



CIL MATTERS NEWSLETTER

Spring Edition – April 2017

This newsletter reflects the diverse views of
Merton CIL members

Let us know what you think about the
newsletter's new look! – info@mertoncil.org.uk

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1. The Merton CIL Update

Message from the CEO



Dear members and supporters,

We're so pleased to have had lots of you contribute to the newsletter; please do get in touch if you want to comment on any of the stories or if you'd like to write something for our summer edition. In the meantime, there is so much to update you on! We have worked closely with one of our members to make a short film on what Independence means to them (page 8). We're planning a series of films so get in touch if you'd like to feature!

We have talked about our concerns over Merton Council's budget-setting in previous editions and we haven't covered it this time – many of you will know that the Council finally agreed to increase Council Tax in order to support Adult Social Care, and since then, central Government has also allocated a bit more money to Merton. However, it is not yet clear what rules there will be around these budgets, so watch this space.

Finally, before I sign off, you may remember that at our Annual General Meeting, members agreed a new structure to our membership. Disabled people will be full members with voting rights and non-disabled people will be supporters. This is to ensure that we remain an organisation run and controlled by disabled people. Some of you may receive an email or letter in the post if we haven't previously been in touch to ask you to fill out a monitoring form. This is to help us make sure that we have correctly registered you as a member or a supporter. And of course, I want to emphasise how much we value every one of you, and appreciate your continued enthusiasm and support.

Lyla, CEO of Merton CIL

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My Voice Matters: My Future Matters 2016 Update!



Picture: Graphic facilitator Sandra Howgate captured people’s thoughts throughout the event – www.sandrahowgate.com

Over 40 disabled people and supporters attended our annual “My Voice Matters” event on 8th December and told Merton CIL what they want us to focus on over the next few years. One attendee said:

“It was good to hear disabled people speak for themselves.”

Feedback from the event was really positive with people highlighting the importance of Merton CIL’s current services, as well as asking us to do even more going forward! In particular, people wanted us to build on our current services and offer more long-term and day to day support. In addition to our core work on benefits, community care, and housing, people wanted more help accessing health care and attending health appointments, and more support for mental health service users who have seen a cut in services in Merton over the past few years. Merton CIL has been piloting support for disabled people who have experienced Hate Crime, and attendees at My Voice Matters really wanted



Picture: Attendees in a discussion group at My Voice Matters

this work to continue. People talked about wanting support to attend the Job Centre and they asked Merton CIL to work with employers to support and retain disabled staff. They also asked us to help disabled people who employ personal assistants. Young disabled people were identified as a key group of people who Merton CIL should be talking to and working with, and there were lots of good ideas to support young disabled people to be more independent. Attendees at the event were really interested in another pilot project which Merton CIL has been working on with Merton Seniors Forum, "Dignity in Care". People wanted us to set up a programme of inspections at residential care homes, train care staff, and support residents of care homes to speak up. People had lots to say about access to services, buildings and transport too, with many sharing experiences of poor access. Merton CIL was asked to work with the Council to ensure that services in Merton are accessible to disabled people, and they asked us to raise awareness with local businesses.

Finally, people at the event shared their own ideas and asked Merton CIL to work harder to raise awareness of disability and explain the Social Model of Disability to people, which says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment. CEO Lyla Adwan-Kamara said:

“We’ve listened very carefully to what our members and supporters have asked us to focus on. We won’t be able to do everything we have been asked to do, because money is tight. But over the next few months we will be working hard to develop our strategy based on what is important to disabled people in Merton, and we will continue to do our best to support disabled people to speak up”.

We also created a short video following the event - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELcQ-XxydEU>

We Want to Hear from You!

One of our core values as an organisation is about learning. We want to hear from you about how we’re doing as an organisation, so that we can keep improving the services we deliver to you.

If you have used our service over the past 12 months you may receive a call from us asking if you would be willing to provide some feedback on the service that you received.

We understand that sometimes people are worried about giving negative feedback, and we just want to say that we really want to know about everyone’s experiences, good and bad. We have appointed CVA as an independent organisation to help us with this work. Please be as honest as you can be as it is all about service improvement.

If you would like to give feedback via telephone or email please feel free to contact Charlet on info@mertoncil.org.uk or 020 3397 3119.

Any feedback you are able to give us will help us improve and develop our services so that they can be as good possible and so that we can continue running services for disabled people in Merton.

Could You Help Merton CIL to Improve?



**Want to help us improve
our service?
Why not join our
Monitoring and Evaluation
Steering Group?**

What is a Monitoring and Evaluation group?

We have been working hard to deliver quality services for local disabled people. As part of this effort, we have commissioned Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA) to conduct an independent evaluation of our work. To support CVA, we also developed a user-led Monitoring and Evaluation group to talk to service users, members, volunteers and staff, to find out how we are doing

What would we talk about?

