



## CIL MATTERS NEWSLETTER

Autumn Edition – October 2017

# The Independence Issue



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](mailto:info@mertoncil.org.uk)

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# 1. The Merton CIL Update

## Message from the CEO



Dear members and supporters,

Welcome to the "Independence Issue" of CIL Matters. We have had loads of contributions from our members and supporters this month talking about what independence means to them, and there are more opportunities for you to get involved too – check out the competition on page 21 and please get involved!

Over the summer we ran our Independent Living road show. We contacted loads of venues but found it hard to get in and talk about Independent Living, so we'll be carrying on that work in the New Year – do get in touch if you have a group or organisation you would like to invite us to. One thing that did go well was running some Independent Living conversations with social care staff at Merton Council. These were well attended and we hope that people took some important reflections back to their day jobs. Another important area of work, and which many of you have contributed to, has been raising concerns about the very many problems with the new PIP benefit, and the negative impact on disabled people. You can read more about this on page 12.

Finally, before I sign off, I would like to personally invite our supporters and members to our next Annual General Meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> October – see page 4 for more details. I am really looking forward to presenting our new 2018-23 strategy to you all, which has been developed with our members and supporters over the past year.


**Lyla, CEO of Merton CIL**

## Join us at our Annual General Meeting



**Merton Centre  
for  
Independent  
Living**

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017



**Monday 30th October 2017 from 11am-1pm**  
**Vestry Hall, 338 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 3UD**

Come along to this years AGM, meet staff and trustees and hear about what we have been up to over the past year. We will also be sharing our new strategy, developed with help from our members.

Please RSVP using the contact details or link below.  
 If you have dietary/access needs please inform us by  
**Oct 19th 2017 - <http://bit.ly/2fhkh5I>**

☎ 020 3397 3119

📱 07449 362 233 (SMS)

✉ [info@mertoncil.org.uk](mailto:info@mertoncil.org.uk)

💻 [www.mertoncil.org.uk](http://www.mertoncil.org.uk)

🐦 @MertonCIL

📘 Mertoncil

🗣 Merton.cil

**There will be Ghanaian street food available for lunch! Vegan/Vegetarian options**

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 Registered Charity Number 1152825

Come along to our Annual General Meeting to hear about what we have been up to over the past year. The AGM will also be an opportunity to say thank you to all of our members, volunteers, staff and trustees for their ongoing support. We will also be launching our new strategy, which you helped us to create.

The AGM will be held at **The Vestry Hall, 338 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 3UD** from **11am to 1pm**. There will be Ghanaian street food available for lunch after the formal meeting is over – vegan and vegetarian options provided. If you have any access or dietary requirements please inform us by **19<sup>th</sup> October 2017**. You can RSVP here: <http://bit.ly/2fhkh5I>  
 Or contact Charlet on 0203 397 3119 or email [info@mertoncil.org.uk](mailto:info@mertoncil.org.uk)

All full members will receive a member pack in the post. This will include important documents. If you are a full member please bring your voting card with you as it will have your unique membership number on it and will be needed to vote. Our volunteers will be calling members to give a gentle reminder a few weeks before the AGM.

**We look forward to seeing you all there!**

☎ 020 3397 3119  
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 💻 [www.mertoncil.org.uk](http://www.mertoncil.org.uk)

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## An update on our current reduced service

As many of you may be aware, we are currently operating a reduced service and will not be accepting new referrals at this moment in time. This is largely due to capacity issues. We will keep you updated when things change but please bear with us.

Please take a look at the useful information section of our website for other local organisations that may be able to support you.

<http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/useful-information/>

## We are recruiting a new Advice and Advocacy Caseworker

Merton Centre for Independent Living (Merton CIL) is looking for an experienced Adviser to join our Advice and Advocacy Team. You will primarily be providing Benefits and Money Advice and Casework, but there will also be opportunities in Housing and Community Care.

This role is for 35 hours per week. **Closing date for applications is Monday 9 October at 11.59pm.** Interviews are expected to take place in the weeks commencing 16 October and/or 23 October.

