



**Merton Centre
for
Independent
Living**

CIL

Merton Centre for Independent Living

ANNUAL REVIEW 2014-15

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Merton CIL is a company limited by guarantee.
Company Number—7645926 Registered Charity Number—1152825



Picture 1: Trustee Sarah having fun at our Annual General Meeting 2014

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About Us

Merton CIL is a rapidly growing, user-led disabled people's organisation run by disabled people, for disabled people, across the full spectrum of disability. Our steering group was set up in 2008; we were incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 2011 becoming a registered charity in 2013. In 2014-15 we employed 4 part-time staff to deliver our services

Our Aims

- To promote the independence and inclusion of disabled and deaf people in Merton
- Challenge discrimination facing disabled and deaf people in Merton
- Encourage disabled and deaf people and supporters to achieve change locally

Ensuring our work delivers our aims

We review our aims, objectives and activities each year. This review looks at what we achieved and the outcomes of our work in the previous 12 months.

Contact Details

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Registered Company number 7645926 (England and Wales)
Registered Charity number 1152825

Chair's Report



Picture 2: Chair Roy delivering a petition against cuts to services to the Council, with trustees and volunteers

The past year has been one of consolidation where our services have gained a good reputation and the CIL has had some success in expressing the views of disabled people in Merton as you will see in the following pages of this report

Given the current economic climate we owe much to our CEO who has been very successful in obtaining considerable funds which will see an expansion of our activities over the next three years. For further details see our acknowledgements page. I would also like to thank the hard work and commitment of our staff and volunteers without whom we would have achieved far less.

Our successful AGM last September at which 60 people were present saw 3 new directors elected to the board Charles Barraball, Anita Jones and Fiona Ringwood joined us as our new treasurer. Finally let me pay tribute to all my fellow directors who have contributed their time and expertise to help making Merton CIL a force to be reckoned with.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roy Benjamin".

Roy Benjamin, Chair of Merton CIL

Meet the trustees!



Roy Benjamin, Chair, has worked in the social care field for longer than he can remember, which is not long these days, and for the last 30 years has been an ardent campaigner for equalities



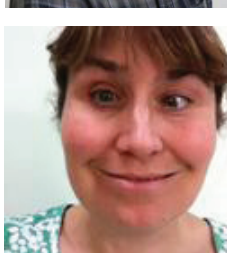
John Kelly, Vice Chair, has over 20 years experience of working in the disability and independent living movement, and is a fantastic musician



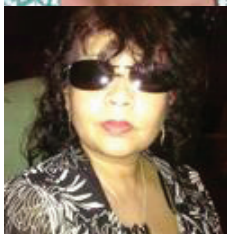
Fiona Ringwood, Treasurer, has 25 years experience in accounting and bookkeeping, and is a carer.



Charles Barraball is a stroke survivor who has worked with Merton CIL as a peer supporter since 2012, and joined as a Trustee last year. He attends the members group and assists at events, whenever possible.



Claire Benjamin is a visually impaired mum of 2 disabled children who has lived in Merton for 15 years



Martia Bevan has a background in Psychology, Counselling and Disability support in the public and voluntary sector



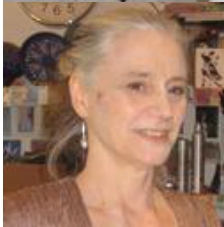
Slim Flegg is extremely active locally having been a local councillor and Mayor in the past, and helped found both Go4M and Merton CIL



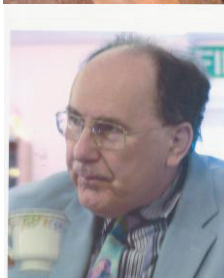
Sarah Henley lives in Merton and brings her sense of fun and adventure to every board meeting!



Anita Jones is a volunteer, service user and carer with a background in production and fashion



Carole Mathurin's family have given her many years of experience of disabilities to call on which have informed her awareness of discrimination and the need for continuing campaigning for equalities



Nick Pizey has over 20 years of experience with national disability organisations and is involved with local healthcare organisations



Gina Vettese has been disabled since she was 13 years old and has been part of the Go4M and with Merton CIL from when it was just a steering group, as well as being a talented seamstress

Merton CIL Headlines

12
Wonderful Trustees steered us.



58 New members joined us



5 Great services delivered: Advice, Advocacy, Peer Support, Volunteering, and promoting the Voice of Disabled People

4 Fantastic staff made it all happen



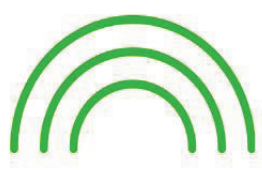
"Merton CIL's Service is..."