Specific topics would be discussed which could include:

- Providing feedback or giving ideas on how we could improve our services
- Taking an in-depth look at our systems and procedures
- Developing and implementing monitoring procedures
- Discussions around how we evaluate
- Examining outcomes for service users
- And much more.

What will I be committing too?

We will meet up every few months for around 1 hour and a half. You would not have to attend every meeting but would love if you chose too. There will be tea and biscuits at all meetings.

How do I join?

Contact Charlet via email telephone (details below) and she will give you some more information on how to join.

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I'm Edwina - What Does Independence Really Mean?

A year ago we held a panel discussion with our members to discuss what does independence REALLY mean. Our feeling was that the Local Authority sees independence as something that happens when you don't use services. However, our members see this much more as being about having choice and control. We also realised that independence is something which is pretty unique to the individual.



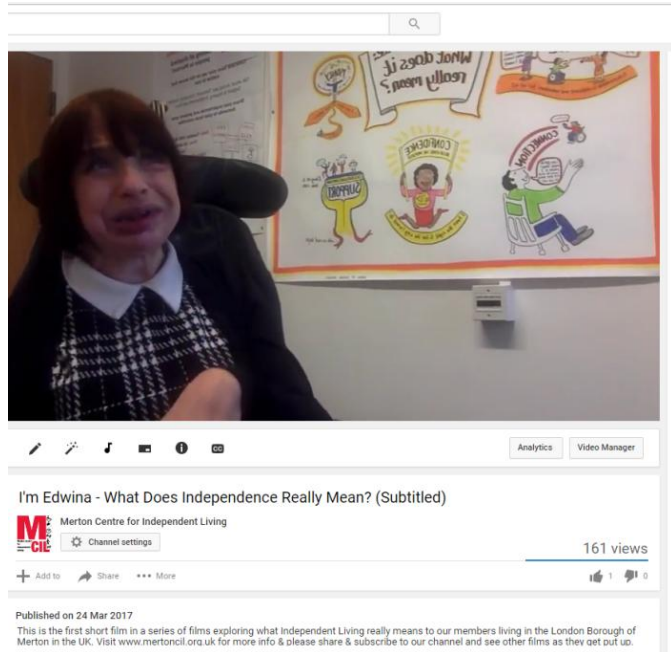
So, we decided to ask our members to tell us their stories, in their own words. We've made a short film with one of our members, Edwina, and we're looking for other members who would like to share their view of what independence means to them.

Your story would be part of a series of member's views which we will share on our upcoming Independent Living Road show in the Summer, check out our

Dates for the Diary section on page 26 for more about the Road show, because we would love to get our members and supporters involved - even if you don't fancy being on film, there are lots of different ways you can take part!

Here is a video featuring Edwina's view, we hope you enjoy finding out what Edwina thinks as much as we did.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i82ZDRquec4>



You Can Help Us To Support Local Disabled People!

At Merton CIL we rely on the generosity of our donors and we are extremely grateful for your interest in supporting us. Thank you!

Ways that you can donate to Merton CIL:

Get rid of your old pound coins!

Have you heard that round pound coins are being replaced by new 12-sided coins? We're sure you've got plenty to spend your old coins on, but if you happen to have a few hanging around, here at Merton CIL we're happy to take them off your hands!

Please don't send cash in the post, give us a call on 020 3397 3119 or email info@mertoncil.org.uk to make arrangements for you to bring them into the office.

By Post

You can send one-off cheques, or postal orders by post, payable to Merton Centre for Independent Living. Please download and complete the Merton CIL donation form to send with the donation -

<http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/assets/documents/merton-cil-donation-form>

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 today! <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/merton-centre-for-independent-living/ct54304>

Give as you Switch

Compare or Switch your energy supplier and raise £17 for Merton CIL via Give as you live - find out more at <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/merton-centre-for-independent-living/ct54304/switch>

Online via Givey

<https://www.givey.com/mcil>

- All you have to do is visit the link above and click the donate button on the left hand side. You can create an account or continue as a guest.
- You will be taken to a page called inspiration - you are able to skip this step or you can upload a picture of yourself which will appear on our givey home page as one of the people who have donated.
- Once you click save you will then be taken to a donation page. Select the amount you wish to donate and add a comment if you wish.
- Chose whether or not you would like to gift aid the donation and then review and you are done. Easy!

Need more information or have a question? Give us a call on 0203 397 3119 or email info@mertoncil.org.uk

Thank you!

Please see our annual reviews to see how your donations can help make an impact and remember, its not all about the money, there are lots of other ways to get involved like joining as a member, coming to events or becoming a volunteer - <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/getting-involved/>

2. News

News Shorts

Please note Merton CIL is not responsible for the content of external sites

The Wilson Community Conversations Update

Last August, Anjan from the Public Health team at Merton Council came to visit the Merton CIL members group to talk about members' ambitions for The Wilson and what that would look like. The Health and Wellbeing Board have now published the results of their consultation and community conversations. Merton CIL members are featured in the report and we hope you feel heard.

