



Merton Centre for Independent Living

ANNUAL REVIEW 2013-14

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Merton CIL is a company limited by guarantee.

Company number 7645926

Charity number 1152825



CONTENTS

About us	3
Chair's Report	4
Director Profiles	5
Our Work	6
Acknowledgements	7
Merton CIL Home and Phone Advice Service	8
Case Study: Merton CIL Advice Service identifies over £29,000 for one Merton couple	9
Merton CIL Advocacy Service	10
Case Study: Merton CIL Advocacy Service Helps with Re-housing	11
Merton CIL Peer Support Programme	12
Case Study: Merton CIL Peer Support Programme Supports You to Find Your Solution	13
Merton CIL Inclusion Project	14
Case study: Engaging with the Merton BAME Forum	15
Merton CIL Events and Consultations	16
Case Study: My Voice Matters: Disabled People in Merton Demand Change!	17
Statement of Financial Activities	18
Notes to Statement of Financial Activities	19

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. We support the independence and inclusion of disabled people, challenge discrimination, and enable people to achieve change locally. 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.

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 (since 11 July 2013)

CHAIR'S REPORT

Roy Benjamin and Sarah Henley at Mitcham Carnival June 2013



I can't believe it's a year since I last undertook this task. This year has been both busy and productive as you will see from the following content in this report.

Given the current economic circumstances, it is a credit to the hard work of staff that our income has grown substantially which has

enabled the CIL to establish our advocacy and specialist advice services (see pages 8-11) and for this we are grateful to our growing list of donors.

This year has also seen us grow our membership to over 100 members and our newsletter 'CIL Matters' is circulated to over 300 people.

As a disabled persons organisation we must never forget that we are here to meet the needs and aspirations of disabled people in Merton and, to this end, we held a 'Have Your Say' event last November and have recently started a regular members group.

It is very clear from our monitoring that our services are highly valued, and we will have to work even harder in the coming year in order to sustain our success.

May I take this opportunity of thanking volunteers, staff and trustees for their contribution to our growth this year, as without their hard work and dedication none of this would have happened.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy Benjamin'.

Roy Benjamin, Chair of Merton CIL

DIRECTOR PROFILES

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. Fiona was co-opted to the board July 2014

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

Patrick Daly, resigned from the board June 2013

Slim Flegg is extremely active locally having been a local councillor 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. She was co-opted to the board July 2014

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

OUR WORK

We work within the Social Model of Disability, whereby society creates disabling barriers through attitudes, environment, or organisational structures which don't consider disabled people's needs. Therefore, some disabled people require additional support to navigate the barriers created by society, claim their rights, and access the services they want or need.

In 2013-14 our key areas of work were:

- A home visiting advice service, including income maximisation, benefit checks, debt advice, form filling
- Advocacy enabling disabled people get their voice heard, including support at tribunals and assessments
- A 12 week programme of 1-2-1 Peer Support led by volunteers with lived experience of disability
- An inclusion project aimed at growing our membership and encouraging members to get more involved
- Running events and activities supporting disabled people to speak out and share their experiences, including a regular members' group and a 'My Voice Matters' consultation event in November 2013
- Responding to national and local consultations and reviews, and representing the voice of Merton's disabled people.

Future Activities

Our plans over the next 12-36 months are shaped by the views of our members, service users, and local disabled people. These will include:

- Consolidating and scaling up our Advice, Advocacy and Peer Support Services
- Developing new areas of work around tackling disability hate crime and a volunteer development programme
- Looking at access and planning issues

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Merton CIL gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organisations in 2013-14

- Circle Housing Merton Priory
- London Borough of Merton (LBM)
- Merton Partnership
- Office of Disability Issues (ODI)
- Trust for London
- Waitrose

We have also received in-kind support from individuals and organisations including:

- Our board of trustees and volunteers gave over 750 hours of support
- Social Enterprise Press supported us with subsidised office space

Merton CIL chair Roy Benjamin collecting our Community Matters cheque from Waitrose Raynes Park with Lucy Whatley and Aiden Birt June 2013



MERTON CIL HOME AND PHONE ADVICE SERVICE

Advisor Justyna Sleigh supporting the Save the ILF Campaign



Our Advice Service is specifically tailored to the needs of disabled people and has been developed and refined since our initial pilot at the start of 2013. Our home visiting service ran once a week Aug - Dec 2013 and twice a week from January 2014. Across the year 2013-14 we delivered 177 advice sessions and helped 93 disabled people gain or save £158,400 (checked August 2014, many decisions outstanding).