There to help people to get back on their feet again"



"People can't manage their lives alone without a little push –"


when depression hits you, your family can't help, you just see them as a big nag, you need outside help like Merton CIL"



550

550 sessions of support delivered across our services



 **300**

Disabled people supported in 2014-15

"Merton CIL's Service is... very supportive for people having difficulties"



4

Brilliant events including our Evening's Entertainment and AGM, My Voice Matters: My Inclusion Matters, Panel Discussion on the Experience of Disabled People from BME groups, Quiz your Candidate General Election Event




£282,000

Gained by local disabled people through our support ¹

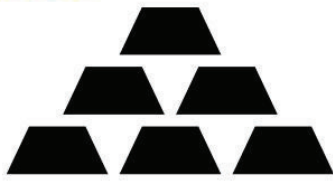


5 out of 5

Over half of service users give us top marks for satisfaction ²

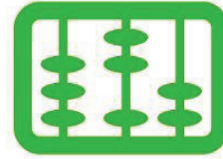
1. Information correct August 2015 and reflects confirmed (rounded) figures only. The true figure is likely to be much higher.
 2. We conducted feedback with a random sample of service users who answered the question, "Thinking about the reason why you got in touch with us, how well did we deal with that? Using this scale, 1 means not at all and 5 means very well"

"Merton CIL's Service is... Worth their weight in gold"



85%

Of service users who achieved what they wanted to³



"Merton CIL's Service is... a great service that helps solve problems"

★ "I do feel more confident now after seeing how the Advisor dealt with things and gave me back up and gave me an extra push to speak for myself and to apply to what I was entitled to. I think I could do things myself right now, but things might change as I am schizophrenic. I am dealing with hospital appointments myself now" ★

3 in 10

Service Users reported an improvement in their confidence



"The cancer has spread and the medical team don't know if they can save me. But I have a bit more confidence because I am more prepared now"



19%

of Service Users reporting an improvement in their housing⁴



1 in 7

Service Users reported an improvement in their health⁴



"They helped a lot, very professional and quick"

100%



of Service Users would recommend Merton CIL's services⁵



600 hours

of voluntary support given to Merton CIL⁶



3 - Service users who answered the question, "Did you feel you achieved what you wanted using the service?"

4 - Service users who answered "Has there been any improvement for you in any of the following areas? Housing, Confidence, Health"

5 - Service users who answered "Would you recommend this MCIL service to someone else?"

6 - This figure excludes the time trustees spent on Governance

Thank You!

Merton CIL gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organisations in 2014-15



Circle Housing Merton Priory



Merton Partnership



London Borough of Merton



Trust For London



The Clothworkers' Foundation



South Yorkshire Community Foundation (AESSEAL Charitable Trust)



Sport Relief Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund



Wimbledon District Nursing and Midwifery Benevolent Society

Wimbledon Foundation

We have also received very generous in-kind support from individuals and organisations including over 800 hours of support from our board and volunteers

My Voice Matters: My Inclusion Matters



Picture 3: Graphic Facilitator Sandra Howgate captures our thoughts at My Voice Matters: My Inclusion Matters 2014

'My Voice Matters: My Inclusion Matters' was the third annual debate hosted by Merton Centre for Independent Living held on December 3rd, 2014. The aim of the event was to explore issues which our members and services users have highlighted during the past year, and to work together to identify potential solutions. The previous event, in 2013, set our organisational priorities for the next 3-5 years.

Mayor of Merton, Councillor Agatha Akyigyina opened the event. Madam Mayor acknowledged disabled people's concerns when she pointed out that "in the last Residents' Survey, disabled people scored the Council less well than non-disabled people on almost every measure, including on how well the council is listening to your views."

Attendees then heard from Kris Witherington, Consultation and Community Engagement Manager for Merton Council. Kris said that the Council has 50 to 100 consultations every year. However, attendees at the event felt that disabled people weren't being given an equal opportunity to engage with the Council and respond to consultations.

