



Merton CIL's Impact on Merton Council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy

May 2024

Last October, [Merton CIL responded to Merton Council's public consultation on their draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.](#)

The following month, our Policy and Campaigns Manager, Pippa Maslin, met with the Council's Equalities and Community Cohesion Lead to discuss the suggestions that we had made.

Last month, the final version of the Strategy was published, and we are happy to report that many of our ideas have been incorporated.

We are particularly pleased that the Council would like to:

- Establish a Disability Forum to shape and influence Council policies and services.
- Improve Council services and communications to make them more accessible for Disabled people.
- Ensure that new housing developments achieve the highest standards in terms of accessibility and inclusivity.
- Make public spaces accessible for all.
- Increase Disabled people's access to sport and other physical activities in the borough.

Coproduction with Deaf and Disabled People

What we said

We reminded the Council that our members, service users, staff and trustees are well-placed to help them to, firstly, improve their understanding of the issues faced by Deaf and Disabled residents and, secondly, develop their services to meet differing needs. We emphasised

that Deaf and Disabled people should be involved in designing and evaluating the policies and services that affect our lives, as we are experts by experience.

What the Council promises to do

'Key activity: Initiate and develop a Disability Forum with community representation to shape and influence policy and service delivery, especially in terms of accessibility.

Intended outcome: Improved accessibility for Disabled residents; enhanced representation and inclusion of disability on key policies and service delivery and design.' p.24

Accessible Housing and Public Spaces

What we said

We pointed out that Merton needs more accessible housing for Disabled people. According to the London Plan, at least 10% of new build homes should be 'wheelchair accessible or adaptable' and at least 90% should be 'accessible and adaptable'. However, the data available for our borough indicates that these targets have been missed.

We drew attention to the excellent work of our Access Champions – a growing group of Disabled residents united by the aim to make Merton as accessible as possible – and provided examples of the issues that matter to them and their campaigning successes.

What the Council promises to do

'Key activity: Ensure new housing developments achieve the highest standards of accessibility and inclusive design, and for the public realm to be accessible and usable for all.

Intended outcome: Ensure that regeneration developments include opportunities for first class homes in which residents can age well, and which can adapt to meet emerging care needs, and there are good

quality homes for those with disabilities and mental health conditions.’
p.19

Accessible Council Services and Communications

What we said

We highlighted the difficulties faced by some of our members and service users when trying to navigate the Council’s website, and the fact that about a fifth of Disabled adults do not use the internet at all, meaning that they cannot access some services and communications at all.

What the Council promises to do

‘Key activity: Review of Council phone line with an accessibility lens to improve access for Disabled residents.

Intended outcome: Improved accessibility for Disabled residents to Council telephone line.’ p.25

‘Key activity: Conduct accessibility review of Council services and communications to ensure improved access for Disabled residents.

Intended outcome: Improvements in accessibility of Council services and communications.’ p.32

‘Mainstreaming disability awareness and accessibility across Council services and communications is key to the Strategy. People living with a physical disability, learning disability or mental health condition can face additional barriers, discrimination, and challenges in their lives from people and wider society. The UK Disability Survey (2021) noted that unsurprisingly, accessibility challenges extend beyond the home, to public buildings and spaces. These findings, as well as vast and extensive research on the issue, highlight the need to make accessing public services, including online services, as smooth and easy as possible. As a council, we want to contribute to enhancing accessibility for our residents in Merton.’ p.9

'Data from the Office of National Statistics on internet users in 2020 has shown that 19% of Disabled adults do not use the internet; digital inclusion must also be underpinned by accessibility. As a Council, we acknowledge the need to communicate with residents in an inclusive manner to ensure access to information and services. Avoiding further exclusion of digitally excluded households and individuals will be central to our approach to this work.' p.14

"Merton CIL is glad that the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy incorporates many of the suggestions that we made during the public consultation stage last year. We see clear aims to improve the lives of Disabled people in the borough. We hope that the Council are open to working with us and other relevant organisations to make these aims a reality."

Pippa Maslin, Policy & Campaigns Manager at
Merton CIL

