

Day Centre Modernisation: User & Carer Experiences and Views

Healthwatch Richmond
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**Committed
to quality**

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Glossary and Notes

Client - refers to someone who attends a day centre.

Carer - refers to an unpaid carer who supports or provides care to a client.

Care Worker / Care Staff - refers to a person who is paid by the day centre to provide care whether as an employee or an agency worker.

Anonymisation

Where necessary we have changed quotes so that they are fully anonymous. For example, we have changed “my wife” to “my spouse”.

Similarly, we have not attributed quotes from clients or described their medical condition in a way that would make them identifiable.

Key Considerations

1. Respite for carers

- a. All three day centres provide essential respite for carers including those who care for people who do not, or are unable to, access support elsewhere in the community.
- b. A lack of access to respite was cited as the cause of carers neglecting their health.
- c. Conversely, carers who had good access to respite described being able to access health care and engage in enriching community and social activities.

2. Appropriate provision of social, care and community activities

- a. All three day centres meet the needs of their specific clients in terms of care, socialisation and meaningful activities.
- b. It is unclear that the day centres would continue to meet the clients' needs in an appropriate way if combined.
- c. Respondents were unable to identify any other services that they currently engage in that would meet these needs other than when supported 1-2-1 by a carer or care worker.
- d. The importance of meeting these needs cannot be overstated.
- e. Our observations of the activities were mixed.
 - i. Generally, clients enjoyed the activities offered at the day centres.
 - ii. Clients at the Access Project valued being involved in the planning of activities at the day centre. They would welcome new activities and should be involved in the planning of the activity programme.
 - iii. At Woodville and Sheen Lane we were given the impression that there was not as wide a variety of activities offered.

3. Care, Support and Staff

- a. We witnessed a good level of care at all three day centres. We thought that the care staff at Sheen Lane and the Access Project went above and beyond to engage and support clients
- b. There was universal praise for care staff from both clients and carers at all centres. Common responses are that they are helpful, caring and friendly.
- c. Our observations were positive, but less positive than client feedback and included:
 - i. an isolated incident at Sheen Lane that we believe has been addressed

- ii. a need for more interaction with clients from care staff at Woodville.

4. Underutilised facilities

- a. The day centres all had good spaces which offered good facilities to clients.
- b. These were not used to their full potential at any centre.
 - i. 'gym' at Sheen Lane
 - ii. Reminiscence room' at Woodville, used predominantly as a quiet lounge
 - iii. treatment and meeting rooms at the Access Project.
- c. All centres required some maintenance whether to the bathrooms, gardens, or storage areas.

5. Transport is (Mostly) Essential

- a. Feedback from clients and carers show that for most, transport is essential. Many clients could not attend without it
- b. Clients do not use the transport when: they live off route; transport is variable in terms of timings and communication; the carer gains additional respite by transporting the client and is able to do so.
- c. The fleet is uncomfortable. Those in wheelchairs are often placed over the vehicle's axle which has the most impact from potholes.

6. Meals

- a. The quality of food provided was better at the Access Project than at Woodville and Sheen Lane.
- b. We did not observe any opportunity for hand washing before eating at any of the day centres.
- c. Not all require or wish to pay for a large meal, but for those in financial difficulty, it may be the only meal that they will have.

7. Communication

- a. Comments from carers indicated that there is a lack of communication from the day centres to carers around the activities, food and transport. Carers requested better communication.

Introduction

Background

Richmond has a long history of supporting residents who need day care. Services delivered from day care facilities provide meaningful support and activities for older and disabled residents with care and support needs. Day centres also provide valuable respite to unpaid carers. However, generally day services have changed over recent years in that individuals present higher levels of needs and our current offer does not meet local need. The Council needs to modernise the service to meet this change.¹

Richmond Council asked Healthwatch Richmond to gather information about day centres, focusing on the experience of clients and carers. Healthwatch Richmond is a charity independent from the NHS, established in the Health & Social Care Act of 2012. Its purpose is to gather patient experiences in order to inform improvements in health and social care services.

Scope

The aim of this work was to collect views and experiences of clients of the day centres and their carers to inform future decisions about the services. **“Views and experiences”** collected from Clients included: transport, food, activities, facilities and care provision at the day centre. For carers these were the same with the addition of support carers receive from other organisations. Views and experiences outside of this were out of scope for the work.

A rapid turnaround was required with the work to be completed within 4 weeks. Time was a key consideration and so it was considered sufficient to collect enough data to draw overall findings from.

Some key stakeholder groups are out of scope for this work and we understand will be engaged through other Council led work, some of which may happen later in the year (e.g. within the scope of the Carers Strategy & Dementia Strategy reviews).

These groups are listed below:

- People who could access the service but do not whether by choice or because they are not aware of it
- Carers of the above
- Care workers who are not employed by LBRuT (e.g. Personal Assistants)
- The voluntary sector

¹Taken from London Borough of Richmond upon Thames *Modern Day Service Offer: Communication and Engagement Strategy and Plan*, (March 2024) pg 3.

Methodology

Healthwatch Richmond undertook approximately 40 staff hours of visits to day centres to make observations of the care provided and speak to clients.

- The Access Project: visited on 16th May from 10am - 3pm
- Sheen Lane: visited on 8th May from 10am - 2:30pm and 10th May from 9:45am-11:30am
- Woodville: visited on 9th May from 9am - 2:30pm.

Observations focused on: care, transport, meals, activities and facilities. Preliminary visits also took place in the weeks preceding. Observations from these meetings have been included in the findings.

During the visits, Healthwatch Richmond staff spoke to clients and conducted a semi-structured interview focusing on: transport, food, activities, facilities and the care they received.

A survey was designed for carers of day centre clients to complete. This focused on the same themes - care, transport, food and activities - but also asked about the support carers receive from other organisations. A hard-copy of the survey was sent home with the client with a freepost envelope. Carers were also sent emails with electronic copies of the survey. We also spoke to carers during our visits.

Limitations

We could not speak to all clients due to varying impairments (e.g. cognitive and communication impairments) and/or health needs. To mitigate this, Healthwatch Richmond staff still engaged with client users in an unstructured way, for example, asking general questions about lunch or their day. We also conducted thorough observations at all three day centres.

