



CIL Matters

Autumn 2016 Newsletter

This newsletter reflects the diverse views of Merton CIL members

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1. Merton CIL Update

Message from the CEO



Dear members,

I am so thrilled that this edition of the newsletter has a really high number of articles and contributions by our members and supporters. Whether it is views on the US election, a film review, or a look at some of our hate crime work, many people have contributed to this edition! We really value the views of our members and supporters and we have been developing more ways for people to be involved. For example, come and take part in My Voice Matters: My Future Matters! and help us to develop Merton CIL

services (see page 26). Or get involved with checking the quality of our work by joining the Monitoring and Evaluation Steering Group – we still have one place left (see page 6). You can check out other opportunities to come and chat or join us as a volunteer on pages .

In fact, this is a jam-packed edition and we are trying out a new “news shorts” section on page 19 so that we can tell you about some more of the latest news without adding too many extra pages to your newsletter! We would love to know what you think of the new format.

We look forward to hearing from you all!



Lyla, CEO of Merton CIL

Merton CIL's Programmes and Services



**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:

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Can You Help Us Improve?

Merton CIL has 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. They have worked together with a user-led steering group to talk to service users, members, volunteers and staff, as well as taking an in-depth look at our systems and processes, and most importantly, outcomes for service users.

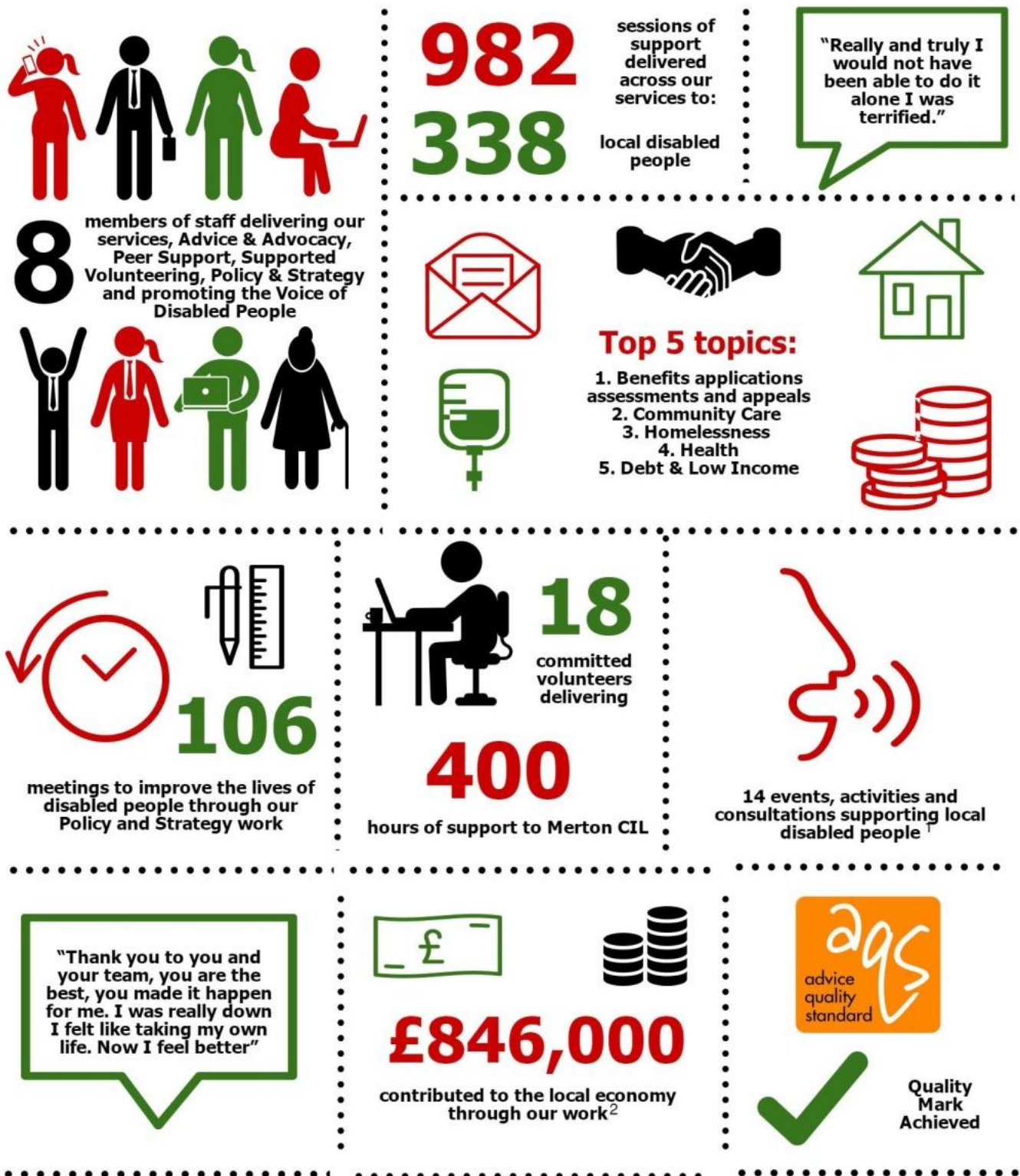
Some of the key findings are that we are an open, honest and learning organisation and that we are achieving good outcomes for service users. However, we have grown fast as an organisation over the last few years, which has sometimes been difficult for staff. In addition, some service users felt that we were a bit too focussed on gathering feedback. This is really useful information to share with our funders, and we will be looking at how to manage supporting people, which is our primary purpose, and gathering monitoring information, which we need to keep our funding!

