

What do Carers want?

When it comes to the Local Offer, its important that we find out our members's views from time to time. Our 2015 satisfaction survey showed that users greatly welcomed the WAND card, launched in 2013. Key suggestions for further improvement were: more parking concessions, more sports activities and more support for carers.

Since the 2015 survey we have expanded our existing parking concessions at hospitals and the Town Hall to include parking outside a WAND cardholder's school for pick-ups and drop-offs and free parking in Battersea Park car park on days when we hold pre-arranged events there. We have also worked with Enable to expand the disability sports offer and with other providers, such as Aspire. Most recently, we have been able to negotiate discounts with Flip Out for regular weekly sessions and also some free places at Go Ape during the holidays.

In addition, Places for People Leisure Centres now offer carers a discounted rate on weekdays between 10am-4pm for swimming and other Leisure Centre activities. Full details of all of the above can be found on the Local Offer website www.wandsworth.gov.uk/localoffer

Our latest survey, launched in the spring of 2017, focused on parent/carer needs and what else would help you. Here is a summary of the findings and if you would like to see the more detailed report, please go to the website: <https://goo.gl/XD6YHt> or contact us for a copy.

Key 2017 findings

The following findings were based on replies from 122 Wandsworth parents/carers, 95% identifying themselves as parents. The majority (67%) of the children and young people they cared for were in the age bracket 5-17.

52% said they knew about the Local Offer, 42% said they did not. 72% like to get information via email but other communication methods were also important, including paper communications, website, face to face and telephone calls.

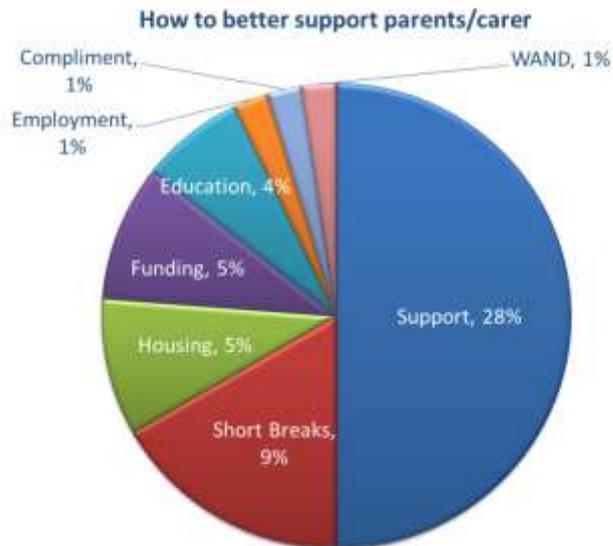
Looking ahead, the following were the top four areas likely to be of most help to parent carers: Leisure information (76%), Help with problems at school (54%), Help to cope with my caring role (49%) and Things to aid my health and wellbeing (49%)

Future Useful Information (Multiple Selection)	Responses	%
Leisure activities for my child/young person	93	76%
Problems with schools / college	66	54%
Help me to cope with my caring role	60	49%
Aid my health and wellbeing	60	49%
Accessing benefits and housing	44	36%
Help at work or getting back into work	44	36%
Personal development / future career path	40	33%
Support with relationship issues	27	22%
Advise about money management / debt	24	20%
Other	1	1%

We then asked whether or not parent/carers feel they receive enough support to balance their added caring responsibilities with work/education and to have a life outside of their caring role. Just over one in five, 21%, said YES to this question. More than half, 55%, said NO. Asked what would make a difference in the future, there was a strong emphasis on improving employment prospects or help to enable people to return to work:

What would make a difference in the future (Multiple Selection)	Responses	%
Full time, part time, flexible working opportunities	49	40%
Employers advertised as family friendly	41	34%
Childcare availability to help me work/study longer	29	24%
More confidence to return to work	27	22%
Help with reviewing my skills or change of direction	28	23%
Advice on housing & benefits for part timers	23	19%
Other	11	9%

Finally, we asked an open question about what else Wandsworth Council or others could do to better support parents or other carers of children or young people with SENDs. The following pie chart shows the key areas where people would like more help:



NEXT STEPS IN SUPPORTING CARERS

The survey highlights a need for more support for parent carers, not least in making sure they have practical information about sources of support to help them in their role.

With this in mind, we have already organised several events for carers this year – starting with the Can-do Carers information morning at York Gardens Library and a programme of activities around Carers Week in June, ranging from drop-in information sessions, to pampering sessions in Southside and via Wandsworth Carers Centre. We were also able to try something a bit different with a ‘Relax and Draw’ day, including lunch, courtesy of the National Gallery.

More recently we have run a workshop on Employment Rights for carers, outlining how to make effective requests when it comes to flexible working or time off to care for sick children. We also had a guest speaker from the Family Fund to talk about applying for grants for children with SENDs.

We have also fed back our findings to the Wandsworth Carers Partnership Board and to our colleagues at Work Match, with the hope that more may be done to help parents wanting to find employment with flexible, family friendly hours.