The 4 week time constraint meant that our report is based on a limited 'snapshot' of day centres. Whilst the number of participants was limited, it is reflective of the numbers of participants using the service. We mitigated this limitation through collecting multiple sources of data: interviews with clients, observations from Healthwatch Richmond staff visits and carer survey responses and interviews. The effectiveness of this mitigation is evidenced through:

- Triangulation of observations, Client and Carer feedback - which is corroborated by separate staff engagement work.
- Data saturation was reached as there is considerable alignment of experience and sentiment from clients and carers of the service.

Access Project

We visited the Access Project on Thursday 16th May from 10am – 3pm. There were 8 clients in attendance, all of whom were male. Clients were supported for a wide range of needs including:

- visual impairments
- mobility impairments
- cognitive impairments and dementia
- learning disabilities and neurodiversity
- neurological impairments
- mental health needs.

In some instances clients displayed behaviour that might challenge in other day centres however within this setting it did not.

Care, Support & Staff

Despite the range of needs within the centre, clients were well cared for, supported to be independent and to exercise choice. We observed staff asking clients about their care needs and preferences and delivering individualised care. This included feeding at the clients pace and an individual choosing to self-mobilise their chair and then being assisted when they changed their mind.

The staff and client interactions we observed were positive, friendly and considerate. Clients were treated as adults/equals and carer workers engaged in conversations led by the clients.

Clients' Comments about Care and Support

All service users described the staff as *"friendly and helpful"*, *"staff are fantastic"*, which aligned with our observations of the staff.

Carers' Comments about Care and Support

Carers, whilst limited in number (5) offered universal and unreserved praise:

"We find the staff at the day centre extremely helpful and friendly. We have complete confidence when [the client] is there that they are well looked after and in very safe and capable hands."

"We are very pleased with all the staff at the day centre for the support given to [the client] and us"

As well as providing care for clients, day centre staff are the first point of call for support for some clients and carers. One client told us that they would ask the

manager for help when they needed a GP appointment and to liaise with Social Services around unmet needs. This was confirmed by carers who said:

"They are always willing to help with any issues that may arise."

"If there is a problem the centre keeps us informed plus gives us somebody to talk to for advice"

"Once the shower at home broke so we were able to use the shower at the day centre"

Transport

For almost all clients, the transport provided by the day centre is essential. A small number of individuals can make the journey with support from carers, albeit not reliably. Most would prefer to use the transport as it enables them to feel part of the group.

Clients' Comments about Transport

The driver was praised both for the care provided and for their patience and communication. The driver is also a care worker at the centre and is popular with the clients.

"Liz is an excellent driver, always on time."

Whilst the transport does not always run to time, clients appeared to be very understanding of this and quite content with the communication around this:

"They call if they're running late"

"Sometimes the bus can be late as it has to pick up lots of people."

The vehicle is however uncomfortable and this is compounded by the state of the roads and potholes:

"It is good. The roads are terrible and it is impossible to miss them in the bus. Sitting over the axle is very uncomfortable but what can you do?"

In addition to transport to the centre, the bus is also used for excursions which are very important to the clients of the centre:

"Also I get on the bus when they have excursions and they drop me right home."

Carers' Comments about Transport

Carers were positive about the transport, emphasising that it is essential for clients to attend:

"Without transport [the client] would not be able to attend."

Meals

Meal time at the Access Project is very social with staff and clients sitting together chatting. We observed staff supporting clients to cut up their food and to eat, which was not hurried and at a client led pace.

We ate with the clients during our visit and found the food good. Food was cooked fresh onsite, portions were large and the meal was nutritious. The chef spoke to each person checking whether the meal was to their taste and offering second helpings.

Users were given aprons before the meal. When users were finished they were free to go to the lounge. During lunch one person was reading a book. Lots of tea was offered during the day.

In addition to the meals, we observed a cooking activity at the centre during our planning visit. Clients told us that they enjoy the cooking club and making their own lunch.

Clients' Comments about Food

Overall, clients were positive about the food served, highlighting that their individual preferences are catered for:

"I don't like spaghetti so I get a baked potato with Bolognese sauce on it instead."

"Food is excellent"

Carers' Comments about Food

Clients and carers spoke well of the food and of their choice during meal times:

"My [partner] loves the lunches at the centre, always well balanced. Happy man/woman."

"The food is generally OK, my partner is usually satisfied with the food."

However, where there are dietary needs, carers were not as confident in the food:

"The food is fine. They have special dietary needs and cannot eat certain foods and is halal. Sometimes is unsure if the food has been checked before served to them."

There were also issues raised over the cost of food where meals are vital for some:

"Can't always afford to eat properly at home so the food is a lifesaver. On the days I don't come to the centre I might have a sandwich or something for tea but not proper food because we're skint", but an unnecessary cost for others: "[The client] chooses to take a packed lunch as it can work out quite costly to eat there every day and also eats an evening meal. It would be too much to have 2 meals in one day."

Activities

The social interaction and the atmosphere that activities promote was praised. There was some variation in views of the appropriateness of the activities: some clients found the activities well run but might prefer different activities i.e. other forms of exercise rather than yoga, quizzes rather than bingo. The clients also valued being involved with the planning of activities, one client told us how they have a meeting where they plan where to go on their photography trips, which has included boats trips and visits to parks in the past.

We observed the morning yoga, led by a friendly and personable an external instructor who called users by their first names which encouraged them to be more involved.

We observed the social nature of the day centre at other times: as people arrived there were conversations about the news on the TV; over lunch there was a buzz of conversation; during the afternoon quiz, both clients and care workers engaged in a jovial atmosphere. During activities, care staff sat and talked to those clients who couldn't or didn't want to engage.

Clients' Comments about Activities

Clients spoke about the social elements of activities and indeed of their wider time at the centre. The importance of this socialisation to clients is hard to overstate and clearly of significant value to those who use the centre.

"Activities are good but the real benefit is the socialisation, the friendly atmosphere and getting out of the house."

"Love all the activities and think it is better than being stuck at home"

"Enjoy watching the news on the TV and discussing."

"Here we can have a laugh and a chat... I feel safe and welcome and entertained."

