruption to our plans for 2020-21 but we have adapted and continue to provide accessible and person-centred support to Deaf and Disabled people in the face of a pandemic. You can read more about our services on page 4. Also, get involved and help us raise money to keep our important work going by entering our Christmas raffle and sharing it you're your networks, information on page 12.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Merton CIL and its work. We are extremely grateful and proud of how our staff, trustees, members, supporters, and the local community have pulled together through such a difficult time. We look forward to working together closely over the next few months to ensure that Deaf and Disabled people emerge from the crisis maintaining independence and inclusion.

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Merton CIL's new address

If you have not done so already, please ensure that you have updated our contact details:

Merton Centre for Independent Living

Unit 1 Batsworth Road, Mitcham, CR4 3BX

0203 397 3119



We are now offering office-based appointments that will need to be pre-arranged via telephone, video call or email. We do not offer a drop-in service so be sure to book an appointment before you come along. Our telephone number remains the same.

An update on our services during the pandemic

Following government advice around coronavirus, we made temporary changes to how we delivered our services. However, we are now slowly beginning to offer our services in person, as well as online.

Promoting Independence and Inclusion – Our Advice and Advocacy Service

Our advice and advocacy service continues to provide support with benefits & low income and social care cases. We are also now able to offer face to face appointments to those that need them. Various risk assessing procedures will be carried out beforehand. We are also still offering digital appointments via telephone, zoom and WhatsApp.



Our telephone line remains monitored daily and you can also email and visit our website or social media platforms for general information and advice.

To book an appointment please contact reception on 0203 397 3119 or email us at info@mertoncil.org.uk

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Challenging Discrimination – Our disability hate crime work



We continue to lead the pan London disability hate crime project that raises awareness and increases support for Deaf & Disabled people across London. You can read more about the project on page 11 of our new impact report.

Unfortunately, we are currently unable to provide advice and advocacy support around disability hate crime. If you need general information and signposting, please get in touch we may be able to help or put you in contact with someone that can.

We also recently launched our new disability hate crime report that reviews recommendations we set out in 2016 and even makes a new one. You can read the full report here – <https://bit.ly/2J4KuUh>

Achieving change locally – Craftivism and chat, events and policy work

Craftivism and Chat is still being delivered online. We listened when you told us you needed more opportunities to connect and offered an additional Craftivism & Chat group each month. We called this our wellbeing catch up. You can read more about what is happening at Craftivism and Chat on page 6. We will begin to slowly reintroduce face to face groups from Feb 2021. This may change depending on government guidance. Also, have you watched our new BSL video that speaks about Craftivism & Chat yet? If not, take a look below.



an additional Craftivism and Chat group each month.



Let's celebrate Deaf and Disabled People for International Day of Disabled People

Thurs 3rd December 2020 (International Day of Disabled People), 1pm - 3pm

M Feeling lonely/isolated or want to help make change happen? Come along!

C RAFTIVISM AND CHAT

Merton Centre for Independent Living CIL

Get in touch for a free Craftivism & Chat Pack!

Held on Zoom Meeting ID: 859 8100 1386

Thursday 3rd Dec 2020 from 1pm to 3pm
A Celebration of Deaf and Disabled People!
With Ignite Me Theatre Group

It's international day of Disabled people. Come along and get involved in an interactive and dramatic workshop celebrating us as Deaf and Disabled people as well as those that inspire and influence us.

If you have any access needs please get in touch.




Let's end the year with a celebration of Deaf & Disabled people! Join us for a drama workshop to mark international day of Disabled people.

We will be running a dramatic workshop that will explore what we have achieved as local Deaf and Disabled people. We will also share how we are inspired and influenced by other Deaf and Disabled people in our community, in the public eye or in our personal lives. The session will be co-hosted by Ignite Me Theatre Group, which is Disabled led.

The event will take place on Thursday 3rd December 2020 from 1pm until 3pm. It will be held on Zoom. You can join by clicking here - <https://bit.ly/39ouOps>

If you wish to attend but do not have the equipment to get involved please contact us, we can loan tablets to Deaf & Disabled members. You can read more

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on page 7. If you have access needs, you will need us to take into consideration please email us by 1st Dec 2020.

We look forward to seeing you all there to celebrate Deaf & Disabled people!

Were you excited for our cancelled Christmas Wreath Making session?

Unfortunately, due to the current lockdown we have had to cancel our Christmas wreath making session. However, we still have something exciting lined up for you. Read more below about how you can get involved in Craftivism & Chat from home.

Craftivism & Chat Packs



We will be sending our 2021 Craftivism & Chat packs to those involved during the pandemic. We want you to continue getting involved from home and feeding into our collection of disability arts. How great are these two pieces created by members to highlight their experience of the pandemic?



All art shared with us will help form Merton CIL's Craftivism & Chat collection in 2021. To request a Craftivism & Chat, just send us an email.

Do you need equipment to stay connected over the holiday season? Borrow one of our tablets

We are aware that some of our members and supporters are becoming digitally excluded due to a lack of equipment, as well as a range of other factors. To address this issue, we secured emergency funding and purchased tablets that we can share with our members should they need them. Please get in touch if you would like to us to lend you a tablet.

Annual General Meeting (AGM) & My Voice Matters – Together We Are Stronger

On Wednesday 28th October 2020, we held our AGM and My Voice Matters event online. These events are usually held face to face, with one taking place in the winter and one taking place in the summer. These events usually provide us with an opportunity to come together, get connected and share our thoughts on issues affecting Deaf and Disabled people.