CVA will continue to review our work over the next few years, and we would like to invite more of our members to join the Monitoring and Evaluation Steering Group. Training is provided and there are just a few meetings a year, with the opportunity to get more involved if you want to. Please contact Charlet on info@mertoncil.org.uk to find out more.

We are also carrying out our annual survey. It is just 5 questions, so please do take part if you can!

<http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/merton-cil-annual-survey/>

Key headlines from our recent work are available on the next few pages, as well as a summary of our very well-attended Annual General Meeting.

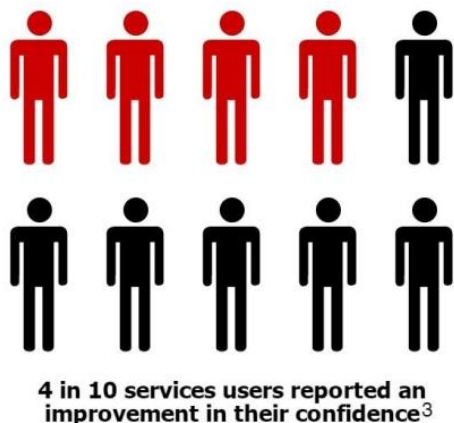


1. These included: My Voice Matters, Independence: what does it mean to you?, A sponsored walk, Our AGM, 10 consultations, campaigns and conferences

2. Amount obtained directly for disabled people, carers and net salaries of local staff



"MCIL absolutely helped me tremendously. I was having a nervous breakdown before MCIL. I class you as very good"



A quarter of service users reported an improvement in their health³



Merton CIL is.... "Excellent in every way", "Brilliant and Resourceful"



Top marks for satisfaction! 2 in 3 people rated us 5 out of 5⁴



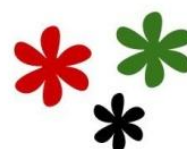
Over half of service users reported an increase in their ability to speak up³



of service users reported an improvement in their housing³



"You got me through the toughest times"



3. We conducted feedback with a random sample of service users who answered the question "Has there been any improvement for you in any of the following areas? Housing, Confidence, Health, Speaking Up"

4. We conducted feedback with a random sample of service users who answered the question "Thinking about the reason why you got in touch with us, how well did we deal with that? Using this scale, 1 means not at all and 5 means very well"

Feedback from our Annual General Meeting



This years' Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 20th October 2016 at The Holy Trinity Church, Wimbledon. There were 46 attendees.

Our Chair Roy Benjamin discussed some of our achievements over the past year. He mentioned how our services have grown, we now have a service manger in place, and we are supporting more local disabled people than we have ever before.

Our policy work was a hot topic, and our battle to get the voices of disabled people heard regarding cuts to services.

Roy ended by thanking volunteers, funders, staff and our CEO Lyla for all of their hard work and support.

Two great new trustees were also elected by members:

- Fitzroy Dawson - CEO of Merton Community Transport. Fitzroy would like to see a focus on access and disability.
- Petra Jones – a Merton resident and social worker with a hearing impairment. Petra would like to ensure we improve social work and fight against cuts.

They will be great additions to our board and we look forward to working with them.

We also discussed a Special Resolution that was sent to all members in the post. We are introducing 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.

The close of formal business was followed by a facilitated discussion on Merton CILs strategic direction. We received a lot of interesting feedback that will help to further shape the conversations we will be having at this year's My Voice Matters event.

We closed the event with lunch and members completed our annual survey. If you were unable to attend the event and would like to complete the survey – please do so below. We would love to hear from you!

<http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/merton-cil-annual-survey/>

Thank you to everyone that attended and helped out at this year's Annual General Meeting.

You can view our Annual Review and Financial Statements for 2015/16 here - <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/about-us/annual-reports/>

Read minutes from our 2015 Annual General Meeting here - [Merton CIL AGM Minutes 2015](#)



Raise donations for Merton CIL whilst online shopping this Christmas



Join



Shop



Raise

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online - from your weekly shop to your annual holiday to last minute Christmas shopping - you could be collecting free donations for Merton CIL?

There are over 3,000 shops and sites on board ready to make a donation, including Amazon, John Lewis, Aviva, The Train Line and Sainsbury's – it doesn't cost you a penny extra! It is extremely straightforward and here is how you do it:

1. Head to

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/mertoncentreforindependentliving/> and join for free.

2. Every time you shop online, go to easy fundraising first to find the site you want, click through and start shopping.

3. After you've checked out, that retailer will make a donation to your good cause for no extra cost whatsoever!

There are no catches or hidden charges and Merton CIL will be really grateful for your donations.

You can also donate via Give as You Live

1. Visit <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/christmas> and select sign up for free
2. Search 'Merton Centre for Independent Living' as the cause you would like to support and select
3. Complete registration form and click sign up!
4. Once you are signed up visit online stores via the website and shop as normal. These companies will make donations to your supported cause with every purchase that you make.

2. News

Merton CIL is trying to make applying for Personal Independence Payments less of a challenge

It has been well-documented that disabled people are disproportionately impacted by the policies of Welfare Reform. Barriers to claiming benefits to which disabled people are entitled directly impacts on disabled peoples day-to-day lives, mainly by being left with an inadequate income and experiencing poverty, which leads to isolation and has a negative impact on health and sense of well-being.