We observed, and heard positive feedback about more structured and led activities too. Many of these were popular and received positive feedback from clients. Trips outside of the day centre are highly valued by clients:

"I enjoy all of the activities, particularly photography where we go out on trips. We also go for coffee on a Friday sometimes"

Carers Comments about Activities

Carers were positive about the activities:

"[The client] enjoys all activities they participate in from cooking, art, music, yoga, bingo, book club, photography and of course trips out! [The client] also enjoys the time to socialise with other clients."

"I think the activities are good and they are always busy. This is the right environment for my cared for person"

"Reflexology, singing, painting, yoga, book club. My spouse enjoys all the activities."

Some carers' spoke about their desire for activities that are not currently provided:

"Some activities like podiatry would be good on a Monday. They do it on a Tuesday but [the client] doesn't come then. I also think physiotherapy would be good. Not many activities [the client] can involve with so music and exercise is the best for them."

"[The client] enjoys all that they does there, maybe new things/classes could be offered or changed around to keep things interesting."

"They enjoy doing gardening when they are at home and would like to do more at the day centre."

Building considerations

The Access Project uses part of a building with open access. The largest space in the building is used by Age UK Richmond and Multicultural Richmond. From our wider work, we are aware that this space is well used and valued by the community. The co-location of services is also welcomed by carers who make use of activities also provided within the centre and perhaps this synergy could benefit from some further integration.

The Access Project occupies 2 main areas to the left and right of the main door separated by a long hallway around two corners. The layout means that part of the centre is always out of sight. The dining room, catering kitchen and an activity kitchen are at one end. The accessible toilets are near the entrance to the building. We observed some dirt in the toilets suggesting that they may benefit from a deep clean but this was not a major concern. The office, activity rooms and lounge are to the other end of the corridor.

The layout of the building is quite confusing. There are no obvious signs or visual aids to assist navigation. One client reported that they had once got lost and ended up stranded after entering the wrong room and being unable to open the door to get out.

Moving from one area to another requires mobilising a considerable distance. Some clients have to seek assistance, which reduces their independence. The building is otherwise accessible due to the wide corridor and doors, automatic front door, and adaptations including a standing hoist and handrails. There was some difference of opinion over the appropriateness of the standing hoist but we cannot comment further on this.

Whilst the Access Project covers a considerable area, it is divided into several modest rooms. The lounge and dining room appeared to be the hubs of the centre but were quite full on the day. This limits the capacity of the Access Project.

Some rooms appeared to be relatively underused including a "Chiropodists room", which appeared to be storing chairs, and a small meeting room. The art room was well provisioned and seemingly well used with considerable art on display both in the room and around the centre.

The garden received positive feedback from clients however the weather was poor at the time of our visit and we did not see it used. The garden was overgrown in some areas and the garden entrance from the dining room was less appealing than from the art room.

Other considerations

More than one individual described the importance of the day centre in avoiding relationship breakdown.

"Respite is difficult to find. My carers' health has been deteriorating and this gives my partner a break from me. The relationship is strained because they take on everything but this gives them some space. I've asked for another day which we both want, only asked last week so can't complain but nothing happens very quickly with social services."

Other carers said the day centre enabled them to stay connected with their communities and enjoy life outside of their caring roles.

For most clients, the Access Project is the only social and engaging activity that they can participate in. The impact of not having this opportunity was expressed:

"I'd be lost without this place. It's the only thing that I look forward to. I never got out of the house for 4 years before, but I never knew this place existed. I have a chair at home that I call the coffin because I never leave it otherwise."

"It's kept me sane. I would probably have jumped off a roof without it."

Moreover, the Access Project caters for people across quite a wide range of ages, from young adults to those of late middle age and early old age, and needs. It does so in a way that gives clients autonomy in their decisions, provides enjoyment and values the individual. This is perhaps best evidenced by:

- a neurodiverse individual, whose behaviour might have been challenging in another setting, being encouraged to run one of the activities.
- a group of stroke survivors having conversations and joking about racing their wheelchairs down the corridors
- a client with deteriorating health needs being supported 1-1 and planning future activities that they would prefer to engage in.

Several individuals spoke of wanting or actively seeking additional days at the centre and one spoke of wishing they had been aware of the centre earlier. Access to the services appears to be controlled by Social Services and limited by funding decisions rather than demand. It is unclear how many other clients who are not currently accessing the service could benefit from doing so if this were addressed.

Sheen Lane

We visited Sheen Lane Day Centre twice: on Wednesday 8th May from 10am – 2:30pm and Friday 10th May from 9:45am–11:30am.

- On 8th May, there were 11 clients in attendance.
 - 6 wheelchair users, including 2 specialty electric wheelchairs; 2 clients who used walkers; 1 client who was visually impaired; and 1 client who used a walking stick
 - We could hold a conversation with 8 of the clients.
- On 10th May, there were 9 clients in attendance
 - 3 wheelchair users, including 2 speciality electric wheelchairs; 1 client who used a walker and 2 who used walking sticks
 - 3 of the clients were hard of hearing.

Notably, there was some overlap in clients attending on the 8th and 10th May. We interviewed 10 clients and observed 14 clients. We were told that a total of 21 clients attend the day centre.

Seven carers of Sheen Lane clients shared their views with us via the carer survey.

Care, Support & Staff

On 8th May, there were 6 members of care staff, 1 staff member who worked in the kitchen and 1 member of housekeeping staff. We were told that there are 6 members of permanent staff. There were also 3 agency staff on 8th May.

Care staff were attentive and kind. They knew all the clients by name and frequently engaged them in conversations about current affairs and the clients' personal interests.

The following events are of note:

- Care staff asked clients if they needed to go to the bathroom before and after activities and then helped clients access the bathroom
- During the morning on the 8th May, one client was not participating in the yoga and instead was watching the music videos from a reclining chair. One carer worker saw this and said: *"You can't hear any of the music can you"*. The client replied *"No,"* but that they were quite content. The care worker appeared to understand that the client would wish to hear the music, turned the volume up and checked whether the client could now hear it
- On the afternoon of the 8th May, a care worker was removing and reapplying nail polish for a client who didn't want to engage with the activity

- On the morning of the 10th May, one care worker informed clients individually that there was a birthday next week, a card to sign and a cake
- During the morning activity on the 10th May, one non-verbal client attended. During introductions, a care worker stepped in and introduced the client to the group
- An isolated, minor, incident of poor care was observed that was reported to the Day Centre Manager and we understand now dealt with.