You can download more information and the application pack from our website - <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/merton-cil-recruiting-for-an-a/>

Please email applications to [info@mertoncil.org.uk](mailto:info@mertoncil.org.uk)



## Exploring Independent Living With Focus 4 1

As you may remember, back in May, we cancelled our hustings events following the attack in Manchester and suspension of campaigning as a mark of respect. A lot of planning had gone in to our hustings. It was well advertised and we had a substantial number of RSVPs and it was kindly being hosted by Focus 4 1 at Vestry Hall. Therefore we felt as though we had to provide an alternative event in case people turned up. We had a few hours to make this happen. We decided to further explore Independent Living with Focus 4 1.

This was an opportunity for us to explore independent living and its importance with a group of individuals who could shed light from a mental health perspective. The assumption is often that independent living is only important to those with a physical or sensory impairment. This impromptu session dispelled that myth and brought a shared understanding that independent living was indeed important to us all.

The conversation was started with the concern that the call of a snap election would exclude some disabled people from participating and access needs might slip down the priority list. For some in the room this wasn't about physical access but support to discuss and explore what the parties were saying. This group were also particularly concerned about benefit changes, cuts to services and employment. It was extremely interesting to explore what independent living means to those who experience mental health issues. The discussion raised an important and often forgotten perspective. There were a number of shared experiences around dealing with stigmas and cuts to services which are key to maintaining wellbeing.

The group were unsettled by the level of change and lack of consultation. The changes implemented often meant an abrupt end to a service that worked well and no other support options provided. There was an overwhelming value placed upon peer support. Many shared the view that spaces such as Focus 4 1 are crucial in building confidence and helping people with mental health issues to get on. The experience of stigma was a shared point of emphasis. They felt as though this was an important issue that needs tackling. This conversation helped to remind us that there are still some very basic attitudes of prejudice and lack of awareness/understanding about disability and mental health that needs changing.

The nature of the conversations happening during the event remained supportive. When people spoke of personal experiences they were often followed

by a round of applause. It was felt that this kind of strength is what helped the individuals present to be strong and to deal with the negative stigma they spoke of. Another participant said since her stroke she never felt confident to speak in a group - the group then with lots of voices said but you are now! Another round of applause broke out with the comment "you are brave and confident to come and speak here".

Throughout the afternoon there was a unanimous feeling that the views and experiences being shared were non-party political. There was a collective feeling that all political parties need to take our issues more seriously. The event ended with an exhibition of Merton CIL's short film on independent living starring Edwina (you can watch the film here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i82ZDRquec4>) and musical pieces by Rocking Paddy (John Kelly). So even though the hustings event was cancelled, we managed to have some great conversations and exploring independent living is definitely important to everyone in Merton.



## Helping Disabled People Speak Up about the Regeneration of Eastfields, High Path, Ravensbury Estates

Merton Centre for Independent Living (Merton CIL) are doing some work with Clarion Housing Group (formerly Circle Housing) to support their disabled residents to speak up throughout the regeneration process of the Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury Estates. Merton CIL are supporting Clarion to hear from and consider the needs of disabled residents throughout the process. This includes people from across the full spectrum of Disability and includes disabled community language speakers and Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users.

Merton CIL are also looking at some Clarion's policies and procedures to highlight what else they might need to do to take on board the principles of Independent Living.

Merton CIL will also be setting up a number of focus groups and one-to-one interviews with disabled residents of Eastfields, High Path, and Ravensbury estates to gather your views and suggestions. These will take place later in the year. If you would like to take part in the discussions with Merton CIL, please contact Charlet at Merton CIL:

email: [info@mertoncil.org.uk](mailto:info@mertoncil.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 3397 3119

SMS/Text Message: 0744 936 2233

There is a BSL video available if you would like more information here:

<https://youtu.be/jMSHOUqfcek>

If you have any questions about the regeneration process at Eastfields, High Path or Ravensbury, please contact your Regeneration Manager, Donna, Doreen or Farrida:

Email: [mertonregen@clarionhq.com](mailto:mertonregen@clarionhq.com)

Telephone: 020 3784 5951 or SMS/Text message: 07584 365 629



## 2. News

### News Shorts

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

**Merton CIL Members Group Responds to Plans to Close Wimbledon Police Station:** Merton CIL's members group met recently to discuss plans to close Wimbledon Police Station. The group were not happy with the proposals and felt that the Mitcham Police Station was not as accessible as Wimbledon for disabled people. The group also raised concerns about some of the proposals to move more services online, as this can also be less accessible to disabled people. Our members also raised concerns about the nature of the consultation, whether it was genuine consultation, and the fact that some of the questions seemed somewhat leading.