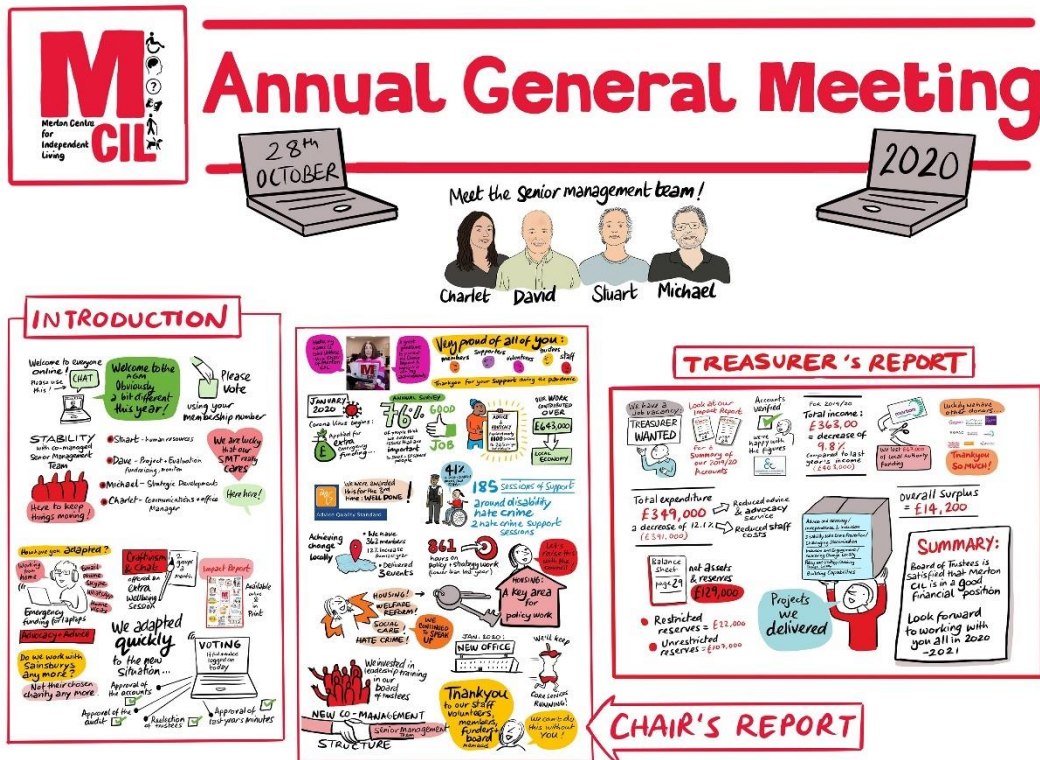


Image by: www.sandrahowgate.com

We were unsure as to how it would play out online, but we are so delighted with how it went. Thank you to our members and supporters who came along on the day, voted via proxy or shared their feedback with our team. It was great to have so many of you involved. You can see an illustration by @sandrahowgate that details what was discussed at the AGM above.

If you were unable to attend the AGM & My Voice Matters, or haven't done so yet, please complete our annual survey and share your thoughts on our work over the past year and what you think we should be focussing on over the next 12 months. Also – by completing the survey you will be entered into our Christmas raffle which means you will be in with the chance of winning a hamper full of goodies - <https://bit.ly/2H7ZNdE>

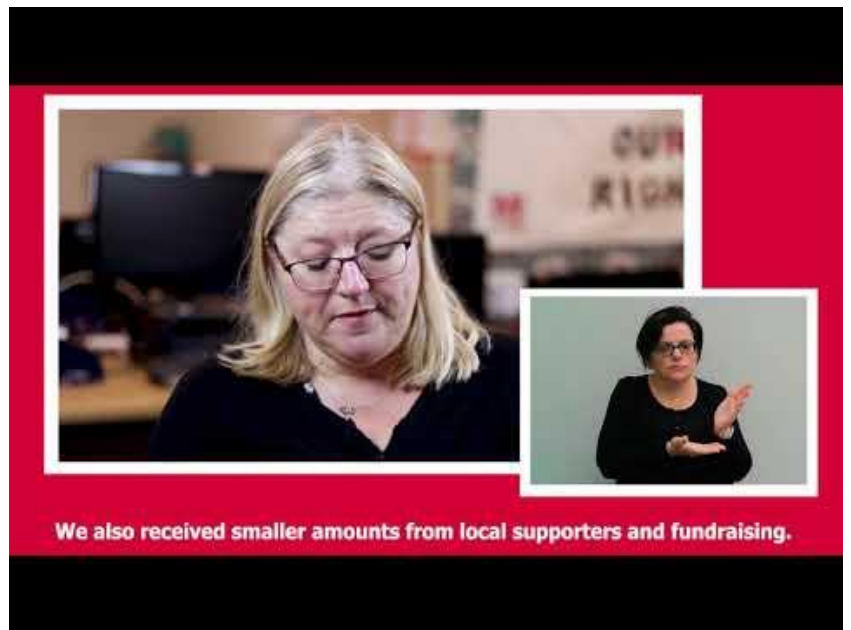




If you were unable to attend, you can catch up on our (vice) chairs report (to the left) and details of our financial statement (below):

Please note that there were changes to figures following the recording of this video explaining our financial report – please refer to our financial statement -












<https://bit.ly/2IMbA1E> or our illustrated statement below



Thank you to @Filmanthropy who helped us to create accessible videos to ensure our chair’s and financial report could reach all members and supporters.

