



Intersectionality Statement

V1 May 2026

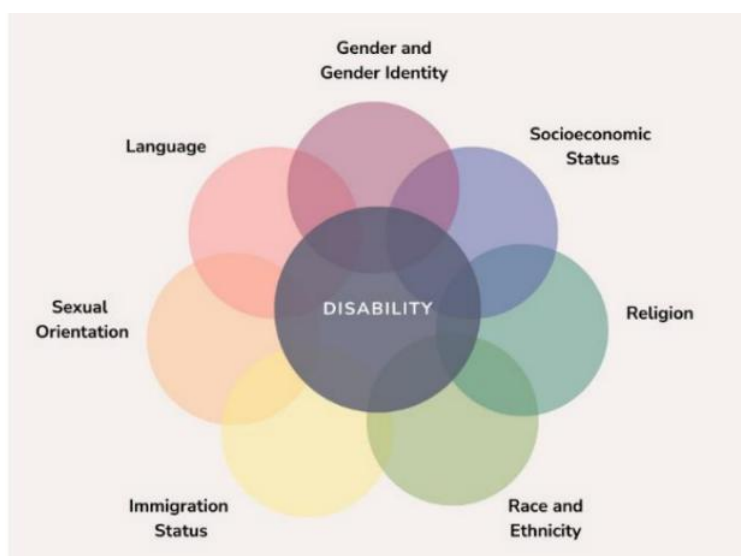
1. Overview

- 1.1 This statement explains why Intersectionality is important at Merton CIL and should be read with our Intersectionality Action Plan. Both documents are the starting point for deepening our understanding of Intersectionality, honing our practice around it and embedding it strategically across all of our work.
- 1.2 We operate within the social model of disability, which means that we believe that we are disabled by how society is designed, and not by our impairment or health condition.
- 1.3 This means that the social, economic and political exclusion of Disabled people is caused by barriers such as inaccessible environments, discrimination, inflexible systems and a political establishment that does not value Disabled people.
- 1.4 Intersectionality helps us to break this down further and is a framework for helping us to understand how Disabled people who also experience discrimination related to class, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and more may experience different or more complex barriers to social, political and economic inclusion.
- 1.5 Learning to think and see intersectionally also helps us think more comprehensively about how Disabled people experience barriers in our lives. It also helps us to think about how we can develop our work to be more inclusive of Disabled people who face multiple barriers.

2. What does 'Intersectionality' mean?

- 2.1 The word 'Intersectionality' is used to describe how people who belong to two or more marginalised groups experience discrimination differently from those who belong to one

marginalised group and each other. The image below illustrates this explanation.



- 2.2 People who experience 'intersectionality' tend to experience additional discrimination that many other people do not always understand.
- 2.3 The term 'intersectionality' was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black woman, a lawyer and an academic. She introduced the idea to explain the complex impact of Racism and Sexism on Black women's experiences of discrimination. She describes how her experience of 'single issue'¹ politics in society, but also in law, made it difficult for black women to receive justice for the discrimination that they faced. It is important to remember where the term comes from.

3. Why is Intersectionality important?

- 3.1 As Disabled people, we can only achieve full equity and participation in society if we lead systemic change.
- 3.2 Often, DDPOs focus on the barriers that Disabled people face by being Disabled by society alone, and this can have the unintentional impact of centring the experiences of white, male, cis-gendered, middle-class Disabled people. While

¹ In the 1960s and 1970s, many movements fighting for better rights for marginalised people developed simultaneously. We had the 'feminist' movement, the 'civil rights movement, the 'LGBTQI+ rights movement, and the Disabled people's movement. These movements became known as 'single issue' movements and have been criticised for not representing the most marginalised members of those communities.

those experiences are important, they do not represent the experiences of all Disabled people.

- 3.3 We believe that for this reason, inclusive, systemic change must also start with challenging the hierarchies of power that exist within the Disabled peoples' movement and our organisations. This helps us to proudly aim to be inclusive of all experiences in our community.
- 3.4 Taking an intersectional approach also means that we work to understand the 'compound impact'² of belonging to different marginalised identities and understanding that the overlap in marginalisation creates a different, unique and sometimes intensified overall experience of oppression.
- 3.5 Taking an intersectional approach to our work means committing ourselves to understanding all the barriers to inclusion a Disabled person may face.
- 3.6 Intersectionality helps us to understand that the Disabled community is not homogeneous – we do not all experience discrimination in the same way.

4. Why is Intersectionality important at Merton CIL?

- 4.1 At Merton CIL, our vision is a society that is fair and equitable for all Disabled people. Being intersectional is key to good leadership and to us achieving our charitable aims.
- 4.2 If we do not think intersectionally, we may unconsciously create barriers for and discriminate against some Disabled people.
- 4.3 Being intersectional is the only way to engage with the full Disabled community in Merton and especially those who are the most marginalised.
- 4.4 Access needs and impairments may present differently for Disabled people with intersecting identities. It is important

² An example of compound impact is: Girls diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are doubly disadvantaged because of their gender compared to boys with the same diagnosis of ADHD (who, themselves, are disadvantaged compared to neurotypical students in schools). This is an intersection between gender and disability where there is a compounding effect of disadvantages (example taken from [here](#)). The impact of these experiences also 'compound' over time – creating even bigger disparity of outcomes over a longer period.

that we all deeply understand this to be good managers, colleagues and provide person centred support to our service users.

- 4.5 Being intersectional shows thoughtful leadership, which creates more impact, which is what foundations and commissioners want to see. While this is not our main objective, being intersectional can also help us to evolve our practice, grow our organisation and serve even more Disabled people across Merton.
- 4.6 Being intersectional means, we actively create an inclusive Disabled people's movement which 'leaves nobody behind'.
- 4.7 Changing and developing to meet the needs of Disabled people is in our DNA, and this is something we all need to be better at – it creates a stronger community of Disabled people.

5. What does Intersectionality mean at Merton CIL?

- 5.1 While we understand what intersectionality means as a concept, we have work to do, to decide what 'being intersectional' means at Merton CIL.
- 5.2 We recognise that we can't just decide that we want to be intersectional, and automatically have the skills, resources and knowledge to do this work. If we did, we would be doing it already.
- 5.3 Understanding entrenched, complex and multi-faceted discrimination takes time, effort and deep listening and unlearning. It requires us to be humble, and to take our commitment seriously.
- 5.4 So, our action plan starts with deep listening and research, it focuses on taking the conceptual definition of intersectionality and deciding what this means in practice in our organisation.
- 5.5 This statement will be reviewed and updated as our intersectionality action plan work develops.



This statement and our action plan were developed in collaboration with [Birthing Ourselves](#) – an intersectional DDPO.