Clients' Comments about Care Staff

Clients were effusive with their praise for staff:

"The staff are very attentive. They are brilliant. I cannot fault them. They are marvellous, all of them."

"The staff are absolutely brilliant. They are outstanding. They couldn't be more helpful."

"I wouldn't change anything. The staff are excellent and fantastic."

"My neighbour suggested I go to a different day centre but I refused because it couldn't be better anywhere else. I think the staff are exemplary and can't do enough for you. They go out on a limb to help you."

Carers Comments about Care Staff

This was echoed by comments from carers about the care their cared for person received at Sheen Lane:

"The support and care at the centre are excellent and I don't know how it could be improved."

"My spouse enjoys the care given by the staff. Suffering from dual incontinence the staff assist my spouse, compassionately with their personal care... The staff are wonderful - the care they give is excellent."

Transport

On arrival, wheelchair users were taken off the bus one by one and brought into the main room. Those that were mobile were helped off the bus and made their own way to the main room. It seemed efficient and calm but not particularly speedy. On both days we visited, some clients were brought in by their carers.

Clients Comments about Transport

The clients expressed broadly positive views about transport. One wheelchair user reported that: *"I wouldn't change anything."* The drivers enter the client's house, collect their belongings and wheel them to the bus. The client reported feeling safe with the drivers.

Reasons for not taking the bus included living off the route. Negative feedback about transport included: long journeys and variable pick-up/drop-off times. One client who uses the transport reported that the bus often arrives very late and the journey is over 1 hour which was problematic because health conditions make sitting for extended periods of time painful.

Carers' Comments about Transport

For most, transport was essential to attending the centre. All feedback from carers regarding transport was positive:

"The transport is necessary, otherwise will not be able to attend."

"Transport to and from their home is a necessity."

"My spouse cannot attend day centre without transport & help as I cannot push their new heavier chair to and from bus."

"The transport works well. Drivers and carers are caring and efficient."

"It is extremely important. My spouse is liable to falls at any time so the use of public transport is not an option - I work full time so am unable to take them out anywhere in the week."

Food and Meals

Clients were offered tea, coffee and toast on arrival. We witnessed a client being offered breakfast who couldn't immediately articulate what they wanted. The care worker asked if the client wanted the usual toast and the client nodded and smiled. This shows rapport and familiarity between the clients and care workers.

Clients were asked what they wanted for lunch and were able to order off the menu. On 10th May, there was a Sicilian lemon cake on the menu and the care worker made a big deal about it with each client, stage whispering it to each service user as if it was a secret. This added a moment of fun and camaraderie to a routine provision.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Choice A Salmon crumble	Roast Chicken Breast	Chicken Curry	Beef lasagne	Fish
Choice B Lamb mince steak	Cottage pie	Meatballs	Chicken pizza	CHICKEN SLICE Steak Slice
Vegetarian Veggie cottage pie	Tom, lentil Sweet pot crumble	Moroccan Bean Cass	Veg. Hotpot	Cheese omelette
Potatoes Mash + Boiled Chips Croquettes	mash + Roast	Rice + Mash	mash + Crook	mash + Chitas
Vegetables Brocc Veg + Medley	Sprouts + Carrots + Parsley	Green Beans + Cauliflower	Cabbage + Swede	peas Baked Beans
Hot Dessert Rhubarb sponge	Bread + Butter pud	Cooked apricots	Rice pud + Clotted cream	Rhubarb crumble

The main room wasn't tidied before the lunch service and clients used their old drink cups. Clients were given plastic bibs to cover their clothes but none were offered the opportunity to wash their hands, use a hand wipe or anti-bacterial gel. Two clients had 1-2-1 help eating and received their meal before the other clients. We ate with clients and had the vegetarian option. The vegetables were overcooked, the main was bland and one of our meals was incorrect.

Overall, the meal was calm. The TV screen with music videos was left on which added a nice ambience to the meal. Clients chatted amongst themselves or listened to music. Each course was efficiently tidied away by care workers.

Drinks were offered at various points throughout the day. Two different flavours of squash were offered as well as tea and coffee.

Clients' Comments about Food

Overall, the clients were positive about the food. One client said:

"I can't complain about the food. It is wonderful.

I can choose what I want. I wouldn't change anything."

Other clients reported that the food they receive at Sheen Lane is important as they live alone and find it hard to cook for one person. Negative comments focused on the variety of food: one client commented that the lunches were *"meat and two veg"* and two clients said that they wished there were more vegetables.

Carers' Comments about Food

Overall, carers' comments about food were positive:

"Leave as is - it's perfect."

"One time I attended at lunchtime the meal was good."

"The food is mostly excellent, great choice. Desserts are particularly loved."

One carer commented about the cost of the food:

"Never tasted it but not worth £10.20 per day. My spouse needs a hot meal during the day but not too much as she eats a full evening meal each evening... Asked if smaller portions cost but no joy."

Activities

Two activities led by care staff or external coordinators take place every day: from 11am-12pm and from 2pm-3pm.

On the 8th May, there was chair yoga led by an external instructor. The clients were asked or gently encouraged to go to the activities lounge and then helped by the care workers to move rooms. 6 clients attended the yoga session. The yoga instructor knew each of the clients by name, encouraging and praising them for their efforts. The clients were smiling and laughing throughout the session.

The clients who did not participate in the morning activity sat in the dining room, listening to music, reading the newspaper or doing word searches or Sudoku. The care staff would check in at what felt like the appropriate frequency. As it was a warm, sunny day, the care workers opened the doors to the garden and offered to guide the clients outside.

In the afternoon on the 8th May, there was a music therapy session with an external instructor who played the guitar and the piano attended by 8 clients. The instructor knew the clients by name and encouraged them to participate.

On the 10th May, there was a church service led by the vicar and 4 members of the local parish church. The clients were asked if they wanted to attend and were aided into the activities lounge. One of the church members played the piano for the hymns. One client said that they chiefly attended to sing the hymns.