You can have your own say on the plans until **6th October 2017** by going to this website

<https://consult.merton.gov.uk/kms/dmart.aspx?LoggingIn=tempVar&strTab=PublicDMart&noip=1>

**Universal Credit - What is Your Experience?:** Inclusion London are keen to hear about your experiences of Universal Credit. This could include your experience of the application process, the impact of being paid a month in arrears, the fact that there is no payment for the first seven days or any other information you would like to give. The Work and Pensions Select Committee of MPs is holding an inquiry on the roll out of Universal Credit and Inclusion London intends to send evidence to the inquiry. Your experience would help to inform our evidence. Please your feedback to

[Henrietta.Doyle@inclusionlondon.org.uk](mailto:Henrietta.Doyle@inclusionlondon.org.uk) by **10 October**.

More information about the inquiry is available

at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/inquiry/>

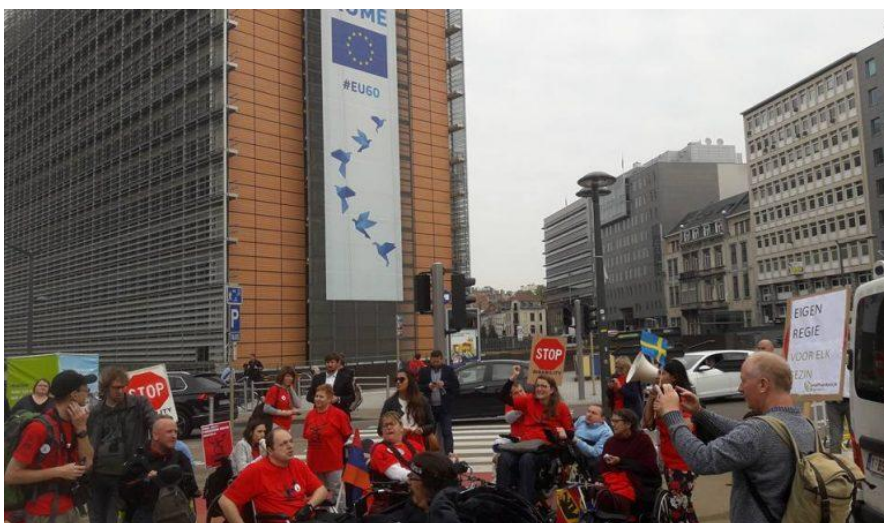
**A watershed moment for the Care Act?:** Does a recent High Court judgment raise hopes that the Care Act could start living up to its promise? Earlier this year the High Court used the Care Act to quash London Borough or Merton's decision to transfer a service user (JF) to a cheaper service. At the heart of the judgment was that the court could find no evidence of who actually made the decision to move JF's placement, when, within what policy or upon what evidence of need. The Care Act requires that decisions about resources are based on an assessment of needs to promote well-being. Merton Council have been told to revisit the assessment and do it lawfully. How will they set about this, and what lessons will all other councils learn from this judgment?

You can read the full story here:

<http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2017/07/12/watershed-moment-care-act/>

**New sexual health services for South West London:** From October Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust is providing new sexual health services across Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth. The services offer free and confidential advice and treatment across the full range of contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. There are six clinics across the three boroughs offering appointments six days a week including Saturday mornings. A full list of the clinics and booking details are available on [www.sexualhealthswl.nhs.uk](http://www.sexualhealthswl.nhs.uk)

## ENIL 2017 Freedom Drivers Stand Proud and Strong and Visible in Brussels



The European Network on Independent Living has closed its 8<sup>th</sup> Freedom Drive this month, bringing an end to a week of promoting independent living, peer support, protest and celebration of disability rights. The Freedom Drive has brought together around 300 independent living

activists from 19 countries, from as far East as Albania, to Norway in the North.