We also created an illustrated financial statement to increase accessibility. Take a look below and let us know your thoughts:

HOW WE HAVE KEPT COUNT OF, SPENT AND RAISED MONEY IN 2019 - 2020

<p>The board of trustees presents the report and financial Statement of Merton CIL at year end 31st March 2020</p> 	<p>Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements to give a true and fair view of the state of Affairs of Merton CIL, and the surplus or deficit each year</p> 	<p>Lesley Cornwell of Cornwell & Cornwell → independently examined our accounts for 2019-20</p> 	<p>We brought forward unrestricted funds of £69,647 and restricted funds of £44,877 from the previous accounting period</p> <p>Final balances to carry forward on 31st March 2020: £129,761</p> 												
<p>Total income for 2019-20 is: £364,142</p> 	<p>We received money from:</p> 	<p>We raised £6,171 in donations</p>  <p>and £347 in other income which is made up of things like contributions for consultation involvement and more.</p>	<p>Total expenditure for 2019-2020 is:</p> <p>£348,905</p> 												
<p>Cost of Charitable Activities:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Advice and Advocacy/ Independence & Inclusion</td> <td>£153,951</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disability Hate Crime Prevention/ Challenging Discrimination</td> <td>£123,495</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inclusion and Engagement/ Achieving Change Locally</td> <td>£25,770</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Policy and Strategy/ Achieving Change Locally</td> <td>£31,460</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building Capabilities</td> <td>£7,741</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Cost of Charitable Activities</td> <td>£342,117</td> </tr> </table>	Advice and Advocacy/ Independence & Inclusion	£153,951	Disability Hate Crime Prevention/ Challenging Discrimination	£123,495	Inclusion and Engagement/ Achieving Change Locally	£25,770	Policy and Strategy/ Achieving Change Locally	£31,460	Building Capabilities	£7,741	Total Cost of Charitable Activities	£342,117	<p>Total reserves: £129,761</p>  <p>This includes £88,354 unrestricted funds and £41,407 restricted funds</p>	<p>Reserves help to cover future running costs in the event of lack of funding.</p>  <p>The board has set aside £13,600 to secure immediate business continuity</p>	<p>Merton CIL will hold unrestricted funds to meet at least 2 months running costs and aim towards holding 3 months by 2020-21.</p>  <p>This will enable provision of services over the long term as well as a safety net</p>
Advice and Advocacy/ Independence & Inclusion	£153,951														
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My Voice Matters 2020 – Together We Are Stronger

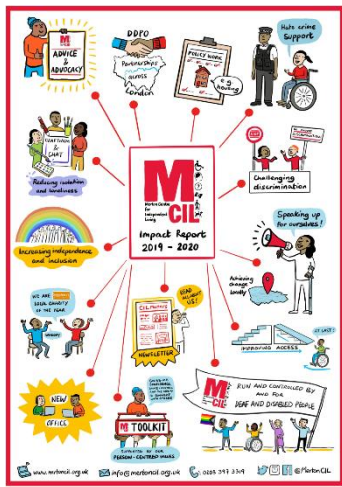
At this year's, My Voice Matters event we were keen to hear from Deaf and Disabled people how the crisis has affected them and how they wanted us to support them throughout and to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic.

We began the event with an incredible dramatic performance from Ignite Me Theatre Group. You can find out more about them here - <https://bit.ly/2IJegO4> and their future workshops on page 28.

be following up some of the points made which you can see detailed in the illustration below.

Other issues were also raised including isolation and loneliness and support around mental health. If you were not at My Voice Matters but would still like to share your experiences, we would love to hear from you. Please email info@mertoncil.org.uk or give Charlet a call on 0203 397 3119.

Impact Report & Financial Statement 2019-20



Find out about what we have been up to over the past year, what we have achieved and how we have spent our money in our new impact report for 2019-20

You can read our Impact Report here – <https://bit.ly/36b6ghG>

You can read out Financial Statement here - <https://bit.ly/33jGaqP>

Help us raise money to keep our important work going, this holiday season!

The pandemic has affected our ability to fundraise.

We now need to raise some extra money to keep our important work going and we are asking for your help!

The money that we raise via fundraising over the next few months will go towards helping the following



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projects to continue supporting Deaf and Disabled people in Merton in 2021:

1. Independence and Inclusion – this will help us fund our advice and advocacy service.
2. Achieve change locally – this will help us fund craftivism and chat and social policy work.

Please donate and share our campaign with your friends, family and networks. Our target is £500 by Christmas but we would love to raise more.

You can donate here - <https://bit.ly/3krBHbv>

You can copy and paste this tweet/post to your social media platforms:

Help me raise money for Merton CIL and help them continue their important work supporting Deaf & Disabled people. Make a donation of £5 or more and also be in with the chance of winning a hamper full of goodies - <https://bit.ly/3krBHbv>

You can also tweet, post or share the image below:



Enter Merton CIL's Christmas Raffle

M  **CIL**
Merton Centre
for
Independent
Living

Help me to raise money for Merton CIL and also be in with the chance of winning a hamper of goodies.

To enter: donate £5 or more here - <https://bit.ly/2UEe98E>

Please email info@mertoncil.org.uk if you would like the image emailed or sent to your social media account.

The winner of the Christmas hamper will be announced on our social media platforms on 23rd December 2020. If the winner is a Merton resident the hamper will be delivered in time for Christmas.

The hamper will include a variety of up to 20 items.

Good luck everyone!

Get involved at Merton CIL in 2021

Now more than ever we need our members and supporters to get involved with helping us to achieve our aims. Please see below for opportunities or get in touch on info@mertoncil.org.uk or 0203 397 3119 to further discuss.

Fundraising

Following cuts to our funding and a strain on our services, we need you to help with raising money to keep our important work going! You can get involved with fundraising in four ways:

- 1. Share our fundraising campaigns on social media** - If we have ever helped you in the past or you support the work we do please share or retweet images of our fundraising campaigns along with some kind words about how we may have helped you or a family member. You can also share the materials provided above on page 12.
- 2. Raise Money for Merton CIL whilst online shopping** - Want to help us raise more - just by shopping online? Well now you can with Give as you Live! When you shop at over 4,000 top stores including Amazon, Expedia and John Lewis via Give as you Live, they'll turn a percentage of your spend into free funds for our charity! Simply sign up, search for the retailer and start shopping. It's that simple. Get started here – <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/merton-centre-for-independent-living/ct54304>

Amazon Smile - If you shop Amazon Black Friday Week deals from 20th - 30th November, you can do more than discover great deals: Simply shop at smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1152825-0 or with AmazonSmile ON in the Amazon Shopping app, and AmazonSmile donates to Merton Centre For Independent Living at no extra cost.



