



Merton Centre for Independent Living
Vestry Hall
336 London Road
Mitcham
CR4 3UD

23rd October 2024

TfL Customer Services
9th Floor
5 Endeavour Square
London
E20 1JN

Dear Transport for London,

Invitation to Discuss Access Issues on Buses with Merton Centre for Independent Living's Access Champions

Merton Centre for Independent Living (Merton CIL) is a Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation (DDPO) based in the London Borough of Merton. Our members are Deaf and Disabled people who support our work to push for a more equitable society, and one vehicle for the membership to use their lived experience as a tool for social change is our group of Access Champions, who are united by the aim to make Merton more accessible.

The Access Champions meet quarterly and are in regular communication with each other between meetings. They have a broad range of concerns, from access to green spaces, to accessible toilets – networking with organisations and individuals who can help to bring about positive changes. Their work is making a difference. They have improved access on Wimbledon Common and successfully campaigned for the installation of a Changing Places Toilet in Wimbledon town centre. When they reached out to South Western Railway about proposed ticket office closures, it soon resulted in a fruitful meeting with their Senior Accessibility and Inclusion Manager, opening up communication in a way which is of mutual benefit. They are currently working with the Mitcham Town Centre Manager on the issue of ramps needed to access certain businesses. And following their creation of an accessible toilets survey which is being piloted in Raynes Park, they will soon start liaising with the borough's new Community Toilet Scheme Project Officer

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Notably, a recurring topic of discussion is TfL's buses, as those who use mobility aids sometimes have a good experience but, sadly, too often find that their right to travel safely and conveniently is eroded by misuse of the space that is supposed to be prioritised for those who use mobility aids, and drivers failing to: exercise their authority to ensure that the space is used properly; lower the bus for people who need it; deploy ramps at appropriate points and, thereby, safely; and wait for people to sit down before pulling off. In addition, there is general agreement that TfL's complaints process could be made easier, as people have sometimes been asked to provide information and evidence which is very difficult or even impossible to capture at the time of an incident, such as a photograph of the driver.

The Access Champions would like to use their insights to serve as a critical friend to TfL and, accordingly, invite you to meet to discuss the improvements that they would like to see and the ideas that they have to bring about these improvements, as well as, of course, acknowledge the good practices that they have encountered. One of the Access Champions has already helped you with a training video for bus drivers. Furthermore, we are heartened to know of the existence of your Independent Disability Advisory Group, and note your statement that you 'believe in a London that is for everyone' and are 'working to improve the network to be more accessible and open to all' (<https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/>). Therefore, we are hopeful that you are open to our suggestion.

In terms of practicalities, you would be more than welcome to come to the building in which Merton CIL is based (please see the address overleaf), but an online or hybrid meeting is possible too.

Thank you for your consideration. Our Access Champions look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Pippa Maslin
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