The model we have developed is of in-home visits of up to an hour each, and we return as many times as the person needs. This makes advice more accessible to disabled people who:

- may struggle to get out of the home (perhaps through anxiety or ill health)
- may need to build up a relationship of trust before revealing their needs
- have a number of complex and inter-related issues which need addressing holistically

Our Advice Service supports people across a wide range of issues including:

- retaining or applying for new welfare benefits
- managing debt
- accessing money-saving products eg utilities or freedom passes
- maximising or applying for social care packages
- accessing grants
- improving the home environment or addressing housing needs

CASE STUDY: MERTON CIL ADVICE SERVICE IDENTIFIES OVER £29,000 FOR ONE MERTON COUPLE

Mr & Mrs George* are in their early 60's and recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. After working as a builder all his life, Mr George was diagnosed with terminal cancer in July 2012 and had become confined to bed. Mrs George was caring for her husband, and neither of them was aware of the benefits they could get to help out with their expenses now that Mr George was unable to work.

Over the course of several home visits, our advisor got to know the couple and their situation. Our advisor helped them complete forms for Disability Living Allowance and Carers Allowance, which were successfully awarded.

Our advisor also realised that they were entitled to Pension Credits and helped them apply. When this was initially refused, we helped them appeal the decision, which was successful with a backdated payout.

Our support meant that Mr & Mrs George received an additional £29,000 in income over 12 months.

Mr & Mrs George were renting a property from a private landlord, and they could apply for Housing Benefit. However, they knew that their landlord did not want to have tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit. So they decided not to apply for Housing Benefit and instead applied for social housing in December 2013, with the help of our advisor.

However, Mr George was then hospitalised and unable to return home as there was no space in their rented flat for a hospital bed. Merton CIL supported Mrs George to ask Merton Council to prioritise the case so that they could be accommodated together in Mr George's final days. The Council eventually gave Mr George over-riding medical priority for social housing, but sadly he had died the day before. We are now supporting Mrs George to sort out her affairs.

*not their real name

MERTON CIL ADVOCACY SERVICE

Our Advocate, Michelle Savioz



Our Advocacy Service is focused on supporting disabled people to speak up in official environments and to get their voice heard. If instructed, we may also write letters or make calls on the person's behalf, however, the advocate does not offer advice, rather ensures options and choices are understood.

The service launched in September 2013 and between September and March 2014 we delivered 113 advocacy support sessions for 27 people. Positive outcomes for service users include successful tribunal appeals, housing applications, and assessments, as well as increased confidence.

Our Advocacy Service will support with issues such as:

- speaking up
- planning for and attending tribunals and appeals
- social services assessments and reviews
- understanding and navigating the housing process
- making complaints
- understanding rights and choices
- planning for the future

CASE STUDY: MERTON CIL ADVOCACY SERVICE HELPS WITH RE-HOUSING

James* and his 13 year old daughter had to leave home due to domestic violence and became homeless. His daughter ended up sharing a bed with James' stepmum, who took them in temporarily. James usually slept on the floor or outside in his van, which was making his health and his lung disease worse. James came to Merton CIL after trying to get help from several other organisations, including 4 trips to the local CAB. He was on the housing list in band B and felt that the council hadn't taken his medical condition properly into account.

With the support of his Merton CIL advocate, James got the local council to review their decision and to take his medical evidence into consideration. This meant that he and his daughter were moved from Band B to Band A, where he was 16th on the list. This put James in a great position as many of the people ahead of him needed adapted housing, so they were less likely to bid for the same properties he was bidding on. James felt it was important for him to focus on getting a house, rather than a flat, and his advocate explained that this might cause delays in getting somewhere due to the lower availability of houses. However, within 3 months of first contacting us, James got the keys to his new house. He said:

"It took council ages to say where I was on the list, and they didn't explain the process. I had a terrible first interview, they were really awful and unhelpful and basically told me to get lost. Without you guys, I don't think the council would have listened to me or to my doctor. My advocate helped me to examine their policies and challenge their decisions which he did really well. The pressures did get to me but I am over the moon now. My daughter only has 1 bus for school, so that is less worry for me. And it is only 5 minutes from the hospital for me. Now we need to make the place our home."

*not his real name

MERTON CIL PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Attendees at 'Shared Experiences' Peer Support Networking event
February 2014



Our Peer Support Programme is volunteer-led and offers mentoring and coaching support by disabled people who have been through similar experiences and understand the point of view of the service user in a way which a non-disabled person may not. Our programme is small scale but intensive, and positive outcomes are achieved for both the volunteer and the person being supported, particularly around improved confidence and resilience. This was celebrated at an event in February 2014 which we developed in partnership with Volunteer Centre Merton for peer supporters across the borough.