One of the outcomes of Welfare Reform has been the abolition of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) abolished, replaced by Personal Independence Payment (PIP). New applicants have been applying for PIP for some time, and many people who previously got DLA have been asked to reapply for PIP, including people who were on lifetime awards. According to DWP, by September 2017, everyone who used to get DLA will have had to reapply for PIP – and not all of those people will get the new benefit. About 20% of people entitled to DLA are expected to lose their entitlement to PIP.¹

This is a big problem, because for the 20% of people likely to lose out in the changeover, there are knock-on effects beyond the loss of the benefit itself. People who get DLA/PIP are exempt from a number of other welfare changes: the single room rate change, the overall benefit cap and in some boroughs, council tax support. If entitlement to DLA/PIP is lost, not only will individuals lose their DLA/PIP income, but they could also lose income from other benefits as they are no longer exempt. People can also lose their Motability vehicle. It takes 7 weeks for the vehicle to be removed following the change of benefit, but the benefits appeal process takes much longer so they could lose a vehicle they are later proven to have been entitled to on appeal.

Given the high stakes and significant impact on people's lives, the PIP application and assessment process really needs to be getting it right. But it isn't. Our work with local disabled people has identified three key issues with assessments for PIP.

¹ <http://www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/topics/receiving-non-work-benefits/dla-caseload-by-care-award-type/>

1. Inaccessible Assessment Centres

This includes centres which are physically inaccessible, or those located far away from the person's home. At Merton CIL we regularly get calls from Merton residents who are being asked to attend assessment centres which are difficult for them to get to. This includes being told to travel to Brighton, Deptford, East London or Vauxhall, all of which require independent travel skills, and the ability to make lengthy journeys with multiple changes. Even closer assessment centres can be difficult to get to, with typical centres being located in Wandsworth and Croydon, neither very easy to get to for Merton residents.

PIP assessment centres appear to have been set up with little consideration



for the access needs of the people visiting them. For example, in a Wandsworth centre, there is no parking. The nearest disabled parking spaces are over 200 meters away. Another example is when assessment centres have wheelchair inaccessible buildings or an inhospitable environment.

Image: Picture shows tiny waiting room in Croydon

2. Overbooking of Assessment Centres

We have identified that assessment centres appear to have moved in the last 18 months to a model that we compare to budget airline bookings, ie, they are overbooking appointments in the assumption that some people will not turn up. This was confirmed by one of the assessors who told us that she had 20 assessments on her list per shift, but that she could only reasonably do 6 in the time available. This means that a number of our service users are seeing last minute cancellations by the assessment centres – sometimes while they are en route or just as they are getting ready to leave. This is clearly distressing for people who have prepared for the assessment and may already have faced a lengthy wait to get to this point. For those who do get to the assessment centre we have seen long waits at the centres causing distress and anxiety for our service users. For example, we have had people vomiting at the centre due to anxiety over the wait. Practical issues also arise such as people unable to take their medication or having difficulty with childcare arrangements.

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3. Inaccurate Assessments

PIP works on a points system and at Merton CIL we are witnessing a growing number of assessments where people are being assessed as having zero or very few points at assessment, which is later overturned in tribunal. In a number of cases, people felt their assessment reports were so far removed from their situation and what had been discussed at the assessment itself, that they thought their details had been mixed up with someone else. However, getting to tribunal is a complicated and time-consuming process. Once a person has been denied PIP and they wish to appeal, they first have to go through a mandatory reconsideration (MR) process, however, most of the time the decision remains unchanged. The individual then has to make a submission to the tribunal, and attend tribunal, which can be quite daunting. At tribunal, many of the people attending are awarded the benefit after all. This means that 2/3 people are being forced to undergo hardship and wait months longer than necessary in order to access a benefit to which they were entitled in the first place.

There is a growing body of evidence indicating that the very process of forcing disabled people to undergo an assessment is damaging to their wellbeing. Many disabled people are not only being assessed for PIP, but also for Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and for Social Care, and in many instances being reassessed annually and, in the words of one of our service users, "being asked to prove I am needy enough all the time".

The Situation in Merton

Sadly, our experience is by no means unique. Discussions at the Merton Health and Social Care Forum make it clear that other support agencies are seeing the same issues arising for the people they are supporting, and there is lots of national evidence of these issues. We believe that these issues could affect a large number of disabled people in Merton. Based on census data, a minimum of 950 disabled people in Merton will lose out in the transfer from DLA to PIP. In fact, because a greater proportion of Merton residents are on low or middle rate DLA claims compared to the England average, we believe it is possible that far more than 20% of people are at risk, and up to 2,000 disabled people locally could lose their benefit just in the DLA to PIP changeover. In addition, new people are regularly claiming PIP and many of those are also being also unfairly denied the benefit.

What Now?

We have written a briefing for Mitcham and Morden MP Siobhain McDonagh who will try to get an Adjournment Debate in Parliament to raise some of the areas of concern around PIP.

We have shared our briefing with Simon Williams, Director of Communities and Housing, London Borough of Merton, who is looking at the issue of PIP for ADASS (association of directors of adult social services). We have also spoken to local Councillors about the overall impact of Welfare Reform.

We are going to contact local assessment centres to raise concerns about their practices too.

If you have applied for PIP, we would love to hear more about your experiences. And for anyone applying for PIP now, please do get in touch with us – we may be able to support you through the process.

You can read the full briefing we have written on PIP and welfare reform here: <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/services/speaking-up/>

Council Tax Consultation: Merton Communities Support Local Disabled People and Older People

Over 80 per cent of Merton residents have called for Merton Council to make Adult Social Care their number one spending priority following a recent consultation on Council Tax and Council Spending. After last year's devastating cuts to services for disabled people and older people in Merton, this result is testament to local people's desire to see the Council live up to its "July Principles".