Freedom Drive is one of the key campaigns of the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) – held every two years since 2003. It provides supporters of the Independent Living Movement with the unique opportunity to meet MEPs and promote human rights issues, as well to share experiences and ideas with colleagues from around Europe. Freedom Drive has developed over the years and is now a large 4-day event, bringing together up to 300 people. It has a rich programme, including the ENIL General Assembly, a conference with sessions on multiple topics, a meeting of the ENIL Youth Network and the culmination – a noisy march to the European Parliament where Freedom Drivers meet with MEPs.

Among the main Freedom Drive demands this year were the end to institutionalisation of disabled people across Europe, access to personal assistance in all countries, full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the end to cuts to support services and benefits for disabled people.



The Freedom Drivers met with Members of the European Parliament, the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility Marianne Thyssen and other EU officials and organisations. One of the highlights of the week was a discussion on the right of disabled children and young people, and their families, to independent living, with a commitment of the Vice-President of the European Parliament Mairead McGuinness to ensure disabled children's voices are heard at EU level.

ENIL has paid tribute during the week to the founder of the Freedom Drive, the late Martin Naughton, and other heroes of the Independent Living movement, such as Peter Lambreghts, Debbie Jolly and Donal Toolan. It was, however, a week of disability pride, with many young disabled people joining the march for Independent Living through Brussels and other events. The new leaders of ENIL were also elected by the organisation's General Assembly, and will take the organisation forward as it embarks on the implementation of its 2018 – 2022 strategic plan.

Article reproduced with kind permission of ENIL. You can see the original here: <http://enil.eu/best-practices/enil-2017-freedom-drivers-stand-proud-strong-visible-brussels/>

## Thousands of Disabled People in Merton are Being Unfairly Denied Personal Independence Payments

Merton Centre for Independent Living research has shown that over 2500 Disabled People have already been denied PIP or had their benefit reduced, and thousands more are at risk.

Personal Independence Payments (PIP) is a benefit that helps with some of the extra costs caused by long term ill-health or disability. It is a replacement for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and has different eligibility criteria, ie it is the benefit which has changed, and not people's impairments.

At Merton CIL we have supported numerous people through the PIP benefits process. Based on our direct experience supporting local Disabled People, we gathered evidence and raised concerns about problems with the process in October 2016. This was picked up by MP for Mitcham and Morden, Siobhain McDonagh, and raised in Parliament. We also covered the issue in our Spring 2017 newsletter, which includes personal testimonies from some of our readers.

Following the release of new DWP statistics, we have been able to identify that over half of Disabled People in Merton who previously received DLA, are having their benefit reduced or losing it completely in the changeover to PIP. The impact on people having their PIP cut is huge, and could amount to several thousand pounds over a year, because people also lose their entitlement to other support like Blue Badge, or Carers Allowance for the person caring for them.

Our casework evidence has found that the process of assessing Disabled People for PIP is unfair. We have found that assessment centres are inaccessible; this includes centres which are physically inaccessible, have no disabled parking, or are as far away as Barking. We found that assessment centres are being deliberately overbooked, so Disabled People face long waits and last minute cancellations. One assessor told us she had 20 assessments on her list, but she could only do 6 in the time available. Finally, we found that there was a worryingly high number of inaccurate assessments where people were being awarded zero points at assessment, but then awarded 30 points if they appealed and went to tribunal. In fact, following a Freedom of Information request, Merton CIL has discovered that 77% of PIP appeals are overturned by Sutton Tribunal, which is significantly higher than the national average (65%). This means that although the DWP claimed people weren't eligible for PIP, the Tribunal awarded the benefit saying that the person had been entitled all along. This means that assessors are getting it wrong in over two thirds of cases.

Earlier this month, Merton CIL were given the opportunity to formally present our concerns to the Merton Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and we supported one of our service users to speak up about their experience too. Councillors were shocked by the report and experiences, making comments such as “we should challenge this”; “there is a harmful impact”; “its completely unacceptable”; “its wrong”. Representatives from DWP had decided not to attend the meeting so Councillors have agreed to work cross-party to urge DWP to attend the Panel and answer questions.

At Merton CIL we welcome the support of Merton Council to address this concerning issue, and also thank Citizen’s Advice Merton and Lambeth for attending the Scrutiny meeting and sharing their experiences. We further urge the Merton Council to inspect assessment centres and challenge issues around access and accuracy.