Black Friday Week: 20th-30th Nov

More than discovering great deals. Shop at smile.amazon.co.uk or with AmazonSmile ON in the app and Amazon donates to us

amazon smile

- 3. Become a fundraising champion** - Email us and ask for a fundraising pack. This will be a pack with ideas as to how you can fundraising independently to raise money for Merton CIL. For example, a bake sale.

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4. Help with outreach stalls throughout 2021 and collect donations on our behalf - Please contact us via email if you are interested volunteering time to help us fundraise.

Volunteer at Merton CIL

We would love more local Disabled people and supporters to volunteer with us. We understand not everyone can donate or help with fundraising. We currently have volunteering positions available. If you are interested in getting some new skills or supporting our work, please email us and we will arrange an informal interview.

Join our Monitoring and Evaluation Steering Group

Help us improve our service and join our Monitoring and Evaluation steering group. We developed a user-led group to talk to service users, members, volunteers and staff, to find out how we are doing and help to improve the service. Get in touch to find out more.

Get your friends and family to sign up as members of Merton CIL - It is free to sign up as a member. We fight for the rights of Deaf and Disabled People and having more members with us helps everyone to be stronger together. You can read more here - <https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/feedback-2/>

Connect with us on Social Media

Please like our page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Mertoncil/>
We also have a closed Facebook group where members and supporters can get support, share information, speak about their Craftivism and more. Please join - www.facebook.com/groups/mertoncilmembers/

Follow us on Twitter and like/RT our tweets: @MertonCIL
<https://twitter.com/MertonCIL>

Follow us on Instagram and like/share our posts and stories: @MertonCIL
<https://www.instagram.com/mertoncil/>

Subscribe to our channel on YouTube and watch our Independent Living series:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGPV8YAqNPYkLx9P3GzFJqg>

2. News

Merton CIL urges local community to get involved and help tackle disability hate crime in Merton



Photo: Merton CIL and Tell Mama at Hate Crime Pop up at Civic Centre

During Hate Crime Awareness Week, we launched our new disability hate crime report 'Starting to Stop It'. This report reviews recommendations and what has been done in the borough over the past 4 years since we published

'Make it Stop', a report with Stay Safe East that conducted extensive research into hate crime in 2016.

Michael Turner, Policy and Strategy Manager of Merton CIL said, "There's been significant progress in the borough and our new report takes stock of this and where we need to go from here.'

The original report found that 500 Disabled people a year experience hate crime in Merton alone, with only about 10 people, 2%, making a report to the police. It also found that it was difficult for victims and survivors to report hate crime because they felt they wouldn't be believed, they felt nothing would be done, or they didn't recognise it as a hate crime themselves. In addition, there were some practical barriers to reporting, like a lack of information online and problems accessing police stations.

The original report made a range of recommendations for Merton CIL and our partners in the Council, the Metropolitan Police Service and in the social housing sector. The new report shows there is now a far bigger range of support for Deaf and Disabled people experiencing disability hate crime and other hate crime in Merton and there is now a concerted effort to raise awareness of the issue.

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Michael Turner concludes: 'These are good signs of progress, but we've only really scratched the surface of a huge issue and we still have a long way to go. We need to keep up the momentum we've built up in the last 4 years and with the commitment of partners in the Council, the voluntary sector, the police and social housing we will be able to say we are starting to stop it.'

You can read the full version of our new disability hate crime progress report, published 12th Oct 2020 here: <https://mertoncil.org.uk/services/speaking-up/disability-hate-crime-in-mert/>

Merton CIL supports independent recommendations to improve the benefits system

Merton CIL has given a positive response to the recommendations of the independent Commission on Social Security. The Commission was set up by Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations and claimants and user groups. All the commissioners have lived experience of the benefits system. The Commission has said the benefits system should be based on 5 key principles:

1. Everyone should have enough money to live on
2. people should be treated with dignity, respect and trust
3. there should be rights and entitlements
4. be provided through a user friendly and accessible service that involves people with lived experience in running the service
5. there is free advice, support and advocacy available

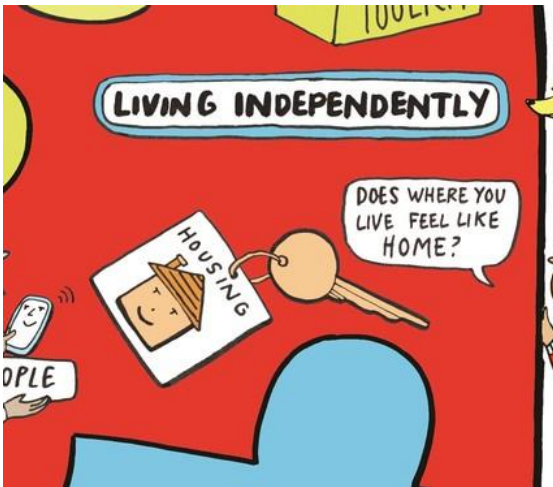
It also makes a range of recommendations about specific changes These include:

- a new Guaranteed Decent Income to replace Universal Credit and the other main income replacement benefits
- a new benefit to replace Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to cover the extra costs of living as a Disabled person with an assessment using an approach based on the social model of disability.
- an end to the bedroom tax
- benefit rates to be put up every year

The Commission also looked beyond the benefits system to consider issues around social care and independent living. It recommended that services should be free of charge and supported by a National Independent Living Support Service. Free prescriptions and dental treatment are also recommended.