The publication of the consultation results shows that residents have chosen to overwhelmingly support services for disabled people and older people, and for an increase in Council Tax to provide these services. The people have spoken, it is now up to the Council to implement the outcome of the Borough's biggest consultation in recent years.

At Merton CIL we welcome this outcome. At times it can feel very lonely when talking to the local authority about the crisis facing local disabled people. However, this consultation shows that our local communities listen to and understand our concerns. We hope that Merton Council will now listen to the

voice of the people and feel empowered to prioritise spending on essential services for disabled people and older people in Merton.

Traditionally, local councillors have felt that top priority issues are street cleanliness and waste collection, but local residents have clearly said that actually, social care services for older people and disabled people, as well as services for children, are more important. 81% have put social care for older people and disabled people as the top priority for the council. What's more, over three quarters of residents have supported the need to increase Council Tax in order to keep local services, especially social care, viable. Nearly half of residents supported a maximum increase of 3.99%, which is equivalent to about 12 pence a day for the average household.

These results are particularly important because Merton is one of only a handful of local authorities who didn't increase Council Tax this year to support Adult Social Care services, despite an emerging nation-wide crisis in social care. The results are also important because at times the messaging around the consultation, and the emergence of a rival consultation, was pretty divisive and seemed aimed at encouraging local residents not to support a Council Tax increase.

Official headline consultation findings are available

here: https://consult.merton.gov.uk/KMS/dmart.aspx?strTab=PublicDMart&NoIP=1&filter_status=2

You can read Merton CIL's full consultation response

here <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/merton-cil-raise-significant-c/>

The Kelly Caster

Article via Drake Music (<http://www.drakemusic.org/>)



As well as being our Policy and Strategy manager, John Kelly is a musician, writer, actor and active campaigner for disability rights. In spring 2015 John, who has a physical impairment that restricts the use of his hands, conceived and created a specification for an accessible guitar, bespoke to his access needs. He presented the idea to the DMLab meeting to invite collaboration.

Image: John Kelly & Gawain Hewitt at the Web We Want festival with the Kellycaster. Image by Emile Holba.

Gawain Hewitt developed a first prototype of the hardware, and the software was developed at the Drake Music accessible music technology hackathon at the Southbank Centre on the weekend of the 30th and 31st May by Charles Matthews, with input from Dave Darch and John Kelly.

We are delighted to announce a partnership to build a revolutionary new type of guitar which can be played using just one finger, nicknamed the 'Kellycaster'. The Kellycaster is an instrument that uses a real electric guitar as an interface for computer software. This is combined with software innovations that iPad apps like Garageband for the iPad have showcased, such as software controlled chords. It allows a musician to play the guitar by strumming real guitar strings, while using an iPad app to control chords and notes, as well as switch control over augmented chords.

The resulting innovative instrument won the hackathon, and was featured in the Independent's 'I' paper that same week.

The Kellycaster project is part of the Inclusive Creativity venture supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, a partnership between Ulster University, Walled City Music and Drake Music.



Image: The 'kellycaster' – the prototype developed by Charles Matthews and guitarist/musician John Kelly.

The new instrument will enable John to expand his professional musical practice. He commented:

"Playing the prototype Kellycaster last year was the realisation that I could take

my guitar playing to a whole new level. It was a real 'hairs on the back of the neck' moment. I'm very excited about the development of the prototype, it will really create a dynamic new journey with my live performance."

Matthew Greenall, Executive Director of partners [Walled City Music](#) added:

"We are delighted as part of the Inclusive Creativity programme to be supporting this important and innovative development.

Improving access to music making for disabled musicians and levelling the playing field for their participation is at the core of Inclusive Creativity, and the design of new instruments, such as the Kellycaster, is critical in pushing the boundaries of the possible."

News Shorts

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

It is Disability History Month



The Word Have you heard? 22nd November is the start of UK Disability History Month (UKDHM). 2016's theme is Disability and Language. The focus is words used to deny us and words we use to express ourselves.

More information here - <http://ukdhm.org/>

Improving Lives Controversy

There is controversy over the launch of the Department for Work and Pensions new work, health and disability green paper, "Improving Lives". Plans include extending sanctions and conditions to people on Employment Support Allowance. You can read about the issue here:

<http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/devastating-unethical-cruel-disabled-people-react-to-green-paper/>

You can contribute to the consultation here:

<https://consultations.dh.gov.uk/workandhealth/consult/>

Independent Living Fund: One Year On

In September, Inclusion London launched a report looking at what had happened following the closure of the Independent Living Fund (ILF). The report makes grim reading and highlights the detrimental impacts of the ILF closure on former ILF recipients, ranging from distress and anxiety to removal of essential daily support. We identified many similar issues in our Summer Newsletter.

You can read the Inclusion London Report here:

<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/facts-and-information/independent-living-social-care-and-health/ilf-one-year-on/>

You can read our previous newsletter here:

<http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/news-2016/cil-matters-newsletter-summer/>

3. Your Views

The US Election: What Next?

Written by a Merton CIL member and volunteer



The torture is over, the US Presidential Election which has lasted for an eternity it seems, has ended. Donald Trump has unexpectedly won the Presidential Election. Now that the campaign and all the rhetoric that has come along with have come to a close, we'll look at what it might mean for disabled people in the US.