We have 6 trained volunteers and since April 2013 they have delivered 72 peer support sessions (6 people).

We offer a 12 week programme of 1-2-1 support which enables the disabled person to set goals, find direction and take action. The programme is focussed around supporting and facilitating life changes, such as moving out of home for the first time, relationships, changes in circumstances, new to disability, addressing employment or neighbour challenges.

Peer Support is also delivered informally through the regular members group which is volunteer led with topics designed to enhance skills and experience sharing. See page 14 for more information.

CASE STUDY: MERTON CIL PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMME SUPPORTS YOU TO FIND YOUR SOLUTION

Jane* got in touch with Merton CIL because she was going through a tribunal process with DWP and she wanted someone to support her through the stress of that, as well as help her re-focus and re-motivate herself on her job hunt, as she was committed to getting off benefits and back into work as soon as possible. "[My peer supporter] was a big help in pushing me to get things resolved, whereas it would have been easy to just do nothing. She was easy to speak to because she has been through similar experiences whereas my family don't understand it."

Jane managed to rewrite her CV and has been getting some positive feedback from employers, and she also spoke really powerfully about the negative impact of stress and how important it was to have a peer supporter: "I have a degree in psychology, I should know how my own head works, but when it's you all your common sense goes under the carpet, stress is such a powerful thing. [My peer supporter] helped deal with feeling bad about all the medication I had at home and how easy it would have been to end it all. A few times I picked up the pills and then I heard [my peer supporter]'s voice bringing me back."

Jane's peer supporter told us how valuable it was for her to be able to support someone else in this way and how it also improved her confidence in herself. "I think that we are all used to giving advice to people whenever they are speaking about a problem they are having. It is a knee jerk way of comforting someone. But during peer support you need to fight the temptation to prescribe. Whatever your peer is struggling with they will not benefit from hearing your solution - what they will benefit from is coming up with their solution."

Now Jane is working hard on getting herself back to full health and trying to get a job. She has also started writing regularly for the Merton CIL Newsletter and may be interested in becoming a peer supporter herself.

*not her real name

MERTON CIL INCLUSION PROJECT

Our Engagement and Development Worker Richard Downes at our AGM September 2013



Our new inclusion project has been busy since it launched in August 2013. Following some in-depth desk research, and interviews, with external organisations who engage with a range of different people, Merton CIL developed our own strategy to promote the inclusion and engagement of our members:

- Development of MCIL Ambassadors
- Regular MCIL Members Group
- Attending events around the community
- Conversation on social media

Since the start of the year we have been trialling the different approaches to see which ones are best for having a conversation with our members and getting new members on board.

Social media has been particularly successful, and we got more than 1300 hits on our Facebook page during November 2013. In addition, we have developed a MCIL blog www.inclusionmcil.wordpress for sharing our experience.

In this financial year (April 2013 to March 2014), our membership grew from 73 to 92 members and has grown even faster since then. Membership is free and everyone is welcome, and members get to see our quarterly newsletter before everyone else.

Our regular members group has also started to grow. This informal support for members is volunteer-led with topics designed to enhance skills and experience sharing, eg finding employment, dealing with social workers, self-advocacy techniques, etc.

CASE STUDY: ENGAGING WITH THE MERTON BAME FORUM

An extract from our blog www.inclusionmcil.wordpress from December 2013.

I am an Engagement and Development Worker for MCIL now and it is my role to include all sorts of different people. So, I went to a forum facilitated by the Merton Unity Network.

As a white English man I never thought BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Forums would be for me. I always respected the right of people from BAME backgrounds to speak for themselves. My primary experience of BAME communities was living with black kids in care homes and advocating for disabled BAME people. As a disabled person, I have common ground in experiencing discrimination. I am a disabled activist. My people learned from yours. We are proud of your achievements. I consider these experiences when introducing myself at the forum.

The business of the forum is 'the way forward'. The discussion leads to the development of a taskforce charged with creating an event for the community. The forum is excited about the event. Indeed I am excited about the forum.

Why aren't disability groups in Merton meeting together? Could we better achieve 'Equality through Unity'. I am wondering to myself what kind of an event would I be putting on. The idea of storytelling crosses my mind. What do our past stories tell us about our present and future, how many ways are there to tell a story from performance to song to story telling. I tell a good story myself. I consider disability arts and culture. We have our own star amongst our midst in John Kelly AKA Rockin' Paddy.

As the forum comes to an end I catch up with representatives from the Positive Network Centre and Focus-4-1.

I feel connected. I feel inspired.