If any of our readers have been denied PIP, we encourage you to appeal the decision!

You can read our full report on PIP issues here: [\*\*Merton CIL Briefing on PIP Assessment Challenges\*\*](#)

You can read more about the Scrutiny Meeting here:

[\*\*https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=151&MIId=2797\*\*](https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=151&MIId=2797)

You can watch the video or read the transcript of PIP issues being mentioned in Parliament here:

[\*\*http://www.siobhainmcdonagh.org.uk/newsroom/news.aspx?p=105231\*\*](http://www.siobhainmcdonagh.org.uk/newsroom/news.aspx?p=105231)

You can read our spring 2017 Newsletter

here: [\*\*http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/news-2016/cil-matters-newsletter-issue-1/\*\*](http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/news-2016/cil-matters-newsletter-issue-1/)

## Taking Disabled people’s rights to Amnesty International

Emma Vogelmann (pictured on next page) writes about her experience with Amnesty International.

“As a disabled rights activist, you are used to fighting for your voice and concerns to be heard by others, particularly by others who can affect real change. So you

can imagine how surprised I was when I was asked to be on a panel of young activists at Amnesty International's International Council Meeting (ICM) in Rome!



Both Amnesty International and the disabled community recognise that Amnesty International does not yet take an active enough role in promoting and advocating for the rights of disabled people. When I met

with members of the International Secretariat before the ICM, I was told this was something Amnesty International was looking into changing but they currently lacked the expertise on how to do this. (Enter Emma!) It is because of my reputation as a knowledgeable and experienced young disabled rights activist that I was asked to be part of this incredible event. As Amnesty International operates on a global level, the timing was perfect as the UK has just been reviewed by the UN on how they are performing under the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities making these issues that much more relevant to this international audience. The findings of the unprecedented inquiry by the UN disability committee published at the end of last year reported that the threshold for "grave and systematic violations" of disabled people's rights had been met due to welfare reform. This latest routine examination by the UN resulted in the Chair of the disability committee telling the UK government their cuts have caused "human catastrophe". These issues I discussed came as a surprise to many people I talked to at the ICM.

My panel was on the Economic, Social and Cultural rights of young people and how we have encountered demonisation in our work. The other panellists were Daiene Mendes from Brazil, who spoke about her amazing human rights activism in the Favela in Brazil and the war on drugs, and Shaeera Kalla from South Africa, who is one of the student leaders of the movement to promote accessibility and affordability of higher education in South Africa and spoke about the change in society's and government's attitudes towards students. I spoke about the issues faced by young disabled people in the UK who have been impacted more than any other group by austerity measures and how this has led to a retrogression of our rights.

The panel was moderated by Benya Kraus from the USA making us an all-female panel of powerful young activists! One of the best aspects of the panel, was that



we all had such different backgrounds and areas of work yet we all faced similar opposition to what we are trying to achieve. The marginalised groups we work with have all been the targets of demonisation by society and by our respective governments and this made for a great panel discussion. Amnesty International are currently trying to promote the role of young people in their work so having

the panel on International Youth Day this sent a powerful message to the delegates that we are here and we are ready to continue fighting for our human rights.

At the ICM, a resolution was being put forward on the rights of disabled people and contained a few areas Amnesty International could work on. This made my role on the panel even more important as I was not only raising awareness but I was also trying to convince Amnesty International to take action with me. I was flown out to the amazing city of Rome knowing the ICM would be the perfect opportunity to raise the issues faced by the disabled community to an audience that have the power to support our rights.

I am so happy to say that at the first vote on the resolution, which was after my panel, the resolution was passed and my involvement on the panel was mentioned in the discussion. It is my hope that through research and consultations with experts in disabled rights, Amnesty International will gain a fuller idea of the issues disabled people face daily. So watch this space!"

Blog reproduced with the kind permission of lawyer, rights activist and writer Emma Vogleman <https://emmavogelmann.wordpress.com/>

## Disabled People at the UNCRPD examination of the UK Government in Geneva

The UN Disability Committee were clear and robust in their condemnation of the impact of austerity on Deaf and Disabled people and the UK Government's abject failure to implement the Convention and engage with Disabled People's Organisations.