We were told that the day centre sometimes organised day trips for the clients, including for a pub lunch or trip to the seaside.

Clients' Comments about Activities

Overall, the clients were very positive about the activities. The resounding favourites were music and bingo. However, there may be ulterior motives with bingo:

"My favourite activity is bingo because they give out chocolate as prizes"

Many also commented that they like their alone time doing word searches, Sudoku or watching TV. A few clients noted that they struggled with yoga and were tired afterwards. The clients recognised that there were mixed abilities within the group. For example one client noted that they can't join in with darts or skittles because they are in a wheelchair but joked that they enjoy watching the other clients *"make fools of themselves."* However, clients appreciated that they had a choice of whether or not to take part in the activities.

Clients also commented that they come for the social aspect, *"I come because I have wonderful friends here."*

Carer's Comments about Activities

Three carers commented on the activities at Sheen Lane Day Centre:

"I cannot grumble at any activity at the day centre."

"Being practically housebound the activities & events provided stimulate his mind and physical exercises strengthen his body. Special days out are a wonderful event to his time there."

"Important that my partner sees the outside world and tries to make friends and join in... I really don't know how much exercise my partner does at the day centre and amount of time devoted to this. Any time I have attended a day centre I did not see my partner exercising or joining in social games or classes."

Building Considerations

There are three areas at Sheen Lane Day Centre which clients had access to: the dining room, the activity lounge and the garden.

The dining room consists of a large open space with tables and chairs as well as recliner chairs along the back wall. There is also a mounted TV which was playing music videos throughout our visits. The furniture appeared clean and of a good standard.

The activity lounge is relatively small and is crowded with chairs. There is a piano in this room. This limits the available space in the room; however the room is light and airy due to the large windows looking out onto the garden.

The garden is small. It is mostly paved with some beds and chairs/benches. Some of the plants and beds are in a poor state of repair and there are plants growing out of a broken bag of compost. There was also a broken wheelbarrow with weeds growing from it. The bird feeders were also empty. On both visits, the garden doors were open and users were free to walk or were guided into the garden.

There are 3 accessible toilets, one off the main dining room and 2 down a corridor. All three were relatively clean and tidy. One of the accessible toilets down the corridor has a broken toilet roll holder and the tile underneath the cistern was lying on the floor. There is a ledge on the back wall of the toilet, used to storing wipes. This was quite dusty. At the time of visiting, there was also litter on the floor of this toilet.

In the other toilet down the corridor, there was an empty, dry Tupperware placed under the pipes behind the toilet. When Healthwatch Richmond staff visited this toilet on both 8th May and 10th May, the toilet didn't flush properly.

In addition, there are two office rooms, a large kitchen and a hairdressing salon which is currently used as a storage room. The paint on the walls was peeling and cracked in multiple places throughout the building.



Clients' Comments about the Building

Clients were relatively positive about the building. They commented positively about the garden, although the comments may have been skewed because of the weather.

*"I enjoy the garden, particularly when there is nice weather.
I enjoy going to sit outside."*

There were a few comments from the clients about not using the bathroom when they are at the centre. They didn't give a reason for this but one did mention that there wasn't a high level toilet seat. Some clients also commented on the cleanliness of the bathroom.

Healthwatch staff members did not observe any cleaning taking place during the day.

Other Considerations

The dog added a lovely 'homely' element to the centre. The clients were very affectionate towards the dog.

Woodville Day Centre

We visited The Woodville Day Centre on Thursday 9th May 9am–3:30pm. There were 15 clients present and 7 members of care staff, 4 permanent and 3 agency. We were told the agency staff had been there for a number of years. All clients had dementia. Other client needs included:

- 4 mobility impairments (including 1 wheelchair user)
- hearing impairments

We received 13 responses from carers on the survey.

Care, Support & Staff

Interactions between care staff and clients were generally kind and positive. There was one incident during the lunch service where a client became upset at a member of care staff: the client was uncomfortable with the plastic apron tied around them. The client shouted *"get it off"* and threw their cutlery away. The staff member remained calm but did tell them: *"You shouldn't have done that. Please behave."* We also observed a member of care staff giving a client their lunchtime tablets, they brought them a cup of squash and sat with them.

Outside of the activities, clients were often sat without any stimulation, conversation or entertainment except for the radio playing quietly in the background. Clients that arrived at 9am sat without stimulation for two hours before the morning activity started. This was also the case after lunch.

During lunch, two clients needed support from care staff and were sat separately. Despite only eating for around 30 minutes, they sat there for an hour and we did not observe the care staff trying to entertain or engage them.

Client's Comments

Clients expressed positive opinions towards the care staff:

"The staff are cooperative and always very helpful"

One client expressed that they liked being greeted in the morning by care staff, who take their coat and make them a cup of tea, saying: *"I feel welcome here"*.

One of the clients we spoke to also expressed how they enjoyed socialising at the day centre: *"I enjoy the company"*.

Carer's Comments

All carers listed 'respite for carer' as a reason for using the day centre. There were positive comments about care staff meeting clients' care needs, with carers expressing this is care that they themselves struggle to provide:

"The care and support that Woodville Centre provides is excellent"

"The staff are very helpful and friendly."

"The service they provide is excellent and we really appreciate it."

"[My parent] is content here. The staff know them well and they feel cared for."

There were no concerns raised around the care and support provided by Woodville. Many expressed how vital the support from the day centre is:

"Without Woodville I couldn't cope. You have saved my life"

"The day centre is my lifeline"

"Without [Woodville] I would be lost"

There were three comments from carers who wished to know what activities the person they care for had done that day, as well as what they had for lunch.

Eleven responses listed 'social interaction' as a reason for using the day centre. One response highlighted that the day centre was the only contact a client was able to make with other people.

Transport

On the day we visited 5 clients were brought by their carers and 10 were brought by bus. When the bus arrived at Woodville, clients were helped off one by one by a staff member who then led them to the front door, where another staff member greeted them. It wasn't a quick process but the care staff were patient and the clients seemed calm and relaxed. It also appeared to be a familiar routine for the clients who stood and waited for their coats to be taken before sitting down.

