

Developing a Centre for Independent Living in Merton

A Centre for Independent Living (CIL) is an organisation which is developed by disabled people for disabled people. It's job is to promote the principles of independent living, equality and inclusion of disabled people locally.

A CIL does this by providing peer support and also by delivering identified services where disabled people feel there are gaps. A CIL can also provide advice and information around independent living and other local disability issues. CILs can also campaign on issues that will improve the lives of disabled people.

CILs are run and controlled by the people they aim to support. They are sometimes called User-Led Organisations (ULOs). Our definition of disability is broad and inclusive as we value the social model of disability. We want to ensure that the voices of under-represented and hard-to-reach disabled people are heard and that disabled people of all ages can get involved and have control over the things that matter to them.

We use both the words disability & user to reflect a wide range of people who may choose to identify differently. The important thing is that we all work together in achieving our goal for independent living, equality & inclusion. We believe working together makes us stronger.

The services that are provided by a CIL, along with how they are run, depends on how local disabled people want them to work. So getting involved is really important to the success of a CIL.

Last February over 50 local disabled people, their allies and supporters came together to share their views on having a CIL in Merton. It was a great day which was both fun and informative. A report was produced and as a result of the day, a group of disabled people in Merton have got together with some non-disabled allies to form a steering group to begin to set up and develop a CIL in Merton.

This steering group is working hard to put things in place by thinking about how a CIL can best work in Merton. Individual disabled people with different expertise along with the support of Merton Council and other voluntary organisations & networks are

working together to decide the best way to develop a CIL in Merton. It is important to work together to make this a success.

It is a good time to be developing a CIL at the moment. The Government has said that each local authority should support the development of a user-led organisation or CIL so that disabled people are able to help each other to manage their independent living and also new self-directed support services where disabled people can have more control over their lives.

The CIL steering group in Merton was set up last September. The steering group is made up of a mixture of local disabled people, representatives of local voluntary sector organisations and people with some business and commercial skills.

The steering group has developed a broad mission statement and has put together a funding proposal to Merton Council.

This proposal asked for funds for a development worker. The main tasks of the development worker would be to:

- Set up the CIL as a legal organisation with a board of trustees and a constitution etc.
- Work with a range of local disabled people to build up networks and to find out what people want from a CIL and to raise the profile of what a CIL could achieve.
- Work with Merton Council and other local organisations to ensure that a CIL is involved in the development of the new self-directed support services.
- Secure some future funding for the CIL to ensure that it is a sustainable organisation.

The good news is that we have been successful with this proposal and Merton Council has just agreed that it will provide some funding for the development of a CIL in Merton. We are very happy about this and we will work with the council so that we can move forward to develop a good CIL in Merton.

It is a really exciting time to get involved in this CIL development and also to get involved in disability issues locally so you can have your say. As we work together we have a louder voice and a better chance to create real change that will improve the lives of disabled people in Merton.

If you are interested in finding out more about the CIL development or are interested in getting involved please email info@rockinpaddy.com

More information can also be found on the Merton Connected website.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chairperson of the CIL Steering Group
30 August 2009