These are sensible, achievable ideas that would move us to a system that is both more humane system and simpler to administer.

Merton CIL responds to Merton Council's Housing Delivery Consultation



Merton CIL has responded to the council's consultation about the delivery of new housing in the borough as part of the development of the local plan for the next 10 years.

We welcome the opportunity to give input on this vital issue and note that the Council has gone beyond the statutory requirements in holding this consultation which is designed to be quick and accessible for a wide range of people. However, we are disappointed at the scope of the consultation. It only seems to cover a very limited range of the issues around housing in the borough. We have significant concerns about housing for Disabled people in the borough that are not easily addressed through this consultation.

We note the point made in the survey that Merton has exceeded its targets for new housing in recent years. The Council has also done well by exceeding the target of 90% of new homes meeting general accessibility requirements by 2% in 2016 -2017. However, only 3% of the target of 10% of new homes met the standards for wheelchair accessible housing was met in 2016 -2017 and we believe it is essential that this target is met in future. Ideally, it should be exceeded to make up for the target being missed in previous years and to ensure that there is an adequate stock of wheelchair accessible housing.

This needs to be supported with work to establish what accessible and adapted housing there is in Merton in the social housing sector. This will help to ensure that it is used as effectively as possible and the planning process is as well informed as possible about the levels of need for wheelchair accessible housing and other housing such as sheltered accommodation and supported living.

You can read the full consultation response and more here -

<https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/merton-cil-responds-to-merton/>

News Shorts

Merton CIL asks local MPs to help scrap benefit sanctions once and for all

We wrote to local MPs Siobhain McDonagh and Stephen Hammond asking them to help us scrap benefit sanctions by raising the issue within their political parties, table motions and amendments in Parliament to remove benefit sanctions for good. You can read more here -

<https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/help-us-scrap-benefit-sanction/>

Choice in Hackney are offering an advocacy training opportunity for Disabled Londoners to become Disability Advocate.

Are you interested in; Helping Disabled people access services, improving your career prospects, Undertaking work experience and/or Improving your confidence. Join choice in Hackney's 13 Week training course that will give you the tools you need to become a Disability Rights Advocate. You will learn about: The Social Model of Disability, Disability Legislation including the new welfare reforms, Local Authority Services, Advocacy best practice, And much more....

Once you have completed the course you will undertake a 12 week work placement.

Next course starting on **Thursday 14th January 2021**

For more information contact: Haq Ismail – Advocacy and Employment Training Co-ordinator Telephone: 020 7613 8136 E-mail:haq.ismail@choiceinhackney.org

Staying Well In Winter

Merton CCG, Healthwatch Merton and a Pharmacist join us at Craftivism & Chat recently to discuss staying well in Winter and why the Pandemic means that it is even more important that you do everything you can to stay well this winter, especially if you are vulnerable and/or have a health condition.

The flu vaccine will not stop you from getting Covid-19, but it will help to protect your immune system and reduce the risk of further illness.

If you have had COVID-19, it is safe to have the flu vaccine. It will be effective at helping to prevent flu. If you have a disability or long-term health condition you may be eligible for eligible for a free flu vaccine from your GP.

Click here for an easy read leaflet about the flu vaccine - <https://bit.ly/2Jkt2ed>



Sources: Public Health England, NHS England, NHS Health Scotland, NHS Wales.

The Warm and Well in Merton campaign is raising awareness of the importance of preparing for winter and giving you support on how to stay well. Financial assistance can also be provided through the Wimbledon Guild’s small grants programme. Eligible Merton residents can get help with items such as food, warm clothing, utility bills, essential furniture and appliances in the home. If you think you might need help, please contact us and we can refer you for support.

3. Your Views

Personal views expressed in the 'Your Views' section of the newsletter are not the views of Merton CIL.

Staying Connected Throughout Covid-19 by Sarah Jeffers, Member & Admin Officer at Merton CIL



The 10th October marked World Mental Health Day. The Covid-19 pandemic has hugely emphasised the impact of 'life in lockdown' on the mental health of the public. Statistics show that Deaf and Disabled people are more likely to experience difficulties with their mental health. This is unsurprising due to some of the barriers we faced in society before the pandemic. In many ways the 'new normal' has provided the rest of society with an insight into the realities of

living with an impairment. Times are challenging and constantly changing, this takes a huge toll on our health and wellbeing, but, the good news is we have become very resourceful in finding new ways to stay connected and keep ourselves entertained.

I have put together a list of handy tips and tricks for surviving lockdown. If you have any other ideas or suggestions that you find helpful, then we would love to hear from you.

Virtual Quizzes - There are several online virtual quiz events, some of which are free to enter or ask for a discretionary donation - <https://www.goosesquizzes.com/>

Parks and open spaces - We are very lucky in Merton, as we have beautiful parks and green spaces. At the time of writing this they remain open for the public to use providing relevant social distancing guidance is followed. If you feel safe to do so, going for a walk can be a great way to clear the mind or meet a friend in your support bubble. You can find out about green spaces and gardens here - <https://bit.ly/36aoCzk>

Virtual Walks and Tours - If a walk in the park does not feel right for you at the moment, then there is a wide selection of virtual walks. Some of these are pre-recorded, while others are live streamed, allowing you to explore and interact in real time. The advantage of this is that some attractions which had been inaccessible to Deaf & Disabled people are now available in a more accessible format. This article shares links to virtual walks across the world

<https://bit.ly/2HGyzLs> and this link shares routes in London <https://bit.ly/2V8BjV1>