There will now be a reference group set up and you are invited to be part of a wide Reference Group for the Wilson work. This will be a group that will come together a couple of times a year and be kept informed of progress and have further opportunity to contribute.

If you would like to be part of the Reference Group, please contact dave@healthwatch. Or call: 07971 661373

Link to full report: <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/assets/documents/community-conversations-220317>

NHS Merton Survey: Choose Wisely

The Merton Clinical Commissioning Group are consulting on possible changes to prescriptions and things they will agree to pay for. Changes include:

- No longer prescribing gluten-free foods
- No longer prescribing self-care medicines, like paracetamol
- Fewer people able to access IVF and fertility treatments
- Patients encouraged to stop smoking and lose weight before surgery

You can read the full plans online here: <http://www.enableeast.org.uk/ccg-merton>

You can complete a survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/82QQ7T7>

You can come to our members group on Thursday 6th April 17 (more details on page 24) if you'd like to have a say in person

Change in the law to protect wheelchair users using taxis and minicabs

The Department for Transport announced a change in the law to protect wheelchair users using taxis and minicabs. From 6 April, it will be against the law for taxi and private hire drivers with wheelchair accessible vehicles to refuse wheelchair users, or charge them more. Drivers found to be discriminating against wheelchair users face fines of up to £1,000 as part of provisions being enacted from the Equality Act 2010. Drivers may also face having their taxi or private hire vehicle licence suspended or revoked, and being prosecuted by us. All taxis in London are fully wheelchair accessible, as are a small number of specially adapted private hire vehicles. Customers can report incidents via TFLs online complaints process - <https://tfl.gov.uk/forms/12396.aspx> or by calling 0343 222 4000

New PA and Agency Direct Payment Rates Agreed

Following requests from the Direct Payments Forum and local service users, Merton Council have agreed to increase the rates which they will pay for PAs and Homecare through Direct Payments.

The new rates will apply from 3rd April 2017:

£12.60 per hour

£10.29 per 45 minutes

£7.95 per 30 minutes

Please note that for PA's the rates are inclusive of all costs including pay to the PA, payroll, holiday pay and pensions

UK Government Breaching the Rights of Disabled People

In late 2016 the United Nations published a report highlighting the grave and systematic breaches of disabled people's rights. The Government disputed the findings, however, Disabled People's Organisations joined together to give evidence to the UN in Geneva in March 2017. You can find out more at Inclusion London's website here: <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/act-now/follow-submission-response-uncrpd-inquiry-report-uk-government-response/>

Personal Independence Payments (PIP) – Have You Been Affected?

In the last newsletter we wrote about some of the issues local people have been experiencing with PIP. These included disabled people being asked to attend inaccessible assessment centres. It also included the assessment centres overbooking their appointments so that people had long waits or last minute cancellations. Finally, we raised concerns about how many of the assessments claimed that people weren't eligible for the benefit, but then when people went to tribunal, it turned out that most of them were eligible after all.

Following our report, Mitcham and Morden MP Siobhain McDonagh held an Adjournment Debate in Parliament on the issue, and you can watch the video or read the transcript on her website here:

<http://www.siobhainmcdonagh.org.uk/newsroom/news.aspx?p=105231>

Nationally there has also been lots of coverage of the issue, especially as the Government is making it even harder for people with certain conditions or impairments to claim the benefit, including people with schizophrenia, dementia or stroke survivors. In fact, the Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee is now looking into issues around PIP and has called for examples of people's experience. You can find out more about how to contribute to this below.

We've also asked Merton Council to look into the issue. For example, Stoke Council are holding an inquiry into issues with PIP assessments locally, and Merton could do something similar. Even though it is a national issue, this affects people here in Merton. The latest figures from DWP show that 44% of people who held Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will see their benefit reduced or cut completely in the changeover to PIP¹. This means over 2,500 local people affected - our friends, family and neighbours in Merton - and is far higher than our previous estimates. That would be over 2,500 disabled people in Merton who could see a knock-on effect their housing because of loss of income and other benefits linked to PIP, on employment because disabled people will lose their adapted cars which they rent with the PIP benefit, people's livelihoods (eg loss of mobility cars impacting on employment), and a negative effect on health and wellbeing. Take a look at our Merton Resident Column on page xx17 for an example of how stressful the whole process is.

¹ <http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/nearly-half-of-pip-reviews-saw-award-cut-according-to-unpublished-dwp-figures/>

If you think PIP issues is something Merton Council should look at then you can contact them via their website. You can also suggest other areas which you think are important. The link is here: <http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/decision-making/scrutiny.htm>

You can also contact the Scrutiny Team at the Council on Tel: 020 8545 3864
Email: scrutiny@merton.gov.uk

PIP assessment – your experience

Let us know about your experience of the PIP assessment

We're helping Inclusion London who have been invited by the Chair of the Work and Pension's Committee to give written evidence on the process of being assessed for the Personal Independence Payment PIP – your experience will inform their evidence.