It's important to reflect how different the main candidates' political experience is. Hillary Clinton has been involved in political campaigning and politics for over 50 years. She has been; First Lady of Arkansas [1979-1981 and 1983-1992] when Bill Clinton was Governor, and First Lady of the United States between 1993 and 2001. She was twice elected to the US Senate and served from 2001 and 2009. She ran for presidential nomination in 2008 losing to Barack Obama. Obama made her Secretary of State [Foreign Minister] for 4 years. By contrast, Donald Trump has never held any political office and his only experience has been this campaign itself. He has however donated money to politicians, including, funnily enough, to Hillary Clinton!

Hillary Clinton's decades in politics have given her the opportunity to influence and improve legislation for disabled people. Whilst she was First Lady she supported the creation of the Office of Disability Policy within the Department of Labor. In 2003 whilst she was Senator she supported increasing the provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], and in 2008 she supported amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA], which is the equivalent of the former Disability Discrimination Act in Britain. In 2010 when she was Secretary of State she appointed Judith Hermann, herself disabled, as a Special Advisor for International Disability Rights and helped support the signing of the UN Convention on The Rights of Disabled People. She initiated the Expanding the Promise for Individuals with Autism Act [EPIAA] in 2007, but couldn't garner enough support from Congress to make it law. It is important to acknowledge that all of these gains for disabled

people have been driven mainly by disabled people, but on the face of it she seems to have been a supporter. During this current campaign Hillary Clinton pledged to make colleges more accessible, ban sub-minimum wages for disabled people and improve hiring practices. She also proposed an 'Autism Initiative'.

Donald Trump, has never been in office, so must be judged by what he's said during the campaign. With regards disability, he and his policy advisors have come up grand number of.... zero policies for disabled people. Not one single policy. In fact, when the head of RespectAbility, a disabled rights organisation, visited with a questionnaire about disability issues he twice refused to fill it out. This is in contrast to Hillary Clinton who did sign. Trump also stirred controversy when he mocked a disabled reporter in public.

His seeming lack of interest and controversies with disabled people doesn't end there, in 2005 a quadriplegic man sued Trump Productions, the company that produces the Apprentice in America and that stars Donald Trump, after they refused his application to appear on his show because he wasn't in 'excellent physical and mental health'. In 2007 the Justice Department found his Taj Mahal Hotel to be in violation of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

So what happens now that Donald Trump is US president?

Trump and his team don't seem likely to initiate improvements in disability policy. There is a question over to what degree they will stifle the efforts of disabled people to achieve independence and equality. Trumps apparent plans to change Medicaid could also have a big impact on disabled people in the US – although to be fair his reported views on this are quite varied, so who knows what is really planned.

However, it may come as a surprise to many that he may in fact be a slightly moderating influence on the more right wing Republicans in Congress. Trump, for most of his life has actually been a supporter of the Democratic Party. Although it's unlikely that he or the Congress will propose legislation intended to specifically improve disabled people's lives, it might not be as bad as one would imagine. This will probably provide little comfort to most, but one has to try and look for hope somewhere.

All Civil Rights groups, including ones for disabled people, have to, in the end, work with the political reality that they've been dealt with and continue with the fight in spite of it.

Merton CILs Pop Up Stall for Hate Crime Week

Written by Dee Scott – A Volunteer at Merton CIL



On Wednesday 12 October, Merton CIL set up a stall in Centre Court shopping centre, Wimbledon in collaboration with Wimbledon Police Service.

The aim was to highlight the rising incidence of hate crime directed against the disabled community. The stall offered relevant information as to what

hate crime is, what can be done about it and how Merton CIL can help through the new disability hate crime service.

As well as Merton CIL's CEO Lyla, staff and volunteers; there were 3 police officers in attendance. They provided special leaflets emphasising the Police Service's commitment to taking this issue seriously and to prosecute offenders. The stall also featured T-shirts with "No to Hate Crime in London" logos and wrist bands.

It was decided that we would engage the public in conversation about our aims, as they passed the stall. On the whole, this was successful, although some people initially thought we were asking for money! The stall was situated on the upper level of the shopping centre and the foot fall could have been greater. Also, I feel we could have attracted more attention if more police officers had been in uniform.

On the whole however, we had some interesting conversations, distributed a lot of leaflets and generally highlighted what can be a difficult subject to discuss.

As someone with an invisible disability, I had never thought myself to be vulnerable to hate crime, but the day made me reflect, that all disabled people need to learn about this issue in order to protect ourselves.

No Protection for Disabled Employers

Written by Emma Vogelmann

I currently employ 4 carers privately with the money I receive from my Personal Health Budget, which is paid by my council. I was one of the 'test cases' for these budgets to see if the idea to give people with a disability more control over their care and to save the council the pricey care agency fees really was the perfect solution it appeared to be. For me, the budget allowed me to hire the people I wanted and to set my own hours, to allow me to commute into London to study law at university, and for three years this worked really well. But all good things must come to an end, which is exactly what happened when one of my carers raised a grievance, subjected me to emotional abuse and threatened to walk out if her demands were not met.

I have employers insurance, who advised me on how to deal with her grievance and meet all my obligations as an employer. They said the law currently didn't cover situations like this, so I was forced to have her keep working for me, regardless of my fear and anxiety. They told me that despite feeling completely unsafe with the carer as a result of her threat to walk out on me – which for me could lead to death – her threat wasn't 'bad enough' to be gross misconduct and as she hadn't actually walked out yet there were no grounds to dismiss her. I believe no level of threat or discomfort should be tolerated and if the law doesn't cover this then the law needs to change.