Watch Parties - If movie nights are your thing, why not try hosting a watch party. A Watch Party is a new way for people to watch movies together, in real time. You can create a watch party via amazon prime video - <https://amzn.to/2VaLMzu> and here are a list of other platforms that you can use - <https://bit.ly/2V6cBEO>

Accessible fitness routines - Covid-19 restrictions have disproportionately affected many Deaf and Disabled people, and it is really felt in terms of those who require accessible forms of exercise. For example, those with physical impairments who usually go swimming. There are some excellent 'wheelchair friendly' workouts which have been designed by people with restricted mobility online. Here are two to get you started - <https://bit.ly/37d6ioG> and <https://bit.ly/33pdPzx>

Assistive technology and gaming - If you enjoy playing console games, but you aren't sure what adjustments can be made to make gaming inclusive for you, then you may be pleasantly surprised by resources and adaptations that Special Effect have to offer. Special Effect is a charity whose mission is to "put fun and inclusion back into the lives of people with physical disabilities by helping them to play video games" - <https://www.specialeffect.org.uk/>

Craftivism & Chat and other virtual events - Our craftivism & chat group takes place each month. If you have never attended one of our sessions before, why not pop along on 3rd Dec. If you are having difficulty accessing technology and need some support, please get in touch and we will do our best to help you. You can find out about more events on page 28.

Emma Vogelmann's Top Tips for Staying Connected



At Septembers Craftivism & Chat group, disability Rights activist, blogger and law graduate Emma Vogelmann (pictured to the left) joined us to discuss how the internet can be used as a powerful tool to connect with others and amplify the voices of Deaf and Disabled people, as we face everyday barriers to inclusion. For those of you who missed it here were some of her top tips:



Twitter as a powerful tool for complaint – Twitter allows you to speak directly to an organisation/company and is a public form of communication. Companies try to avoid bad publicity online so sharing issues such as poor disability access, customer service issues and more can be powerful on this platform and in some cases get you a speedy response and resolution. As your complaint is public, it can go viral or drum up support. SAGA published Five golden rules for complaining using Twitter

- 1. Keep it specific** - Find and use the firm's @name - many have dedicated customer twitter feeds which Twitter will find once you start typing it.
- 2. Keep it brief** - Explain your problem in no more than 280 characters, including spaces. It can be a challenge. But the essence of it can always be boiled down. Resist writing a string of tweets. One strong message is more likely to be retweeted.
- 3. Keep it factual** - Avoid abuse and irrelevant material. But be strong in your complaint.
- 4. Keep it going** - If you get no response, make the lack of response the subject matter of your next complaint.
- 5. Keep it public** - You might need to send personal information such as booking reference numbers and addresses via direct messaging but if this goes nowhere keep on asking publicly. If you end up having to chase via DM you might as well email or phone.

It may be useful to share your complaint with someone that has a lot of Twitter followers and may be influential. Tweet them something like - "I am having a real problem of **y** with **@x** about **z**. What can I do? Please RT"

So next time you hit a brick wall, suffer a long delay, or find yourself battling with complete indifference why not try it?

Using social media to keep disability on the agenda

- Emma discussed that she had not seen herself as Disabled until she faced the societal and attitudinal barriers while at university. It was then that Emma started to identify as Disabled and felt that The Social Model of Disability really resonated with her. The truth is, many of the, misconceptions people have about

Deaf and Disabled people are as a result of a lack of awareness or understanding. The more we communicate openly about the issues that impact our lives, the greater the level of understanding we can achieve. Hashtags on Twitter are a powerful way to form a collective voice.



How to use hashtags - A hashtag—written with a # symbol—is used to index keywords or topics on Twitter. This function was created on Twitter, and allows people to easily follow topics they are interested in.

Using hashtags to categorize Tweets by keyword - People use the hashtag symbol (#) before a relevant keyword or phrase in their Tweet to categorize those Tweets and help them show more easily in Twitter search. Hashtagged words that become very popular are often trending topics. Hashtags can be included anywhere in a Tweet and clicking or tapping on a hashtagged word shows you other posts/tweets that include the same hashtag.

Popular Deaf and Disabled related hashtags on Twitter include:

#DeafCommunity #HearingImpaired #DeafTwitter #WheelchairLife #DeafTalent
#CripTheVote #ServiceDog #InvisibleIllness #TheBarriersWeFace #AbleismExists
#DisaBodyPosi #GetYourBellyOut #ActuallyAutistic #ShowMeYourPump

Use social media as a networking opportunity -

Emma spoke of the preference of Twitter over other social networks, as it does not rely on the concept of 'friendship' to connect people, and unless a Twitter account is private then followers do not require consent or even a mutual following as such it can provide an opportunity to follow experts in a particular field for example. It allows a following and potential engagement with people who traditionally might be difficult to reach. You can network with others and tweet them directly using their Twitter handle (this is their username, starts with the @ symbol). The open nature of twitter enables you to widen your network and keep up to date with developments in areas that interest you.



In 2021, we will be running a series of digital skills workshops. If you are interested in learning more about social media, keep an eye out for dates and join us.

Putting disability in the Spotlight: Crip Tales, A Review by Sarah Jeffers, Member & Admin Officer at Merton CIL

Narratives exploring disability in television and film have rarely come without a distinct divide in reactions which either criticise or praise them in equal measure. Consequently, I have attempted to offer up a more balanced review which asks questions as well as answering them. I also wanted to encourage others to engage as active audience members who are more than capable of making up their own minds.

I was very excited to read about the arrival of a six part Talking Heads style mini-series, written acted and directed by Disabled artists. Crip Tales was released as part of the BBC's month-long Disability Awareness Season to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act. Each episode is a 15-minute standalone monologue presented by a well-known Disabled actor.



