



# Merton Connected Strategy

2025-2030

Registered Charity No: 1085867.







# FOREWORD

This five-year strategy sets out how Merton Connected will continue to champion, strengthen and connect the voluntary, community and faith sector across our borough.

Working alongside Merton Council, the NHS, the Greater London Authority and a wide network of local organisations, we make sure the voluntary and community sector has a clear and credible voice in shaping local priorities. These partnerships open the door for genuine influence and better outcomes for everyone who lives, works, studies or volunteers in Merton.

The strategy builds on what we have learned from local organisations and residents, showing how we have evolved in response to community need and how we will keep adapting as those needs change. Over the next five years, we will bring people and organisations together, help local groups grow stronger, create more space for collaboration and innovation, and ensure local voices are heard where decisions are made.

We will put this strategy into practice with the same focus and commitment that drive our work every day; building a fairer, more connected and resilient Merton.

**Tony Molloy**

Chief Executive Officer

**Judith Brodie**

Chair of the Board of Trustees

# INTRODUCTION



Our 2025–2030 Strategy sets out how Merton Connected will continue to champion and strengthen the voluntary, community and faith sector over the next five years.

We exist to help local organisations grow, to ensure community voices are heard, and to make it easier for residents to find and access the support that makes a difference in their lives.

By connecting people, partnerships and resources, we're helping to build a borough where communities can thrive, work together and shape a fairer future for Merton.

## Our Vision



Recognised as a leading borough for resilience, inclusion, and community connection.



## Our Mission



We support voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations to grow, collaborate and thrive. Strengthening Merton's civil society and improving wellbeing for everyone who lives, works, studies or volunteers in the borough.



## Our Values



Empowering

Collaborative

Inclusive





# Who We Are

## Merton Giving

Through local giving, more than £2 million has been distributed in grants to support Merton's communities. We also work with local businesses to build meaningful corporate partnerships that strengthen community support.

## Healthwatch Merton

We are the independent voice for residents on local health and social care.

We gather community feedback, highlight issues affecting patients and carers, and work with the NHS and Merton Council to improve services.

Through outreach, reports and advocacy, we ensure local experience shapes how health and care are planned and delivered.

## Home Visits Library Service

In partnership with Merton Libraries and a dedicated team of volunteers, we bring books and talking books straight to people's homes. The service offers a vital connection for residents who cannot visit a library in person and have no one who can go on their behalf.



## Development

We help voluntary sector organisations build strong governance, stay compliant, diversify income and plan for long-term sustainability. By developing partnerships, hosting forums and creating opportunities for collaboration, we strengthen Merton's voluntary and community sector and its collective voice.

## Volunteering

We promote volunteering throughout Merton, encouraging residents to take part and helping organisations to recruit, train and celebrate their volunteers. By sharing good practice and recognition, we help make volunteering part of everyday community life.

## Social Prescribing

We deliver social prescribing in every GP practice in Merton, connecting people to local activities, groups and support that improve wellbeing. We strengthen community organisations through referrals and helps identify gaps in local provision.



# Our Future 2025-2030

Our strategy for the future is built on four key pillars of action:

## CONVENOR

### *Bringing people together*

We create spaces for connection through forums, events and networks where ideas are shared, learning is exchanged and collaboration can grow.



## CAPACITY BUILDER

### *Strengthening and supporting*

We provide training, mentoring and practical resources that help local organisations build the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to become more resilient and sustainable.



## INCUBATOR

### *Developing new ideas*

We nurture innovation by supporting new projects, testing fresh approaches and co-designing solutions with local people and partners.



## AMPLIFIER

### *Making our voice heard*

We celebrate local success, share stories and insight, and use evidence from across the sector to influence policy, shape decisions and strengthen understanding of the difference our communities make.





## ***Encourage, Facilitate and Nurture Community***

We create the spaces and opportunities that bring people together. Through forums, networks and events, we support information sharing, innovation and good practice across Merton's voluntary and community sector.

Over the next five years, we will:

- Plan and host inclusive community events that reflect the diversity of Merton
- Use safe, welcoming and accessible venues
- Promote opportunities widely through our channels and networks

## ***Strengthen Collaboration and Communication***

We build stronger connections within the sector and with partners, helping organisations share ideas, data and learning that lead to better outcomes for local people.