Please read the rest of the article here:

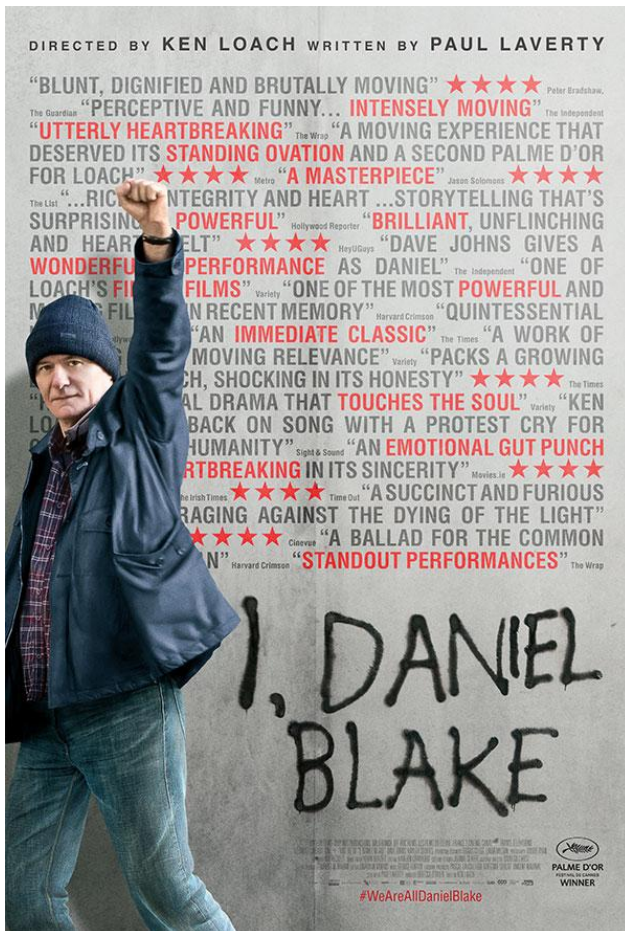
<http://disabilityunited.co.uk/2016/11/no-protection-disabled-employers/>

I'm looking for people to share their experiences of problems with carers hired through a budget of any kind and how you went about dealing with it. I want to know if you had support or if you didn't, what support you would have found helpful. You will be kept anonymous if you prefer.

Contact editor@disabilityunited.co.uk to join the campaign now!

Film Review: I, Daniel Blake

Written by supporter @elinesca



How do you review a story that leaves you speechless, at loss of words? This was how the majority of us left the theatre – silent, uncomfortable in our own skin, some were crying as they lingered behind in their seats. "I, Daniel Blake" is a movie you will need time to digest.

There is a stigma attached to claiming benefits in the UK. The media gives us headlines like the Sun's "The Welfies" - a list of Britain's top "scroungers and dossers". We're fed TV shows documenting these 'scroungers' lives for entertainment and shock value rather than to document and reflect on what is happening today's modern society.

"I, Daniel Blake" comes from a different perspective. It is a portrayal

of a system designed to exclude and disempower those who have fallen on hard times. In Daniel's case, a severe heart condition means he needs to take a step back from work until he recovers. He meets a young single mum of two, Katie, while desperately trying to navigate the system that was created with the intention to help people like them. We follow these two as they strike up a friendship and lean on each other through their journey and dealings with their 'Decision Maker' – the elusive, invisible person at their local Job Centre who determines their fate.

This is hard to watch. The 'Decision Maker' is protected by the disempowered staff who aren't trusted to make the smallest common sense decisions. Daniel is found fit for work despite his NHS doctor's letter as evidence of his illness, and is forced to apply for 'Job Seeker's Allowance' to support himself while he appeals to the 'Decision Maker'. Not only does this make zero sense, but Daniel is also challenged by the 'Digital Divide' his generation experience. He

meets the wall over and over again as his applications has to be delivered online. Katie loses her benefit when she's late to an appointment due to bus problems in a city she doesn't know and has been forced to move to - her desperation drives her into prostitution as a result. We are shown a system so inflexible, rigid, and so completely WRONG that it's impossible not to feel angry as the movie comes to an end with the worst possible outcome. You should become angry.

Go and see "I, Daniel Blake". And then we all need to come together and take action to help change the system around us to help those who need it rather than punish them. Let us demand that 'Compassion' is the principle for how this government serve those who need it the most.

Please see the events section on page 30 for information on accessible viewings

4. Dates for the Diary

My Voice Matters 2016 – My Future Matters!



M
Merton Centre
for
Independent
Living
CIL

**My Voice Matters:
My Future Matters!**

Tuesday 6th Dec 2016 from 11am-2pm
South Mitcham Community Centre,
Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, CR4 3PR

Use people's different
strengths and experiences

Come join us and tell us what
is important to you. Let's all
work together to help build
our future plans!

There will be a pizza lunch
provided.

Please RSVP using the Eventbrite link or contact details
below: <http://bit.ly/2dIoyLc>

BSL interpreters are available on the day. Please inform us
of access and dietary requirements by 01st Dec 2016

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

@MertonCIL
Mertoncil
Merton.cil

Come along to this year's My Voice Matters event to discuss the issues that are important to you. With all of our voices combined we can work together to build our future plans.

The event is being held at **The South Mitcham Community Centre, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 3PR.**

The 200 bus stops outside the Centre coming from either Wimbledon or Mitcham. You will get off of the bus at Haslemere Avenue. The nearest tube station is **Colliers Wood (Northern Line)** the 200 bus stops outside here you will get on in the direction of Mitcham, nearest tram stop is **Phipps Bridge** and the nearest train station is **Wimbledon** or **Mitcham**

Junction. There is free Parking is available around the venue.