Clients' comments

One client described the bus as: *"Alright."* Another expressed that they liked how the bus was *'door to door'*.

Carers' Comments

Generally, there were positive comments about the transport service. Five carers responded that the person they care for would not be able to attend without the provided transport. Others expressed they would find it difficult to provide

transport themselves. There were also comments about transport creating a longer period of respite. Another carer told us they would prefer the bus to drop the person they care for at home at 5pm instead of 4pm to provide them with an extra hour of respite.

“Without transport [the person I care for] would not be able to attend the day centre”

“I would take him myself if transport was not available, although that would mean less respite for me.”

Another had a negative opinion of the morning transport, saying it was *“too unpredictable.”* They feel this is unhelpful for people with dementia. They also suggest that it would be good if there was better communication with the buses.

One carer stated that as they live outside the borough there is no transport available, however they would find it good if this was available as currently they drive the person they care for to the day centre in a 50 minute round-trip.

Meals

When the clients arrived in the morning they were offered tea, coffee and toast. In the morning, a member of care staff asked each client for their lunch choice. We observed care staff appearing to be making assumptions about what each client would want to eat, rather than reading their options.

The morning activity finished about 12pm, and clients were led back to the dining table. Cutlery was laid out once clients had sat down. The food was served on time at 12:30pm and the environment during lunch was quiet and relaxed, with music playing in the background.

The clients appeared to enjoy their meals, most had eaten all their food. There was a 10-15 minute wait before plates were cleared and dessert was served; to much enthusiasm by the clients. We were served a lunch of boiled cauliflower, mashed vegetables, hash browns and a brie and cranberry pastry. This was acceptable but not particularly tasty.



Clients were offered a cup of tea when they arrived, a glass of water or squash after music therapy and a glass of water at lunchtime.

Clients' Comments

Some of the clients were unable to remember what they had eaten so couldn't comment but we did receive positive comments from clients about the food.

"good [despite being] very fussy"

"sensible and not over the top"

Carer's Comments

There were positive comments about the food:

"The food at Woodville is very good and meets our needs".

There were no concerns raised about the quality of the food. 5 carers stated that they could not comment on the food or what was served, as there is no communication from Woodville. One carer expressed that they would like to be told what food had been served so that they can make something different for dinner.

Carers also commented on the amount of food given to clients:

"never comes home hungry or thirsty"

"We have a light supper [...] as she had had a big lunch".

The only suggestion made was to provide more fresh fruit.

Activities

We observed the morning music therapy and the afternoon activity of 'musical bingo', both held in the activity lounge.

The music therapy, led by an external instructor, was very loud as clients were given instruments to play. We felt this environment may have been overwhelming. The clients were engaged, some got up to dance and others sang along and played their instruments. During the session we observed one male service user using his maraca to hit a female member of care staff on the bum. She shook her head at him and moved away.



The 'musical bingo' was led by 3 members of staff. We were under the impression that the afternoon activity would be chosen by the clients but was instead chosen by staff which did not promote the independence of the clients.

We were told the clients *"loved"* playing musical bingo by staff. One client expressed they did not want to participate but was dismissed, with the staff member telling them *"but you played last week"*, and was given a bingo card anyway. During the activity it appeared the staff were completing the bingo on the client's behalf and the activity felt quite rushed. The clients were unengaged and did not appear to be enjoying themselves.

We felt that care staff were lacking when it came to activities and entertainment. There was little individual attention given to clients and there were points during the day where clients and care staff were sat in silence. It appeared care staff were not flexible or supportive of the choices of clients. For example, it was a warm day outside but there was never the suggestion to go out into the garden. A carer appeared to share these concerns: *"Exposure to natural sunlight is a basic human necessity. This must be part of the daily care at Woodville. Staying indoors all day is not good practice"*.

We also spoke to staff about the other activities offered at the day centre. We were told that the clients enjoyed the chair yoga activity, but we were surprised that this was a video when the other day centres brought in an instructor. We also observed the display board which displayed only 5 different activities.

Clients not in activities

Five clients who required closer attention from care staff did not participate in the music therapy or musical bingo activities and were instead taken to the Reminiscence Room. We did not observe clients being given a choice of which room they wanted to be in. The Reminiscence Room is a pleasant space and clients appeared comfortable but unengaged.

During the morning and the afternoon clients should have been looking at pictures of 'famous faces' with two carers as a cue for reminiscence. Staff and clients appearing to be sitting in silence rather than engaging. This was the same activity we observed when we visited the previous week.

We also observed one client, who had chosen to sit in the Reminiscence Room in the morning, being encouraged to leave the activities room before the musical bingo began despite the fact he appeared comfortable.

Clients' Comments

There were positive comments about music therapy and we observed the clients becoming excited when the music therapist arrived. One client told us they were feeling very tired before the musical bingo activity.

Carers' Comments

Six carers expressed that they did not know what the clients do whilst at Woodville and again there were comments asking for better communication.

"I would like to know this myself please"

"I could do with just a bit more transparency"

Carers said that the activities offered met the needs of the people they care for.

"The activities are all what my husband needs".

There were also several positive comments around the music activities.

"She enjoys the music".

"Enjoys the music which is provided there"

Building considerations

The main room is a very spacious, bright and open space with natural light from the skylights above. The decorations were well put together and the furniture appeared in good condition. The skirting boards in the cafe area were old and worn which made them appear unclean. Generally the area was clean and tidy and we observed cleaning ongoing during the day, including cleaning the tables and floors of the cafe after breakfast and lunch.

In the activities lounge there were large comfortable armchairs, but not enough for all clients present to be sat there. There was also a small kitchen which wasn't being used but the counter was dusty. There was also a piano which was used for music therapy.



The Reminiscence Room was a pleasant space which was used by clients with more advanced dementia. There were 'vintage' decorations of an old radio, pictures on the wall, a desk, sofas, arm chairs and a faux fireplace. It felt like a well put together space to provide therapeutic support for the clients, however it did not appear that it was being fully utilised and was used more as a 'quiet room'.