Inclusion London's CEO Tracey Lazard and Campaigns and Policy Manager Ellen Clifford have recently returned from Geneva where, as part of the Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance, they gave evidence to the UN Committee on the Rights of



Persons with Disabilities. Tracey Lazard (pictured) said: "Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations and the thousands of Deaf and Disabled people our organisations work with can feel very proud at the contribution we made to the first examination by the UN Disability Committee of the UK Government's implementation of the UN

Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) that took place in Geneva recently.

"Unlike the UK Government who continue to deny our lived experience of increasing poverty and exclusion, massive cuts in support, punitive assessments regimes and the retrogression of our rights across every area of our lives, the UN Disability Committee were clear and robust in their condemnation of the impact of austerity on Deaf and Disabled people and the Government's abject failure to implement the Convention and engage with DDPOs.

"Chairperson Theresia Degener in her closing questions stated, "Evidence before us now and in our Inquiry procedure as published in our 2016 report reveals that social cut policies has led to human catastrophe in your country, totally neglecting the vulnerable situation people with disabilities find themselves in."



“The Committee also condemned the UK’s attempts to misrepresent the impact of policies through unanswered questions, misused statistics and a smoke screen of statements on policies and legislation which fail to implement the rights of Deaf and Disabled people in reality.

“We can feel very proud about the unity of voice and the quality of the evidence we presented to the Committee which was invaluable in helping the Committee reach its damning indictment of this Government’s track record and its disdain for Deaf & Disabled people and our Human Rights.

“We leave Geneva stronger, more united and more determined than ever to do all we can to protect and uphold our rights and all that our movement has achieved over the last 40 years.”

Inclusion London CEO Tracey Lazard was on Newsnight speaking about the UN’s damning verdict on the Government’s treatment of Disabled people, following the release of the UN Disability Committee’s Concluding Observations. You can watch the video here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=oN\\_eEvW-j24](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=oN_eEvW-j24)

Ellen Clifford, who was representing both Inclusion London and Disabled People against Cuts (DPAC), said: “We are all exhausted but delighted with how the week has gone. We felt that the CRPD committee listened to the evidence presented by the unprecedented number of DDPO representatives who attended the sessions and were able to see through the obfuscation and misrepresentations of information that the UK Government presented. While it is a shame that the Government continues to deny the existence of serious rights’ regressions and the brutal impact of their policies, it was inspiring to be part of the collective effort by Deaf and Disabled people across the UK to ensure our voices are heard.”

Ellen also spoke to RT UK and you can watch what she said here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTr3\\_wLWGPO&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTr3_wLWGPO&feature=youtu.be)

### **More about the UNCRPD**

Read the press release about the UN’s condemnation of the UK’s record on human rights here: [Press Release](#)

Read the UNCRPDs Concluding Observations and Recommendations here (word document): [Read the UN CRPD’s Concluding Observations here.](#)

Read news about the committee's public examination of the UK's progress in implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (UNCRPD) here:

**[UK faces UN examination: Government cuts caused 'human catastrophe' – Disability News Service](#)**

**[The Guardian – UN panel criticises UK failure to uphold disabled people's rights](#)**

**[Independent – UN denounces British government for failing to protect disabled peoples' rights](#)**

**[Channel 4 News – 'Disabled people suffering all over UK'](#)**

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## 3. Your Views

### What Independent Living Means to Me!

Independence and what it really means to disabled people, is an issue we have been keen to talk to people about. It came up as a key issue at last year's My Voice Matters event too. We have recently been speaking to members, volunteers and service users to explore what independent living means to them. Please read their short stories below, in their own words.

#### 1. "I have decided that getting involved is better than not contributing at all"

As a child I knew that to non-disabled children I was different but I don't ever remember feeling my life prospects would be affected by this. I went through disabled education with my friends quite happily and didn't really think about mainstream. College was my first real exposure to non-disabled students. I had very little interaction with them outside of the classroom and spent most of my time outside it with my carer. Although I'm relatively quiet, there probably would have been socialising with them if not for my disability. After 2 years of college my exam results were quite disappointing. I decided that looking for work was probably my best option. Remploy, a disability employer was the first the place I tried and after one meeting nobody got in touch with me again. I then tried to find training or work in any number of places, I struggle to remember them all now. By the time I reached a disability employment adviser my desire and enthusiasm to be part of society had been exhausted. I was ready to quit looking for work and stay at home. Which is exactly what I did for many years.