The questions the Committee are particularly interested in are:

1. Which aspects of the current assessment process for PIP are and are not conducive to accurate decision-making? What improvements could be made?
2. Do Atos and Capita staff conducting PIP assessments possess sufficient expertise to make accurate decisions on claims involving a wide range of mental and physical health conditions?
 - a. Do the staff take enough account of additional evidence supplied by claimants?
3. Is the face-to-face assessment appropriate for claimants with a range of different conditions?
4. What changes are needed to improve the accuracy of decisions made in initial assessments and in mandatory reconsideration, given that the majority of decisions that go to appeal are overturned?
5. What is the impact on claimants of delays in getting an accurate decision on their claim, and how could this be reduced or better managed?

Please send your experience to info@mertoncil.org.uk by **Friday 7th April 2017** or give us a call on 0203 397 3119 and ask for Lyla

The House of Lords Select Committee on Financial Exclusion Reports Back

Last August, Merton CIL responded to an inquiry by The House of Lords Select Committee on Financial Exclusion on behalf of our members. We told them about the disadvantage being faced by Disabled people across all areas of our lives.

Through our casework with local Disabled people, we were able to evidence that Disabled people do experience financial exclusion and associated negative consequences. Financial exclusion directly impacts on Disabled people's day to day lives, principally in the realm of having an inadequate income and experiencing poverty, which leads to isolation and a negative impact on health and sense of well-being.

Financial exclusion also results in a very real loss of independence and control over our lives. Some of the examples, based on our casework, which we shared were:

- Lack of physical access to banks or post offices
- Lack of accessible methods to use banking services
- Difficulties with changing inappropriate appointees
- Poor support with Direct Payments
- Issues with Local Authority Financial Assessments
- Targeting of vulnerable people and lack of safeguards

I tried to use telephone banking and they asked me how old I would be on my next birthday. I asked my friend to help me with my maths, so the operator froze my account.

We are now pleased to be able to let our members and supporters know that the Select Committee has published their report and we welcome the recommendations in the report. They made 22 recommendations, around improving financial inclusion, including rules setting out a reasonable duty of care for financial services providers to exercise towards their customers. Other key (in our opinion) recommendations, are that the Government, working with the Financial Conduct Authority and the British Bankers' Association, should carry out a review of reasonable adjustment practices for disabled customers, as well as recommendations around high-cost loans and Universal Credit problems.

We would like to say thank you to everyone who has shared their stories with us – your stories went all the way to The Lords! There are more opportunities to get involved, you can share your experiences of Personal Independence Payments – see page 14 – and we're inviting people to help us make a video series on what Independence Really Means. See page 8 to find out more.

To read the full report from the Select Committee, or to watch a video on the issue, use this link: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/financial-exclusion/news-parliament-2015/financial-exclusion-report-published/>

You can read our original submission to the Select Committee on our website - <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/assets/documents/merton-cil-response-to-financi>

3. Your Views

PIP Panic! By Sue Hubbert

I recently attended an Adults First workshop where Suzie Rollins, the Merton Benefits Advisor, told us that EVERYONE in receipt of Disability Living Allowance would have to attend a medical assessment interview for the PIP benefit which will replace it. This news (which others have told me might not be correct) sent me into a complete slough of despond! My 50 year old Downs Syndrome son has managed to avoid this for two ESA assessments – thanks to extremely diligent and time consuming form filling on my part.

He has always been in receipt of benefits, becoming ever more necessary as his medical problems accumulate. His needs grow. They do not diminish. Why go through this unnecessary process?

All his life we have encouraged him to make the best of his abilities and have praised his many achievements – which includes recovering the use of his legs after each of six spinal operations and after one consultant told us it was all up with him and to 'put him in a Cheshire Home'. He also now has to suffer the daily indignity of a whole body scrub because of a condition picked up in hospital.

Currently he is very happy. He is, however, extremely sensitive and can dwell on negative experiences for years, which confuses key workers who do not know his history. He has an amazing memory and, with the wrong kind of encouragement can remember slights and problems going back 40 years as if they happened yesterday. If someone or something upsets him, bad memories surface and he can actually make himself ill with worry. We have worked very hard indeed to stop this reaction occurring.

I, as his appointee, will have to sit with him in this interview and enumerate all his failings and inadequacies in the utmost detail and IN FRONT OF HIM in a way I have never done before. This will seem like the greatest betrayal. It will devastate him and I am not sure that he, or I, will ever recover. I anticipate him returning to telling himself off angrily and crying loudly and incoherently for hours (a problem when he was unhappy in the past). His confidence might suffer irretrievably.

This interview would be psychological abuse of the worst kind.