Attendees felt that on any decision affecting them, they should be consulted in a way they could access. This means:

- using clear language
- having enough time to contribute
- speak to disabled people directly, not just voluntary organisations
- use a range of formats and approaches from focus groups to easy read questionnaires. Not everyone can fill out an online survey!

Attendees reminded us of the principle “nothing about us, without us” and pointed out that disabled people, not the council, are the experts on issues affecting our lives. Kris later tweeted “Clear from the audience we need to work harder on engaging disabled people.”

Headlines from My Voice Matters

- Event opened by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Agatha Akyigyina
- 69 people attended
- 60 Tweets during the day from attendees
- 10 brilliant speakers
- 4 amazing workshop facilitators
- 3 lovely new members
- 2 BSL interpreters
- 2 wonderful volunteers
- Experiences captured by 1 great graphic facilitator!

One of the highlights of the day was the section on ‘Our Stories. Disabled People Tell it How it Is’. Four Merton CIL members agreed to take the microphone and talk about their experiences of the four topics of the day. These topics were inclusion and access in Housing, Employment, Health and the built Environment.

Following up from the speakers, these themes were explored in workshops and some suggestions made for improvements to these areas where inclusion and access is poor.

As a result of the input from our members, service users and supporters, we reviewed and updated our Strategic Plan. Some of the key areas we

have worked on in 2014-15, in addition to delivering our core services, has been to promote the voice of disabled people in:

- Responding on behalf of members to several national consultations including:
 - planned changes on Capital Call,
 - the Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance shadow report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
 - Personal Independence Payment Independent Review
 - Closure of the Local Welfare Assistance Fund
 - Children and young people's mental health and well-being taskforce
- Giving formal responses and supporting members to respond to local consultations including
 - Merton Adult Education consultation and commissioning
 - Planned cuts of £14 million over 4 years to Adult Social Care
- Reviewing the performance of aids, adaptations and repairs at Circle Housing Merton Priory CHMP)
- Supporting CHMP to develop residents survey on the impact of Welfare Reform
- Working with Merton Police Service, the Safer Neighbourhood Board, and members to highlight issues around Disability Hate Crime
- Accessing democracy through access audits of polling stations, voter registration, and quiz your candidate hustings events ahead of the General Election 2015

Future Activities

Our plans over the next 12-36 months are shaped by the views of our members, service users, and local disabled people at events like My Voice Matters. We are very fortunate to have secured support from Big Lottery Fund, London Borough of Merton and Henry Smith Charity to deliver our plans including:

- Consolidating and scaling up our Advice, Advocacy, Peer Support and Volunteer Training and Opportunities services
- Tackling disability hate crime
- Addressing access and planning issues
- Supporting disabled people to be heard

Merton CIL Advice Service Case Study



Picture 4: This photo is posed by a model, copyright Photosymbols

Mr Jones¹ is single, he lives alone but has 8 grown up children. Unfortunately, none of his children are in contact with him. At the beginning of our support for Mr Jones, there was one daughter that seemed to be in touch with him, but over the course of time she became unresponsive and stopped contact with her father.

Mr Jones is a is very lovely, bubbly and a cheerful man. He is also triple stroke survivor.

This means he struggles a lot with everyday tasks, he has memory issues, and his care needs are high. Mr Jones was in a situation where he was unable to keep on top of his bills because he struggled to open and read his post, and this support was not included in his care package.

At the time of the referral from another local organisation, his whole financial situation was in a shambles. He was on the verge of losing his property even though he only had a small outstanding mortgage. He did not know what bills are being paid and was struggling to understand his situation.

With support from Merton CIL's advisor, he contacted his lender to sort out his mortgage. The advisor also supported him to sort out his benefits. Mr Jones had been receiving DLA (Disability Living Allowance)

¹ Not his real name

which was time-restricted. He had received a renewal form, however, as he was unable to read or understand it and he had no one to help him with the post he never renewed the claim, and his DLA stopped. Our advisor supported him to make a PIP claim (the replacement benefit for DLA) and accompanied him to his medical assessment because on the day he was supposed to attend, his carer didn't turn up and he wasn't able to get to the assessment centre on his own.

Happily, Mr Jones was awarded PIP at the enhanced rate and his claim was backdated to 2013 when his DLA had originally lapsed. His benefit is now being paid regularly which has made it easier for Mr Jones to manage his other bills. The advisor also supported him with an EDF grant which paid off gas and electricity debts of nearly £3,000.