I was very happy at home, living my life to my schedule and nobody else's. However, my oldest sister thought she knew better. She constantly pestered me to pursue education, work or employment opportunities. I consistently ignored her, but eventually she decided on a plan without my permission. She invited Tara Flood, Director at Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) to our house to discuss the possibility of me volunteering. I was very angry when I found out that she had done this, but there wasn't anything I could do. Tara was very nice and after I had stopped being angry, decided to volunteer. The experience was a

good one but I eventually wanted somewhere more local, and that ended up being Merton CIL.

When I decided to volunteer at MCIL my expectations of what I was going to do were fairly limited, possibly just doing some admin. However, after over a year and a half of volunteering, it has been more interesting than I could have ever imagined. I have been extremely involved in so many aspects of Merton CIL. Although I never hesitated to put myself forward to get involved in projects and tasks, in the back of my mind was the chance that I might not contribute enough, relative to others. My lack of Independent Living experience and disability campaigning and disability issues being the main reasons. But now I don't think too much about this difference between me and other Merton CIL members. I have decided that getting involved is better than not contributing at all. I've gained a lot of knowledge about independence issues, although I don't have to face them at this moment. The situation in my home life has remained the same with me living with my parents. I take for granted what many others struggle for. I now have a carer for a couple of days a week. My time at Merton CIL has taught me to at least begin to prepare for the future where I'll have ever increasing responsibility for my own life. This doesn't mean that family won't still play a role.

## 2. Turning Points by Elaine Tilby

I always felt different to others and was a very nervous and emotional child. I travelled in my childhood due to my father's job – this may have helped my open minded attitude. In New Zealand I was told that "my dad was taking jobs away". I was on the receiving end of these accusations from other children. It had a deep impact on me. But it was an experience that ultimately enabled me to empathise with others who were being targeted in later life.

Much later on I lived in a refuge with my child. I had to fight for housing and my rights. I fell through many loopholes but falling through them made me want to make sure others didn't. I use my experience to signpost others to organisations and people that can help them. I became very aware of the ignorance of others – especially employers. For instance, some sprays affect my asthma, bosses used to ask me to do more than my body could cope with, there was absolutely no understanding of my mental health condition, what I could do and what I couldn't do. It made me want to raise arguments around these issues. I refuse to use public transport on my own because of the way others have abused me because of the differences they can see. I really want to raise awareness of disability issues and I always emphasise the importance of education.

### 3. Independence and what it means to me by Rhianne

To live an independent life is to be able to do stuff yourself and do it without restrictions. It also means being able to ask for help or support if you need it. This can be travelling around how you prefer and living somewhere suitable to you. It also means being treated equally, being shown respect and being treated like a person.

## Get involved in our Independent Living Competition!

We are launching an exciting art competition to celebrate disabled people and independent living. The competition is open to any disabled person from Merton.



Our competition is to find twelve images or illustrated poems that will be used to create Merton CILs 2018 Calendar.

Entrants are asked to create an original piece or artwork inspired by what independent living means to them. It would be great if you could also provide us with a brief explanation as to what independence means to you.

Artwork can be created using any materials and can include photographs.

We will also accept digitally created posters and poems that are illustrated.

There will be prizes for all winning entrants. Please keep an eye on our social media and website to find out more.

All artwork is to be sent to Merton CIL via post or email by **26<sup>th</sup> November 2017**. More information can be found on our website –


<https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/getting-involved/independent-living-competition/>

**Good luck creating!**

## 4. Dates for the diary


### Annual General Meeting

Please see more information on Page 4. It would be great to see you all there



**Merton Centre  
for  
Independent  
Living**  
**CIL**

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017



**Monday 30th October 2017 from 11am-1pm**  
**Vestry Hall, 338 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 3UD**

Come along to this years AGM, meet staff and trustees and hear about what we have been up to over the past year. We will also be sharing our new strategy, developed with help from our members.