20 Years On - What's Still Wrong With Simulation Exercises?

In 1997, long before Merton CIL was even set up, John Kelly, now our Policy and Strategy Manager wrote an article about the issues with simulation exercises. 20 years later, disability equality campaigner Zara Todd felt compelled to write an article saying "I die a little inside every time I hear the words 'simulation exercises' and 'disability' (or a specific impairment) in the same sentence."

What are Simulation Exercises?

- A participant is given a temporary impairment (sit in a wheelchair, be blindfolded, etc).
- They are then given a task to complete
- Discussion then takes place on that experience and what it felt like

What are the Issues with Simulation Exercises?

Zara highlights 9 problems and pitfalls of disability simulation exercises:

1. Disability is too complex

Disability and disablement is complex. It is not explained purely by impairment or the equipment and adaption's we use to enable us to live our lives. Disability for most of us is a combination of impairments, environmental barriers and attitudes which, particularly over time, cause us to be disadvantaged, discriminated against and oppressed.

Many of us have multiple impairments, so shoving a blindfold on someone or sitting them in a wheelchair for 15 minutes will never produce my experience of wheelchair use with involuntary movements, fatigue and sometimes pain.

2. Experts by experience

As disabled people we already face a lot of obstacles asserting our right to have an opinion, without people feeling they are experts in our experience after such limited time. We should be careful in giving non-disabled people a false sense of expertise by simulation.

Why must somebody experience that you cannot get up a flight of stairs in a wheelchair, to understand. Is not the word of the disabled person who experiences the barrier enough to create that awareness? We cannot on one hand develop awareness by saying we want to know and hear the experiences and issues of disabled people and then disregard this until we as individuals have experienced it ourselves. What does that say about consultation and the value of the voice of disabled people?

John, 1997

3. Liberation not trapped

One of my biggest problems with simulation exercises actually comes from the times I've used them. Too often the response from my participants when reflecting on their experience is how limiting and frustrating a wheelchair is. What they fail to grasp without a debrief opportunity is that for me my wheelchair isn't a limiter: it is a liberation. My chair enables me to live life, to travel, to work, and to socialize. Without it I would be stuck in bed.

4. Lazy

This is the trainer in me: frankly I find simulation exercises lazy, and while there is nothing wrong with taking the easy option sometimes, most simulation exercises in disability training don't debrief or challenge participants' assumptions enough to be useful. Especially when they can perpetuate beliefs rather than challenge them. If what we are trying to achieve with disability training is equality then surely what we want to be doing is exploring commonalities and exploring barriers and how we remove them, rather than emphasising our otherness.

5. Fun

Disabled people and our equipment and assistance can be fun – the number of stories I have about off-duty guide dogs alone is testimony to this. I like that my friends can embarrass themselves with their poor wheelchair skills; it's sort of my party trick option, but I won't be handing out certificates at the end.

6. Sympathy not empathy

There's a reason the disability movement in the UK uses the slogan Piss on Pity: the majority of disabled people don't want pity or sympathy. These are responses which have led to us being institutionalised and marginalised. "Oh you poor thing" and "If I was in your position I'd top myself" are genuinely things strangers have said to or about me, unfortunately more than I would like. Recent academic research² into using activities which simulate blindness found using simulation was more likely to create short term sympathy than long term attitude change.

The participants own sense of awkwardness can lead to pity of those in the real situation. Is this the message that should be promoted? John, 1997

7. Problematising the impairment

Despite what society tells me, my impairments are not the problem or why I get discriminated against. Yet if you are placing an emphasis on simulation exercises you are kind of saying my impairment, rather than their attitude, is the thing that needs to be understood.

Simulation exercises are not appropriate in promoting awareness or equality of disability issues and it does not reflect the Social Model of Disability and it actually reinforces the Medical Model of Disability. John, 1997

8. What about impairments you can't simulate?

What about impairments that can't be explored by shoving goggles on or donning a wheelchair? Do they not matter? My experience is that people with hidden impairments are often the most discriminated against. Simulation exercises reinforce the hierarchy of impairment which is a personal bugbear of mine. I have a high and a low impairment on the 'hierarchy' and I have spent most of my life having my dyslexia dismissed as unimportant compared to my mobility impairment but I can tell you they both affect my life, just in different ways.

² <http://www.visionaware.org/blog/visionaware-blog/new-research-blindness-simulation-activities-may-do-more-harm-than-good-1746/12>

9. Generalisation

Disabled people are not a homogenous group, we are diverse, and even when we have the same impairment it doesn't mean it affects us in the same way or that we even have the same access needs. We should be discouraging the idea that if you know what one impairment might mean you magically understand all impairments. Equally, one disabled person can't represent all disabled people in the same way one woman cannot be representative of all women.

What Could We Do Instead of Simulation Exercises?

Zara said "I believe that you shouldn't challenge ideas without offering an alternative. So here are three":

1. Shadow

Rather than getting people to don a blindfold, what about enabling them to shadow a blind person for the day? (With their knowledge and permission, of course)

2. Case studies

Use case studies and videos of real people – much more powerful than 15 minutes crippling up.