We will:

- Share updates, good practice and insight across the sector
- Support the use of digital tools that make communication and collaboration easier and more inclusive

## ***Share, create and reinforce partnerships***

We strengthen collaboration by building meaningful partnerships across the voluntary, community, faith and public sectors. Our work helps turn shared insight into collective action, ensuring data and local knowledge are used to shape better services and reach those most in need. Over the next five years, we will:

- Strengthen community insight by working with the sector to share and analyse data
- Create regular opportunities for organisations to meet, connect and collaborate
- Develop frameworks that support responsible data sharing and partnership working
- Use evidence and insight to identify unmet needs and inform outreach and service design

## ***Co-produce workforce solutions***

We support volunteering and employment initiatives that help people contribute, learn and thrive. By working with partners and local employers, we aim to build a more inclusive and resilient community workforce. Over the next five years, we will:

- Run focus groups to understand and remove barriers to volunteering and employment
- Support and develop health, wellbeing and employment initiatives
- Facilitate employer forums and resource-sharing hubs that strengthen local collaboration



# Convenor

*Bringing People Together*

## Key Outcomes

- Partner and stakeholder organisations feel better connected and supported through Merton Connected networks
- More residents take part in volunteering and community activity
- Stronger collaboration between employers, voluntary organisations and local partners, with year-on-year growth in joint initiatives that support volunteering and employability pathways





# Capacity Builder

## *Strengthening and Supporting*

### ***Build capacity through support, learning and promotion***

We strengthen the capabilities of Merton's voluntary, community and faith sector so that organisations and individuals can achieve their potential. We respond to emerging needs, providing practical support, training and opportunities for shared learning. Over the next five years, we will:

- Identify and deliver training, mentoring and peer learning opportunities with equal access for all
- Host events to share good practice and monitor sector needs
- Develop a shared knowledge hub to improve access to information and resources
- Promote ongoing professional development across the sector

### ***Promote Continuing Professional Development***

We share knowledge, skills and resources across our staff team and the wider sector to ensure consistent, high-quality support. We will:

- Equip all Merton Connected staff with the training and development they need to respond to the sector's changing needs
- Promote access to relevant training and learning opportunities for local organisations and volunteers

### ***Follow the Funding***

We help local organisations build the skills and confidence to secure sustainable funding. Through a programme of training, resources and shared learning, we strengthen fundraising capacity across the sector.

Over the next five years, we will:

- Embed fundraising skills within training and professional development opportunities
- Share funding news, opportunities and examples of good practice
- Support collaboration between funders and local organisations to maximise impact

### ***Foster Strategic Collaboration and Innovation***

We work with partners to identify challenges, share ideas and test new approaches that benefit local communities.

We will:

- Encourage collaboration that maximises capacity and reduces duplication
- Use task-and-finish groups to address shared priorities and challenges
- Learn from regional and national models of good practice to inform local innovation



# Capacity Builder

## *Strengthening and Supporting*

### **Work at Grassroots**

We strengthen the foundations of Merton's voluntary and community sector by supporting grassroots organisations to grow and adapt.

We will:

- Provide tailored advice and mentoring for emerging and established groups
- Help smaller organisations build confidence, governance and reach

### **Key outcomes:**

- Local organisations report increased skills, confidence and capability
- More organisations take up training opportunities offered through Merton Connected
- Greater participation in fundraising and income-generation training across the sector



## ***Nurture innovation through inclusion and communication***

We work alongside the sector to understand community needs and ensure everyone's voice is heard. Our approach builds inclusion through better communication, collaboration and shared purpose.

Over the next five years, we will:

- Develop tailored engagement and communication systems to reach communities at risk of exclusion
- Strengthen collaboration through volunteering forums that celebrate and recognise the sector's contribution

## ***Co-design Solutions***

We use insight, data and lived experience to identify gaps in local provision and create practical, community-led solutions.

We will:

- Map unmet needs and co-produce responses with residents and local organisations
- Support grassroots groups and under-represented communities to lead change
- Pilot innovative projects and embed successful models into ongoing community provision

## ***Promote resource-sharing and partnership infrastructures***

We are building a culture of collaboration that enables organisations to share skills, resources and ideas. By strengthening partnership infrastructures, we help create a more connected and resilient sector.