Please RSVP using the contact details or link below.  
 If you have dietary/access needs please inform us by  
**Oct 19th 2017 - <http://bit.ly/2fhkh5I>**

☎ 020 3397 3119

📱 07449 362 233 (SMS)

✉ [info@mertoncil.org.uk](mailto:info@mertoncil.org.uk)

💻 [www.mertoncil.org.uk](http://www.mertoncil.org.uk)

🐦 @MertonCIL

📘 Mertoncil

🗣 Merton.cil

**There will be Ghanaian street food available for lunch! Vegan/Vegetarian options**

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### Members Group Meetings

Come along to our Members Group Meeting and share your views - 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 5<sup>th</sup> October - Talking about Sexual Health:** Merton Public Health would like us to inform our members about changes to local sexual health services. They would like to know what disabled people would like to see in

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addition to the new services. They are also keen for suggestions on how sexual health services could better meet our needs. We are seeking views on; how to improve access for all, preventing sexual ill-health, sex and relationship education, role of primary care, linking sexual health with wider health issues such as mental health, substance misuse, and child sexual exploitation.

**Thursday 9th November - National Stress Awareness Day:** The best way to celebrate Stress Awareness Day is to take the opportunity to remove the stress from your life for the day. Take the time to examine your life and find out where all the stressors lie, and start looking into taking steps to remove them or find ways to mitigate them. Or, we hope to talk about Merton's planned **Disability Strategy**. We are waiting for confirmation that the council want to talk to us about this.

## Volunteer Support Group Meetings

**Volunteers Only:** All Volunteer Support Groups meet on the **3<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto:inclusion@mertoncil.org.uk)

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October – Confidentiality Training

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> Nov – From Phone to Charity Log - A review and a training update

## We Support National Hate Crime Awareness Week

Merton CIL want people to come forward and report hate crime. However, hate crimes against disabled people are almost all under the radar. We are supporting National Hate Crime Awareness Week to help make more people aware of hate crime and hate incidents, and find out how to report it and stop it.

### What is hate crime?

A hate crime is when someone commits a crime against you because of your disability, gender, identity, race, sexual orientation, religion or any other difference. Hate crime could be bullying, harassment, offensive language,

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damaging property, or physical violence. Being targeted because of who you are or who they think you are is a crime.

**Please tell someone!**

Hate crime is not ok. You might want to shrug it off if it happens to you. But if you report it, it can be investigated and stopped from getting worse. You can report anything happening to you or to someone else. Even if you are not sure if it is a crime, you can still report it.

Merton CIL’s Chief Executive, Lyla Adwan-Kamara said:

“We have been working with disabled survivors of hate crime, including survivors of physical and financial abuse, to build up their confidence to stand up to the perpetrators. It can take many hours of support before people feel able to take action and to approach the police, and our team are able to help them with that process.”



If you want to find out more, Merton CIL, Victim Support and other community groups will be out and about during hate crime awareness week with the Merton Police Reassurance Bus, so come along and say ‘hello’.

Please see below for the Reassurance bus schedule:

Day	Time and Venue
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> October	09:00 - Civic Centre - Victim Support bus on piazza 10:00 - Pollards Hill Horizon Centre
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> October	10:00 - Phipps Bridge Community Centre
Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> October	10:00 (All Day) Vestry Hall
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> October	10:00 - Wimbledon Town Centre Piazza – outside Morrisons
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> October	10:00 - Wimbledon Town Centre Piazza –outside Morrisons





Remember, if you are in danger ring the police on 999. If you want to talk to the police about bullying and harassment that has already happened, ring 101. SMS text users: text 18001 101

To register for 999 text service for Deaf people, text 'register' to 999 and you will get a text back to tell you what to do.

If you don't want to contact the police straight away and you would like support to make a report, there are lots of organisations who can help you. You can get in touch with Merton CIL, or you can find other organisations to support you on Merton Council's website <http://www2.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communitysafety/hatecrime.htm>

## 5. A final word

### Independence by Debby Cross

Yes, you've read this wonderful poem before, but isn't it perfect for this issue of CIL Matters?

**I**ndividuals

**N**eeding to

**D**evelop and

**E**mbrace

**P**ersonal goal/aims

**E**nthusiastically with

**N**ecessary support

**D**eveloping worthwhile

**E**njoyable positive connections

**N**OT

**C**risis support but

**E**ngaging support ALL year around!

Working with people to create the life THEY wish for!