3. Socialise

The best disability equality tool I've ever found is not in the training room but outside it. Where possible, create space for people to just communicate with each other. Many negative assumptions come from lack of time with the group the assumptions are made about.

At Merton CIL we very much agree with Zara that simulation exercises are pretty retro, and not in a good way. How can it be, that 20 years on, simulation exercises are still a thing? Let's consign them to history, and instead consider methods which look positively at developing awareness.

You can read Zara's full article for Inclusion London here:

<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/facts-and-information/equality-and-human-rights/9-problems-pitfalls-disability-simulation-exercises-3-alternatives/>

Give us a call on 020 3397 3119 and ask for John, or contact him on policy@mertoncil.org.uk if you'd like to find out more about an alternative to simulation exercises.

Keep Our St Helier Hospital! – The KOSHH Group Update by George McAdam

Many people are concerned about the apparent weaknesses in the NHS and wonder whether it will be able to cope in the future. Far reaching Government plans are in place intended to transform the NHS and keep it sustainable, but some experts fear that radical change and cost cutting will damage the NHS. NHS England plans to make £22bn worth of costs by 2020.



Picture: KOSHH meeting at Morden Baptist Church attended by 100+ on Thursday 17th February 2017

South West London faces serious cuts to NHS provision under the Sustainable and Transformation Plans. Merton residents are facing the danger of losing St Helier Hospital under the STP. These cost cutting plans for the NHS in our area include the shutting of one out of the five major hospitals. St George's will be kept. St Helier has been included in closure plans previously and is now very seriously threatened.

The plans also include:

- closing and downgrading A&E departments
- Closing Cancer Departments
- Closing consultant led Maternity and Paediatric Departments
- Cutting and downgrading clinical and medical staff
- Reducing referrals for treatments and operations
- Reducing hospital admissions
- Reducing the number and types of drugs prescribed
- Closing clinics, hospital department, GP surgeries and pharmacies
- Cutting the number of hospital beds (at a time of rising population)

- Closing entire hospitals and selling irreplaceable NHS land

Prior to June 2016 The Epsom and St Helier Hospital Trust were working on plans which included on 800 bed replacement for Epsom, St Helier, Queen Marys Hospital for Children and Sutton Hospitals. This would seriously cut the number of Hospital beds in an area of growing population. The Chief Executive Mr Elkeles said that the area had about a 1000 beds now and admitted that to keep the current level of provision could need 300 more to allow for population growth. To have only an 800 bed replaced is a totally inadequate plan especially since the Trust has been seeing a record number of patients recently and failing to meet A&E waiting time targets from time to time.

MORE PRIVATE BEDS AND FEWER PUBLIC BEDS?

At the "Estates Event" on the 19th of March 2016, the Trust told the public, repeatedly that they would like 50% of the new beds they plan, to be "Private Rooms". They later apologised for having used the word "Private" when they claim to have meant "Single".

Since Trusts can make 49% of their income from private patients, this might leave NHS patients in our area, with only 400 beds, which would equate to only 0.61 NHS beds per 1,000 people

Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt has already gone on the record to say that he would block the building of any new hospital in south west London.

If our local hospitals are closed, and not replaced as per Mr Hunt's statement, some 650,000 extra people will depend upon the three surviving south west London Hospitals (Kingston, St George's and Croydon) which are already severely over-stretched, and would be hopelessly incapable of caring for the swollen number of patients.

For more information: info@koshh.org to receive the newsletters and view video clips from the last meeting - Facebook: [facebook.com/groups/KOSHH-](https://www.facebook.com/groups/KOSHH-) Twitter: @Save_StHelier - or visit <http://koshh.org>

4. Dates for the diary March-July

Members Group Meetings

Come along to our Members Group Meeting - open to everyone, not just members!

Our members group is held on the **first Thursday of every month** from **1-4pm** at **Merton CIL, Room 66, Wandle Valley Resource Centre, Church Rd, Mitcham, CR4 3BE**. Tea and biscuits will be provided.

Agenda for up and coming meetings:

Thursday 6th April 2017 - Cuts to the Local NHS budget

Come along and discuss the proposed cuts with Abbas Mirza, the Engagement Lead Officer of Merton Clinical Commissioning

Thursday 4th May 2017 – How Well Does Merton CIL Promote Independent Living?

What does Independent Living mean for you on a daily basis? How well does Merton CIL live up to our goal of promoting Independent Living in our work? Come and share your experiences. Tell your story, and tell us how to do better!

Thursday 1 June - World Environment Day (5th)

We have invited a council officer to talk to us about noise nuisance and neighbour disputes.

Thursday 6th July 2017 - Scams Awareness Month

Have you ever been scammed? What are the current scams? What can you do to protect yourself?

Volunteer Support Group Meetings

Volunteers Only: All Volunteer Support Groups meet on the **3rd Thursday of the month** from **1-4pm**.