We have BSL interpreters booked on the day and a Pizza lunch will be provided. Please inform us of any access or dietary requirements by **1st Dec 2016.**

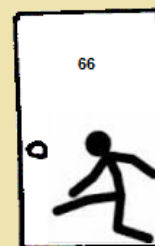
For more information please visit: <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/getting-involved/my-voice-matters-2016/>

Please RSVP using the link below or using our contact details.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/my-voice-matters-2016-tickets-28528499510>

We look forward to seeing you all there!

Enter Room 66



Members Group Meetings

A chance to chat. Members Group Meetings happen from 1-4pm at Merton CIL, Room 66, Wandle Valley Resource Centre, Church Rd, Mitcham, CR4 3BE. Refreshments will be provided.

12th January 2017 Talking about Getting Active

It's that time of year again isn't it? Television screens full of people telling you to stop smoking, different government departments putting out public information films about food and exercise and as for weight watchers, slimming world et.al. At this session we will look at where you are with exercise, why you do it, why you don't and why you should. We will be calling on friends from a couple of activity groups to tell you what they do it Merton. Everyone associated with MCIL welcome.

2nd February 2017 Crisis? What Crisis? Meet the CQC

"Well, I just feel ,that every minute's wasted, My life is unreal, And anyway, I guess, I'm just not rated, At least twice, that's how I feel" (Just A Normal Day – Lyrics by Supertramp). Following a request from a member we have invited Jane Brett from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to talk to us about what they can do and how they might be able to help and intervene with the current crisis in Adult Social Care. Let's let Jane know how we feel about Merton.

2nd March Tell Merton what you think about Equality

Merton are re-doing their Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy. Last time I looked at a council equalities plan it showed that access to the shops and transport were the only issues of interest to disabled people. The Council's Equalities Officer, Evereth, was very open to my criticisms. Now she would like to know what you think. Come and tell her.

Volunteer Support Groups

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 Rich on 0203 397 3119 or by email to inclusion@mertoncil.org.uk

19th January. Resolutions.

MCIL are actively looking to make the volunteering experience more rewarding at MCIL. Today we reveal our current and future plans. We also review your hopes and aspirations as volunteers at MCIL. How can MCIL support you to get where you want to go. Listen to your views and seek to act upon your wishes.

16th Feb and 16th March. Subjects TBC (to be confirmed)

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.

Get Fit, Get Healthy with Age UK Merton & Merton CIL



Age UK Merton and Merton CIL are working together over the coming year to help people become more active and meet friends. The programme is aimed at people who have been **inactive** previously and particularly at **disabled people** over the age of **50**.

Participants will have the opportunity to set goals and develop a plan on a one to one basis and then encouraged to take part in different activities to suit their abilities and help them to achieve their personal goals. They will be given 10 vouchers to use on a range of activities at Age UK Merton. **Merton CIL can offer volunteer buddies to disabled people who would like to take part, but aren't sure if they want to do it alone:**

- Community Gardening – in partnership with Deen City Farm.
- Rhythm and Movement – a mainly seated exercise that engages brain, voice and body, and is good for building new neural pathways as you get fit.
- Zumba Gold – seated or standing lively exercise to music.
- Yoga – Gentle movement, stretching, and meditation to increase well-being.
- Tea dances and dance lessons – an opportunity to dance to favourite tunes.
- Tai Chi – an 8 week course of a gentle martial art which increases fitness and well-being.

If you would like more information or know someone who may be interested in taking part then please contact **Merton CIL on 020 3397 3119 or info@mertoncil.org.uk**

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/merton/news--campaigns/get-fit-get-healthy/>

External events

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

Accessible viewings of I, Daniel Blake

Date: Monday 28th November & Tuesday 29th November

Time: 12:45pm

Location: The Rotunda Centre, Clarence St, Kingston upon Thames KT1 1QP

Wheelchair friendly and audio described

Return to the Workhouse Cabaret

Date: 3 December 2016

Time: 7:45pm

Location: Chats Palace Arts Centre, 42-44 Brooksby's Walk, London, E9 6DF

What better way to celebrate International Day of Disabled People than a free doo down at Chats Palace? In the late 80's and early 90's Chats Palace regularly played host to the Workhouse Cabaret where disabled artists, activists and performers from all over the UK came together for a night of riotous and ramshackle entertainment. Thirty years later, it seems little has changed for Disabled people and so we return to Chats Palace to remember our history, celebrate our survival and to party like there's no tomorrow!

There'll be music, comedy, poetry, a bit of this, that and the other all hosted by actor and activist Liz Carr.

Chats Palace is accessible, there's a decent sized loo with those grip bars and everything and there'll be sign language interpreters and most importantly a bar with hot and cold drinks (and lots of straws!).

Entry: FREE (donation on-the-door appreciated)

<http://chatspalace.com/events/return-workhouse-cabaret/>

Carols by Candlelight

Date: 3 December 2016

Time: 5pm onwards

Location: Wimbledon Village Stables, 24 a and b High Street Wimbledon, SW19 5DX

This is a traditional Carol concert, held in candlelight in the stable yard, with a choir, mince pies, mulled wine and even a visit from Santa. It is a perfect event for children but is thoroughly enjoyed by all ages and is open to all. There are two performances one at 5 and the second at 6.30.