Toilets

There were three accessible toilets for clients to use. Both were fairly clean and had the appropriate handrails and emergency cords. In one bathroom, there was damage to the floor around the waste water pipe. There was also a cupboard attached to the wall, on the top there was some rubbish and it was quite dusty. The lights in one bathroom were difficult to turn on and off but there was light from a skylight. The one light was also dirty, with what appeared to be bugs trapped under the light cover.



Garden

The garden was a lovely space. It was accessible with hand railings, a level wood-chip pathway and raised beds. The lawn and beds were well maintained. There were also sensory elements such as a water feature, though switched off, wind chimes and small sculptures. There were outdoor seating benches near the door to the garden which could have been brought outside. With such a well put together space, and on such a warm and sunny day, we were very surprised that clients were not being encouraged to go outside.

Other comments

During our visit we observed some instances of poor communication between clients and care staff. We felt the care staff did not communicate the afternoon activity well, leading to some confusion among the clients we spoke to thinking they were waiting for the bus before the activity began.



Carers Feedback

Twenty five carers completed our survey. Demographics can be found in the appendix.

Positive Feedback

Overall, the feedback received from the carers' survey was very positive. Indeed, there is a recurring theme that the service is essential for those who use the day centres.

"Sheen Lane is an amazing place - the staff are wonderful, kind, caring, with a great sense of fun. Exceptional people."

"The day centre is like one big family and I enjoy coming with my cared for person. I think the staff are helpful and nice."

"The day centre is my life line & without it I couldn't cope."

"The staff at Woodville are very supportive and always help if I have any problems. I would not be able to cope without Woodville."

"We find the staff at the day centre extremely helpful and friendly. They are always willing to help with any issues that may arise. We have complete confidence when [the client] is there that they are well looked after and in very safe and capable hands."

We were told one story by the carer of a client at Woodville which highlights how essential day centres are. The carer thought they may have had deep vein thrombosis on a Friday, however the person they care for was not due to attend the day centre until the following Tuesday. They then waited until then to go to A&E to get checked. They were also then late to pick up the client, however they called the centre which stayed open and carried on looking after the client and even drove them home. The carer was extremely grateful for all the help and support they offer.

Lack of Knowledge

In the responses to the carers' survey, there was a repeated refrain of carers not knowing what their cared for person does at the day centre:

"I don't really know how their days at the club pan out."

"I really don't know how much exercise my wife does at the day centre."

"I don't know because [the client] is not able to tell me what they eat."

"I know what Woodville provide at a high level, but not on the day-to-day.... I could do with just a bit more transparency. What morning activity did they do, what lunch did my wife have and what afternoon activity did they do."

Support for Carers

When asked whether they access any support for themselves, 17 carers responded that they didn't access any support. One carer responded with the following:

"Been offered carer support group but no time to go to these in view of limited "own" time & can only access them on days my spouse is at day centre."

The following organisations were mentioned as sources of support by other carers: Homelink, Richmond Carers' Centre, INS, Age UK and the Avenue Club. However, the number of carers accessing these services was very limited (8 out of 25).

Respite

When asked what further support they would like, 7 carers mentioned respite care. Other carers said the following:

"More time at the day centre would help"

"We feel [the client] is well catered and cared for with the package they have in place and they are enjoying life to the full especially since being granted the 4th day at the centre."

Conclusions

Respite and carers' needs

From our carer's survey, it became clear that more often than not the only support or respite a carer was receiving was through the day centre. The respite that day centres provide enables carers to meet their needs for health, socialisation and engaging in meaningful activities.

More needs to be done to make carers aware of day centres, and to make carers of existing clients aware of the wider community support available to them.

Appropriate provision of social, care and community activities

All three day centres meet the needs of their specific clients appropriately in terms of care, socialisation and meaningful activities. The importance of this, and the access that it provides clients to social and meaningful activities is profound as most respondents were unable to identify any other services that would meet these needs other than when supported 1-2-1 by a carer or care worker

Our observations of the activities were mixed. Generally, clients enjoyed the activities offered at the day centre. We observed some clients being unengaged during some activities, often when they were not given a choice about what to do.

From conversations with clients at the Access Project, it was clear that they valued being involved in the planning of activities at the day centre. At Woodville and Sheen Lane there did not appear to be as wide a variety of activities offered.

Care, Support and Staff

There is universal praise for care staff from both clients and carers at all three day centres. We repeatedly heard that care workers are helpful, caring and friendly. We received no negative comments from clients or carers at any day centre.

We observed some instances of poor staff engagement with clients at Woodville, however our observations of care were positive.

Underutilised facilities

Our observations found that the day centres all had well put together spaces which offered good facilities to clients. However, some of these facilities, such as the gardens, required attention. Others appeared to not be used to their full potential, such as the 'gym' at Sheen Lane and the 'Reminiscence room' at Woodville.

All sites required some degree of maintenance whether to the bathrooms, gardens, or storage areas

Transport

Clients and carers both said that the transport provided by the day centre is essential. Many clients could not attend without it and it is an essential part of respite for carers.

However, there were some comments about: long journeys; variability in pick up and drop off timings; and the journey being uncomfortable for wheelchair users. It is also worth noting that not all clients use transport: some carers prefer to drop-off and fetch the clients because it gives them more respite.

Food

Clients were broadly positive about the food provided at the day centres. While the only feedback we received from clients was a desire for more variety and more vegetables, we found the quality of the food lacking at Sheen Lane and Woodville. The food provided at the Access Project was significantly better.