We are going to practice talking more, looking at the issues we face as volunteers, and offering support to one another. Traditional training opportunities will be offered through this group too. Anyone looking to be a volunteer should contact Richard on 0203 397 3119 or by email to inclusion@mertoncil.org.uk

Welcome back Gurjeet Gill. Last year we struggled to meet different access needs in a group. We met with the volunteer support group to discuss a new role in Access Support. This is designed to help participation in the group - not to meet personal care needs. We will develop it through practice. Please let Gurjeet know how he can support you when you are here.

Thursday 20th April 2017 - Calling all Merton CIL Volunteers

What is it like being a Merton CIL Volunteer? What is working well and what could be better? Come and talk to us, and each other, about your views!

Thursday 18th May 2017 - Mental Health Awareness Week

We all have mental health. But where are we with it? Are we thriving or surviving? Assess yourself and how to go forward

Thursday 15th June 2017 – What is it like being disabled in Merton?

Come along and discuss your views/experience of being disabled in Merton.

Thursday 20th July 2017 - How Do Housing Benefits Work (TBC)

Where to look and what you need to know when using research, information and advocacy skills

Disability Hate Crime Support Group Meetings

Come along to our monthly Disability Hate Crime Support Group and speak to other people who have experienced Disability Hate Crime.

The next meeting will be held on: **Monday 3rd April 2017**

Session Time: **1.30pm – 3.30pm**

For any disabled person in Merton who has experienced or is still experiencing disability hate crime, we know that often you will tell a friend. Please, tell us too.

We can help you by:

- Supporting disabled people to report hate crime to the police. This can be anonymous
- Visiting disabled people's groups and talking with you about your right to be safe
- Providing 12 disabled people with in-depth advocacy support

Please get in contact for details on the venue – info@mertoncil.org.uk or 0203 397 3119



DISABILITY HATE CRIME SUPPORT GROUP

Have you been bullied, harassed, threatened or abused because of a disability?

Come along to our support group held on the first Monday of every month
1.30pm – 3.30pm.

To find out more or to report a Disability Hate Crime, please contact us on:

020 3397 3119
07449 362 233 (SMS)
info@mertoncil.org.uk
www.mertoncil.org.uk

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Independent Living Roadshow - July and August 2017

We will be out and about in Merton during July and August spreading the word on Independent Living, the Social Model, and how we can support you to speak up. Get in touch if you'd like us to visit your group or workplace, or if you'd like to join us "on the road". Contact Charlet on info@mertoncil.org.uk or 0203 397 3119

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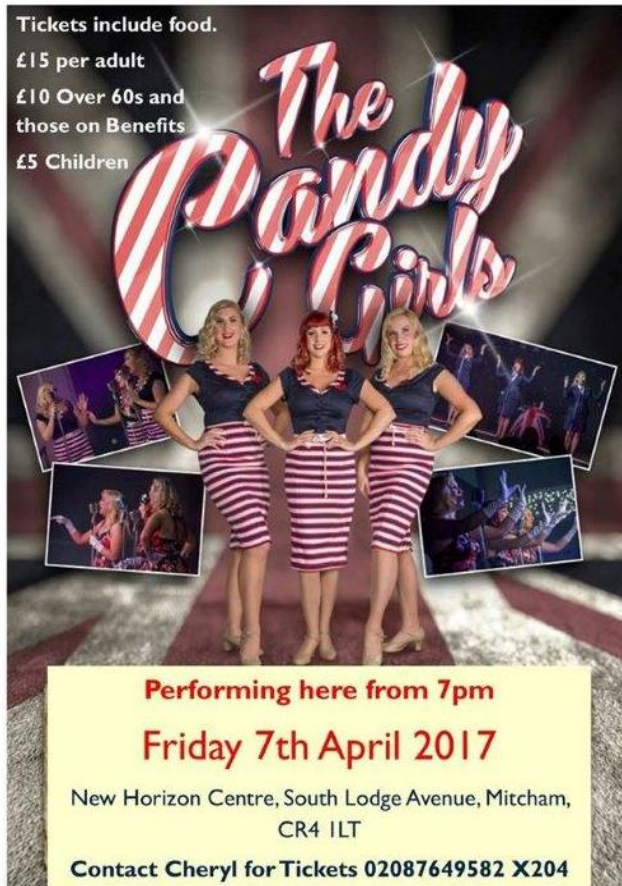
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External Events

Please note, Merton CIL is not responsible for the content of external websites or activities organised by other organisations below...



Transport for All Rail #AccessNow

Date: Wednesday 5th April 2017

Time: 5:00pm start at Heeltap

Location: Heeltap, Borough High Street, SE1 1NX and London Bridge Station

Southern Rail have announced that they are withdrawing Turn-Up-and-Go assistance from 33 stations across their network. This is a huge backwards step for accessibility. Join the protest and help demand that they reverse this shameful decision.