Tickets are £5 and go on sale 1st November 2016, by collection from the stables office. Kindly sponsored by Andrew Scott Robertson.
Telephone: 020 8946 8579

West Barnes Singers Winter Concert

Date: 3 December 2016

Time: 7:30pm-9:30pm

Location: St Saviours Church, Grand Drive, Raynes Park, SW20

A concert of different flavours including works by Mozart and Finzi and Christmas Carols with St Mary's Choristers.

Christmas Fair

Date: 3 December 2016

Time: 11am-3pm

Location: Age UK Merton, 277 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4

Join us for this family Christmas fair with gifts to buy, a raffle, Santa's grotto and mince pies

Telephone: 020 8648 5792

Colliers Wood Chorus presents Christmas Crackers

Date: 11 December 2016

Time: 5pm-7pm

Location:

As part of Colliers Wood Chorus' 10th anniversary celebrations we are delighted to present a retrospective collection of all our major concerts. From our first Christmas concert in the Community Centre in 2006 to the spectacular Carmina Burana and lots in between, we are revisiting the musical milestones we've reached together these past 10 years. Christmas Crackers is a sort of top ten concert with some festive favourites thrown in for good measure.

To book contact: collierswoodchorus@gmail.com

£10/£8 concs; child 5 - 17 £3; under-5s free

<https://www.collierswoodchorus.org.uk/events/16/1211/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Colliers-Wood-Chorus-117391607838/>

Friends of Mitcham Common Walk and Christmas Party

Date: 17 December 2016

Time: 12:30pm (walk) 2-4pm (Christmas party)

Location: Mitcham Junction Station (meet at bus stop on bridge)

Walk around Mitcham Common with Christmas Party to finish at Ecology Centre, Windmill Road, Mitcham

Contact: mlnnunzet@gmail.com or 07944 833605

Wimbledon Guild's Festive Lunch

Date: Thursday 17th December

Time: 12.00 or 13.30

Location: Guild Café, Guild House, 30/32 Worple Road, Wimbledon, SW19 4EF

Come and enjoy a traditional Christmas lunch of roast turkey and all the trimmings; individual Christmas puddings and lots of fun with the Guild Café team. £5 per person.

To book call 020 8946 0735 or email info@wimbledonguild.co.uk

Christmas Day Dinner

Date: 25 December 2016

Time: 11am-4pm (dinner served at 1pm)

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

If you are alone this Christmas day and would like some fun, good food, and company, then why not come and join us for a traditional 3 course Christmas dinner (vegetarian option available). There will be no charge but you must book in advance.

To book please contact Cllr Judy Saunders at one of the following: 0208 640 1298 (please leave a message on the answerphone), 07720 565 454 (call or text) or email judy.saunders@merton.gov.uk

Mayor's 'Winter Warmer' Music Concert

Date: Saturday 28 January 2017

Time: 6.00pm -9.00pm doors open at 5.30pm

Location: St Mark's Church of England Academy, Acacia Road, Mitcham, CR4 1SF

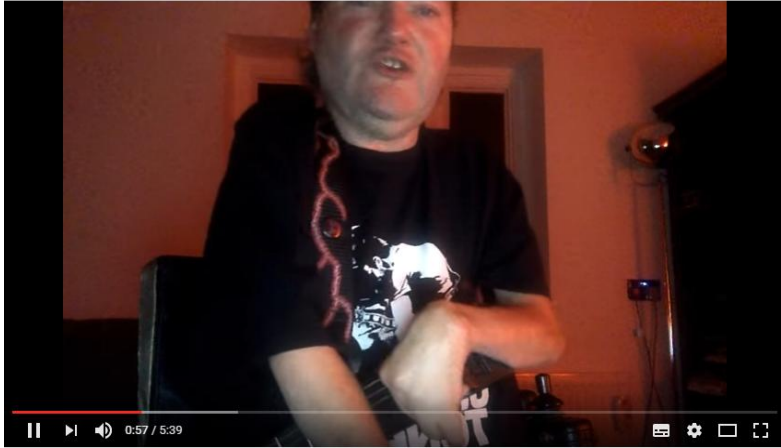
Produced by Merton Music Foundation. Music concert to showcase music and dance with an international flavour, performed by musicians of all ages from Merton Music Foundation and the local community. The programme will feature instrumental and choral music from around the globe as we celebrate the rich diversity within our borough, from Irish folk music, to Indian dance, Polish song, Steel Pans and Big Band swing!

To book contact 020 8545 3517 or email mayor@merton.gov.uk

Or visit <http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/mayor/charityevents.htm>

5. A Final Word...

“You’ve Got To Fight To Get What You Want”



You can't always consult...cause you might find?

The recent outcome of the Council Tax and Council Spending Consultation aptly fits with this song by Rockinpaddy, played on a prototype of the Kellycaster: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=StFMkvp7Q8k>

In their own way, the residents of Merton have shown what they want by saying that support for disabled people and older people must be prioritised. Some people in the Council wanted a different result, but like the song says, you can't always get what you want.

Every day of our lives we fight for different things that we want. Some fight to remain in power, some fight to get into power. But sadly for many people, especially disabled people in Britain today, the fight is to survive. It is a fight to maintain our independence and dignity. It is not an easy fight and it will be won not by the weak, or by the strong, but by those who endure.

There are so many things we could draw from the song, one of them is that through songs like this, protest songs, demonstrations in front of council buildings, or through your vote, you can get what you want.

So my final word is for disabled people to keep on fighting to get what we want, and what we need.

Written by a Merton CIL member