



Impact Report

2024-25

Charity Number: 1152825 Company Number 7645926

Welcome to our Impact Report

This Impact Report will share the **successes, learning and growth** at Merton CIL over the **past year**.

Note from the Chair

I am extremely proud of what we, the Disabled community of Merton, have achieved over the past year. We have delivered much needed services and created spaces for Disabled people to connect and push for change. We have worked together to successfully challenge a number of systemic barriers in creative ways and make our community more inclusive for all.

Thank you to all our staff, trustees, members, volunteers, supporters and funders that have helped us to achieve our aims.

Our organisation grows stronger because of you all. Let's continue to fight for the rights of Disabled People, in Merton and Beyond!

Estifanos Habteselassie

Chair of Merton CIL



What do we mean when we say 'Disabled' ?

Throughout our impact report we use the term 'Disabled people' to mean all people living with an impairment or health condition. This includes:

- People with Physical Impairments
- People with Mental Health Conditions
- Deaf People
- Hearing Impaired People
- Visually Impaired or Blind People
- People with Learning Disabilities
- People with Long-term Health Conditions
- Neurodivergent People
- People who have Invisible Impairments



We recognise and respect that some of the people mentioned above do not think of themselves as 'Disabled' but we believe the groups above can face disabling barriers in society.

About Merton CIL

Merton Centre for Independent Living (Merton CIL) is a user-led **Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation (DDPO)** based in the London Borough of **Merton**.

Our organisation was set up by local Disabled people in **2008**.



Over **50%** of our staff, and over **75%** of our trustees, **81%** of members and **100%** of our service users are Disabled people, with lived experience of the social issues we aim to address.

We are a **pan-disability organisation** meaning we work with Disabled adults (18+) with a range of impairments or health conditions.

We believe that people with impairments and health conditions are disabled by the barriers in society. This is called the **social model of disability**. We also see our **lived experience** as a powerful tool for social change.

Run by Disabled People, for Disabled People.



Our Vision: A society where Disabled people can live as full and equal citizens in all aspects of life and lead systemic change.

Our Mission: Disabled people in Merton face marginalisation and disadvantage. We navigate barriers and work to create a borough that is truly inclusive.



Follow us on social media @MertonCIL or visit our website www.mertoncil.org.uk for more information about our organisation.

69%



of our team have lived experience of disability. As well as, 80% of our board of trustees.

96%



of people that took our annual survey agree that we address the issues important to Disabled people.

£554,525



Contributed to the local economy through our work.

1926

Sessions of in-depth support delivered



Advice, Speaking Up and Information support provided in

476 cases



734

Disabled People supported

53%

of staff built new skills or progressed in the organisation.



OUR INDEPENDENCE OUR RIGHT



430

members



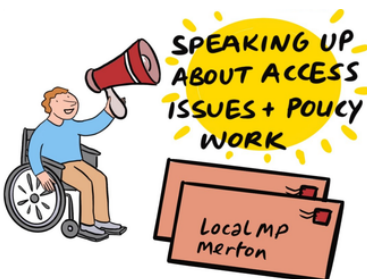
100%

of attendees rated Craftivism & Chat good or great.

81% are Deaf and Disabled people

1260 hours

spent working on policy issues with and on behalf of Disabled people.



95%

of attendees at Craftivism, and Chat felt more connected.



AGM & My Voice Matters



27

events held including My Voice Matters, Craftivism & Chat and Outreach 4

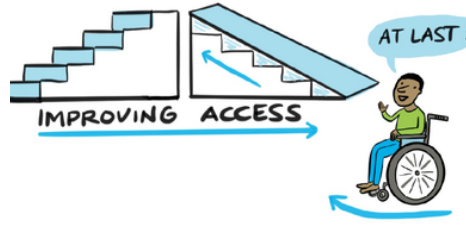
273

hours donated by volunteers and trustees.



58

meetings to push for systemic change.



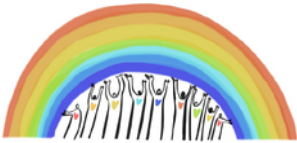
50%

of service users have increased resilience after using our services.



5 in 10 People

have increased confidence after using our services.



3349

people engaged with at events and across social media platforms.



12

Disabled people built leadership skills and confidence.

50%

of service users felt their wellbeing increased after interacting with our Speaking Up service.



5

consultation responses and letters written to push for change.

Launch of:



3

local changes or improvements influenced by our Access Champions.



92%

Staff retention in 2024-25



17

years of supporting Deaf & Disabled people in Merton.



52,817

website visits in 2024-25

What We Do

We provide a range of **free, person-centred** and **accessible** services for **Disabled people (18+) living in Merton** and work to push for a fairer society.

Read more about each service and find out how to book appointments or get involved on our website:

<https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/services/>



Quality Advice on disability issues

Information and Advice service

We provide specialist and accredited help with issues relating to Benefits, Social Care, Housing, DFGs, Aids and Adaptions, Concessionary Travel and Grants.



