



Merton Centre for Independent Living's Response to Merton Council's Budget Consultation 2026/27

About Merton CIL

Merton CIL is a user-led Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation (DDPO). We are based in the London Borough of Merton and work with Disabled adults (18+). 87% of our trustees, 69% of our staff, 81% of our members, and 100% of our service users are Disabled people with lived experience of the issues that we aim to address.

We all deserve to live free from discrimination, poverty and exclusion. However, many Deaf and Disabled people experience structural inequalities that impact our ability to live independently and have choice and control over our lives. Due to marginalisation and disadvantage, we navigate barriers and work to create a community that is truly inclusive and equitable.

We envision a society where Disabled people can live as full and equal citizens in all aspects of life and lead systemic change.

We believe that society disables people with impairments and health conditions. Therefore, we work within the Social Model of Disability and an [Independence Charter](#), co-designed with Disabled people, to ensure that we can influence key issues affecting our lives in a variety of ways.

What We Would Like the Council to Prioritise

Address the Disability Price Tag

Research by Scope reveals that living costs are higher for Disabled people than for non-Disabled people. For the financial year 2024/25, Disabled households needed, on average, an additional £1095 per month to have the same standard of living as non-disabled households – a figure that was 8% higher than the figure for the previous financial year and is estimated to rise to £1224 per month by 2029/30.

Some Disabled people claim PIP but, even then, there is, on average, an income shortfall of £630 per month.

In light of this, we believe that the Council should be doing all that it can to help Disabled residents to meet these extra costs, and that one sensible way forward would be to provide or start to take steps towards providing free care in people's homes, as happens in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, or at the very least raise the standard disregard of £10 per week for disability-related expenditure in financial assessments for adult social care charges. This amount has remained static for at least fifteen years, and we think that it should have, as a minimum, risen in line with the CPI. Moreover, whilst we know that the financial assessment process allows people to submit evidence of disability-related expenditure should it come to more than £10 per week, we hope that the Council recognises that this is an onerous task with which many struggle and which is, therefore, not always successful.

Fund the Nascent Disability Forum

We are very pleased to be playing a part in the establishment of a Disability Forum, as we believe that it has the potential to engender co-production between Disabled residents, organisations who work with and represent Disabled residents, and the Council. In order for it to

flourish, it needs sufficient funding e.g. funding for a Council Officer who has sufficient time to nurture its development, and funding to help to meet Disabled participants' access needs.

Invest in Making Council Services and Communications More Accessible

The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy contains the following 'Key Activity': 'Conduct accessibility review of Council services and communications to ensure improved access for Disabled residents.' Although we are unclear as to whether this is underway, we urge the Council to ensure that it is fulfilling the Public Sector Equality Duty by investing sufficiently in the provision of information in a range of formats, namely, audio, braille, BSL (could sometimes be via Video Relay Service), Easy Read, large print, online and paper.

Invest More in Public Toilet Provision

Despite the work of a Community Toilet Scheme Project Officer who, we feel, did her best within the parameters that she had to work, we believe that there is still a clear need for investment in improving public toilet provision. An investment of 1p per week per resident would be a good start.

In addition, we, once again, urge the Council to set the gold standard by installing a public Changing Places Toilet on the ground floor of the Civic Centre.