Over the next five years, we will:

- Develop a skills and resource-sharing network for local organisations
- Facilitate collaborative funding applications and shared investment pathways
- Showcase partnership models that can be adapted and scaled across the sector

## ***Support learning, innovation and confident decision making***

We encourage innovation and create space for testing new ideas while staying true to our shared purpose.

We will:

- Coordinate activities that ease pressure on the sector and support creative problem-solving
- Take thoughtful risks that help us learn and create positive change, and empower local community organisations to explore new approaches with confidence.
- Maintain focus on our mission while experimenting and incubating new ideas
- Foster a safe feedback culture for staff, volunteers and community leaders



# Incubator

*Developing New Ideas*

## ***Embrace emerging tools***

We help the sector make effective use of digital tools and new technologies to enhance communication, efficiency and impact.

Over the next five years, we will:

- Collate and share training opportunities on emerging tools, including AI and other innovative technologies
- Work with partners to test, adapt and deliver digital solutions that strengthen community engagement and service delivery

## ***Key Outcomes:***

- Better understanding of community need results in more collaborative funding bids and pilot projects
- Increased uptake of training and practical learning on digital and emerging technologies, including AI



# Amplifier

## *Making Our Voice Heard*

### ***Develop stronger strategic communications***

We capture and communicate the social value, reach and impact of Merton's voluntary, community and faith sector. Through consistent and coordinated messaging, we raise visibility and strengthen understanding of the sector's contribution. Over the next five years, we will:

- Develop a clear, cohesive communications strategy
- Highlight successes, challenges and emerging trends across the sector
- Showcase stories that demonstrate social value and local impact

### ***Amplify voices through partnerships***

We help the sector and its communities influence policy and decision-making at local, sub-regional and regional levels. We will:

- Collect compelling stories and case studies to support advocacy, funding bids and community outreach
- Shape engagement calendars and champion community ambassadors who represent local voices
- Build and formalise partnerships that expand mutual visibility, influence and reach

### ***Seek and allocate resources to maximise effectiveness***

We focus our time and resources where they can make the greatest difference. By prioritising our role as the sector's representative body, we ensure our efforts deliver real impact for local communities. We will:

- Secure funding that strengthens our communications and engagement capacity
- Use data and analytics to target activity and inform strategic decision-making

### ***Improve how community voices are heard across the sector***

We strengthen the voice and influence of smaller organisations and groups that represent marginalised or underrepresented communities. By creating more inclusive spaces for dialogue and storytelling, we help ensure every voice contributes to local change. We will:

- Maintain and promote forums that empower community champions and local voices to lead outreach and storytelling
- Champion initiatives that highlight underrepresented experiences and perspectives
- Use accessible and inclusive communication tools to reach a wider audience

### ***Key Outcomes:***

- Stakeholder organisations feel better represented, valued and heard within the borough
- Improved communication and engagement evidenced through increased reach across social media and website platforms



# Developing and Delivering our Strategy

## DEVELOPING

This strategy was shaped through the insight and collaboration of many people across Merton. During 2024–2025, our Board of Trustees, staff, partners, and community organisations shared their views, ideas and priorities for the future. We are grateful to everyone who contributed their time and expertise to help create this five-year plan.

## DELIVERING

Delivery of this strategy will be led by Merton Connected's staff team, under the direction of the Chief Executive and the oversight of the Board of Trustees. Each year, we will set out a clear annual business plan that details the actions that move us closer to our goals. Progress will be reviewed regularly by the Board and shared with partners and communities, with an annual impact report published to highlight progress and learning.

## GET INVOLVED

We welcome everyone who wants to play a part in this journey, whether by working with us, contributing ideas, or accessing our support. To find out more about Merton Connected or this strategy, please get in touch. Your involvement helps strengthen the networks, partnerships and communities that make Merton thrive.





*Connecting people, partnerships and purpose across Merton.*

## Contact us



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Our office hours are 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. As our team sometimes works remotely, please contact us by phone or email in the first instance.

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