The series includes topical and controversial themes including love, sexual liberation, power struggles, abortion, and disabled identity in relation to body-image acceptance. Matt Fraser, who curated the series and presented the first episode "The Audition" details a candid account of his dilemmas as he attends audition after audition and is put through a familiar routine whereby casting directors are perplexed but fascinated by the visible nature of his condition. In response to his performances they exhibit an awkward combination of fear, curiosity, and misguided pity. It broaches the paradox whereby the visibility of impairment becomes more defining than an actor's ability to develop individual character, which ultimately denies opportunities to develop characters beyond their Disabled identity.

For me what really stood out about the series was the way it utilised every minute of screen time to represent each character's individual identity. It wittily unapologetically represented us first and foremost as human beings with the same aspirations, sexual needs and desires as others around us. It dares to present us as sexually attractive, cheeky, and naughty and not as a homogenous group of 'well-behaved' 'innocent' and 'child-like' beings, as is so often the case with stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream media. It must be recognised that the series excelled in portraying the diversity within the Disabled community in a celebratory manner, by amplifying the voices of Disabled women, people of colour and the LGBT+ community.

The series itself has had a mixed reception from the Disabled community. When "The Real Deal" was first aired an which explores benefit fraud it received

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criticism from disability activists who have questioned the morality of reinforcing the stereotype of Disabled people ,as 'frauds' and 'scroungers', as this is the misconception which many people face (especially those with hidden disabilities). Liz Carr the actress and disability activist who stars as the character 'Meg' in this episode, is herself a powerful advocate of disability rights, has previously said "[We are not scroungers or frauds. We are not vulnerable or work shy.](#)" In response to the backlash Actor and curator Matt Fraser suggested that critics had "[somewhat missed the point](#)" and that *The Real Deal* was "[a satire exposing the not fit for purpose benefit and assessment system](#)". With this in mind Crip Tales should perhaps be praised for its gibe at the bureaucratic and inadequate welfare system. It certainly highlights the undignified assessment process which presents an internal struggle for many Disabled people, who have been encouraged all their lives to be fiercely independent yet, in order to receive support are made to purposely demonstrate the extent of the limitations posed by their impairment.

We should also not underestimate the power of such an innovative series, curated directed and acted by Deaf and Disabled people. It may seem a strange point to emphasise this in 2020, but sadly we still live in a time when it not uncommon for non-disabled actors to fill tokenistic roles. This series is the embodiment of the "Nothing about us without us" campaign which has formed the backbone of the Independent Living Movement. Whatever the diverse opinions of its' critics, I urge you to watch each episode for yourself and reflect. After all we are all free-thinking individuals aren't we?

[Crip Tales is available to stream on BBC iPlayer](#), BSL, audio-described and closed caption formats are also available.

4. Events

Craftivism & Chat - Dec 2020 & Jan 2021

Let's Celebrate Deaf & Disabled People

Date: Thursday 3rd Dec 2020

Time: 1pm to 3pm

Location: Zoom - <https://bit.ly/39ouOps>

A dramatic workshop celebrating us as Deaf and Disabled people and those that influence and inspire us for international day of Disabled people.

Merton's Draft Local Plans – What do we think?

Date: Thursday 14th Jan 2021

Time: 1pm to 3pm

Location: Zoom - <https://bit.ly/39ouOps>

Join our Policy & Strategy Manager Michael to review Merton's new draft local plan and the elements that affect Deaf and Disabled people. Are we happy with what is included in the plan? Are there things we think are missing and need to be included? Come along and share your views.

Please keep an eye on social media and our website. Our full agenda for 2021 will be released soon.

External Events

Ignite Me Theatre Workshops

Date: 30th Nov, 7th Dec, 14th Dec and 21st Dec

Time: 3pm to 5pm

Location: Zoom - <https://zoom.us/j/6856151255>

Join Ignite Me for Christmas games, activities and a jolly time at Connect and Do Drama Christmas Workshops. The series of 4 workshops are on Mondays from 30th November to the 21st December. Attendees will rehearse for a performance of "A Covid Christmas Carol" and, in the 4th workshop, this will live stream on YouTube. You can watch a short promo video below:



Wimbledon Guild Mindful Moments

Date: 7th Dec 2020

Time: 13.15 - 14.15

Location: Zoom – email for joining details counselling@wimbledonguild.co.uk

A daytime group offered online on Monday afternoons, for those wanting to try the benefits of Mindfulness. This session is Free – Donations welcome.

Facilitated by a Talking Therapies therapist.

More information here: <https://www.wimbledonguild.co.uk/how-we-help/activities/online>

Wimbledon Guild Group Psychotherapy

Date: Tuesday Mornings/Wednesday evenings

Time: 10am/7:30pm

Location: In person – email for information counselling@wimbledonguild.co.uk

A weekly psychotherapy group offering explorative, psychodynamic therapy for 6 months to 3 years. Costs are on a sliding scale from £10.50 per session upwards.

Facilitated by our Talking Therapies Group Psychotherapist, Patrick O'Connell.

More information here:

020 3397 3119

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<https://www.wimbledonguild.co.uk/how-we-help/talking-therapies/group-psychotherapy>

Wimbledon Guild Continuity of Concern

Date: 7th Dec 2020

Time: 13.15 - 14.15

Location: In person – email for details counselling@wimbledonguild.co.uk

A daytime, face to face group for those typically interested in long-term peer support and community. Group members come from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences and often meet up or contact each other outside the group for mutual support. The group provides a context in which peers can offer mutual support over a range of life issues, including physical and mental health, caring responsibilities, loss, loneliness, aging, etc. Facilitated by a Talking Therapies therapist. Free – donations welcome.

