



Merton CIL's response to the consultation
on the Draft Statement on Community
Involvement

December 2019

1. Background

About Merton CIL

Merton CIL is a pan-Disability user-led Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation which has been supporting Deaf and Disabled People in the borough for 10 years. We work with people with all types of impairment including physical impairments, sensory impairments, mental health service users, people with learning difficulties and people with chronic illness or long-term ill-health. Many of our service users have more than one impairment, and many are also carers and/or parents. Deaf and Disabled People don't have to be members to use our services but we do have an ever-growing membership who shape our direction and focus as an organisation. At the time of writing, we have 322 members.

Our advice and advocacy service worked with 332 people last year, providing 1,592 sessions of advice on a range of issues including social care, benefits, housing and hate crime. Many of the service users we support experience problems with a range of issues that are often interlinked. We reached 1,641 people through events and outreach, and 2,225 people followed us across our social media platforms.

While Merton CIL's main role is to provide advice and advocacy support for individuals, we also engage with local consultation and co-production by responding to initiatives like the Local Plan consultation.

Our members responded to the first stage of Local Plan consultation at the start of 2018, fed back to us more broadly on what life is like for Disabled People in Merton¹, and fed back again on the Local Plan in January 2019.

¹ <https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/news/join-the-conversation-what-i/>

2. Comments on points in the draft

Section 4: Accessible consultations and engagement

Some of the language about Disabled people in the section around making meetings accessible is dated. Merton CIL recommends referring to Disabled people rather than 'those with disabilities' and definitely not 'the disabled'. We would also suggest the document refer to accessible facilities, for example, an accessible toilet rather than a disabled toilet.

We would recommend providing all documents electronically - this will often meet people's need to access documents in alternative formats. The reference to audio tape and even CDs sounds very out of date - some young people may not even know what an audio tape is.

Section 5: Our approach to involving the local community in planning

We understand and recognise the growing importance of electronic involvement, particularly as it can make the process more accessible for many Disabled people. However, we believe that a balanced approach is needed to ensure the widest possible range of people is involved. This is reflected elsewhere in the document but may need to be stated here.

Section 7: Statutory development of planning documents

We recommend that the Council explores approaches around co-production and co-design for all aspects of planning. The value of these approaches is gaining increasing recognition as giving a strong basis for community involvement.

Co-production involves developing a set of principles for communities and public services to work together as equal partners. Merton CIL

would be happy to work with the Council to explore this approach in relation to planning.

This approach should also include feedback on the results of involvement, both positive and negative. We have experience of organisations who provide feedback based around the statements 'you said, we did' and 'you said, we didn't do because...'

We also recommend the Statement recognises that engagement with disabled-led organisations is preferred over those that are not led by Disabled people when working on disability issues.

7.8 - figure 2, Targeted events

We welcome the recognition that targeted events may be needed with Disabled people and mental health service users (which should be expressed in these terms).

Section 8: Development management

For point 8.10 we believe the Merton Design Panel would benefit from having a member who has technical expertise on disability access in architecture and design.

For point 8.26 we recommend disability access should be a material consideration, if this is possible.