Mr Jones has also been supported to review his care package which was inadequate and needed amendments; things like help with opening the post were not included in his support and that led to him nearly losing his home. Mr Jones is still waiting to hear whether that support will be made available by Merton Council.



Picture 5: This photo is posed by models, copyright Photosymbols

Merton CIL Advocacy Service Case Study

Mrs White² is in her late 50's, a single mother of two older children, one of whom is no longer in contact with her. She was renting privately and claiming Housing Benefit. She was re-assessed by a Healthcare Professional on her eligibility for ESA which she had been claiming for several years. Mrs White later reported to us that she was told by the assessor only to answer yes or no to the questions asked in the assessment. She said that being treated in that way really knocked her confidence and meant she wasn't able to properly explain her situation.

The assessor's report meant that DWP decided that Mrs White was not eligible for ESA and her benefit was stopped. She has scored zero points on the assessment.

She was told to apply for JSA (Jobseekers Allowance) but when she went to the JobCentre, they told her she should be applying for ESA, not JSA. Mrs White was confused and did not know what she was meant to do, since she was told he could no longer claim ESA, and told not to claim JSA. So she asked for a Mandatory Reconsideration, however, the decision not to award her ESA was upheld.

Because Merton Council were told by the DWP that her benefits had been stopped, the Council also stopped Mrs White's Housing Benefit and sent her a change of circumstances form.

Over this period, Mrs White's physical health and mental health deteriorated due to anxiety over the loss of benefits. She developed depression and relapsed into her former alcohol addiction.

After several months of not receiving any benefits, she had built up rent arrears because her Housing Benefit had been stopped, and she hadn't seen the change of circumstances form from the Council. An order of possession was made on her home by her landlord.

When Mrs White came to Merton CIL she said she felt really distressed and didn't know where to turn for help. Our advocate helped her to fill in an appeal form for ESA. She was awarded temporary ESA until her appeal was heard at the courts.

² Not her real name

Our advocate supported Mrs White to make a homeless application, which was initially turned down. She was also supported to reclaim Housing Benefit, which was also initially turned down. She then received a Recovery Action Letter from the Council due to Council Tax arrears, as her Council Tax Benefit was automatically stopped when the Housing Benefit was stopped. This added to her stress and anxiety.

Four months after the eviction order, and the day before the ESA appeal hearing, Mrs White's application for Housing Benefit was finally accepted and arrears of over£3,000 were paid to the landlord.

We helped Mrs White prepare for the ESA appeal hearing by looking at the types of questions she would be asked. Mrs White asked her advocate to help her remember the key points she wanted to make, so we wrote the points down and brought them to the appeal. Mrs White decided that at the beginning of the appeal hearing she would explain that she suffers with depression and anxiety, and may find some of the questions difficult to understand.

She successfully appealed the decision not to award her ESA and the court gave her 30 points, compared to the zero points previously awarded by the assessor. However, the victory was bittersweet as she had been evicted from her home that morning, and had nowhere to sleep that night.

Merton Council declined to review the homelessness decision. Their letter suggested Mrs White couldn't be that depressed because she wasn't getting medication for it. However, the lack of medication was due to her alcohol addiction, for which she was attending the Drug and Alcohol Clinic.

Mrs White then went off the radar for five months. When she came back to Merton CIL, she had been rough sleeping, which had affected her health. Mrs White turned down a YMCA tenancy due to fears of exposure to drugs and alcohol. She has now been supported to apply for sheltered accommodation.

Merton CIL Volunteering Case Study



Picture 6: This photo is posed by a model, copyright Photosymbols

Ali³ came to Britain having had to flee torture. His experiences meant that he had lost the confidence to assert his personality and had become deskilled.

We met Ali when he attended our volunteer training course, and he went on to support us in admin-reception work, becoming our most regular volunteer, as well as attending the regular Members Group.

Ali says "I remember when I came to the Disability Equalities Course I felt really frustrated and isolated. I had been applying for work without success.

Merton CIL have helped me to improve my self confidence. I feel as if I am doing something positive and engaging in society. Merton CIL give

³ Not his real name

me good feelings about myself. I have learned that I am happy to help others. I believe in Merton CIL because they help people like myself who are vulnerable.

