

PRESS RELEASE: Local Disabled People Set the Agenda and Say "My Future Matters!"

19/12/2016



Photo: My Voice Matters attendees deep in discussion

Over 40 disabled people and supporters attended our annual "My Voice Matters" event on 8th December and told Merton CIL what they want us to focus on over the next few years. One attendee said it was "good to hear disabled people speak for themselves."

Feedback from the event was really positive with people highlighting the importance of Merton CIL's current services, as well as asking us to do even more going forward!

In particular, people wanted us to build on our current services and offer more long-term and day to day support, in addition to our core work on benefits, community care, and housing. People wanted more help accessing health care and attending health appointments, and more support for mental health service users who have seen a cut in services in Merton over the past few years.

Merton CIL has been piloting support for disabled people who have experienced Hate Crime, and attendees at My Voice Matters really wanted this work to continue.

People talked about wanting support to attend the JobCentre and they asked Merton CIL to work with employers to support and retain disabled staff. They also asked us to help disabled people who employ personal assistants.

Young disabled people were identified as a key group of people who Merton CIL should be talking to and working with, and there were lots of good ideas to support young disabled people to be more independent and live full lives.

Attendees at the event were really interested in another pilot project which Merton CIL has been working on with Merton Seniors Forum, "Dignity in Care". People wanted us to set up a programme of inspections at residential care homes, train care staff, and support residents of care homes to speak up.

People had lots to say about access to services, buildings and transport too, with many sharing experiences of poor access. Merton CIL was asked to work with the Council to ensure that services in Merton are accessible to disabled people, and they asked us to raise awareness with local businesses.

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

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

You can have your say on what you think is important too – fill out our short survey, but hurry, the survey closes 31st December 2016!
<http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/merton-cil-annual-survey/>

Keep an eye on our website for more information from the event, and a video coming soon! <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/getting-involved/my-voice-matters-2016/>



Photo: People's ideas were captured live during the event!

Notes:

Merton Centre for Independent Living is a user-led Disabled people's organisation run by Disabled people, for Disabled people, across the full spectrum of disability. We deliver a range of services to disabled people in London Borough of Merton.

We consult with our members and supporters every year on or around International Day of Disabled People on December 3rd.

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