More information here: <https://www.wimbledonguild.co.uk/how-we-help/talking-therapies/groups>

'Inclusive Design in the Built Environment'
Online Webinar

An event celebrating International Day of Disabled People 2020.

4pm December 3rd 2020

Join **Proudlock Associates** and **Weston Williamson + Partners** as they showcase their recent inclusive design projects and discuss best practice in the industry.

For more information please contact kirsten@proudlockassociates.com



Interested in learning more about inclusive design? Free online event showcasing recent inclusive design projects and discussing best practice in the industry.

You can sign up here - <https://bit.ly/3meA0jp>

5. A final word

Connected vs Disconnected – A collaborative poem by Craftivism & Chat Attendees

I am connected to the planet, to Merton CIL, to friends, to climate change and even to Boris.
 I am connected to a spirit, that you cannot see or feel or touch, by my human spirit that is the very essence of me.
 I am connected to the present through my past.
 I am connected with love.
 I am connected to my family, friends and Merton CIL by talking.
 I am connected to this earth by the force of gravity.
 I am connected by warmth, and emotion.



I am disconnected by from reality now that virtual reality replaces it. I am disconnected by fear, vulnerability, and confusion; by education and by ignorance, by being disinterested in other people.
 I am disconnected from the blood that runs through my veins.
 I am disconnected from my friends and family whilst in lockdown.
 I am disconnected from myself, severed connections within my head that may never repair themselves from years of trauma inflicted all that time ago.
 I am disconnected from reality by anxiety.

6. Coronavirus Support

Support in Merton – Food, medication and more

People classified as 'extremely vulnerable' can self-register for support (food parcels) here: <https://bit.ly/34lJhhh>

MVSC coronavirus support

If you need help, or know someone that does, you can email help@mvsc.co.uk or call 020 8685 2272 between the hours of 10am and 4pm, Monday - Friday. The volunteer taskforce can help with:

- Shopping/basic provision parcel delivery
- Prescription/medication collection
- Dog walking
- Electricity/gas pre-payment card top-up
- A telephone call or keeping in touch
- Posting letters

Commonside Trust – Support and assistance to vulnerable individuals and families in Pollards Hill including food - 020 8764 9582

Wimbledon Foodbank – Part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust - 020 8544 0126

Dons Local Action Group – A local network delivering weekly food packages. If you are in need of a food delivery, please contact us and we will make a referral on your behalf.

Merton Mutual Aid – A grassroots community organising network established to support vulnerable Merton residents during the COVID-19 crisis - mertonmutualaidgroup@gmail.com

Merton CIL – Supporting Deaf and Disabled people in Merton by providing them with foodbank vouchers via post or collection– 0203 397 3119

Ability Net - Factsheets - <https://abilitynet.org.uk/free-resources/abilitynet-factsheets>

Webinars - <https://abilitynet.org.uk/free-resources/webinars>

My Computer My Way – Guide to how to use all smartphones -
<https://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/>

Useful Links - <https://abilitynet.org.uk/node/244>

Digital Accessibility Resources - <https://abilitynet.org.uk/node/147>

Request free IT support at home - <https://abilitynet.org.uk/node/147>

Learn how to use the internet - <https://www.learnmyway.com/>

Volunteer with MVSC - Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) is working with the voluntary sector in the borough to mobilise a volunteer taskforce to help isolated households and those at risk from COVID-19. Anyone who puts themselves forward may be asked to support people who are currently unable to leave their home.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact the volunteer taskforce at volunteer@mvsc.co.uk. You will be partnered with key groups who will allocate you to tasks.

Advice and wellbeing support in Merton

Merton CIL – Advice on issues relating to benefits and low income and social care – 0203 397 3119

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

Merton Community Domestic Violence Support – 0207 801 1777

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

South West London Law Centres – Help for local people with legal advice and casework including problems they are facing as a result of coronavirus – 0208 767 2777

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

Merton Council – Coronavirus updates - <https://news.merton.gov.uk/covid19/>

Every Mind Matters - expert advice and top tips on how to look after your mental wellbeing if you need to stay at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic - www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/

Information on Benefits & Finances

Council tax support in Merton - If your income has been affected by COVID-19, you may be eligible for council tax support. You can find out more about eligibility here - <https://bit.ly/3c2SM7I>

Merton CIL can provide support to apply. Please get in touch to book an appointment.

Local Welfare Support Scheme - Merton have a limited fund to support the most vulnerable Merton residents with short term severe financial difficulties. These grants are usually emergency payments to pay for food, heating, hot water and/or essential household items. Find out more here - <https://bit.ly/2XgNXUI>

Merton CIL can provide support to apply. Please get in touch to book an appointment.

Citizens Advice – Changes to benefits

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coronavirus-check-if-there-are-changes-to-your-benefits/>

Rightsnet – Social welfare law updates - <https://www.rightsnet.org.uk/covid19>

Money Saving Expert's Coronavirus Financial Help & Rights -

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/03/uk-coronavirus-help-and-your-rights>

Turn2us – Information for employees - <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/get-support/benefits-and-coronavirus-help-for-employees>

Department for Work and Pensions – updates and information
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

Other information:

Government main page regarding Coronavirus - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Easy read guides available from Mencap -
<https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/24th%20March%20Cv19%20UpdateCU.pdf>

British Sign Language versions of government advice –
<https://www.signhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/>

Public Health England information in alternative formats -
<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101/resources/5080>

Government guidance on shielding and protecting for extremely vulnerable people (a government classification) -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Government information regarding getting support if you are an extremely vulnerable person (a government classification) -
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>

Information for carers from Carers UK - <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

Homeless Link Webinar: COVID-19 and Homelessness Services -
<https://homeless.org.uk/webinar-covid-19-and-homelessness-services-1>

Citizen's Advice Information about support if you are affected by Coronavirus -
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>