The training I have done has been useful. Going to the members group meetings have given me a clearer understanding about disability and how our communities can work together and care for each other. I have a keener awareness of British values from going to the AGM and hustings. I have seen how organisations work and how candidates for parliament have to be accountable.

Working as a volunteer Admin Receptionist as meant improving my communication skills especially over the phone where using English as a second language was difficult for me. This is much easier now.”

Ali is much valued and trusted by Merton CIL as an organisation and by individuals in the staff team. The staff team respond to him by asking him to do things that may be outside his comfort zone (areas of experience) but which he will engage in. As well as working on reception, he has capably helped out at events. Ali is now talking about moving on.

“I feel much better now. I am ready to look for a job. I couldn’t really think when I tried before. I couldn’t focus. Now I feel far less disabled. I can get out and I feel useful.”

We have linked him in with the Fayre and Square volunteer shop in Centre Court, Wimbledon, who will interview him soon. His primary past experience is in retail. Fayre and Square will offer him a way back in. This will be a major step for him as previous retail experience in the UK had exposed him to bullying. Fayre and Square, whilst a stepping point, will provide greater security.

Ali will be very much missed around the office at Merton CIL, but as a member of the organisation, we know that he will still be involved in the future.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR YEAR ENDED MARCH 31 2015^{2a}

	Note	Un- restricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2015 £	Total Funds 2014 £
Incoming Resources	2b				
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities	3a	5,000	86,200	91,200	63,929
Voluntary income	3b	72	-	72	624
Fundraising Income	3c	261	-	261	242
Other Income	3d	1,940	-	1,940	151
Total Incoming Resources		7,273	86,200	93,473	64,947
Resources Expended	2c				
Charitable Activities		-	93,847	93,847	50,932
Cost of Fundraising		-	152	152	259
Governance Costs	4i	-	1,888	1,888	1,973
Total Resources Expended		-	95,887	95,887	52,964
Net Incoming Resources		7,273	(9,687)	(2,414)	11,983
Transfer of Funds	3e	416	(416)	-	-
Total Funds Brought Forward	3f	2,034	26,320	28,354	16,372
Total Funds Carried Forward	3g	9,723	16,217	25,940	28,354

There are no recognised gains and losses other than those in the statement of financial activities. Therefore no statement of total recognised gains and losses has been prepared. All the above amounts relate to continuing activities. The notes on pages 13-17 form part of these accounts, and more detailed accounts are available on request or on our website www.mertoncil.org.uk

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31 2015

1. These Notes form part of the financial statements.

2. Accounting Policies

2a Basis of Accounting: The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, and in compliance with 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice 2005 (revised 2008)' ("the SORP").

2b Income: from grants, donations and contributions represents the amounts receivable in respect of the year.

2c Expenditure: is recognised in the year in which it is incurred.

2d Fixed Assets should be capitalised and written off over their useful lives on a straight line basis if their purchase value is over £1,000.

2e Voluntary Help: No amounts have been included in these financial statements to reflect the value of services provided free of charge to the charity by volunteers.

2f Pension Costs and other post-retirement benefits: The Company does not currently contribute to any pension scheme.

3. Income

3a Incoming Resources from Charitable Activity means the grants and fees received on the understanding that they will be used to undertake activities to further the charity's objects.

3b Voluntary Income means donations, grants given with no expectation of a service in return.

3c Fundraising Income means various fundraising activities such as events, charity shops, catalogues, sales of merchandise, etc.

3d Other income is earned interest and event facilitated income.

3e Transfer of Funds: Funds remaining at end of projects moved to unrestricted funding with permission.

3f Funds brought forward means funding kept from 2013-14 for use in 2014-15.

3g Funds carried forward means funding reserved for 2015-16

3h The organisation has taken advantage of the exemption in Financial Reporting Statement No. 1 from producing a cash flow statement on the grounds that it is a small company.

4. Expenditure

4a No trustee or any other person related to a trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the Charity during the year.

4b The Trustees have complied with the duty in Section 4 of the Charities Act 2006 to have regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charities Commission.



Picture 7: Dave supports the member-led #NelsonSays campaign against cuts to Adult Social Care in December 2014



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 - Peer Support Programme
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)
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 www.mertoncil.org.uk

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Funded By:



LOTTERY FUNDED

Merton CIL is a company limited by guarantee. Company Number 7645926
Registered Charity Number 1152825