Support to get the health care that you need

Speaking Up Service

We provide person-centred support to challenge structural barriers to health. We work together to get the support that is needed to feel included, listened to, and able to live well.



Accessible Trainee Opportunities

We have a range of trainee and developmental roles that support Disabled people to build employment skills and reach our potential in accessible ways. You can read about how we build a barrier-free workplace on page 9.

“This wasn’t just a service, it was a lifeline. Thank you for your compassion, expertise, unwavering support and for the vital work you do. You’ve made a tangible difference in my life.”



Get creative to make change happen

Craftivism & Chat

A joyful space for Disabled people to connect, build skills, increase confidence and use art to push for change. We use joy and connection to stand up to efforts to isolate and silence us.

“ Craftivism and Chat allows us to spend enjoyable time getting to know others whilst we create art.”



Building a community

Our community of Disabled members and supporters

We bring Disabled people and supporters of the disability justice movement together to mobilise, connect, speak up and co-produce solutions to the barriers that we face.



Growing Disabled Leaders

We support Disabled staff, trustees, Access Champions, and volunteers to build skills and confidence to move into a variety of leadership positions.



Making Merton Accessible

Access Champions

A passionate group of local Disabled people using lived experience and expertise to push for improvements and inclusion in decision-making processes, to make Merton more accessible for all.



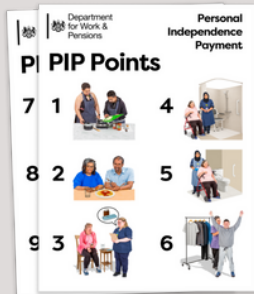
Leading systemic change

Policy and Campaigns

Our Policy and Campaigns work is interlinked with the services mentioned above. The experiences of our service users helps us to push for improvements that make things better for Disabled people in Merton and beyond.

Aliyah's Story

How our advice service supported Aliyah to increase her income, improve her health and wellbeing and grow her confidence.



Applied for Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Aliyah applied for PIP but received 0 points for both daily living and mobility, despite suffering significant mental and physical health issues.



Working together on a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR)

Aliyah asked Merton CIL to help with her MR as her health and wellbeing had been impacted by the pandemic and lockdowns. However, the MR was rejected and Aliyah had to go to tribunal.



The impact on Aliyah

The removal of support led Aliyah to become isolated from friends and family. She struggled with managing her day to day. Aliyah required her caseworkers support to gather supporting medical evidence to strengthen her appeal.



The outcome of our work together

We supported Aliyah to prepare for and attend tribunal. She was awarded daily living and mobility elements of PIP at the **enhanced rate**. She also received a back payment of over **£21000** and will receive **£737 every 4 weeks** going forward.



Aliyah is now able to live with choice and control

The successful outcome helped Aliyah to relieve financial worries and enables her to get out, to work and engage, without stress going forward.

Levi's Story

How our digital inclusion work supported Levi to increase his digital skills, reduce isolation and loneliness and connect with others.



Levi came to our Digital Skills drop-in

Levi responded to an invitation to come along to a digital drop-in session. He wanted to be able to use social media and join online social groups when he was stuck at home due to his impairment.



Difficulty using a tablet device

Levi had a tablet which he was finding it difficult to use. He had been unable to use it effectively. He brought his tablet to a drop-in session.



Person-centred 121 appointments

He was offered 121 support to explore the barriers he faced getting online. He worked closely with a member of staff to address access issues, download apps, and more.



Accessible Digital Support

Levi was not familiar with the process of opening an app and selecting videos to watch so him and a member of staff went through the steps together. The process was repeated and a step by step document was created so Levi could refer to this if he became stuck.



Levi now has increased digital skills and is no longer isolated when housebound

Levi is now able to attend weekly social groups online. His wellbeing has increased along with his digital skills and confidence with technology.



Developing our workplace

We are invested in **creating an accessible, barrier free and creative workplace** to ensure that **Disabled people can develop and thrive in employment**. We do this by:



Co-producing with staff

Our staff work together to create solutions to internal issues, update policies and procedures and get creative around service development, staff development and more.

Reasonable adjustments

We make a number of reasonable adjustments for Disabled staff. We are flexible with working arrangements for parents and have period and menopause policies in place to support female identifying staff.

New Leadership Team

We introduced a new structure at Merton CIL to our organisation is led by a diverse pool of lived experiences of disability. We are also keen to challenge classic hierarchy and power structures in the workplace.

Focus on intersectionality

An intersectional approach is key to challenging the overlapping inequality faced by many in our community and to achieve disability justice. We work to ensure that diverse Disabled voices are heard and valued internally.

A culture of compassion and transparency

We aim to create a workplace that Disabled people from all backgrounds feel safe and can thrive. We promote conversations about access needs and encourage early disclosure to ensure we can support staff well.





How we spent our money



Each year we have to raise money to keep our organisation going. This is a summary of how much money we received and how much money we spent in 2024-25.

Income - £354,324

This income is made up of grants, fundraising income, donations, and other income.