The Candy Girls @ Commonside

Date: Friday 7th April 2017

Time: from 7pm

Location: New Horizon Centre, South Lodge Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 1LT

Visit the New Horizons Centre and watch a performance from the Candy Girls

Crisis Recovery Café Meeting

Date: Friday 7th April 2017

Time:

Location: Vestry Hall, Cricket Green, 336-338 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 3UD

Presentation from Service providers, CDARs and Hestia, about the new service which will be launching later this year in South West London

Merton's new Learning Disability Forum

Date: Tuesday 25 April 2017

Time: 10.30am – 12.30pm

020 3397 3119

info@mertoncil.org.uk

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Location: South Thames College Conference Room

The new Forum is for people with a learning disability, their family carers, local providers, Merton Council, Health and Education - in fact, any person from the learning disability community. Meetings will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care and an elected member of the local Speak Out group.

The purpose of the accessible Forum is to bring people together, share views, and make sure that support for local people with a learning disability and their families is excellent. There will be 4 Forum meetings a year.

Merton LGBT+ Forum

Date: Thursday 18th April 2016

Time: 6:00pm

Location: Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, SM4 5DX, Merton Council Chambers

An update on what the forum has achieved over the last year, where they are with our current projects and how they hope to support all the community in Merton in 2017

Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) with Shelley Heffernan, Ruth Gladwell and Katy Miller

Date: Monday 24 April 2017

Time: 10am to 12pm

Location: Chaucer Centre, Room B, Canterbury Road, Morden, SM4 6PX

CLCH is London's largest NHS Trust dedicated to community healthcare. They have been delivering community services in Merton since April 2016 & are responsible for the majority of NHS community healthcare services for adults & children in Merton. Come along & find out more.

Inclusive Adults League

Date: Sunday 14th May 2017

Time: 11:30am

Location: Tooting and Mitcham FC, Imperial Fields, Bishopsford Rd, Morden SM4 6BF

AFC Wimbledon Foundation are teaming up with Tooting and Mitcham FC to run a new Inclusive Football Adult League (16+). This is a NEW pan-disability 5-a-side and will cater for all abilities. This open to teams / clubs but also open to

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players, so please get in touch with Emma O'Connor via email
emma.oconnor@afcwmbletonfoundation.org.uk or telephone 0208 974 5712

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/inclusive-football-adult-league-launch-date-tickets-33137044793>

NHS England conference - Better health for people with learning disabilities

Date: Tuesday 20th June 2017

Time: 11:30am

Location: The Oval, London

This conference is for all people interested in better health and better lives for people with learning disabilities. This includes commissioners of learning disabilities and mainstream health and social care services, health and social care practitioners including public health, people with learning disabilities and families. The conference will include lots of practical ideas and examples that you can take away and use locally.

Merton Adult Learning Course for Learners with Learning Difficulties

Merton Adult Learning has selected The Baked Bean Company to offer a range of courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from **18th April 2017**. The courses run for 18 weeks and include the following: For more information please contact 020 8004 8320.

	10:00am – 12:00pm	1:00pm – 3:00pm
Monday	E-Safety Pollards Hill Library	Wiki – creating your own website Pollards Hill Library
Tuesday	Healthy Beans – First Aid JMC Day Centre	Healthy Beans – Food Prep & Hygiene JMC Day Centre
Wednesday	Performing Arts JMC Day Centre	Mind & Bodyworks / Choir JMC Day Centre
Thursday	EEP – Prep for work & college Wimbledon YMCA	EEP – Prep for work & college Wimbledon YMCA
Friday	Intro to Runner Beans Tooting & Mitcham Football Club	Runner Beans – Next Steps Tooting & Mitcham Football Club

5. A final word

Walking on Air by Sharon Barron (Volunteer)

I'm still walking on air...
yes it's true
it feels like my feet do not touch the ground...

these feet,
legs right up to my knees,
I cannot feel,
I cannot sense not even the slightest pain
I cannot run,
I cannot jump
no skipping ropes for me.

If I my eyes are closed my balance goes,
I need to see
and so kindly keep it straight,
keep it smooth,
be reliable
or it's hard work for me.

I dislike raised curbs and potholes
with my low bone density
it cracks easily

But I can dance to any tune
so I keep going
In the words of Freddie Mercury
Don't Stop Me Now
I'm having such a good time...

Letter signed stamped



RUN AND CONTROLLED BY DISABLED PEOPLE, FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

We offer services and opportunities for deaf and disabled people in Merton

Advice and Advocacy Services - Debates and Events
 Volunteer Training and Opportunities
 Disability Hate Crime Prevention

We support the independence and inclusion of deaf and disabled people, challenge discrimination, and enable people to achieve change locally

To find out more contact us using the details below:

 020 3397 3119
 07449 362 233 (SMS)
 info@mertoncil.org.uk
 www.mertoncil.org.uk

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