MERTON CIL EVENTS & CONSULTATIONS

Over 2013-14 we ran a number of events and consultations including:

- AGM, held September 2013, supported by young volunteers from The Challenge Network and attended by 54 people
- 'My Voice Matters' Consultation event November 2013 with 72 attendees, which formed the basis of our new strategic plan
- Shared Experiences Peer Supporter Networking event February 2014, with 24 attendees, brought peer supporters and potential volunteers together from different organisations

In addition to our Inclusion Project which visited 22 groups in the Borough over the financial year, we also participated in several events including:

- South Thames College Disability Awareness event March 2013
- Mitcham Carnival June 2013 Health Tent
- Wimbledon Fair June 2013
- Merton Learning Disability Conference where we were on the panel of representatives November 2013

Board Member and Musician John Kelly and RockinPaddy band member David Del Cid busking at Wimbledon Village Fair July 2013, supported by Hayden the Womble



CASE STUDY: MY VOICE MATTERS: DISABLED PEOPLE IN MERTON DEMAND CHANGE!

In November 2013, Merton CIL brought together local disabled people, Councillors and organisations to come up with a set of key demands to improve the lives of disabled people in Merton. Over 70 people attended the debate and met with Councillors and representatives from over 20 local organisations.

Labour Councillor Linda Kirby said: "Merton CIL's My Voice Matters Conference was an excellent opportunity to meet with and discuss the anxieties that many people with disabilities are facing in this climate of massive welfare change. It was clear that these changes are heavily impacting on them, which is especially difficult because of the level of discrimination they already have to bear in our society."

Some shocking facts came out during the day, particularly in the presentation by Tracey Lazard, CEO of Inclusion London which supports Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations in London. Tracey pointed out that disabled people are being hit by the cuts to Welfare 9 times harder than the average UK citizen, and disabled people are twice as likely to live in poverty.

Merton CIL Manager Lyla Adwan-Kamara says: "These things are happening here in Merton. We work with people who don't have enough money to eat, who can't afford to get to their hospital appointments or who can't pay their heating bills or rent. We work with people who are isolated at home and feel like no-one is listening, who want to work but can't find a job, or who want to study but can't afford the costs of education. People who have asked the police for help and been told they're crazy. People who are told its ok to have a bed bath, when they want a real bath or told to use pads at night because their care has been cut. These things are not ok. But collectively we can address these issues and our 'My Voice Matters' event is about starting a conversation in Merton and saying that we dare to dream of a better way of doing things."

Since November, Merton CIL have revised our strategy to reflect local people's priorities and represent those to the council, the police, local housing association and the main political parties.

Statement of Financial Activities

For the Year Ended March 31st 2014^{2a}

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2014	Total Funds 2013
Incoming Resources	2b	£	£	£	£
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities	3a	-	63,929	64,947	36,984
Voluntary Income	3b	624	-	624	-
Fundraising Income	3c	242	-	242	-
Other Income	3d	151	-	151	-
Total Incoming Resources		1,018	63,929	64,947	36,984
Resources Expended	2c				
Charitable Activities		-	50,932	50,932	20,937
Cost of Fundraising		-	59	59	-
Governance Costs		-	1,973	1,973	733
Total Resources Expended		-	52,964	52,964	21,670
Net Incoming Resources		1,018	10,965	11,983	15,314
Transfer of funds	3e	1,016	(1,016)	-	-
Total funds Brought Forward	3g		16,372	16,372	1,058
Total Funds Carried Forward	3g	2,034	26,321	28,354	16,372

The notes on page 19 form part of these accounts and more detailed accounts are available on request or on our website

www.mertoncil.org.uk

NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

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)'

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: were incorrectly allocated in 2012-13. 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 organisation does not contribute to any pension scheme

3. Income

3a Incoming Resources from Charitable Activity means the grants and fees received 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 a debt repaid from 2012-13

3e Transfer of Funds: Funds remaining at end of project moved to unrestricted funding

3f Funds brought forward from 2012-13 for use in 2013-14

3g Funds carried forward means funding reserved for 2014-15

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



Celebrating Independent Lives

RUN AND CONTROLLED BY DISABLED PEOPLE, FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

**Merton CIL offers services & opportunities
for deaf and disabled people living or
working in London Borough of Merton**

- **Advice and Advocacy Services**
 - **Peer Support Programme**
 - **Debates and Events**
- **Responding to Consultations**
 - **Volunteer Opportunities**

**We support the independence and
inclusion of deaf and disabled people,
challenge discrimination, and enable
people to achieve change locally**

Contact Us to find out more about what we do
and how you can get involved:

 020 3397 3119

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