Expenditure - £409,295

We spent our money on salaries, direct project costs, overheads and organisational development work.

In 23/24, we carried over **£159k in restricted funds**. This income helped to cover the difference in income and expenditure figures above.

You can read our full financial accounts for 2024-25 on our website.

Also see more information in the illustrated financial statement below:

HOW WE HAVE KEPT COUNT OF, SPENT AND RAISED MONEY IN 2024-2025

<p>The board of trustees presents the report and financial statement of Merton CIL at year end 31st March 2025</p>	<p>Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of Merton CIL, and the surplus or deficit each year</p>	<p>Lesley Cornwell of Cornwell & Cornwell → independently examined our accounts for 2024-25</p>	<p>We brought forward unrestricted funds of £143,890 and restricted funds of £90,521 from the previous accounting period. Final balances to carry forward on 31st March 2025: £234,411</p>															
<p>Total income for 2024-25 is: £354,324</p>	<p>We received money from:</p>	<p>We raised £12,645</p> <p>This is made up of things like donations, service fees, contribution for involvement in co-production and more</p>	<p>Total expenditure for 2024-2025 is: £409,295</p>															
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Cost of Charitable Activities:</th> <th>NOTE</th> <th>£</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Independence & Inclusion</td> <td>4e</td> <td>295,889</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Challenging Discrimination</td> <td>4g</td> <td>50,852</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Achieving Change Locally</td> <td>4f</td> <td>62,544</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Cost of Charitable Activities</td> <td></td> <td>£409,295</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Cost of Charitable Activities:	NOTE	£	Independence & Inclusion	4e	295,889	Challenging Discrimination	4g	50,852	Achieving Change Locally	4f	62,544	Total Cost of Charitable Activities		£409,295	<p>Total reserves: £234,411</p> <p>This includes £143,890 unrestricted funds and £90,521 restricted funds</p>	<p>Reserves help to cover future running costs in the event of lack of funding. Our monthly running cost is £40,000</p> <p>The board has set aside £13,600 to secure immediate business continuity</p>	<p>Merton CIL will hold unrestricted funds to meet at least 3 months running costs and aim towards holding 4 months by 2025-26.</p> <p>This will enable provision of services over the long term as well as a safety net</p>
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Thank you

Thank you to our staff, trustees, members, service users, Access Champions, Volunteers, funders, supporters, the local community, volunteers and partners. We could not do this without you.



We understand that not everyone is able to make a financial contribution. Thank you to everyone who donated time, skills, materials and knowledge. Your support is appreciated and has been key to our organisation's success in 2024-25.

Thank you to our funders



Thank you to our Board of Trustees in 2024-25:

Gina Vettese, Co-Chair
Amanda Edwards, Co-Chair
Estifanos Habtesellasie, Vice-Chair
Sarah Henley
Claire Benjamin
Raheema Olajide
Chris Bull
Daniel Beglin
Kirstin Hellard
Eekeen Wong, Treasurer

Thank you to our Staff in 2024-2025:

Charlet Wilson, CEO
David Jenkins, DCEO
Pippa Maslin, Policy & Campaigns Manager
Stuart Butler, Advice Quality Manager
Rey Campbell, Advice Service Supervisor
Maddie Cowey, Speaking Up Supervisor
Lauren Heanon, Comms & Admin Officer
Paula Brown, Caseworker
Sarah Jones-Nash, Caseworker
Miral Shaheen, Caseworker
Philip Stapel, Caseworker
Amelia Knipmeijer, Trainee Caseworker
Adrienne Di-Rizzio Palmer, Speaking Up Caseworker



The Year Ahead

Over the next year, we plan to:

- Continue our work **delivering and developing needed services**. Tell us what you think of our services to make them better.
- Hosting **more Craftivism & Chat sessions**.
- Supporting more Disabled people to **build skills and confidence to lead**.
- Using our lived experience and ideas to **push for systemic change**.
- Better embedding **intersectionality**.
- Raise **more money** to keep our organisation going.
- **Investing into organisational development** to increase our **resilience**.



Disabled people face continued threats, with cuts to disability benefits, increasing living costs impacted by inflation and the extra costs of disability and discrimination. We will work to ensure that our services, work and strategy are constantly evolving and meeting needs that may change due to the impact of the external environment.



Get Involved

There are a number of ways you can get involved, engage with us and support our work at Merton CIL. Find out more below:



- Join our community of members - it's free.
- Come to Craftivism and Chat or other events.
- Share your lived experience to push for systemic change.
- Make a donation.
- Fundraise for us.
- Support us on social media - follow or like posts.
- Get involved in our evaluation work.
- Tell friends and family about us.
- Donate art or office supplies.
- Volunteer skills or knowledge.

You can read more about getting involved by scanning the QR code.





Merton Centre for Independent Living

Address: Vestry Hall, 336 London Road, Mitcham CR4 3UD

Telephone: 020 3397 3119

WhatsApp & SMS: 0779 671 2502

Email: info@mertoncil.org.uk

Social Media: @MertonCIL