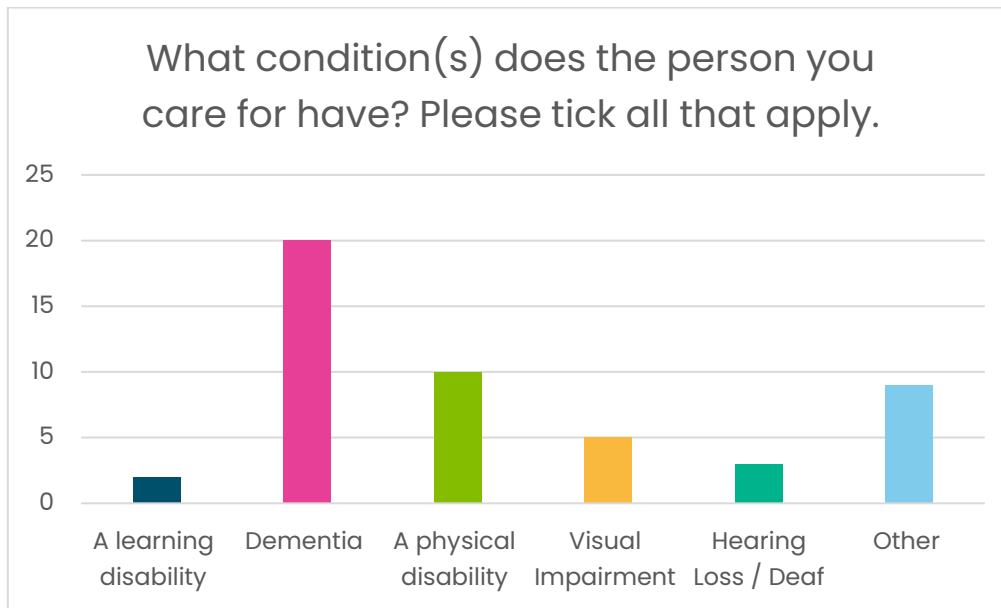
We did not observe any opportunity for hand washing before eating at any of the day centres.

Carers raised issues with the cost of the food and the portion size. There seems to be a need for a lower cost alternative to the food provided which doesn't put additional strain on the carer. This does however need to be balanced with the importance for those on lower incomes of being able to have a good meal.

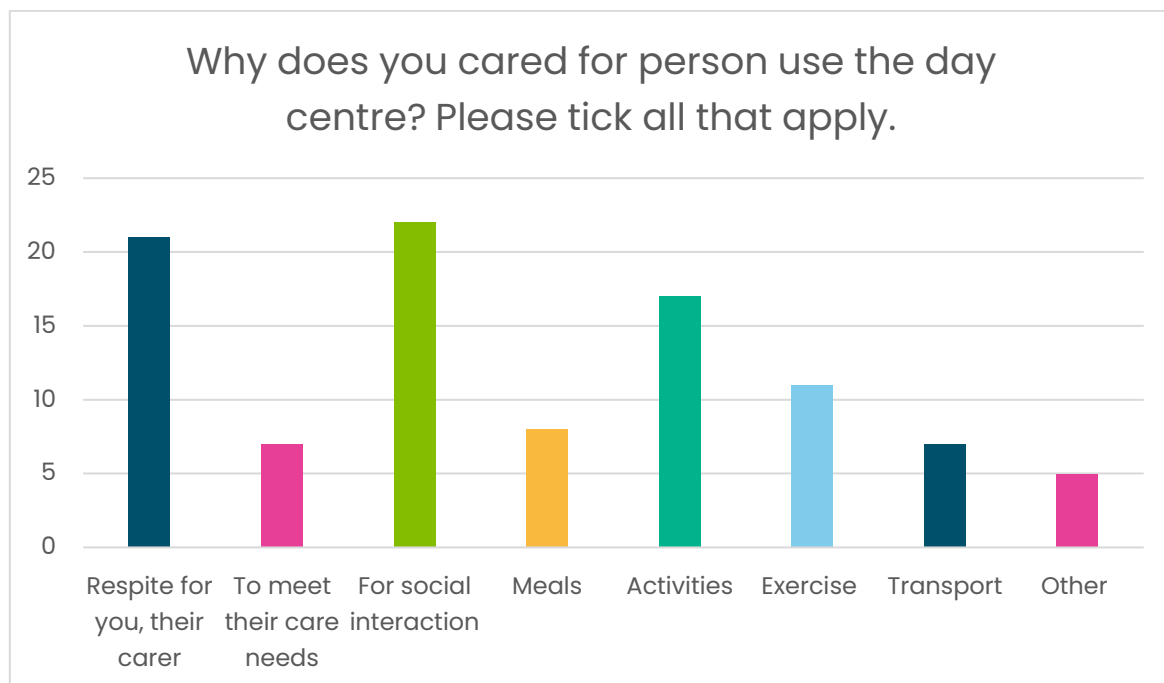
Communication

Comments from carers indicated that there is a lack of communication from the day centres to carers, notably around the activities, food and transport. Carers requested better communication.

Appendix 1: Carers Survey Demographics



Other included: Parkinson's; wheelchair bound; incontinent and epilepsy.

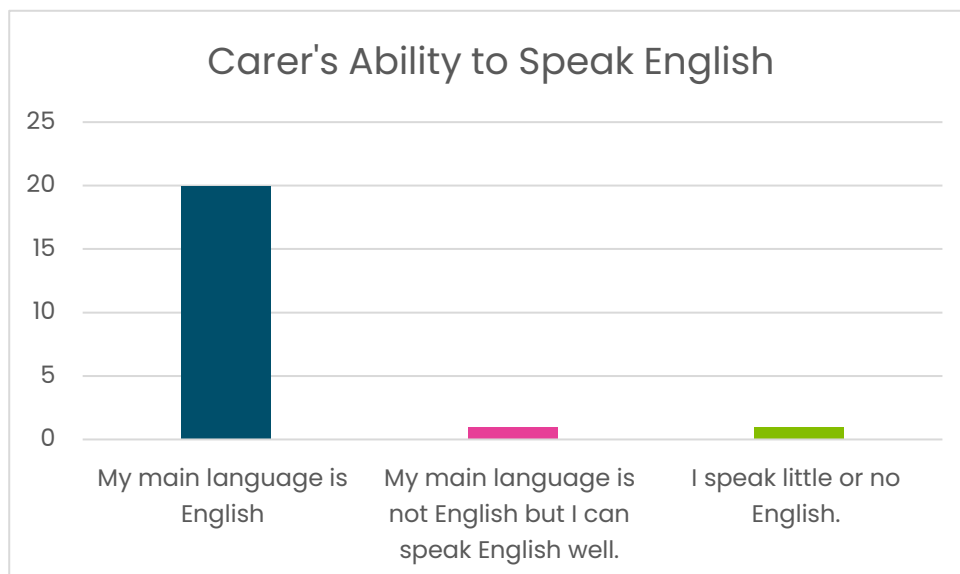
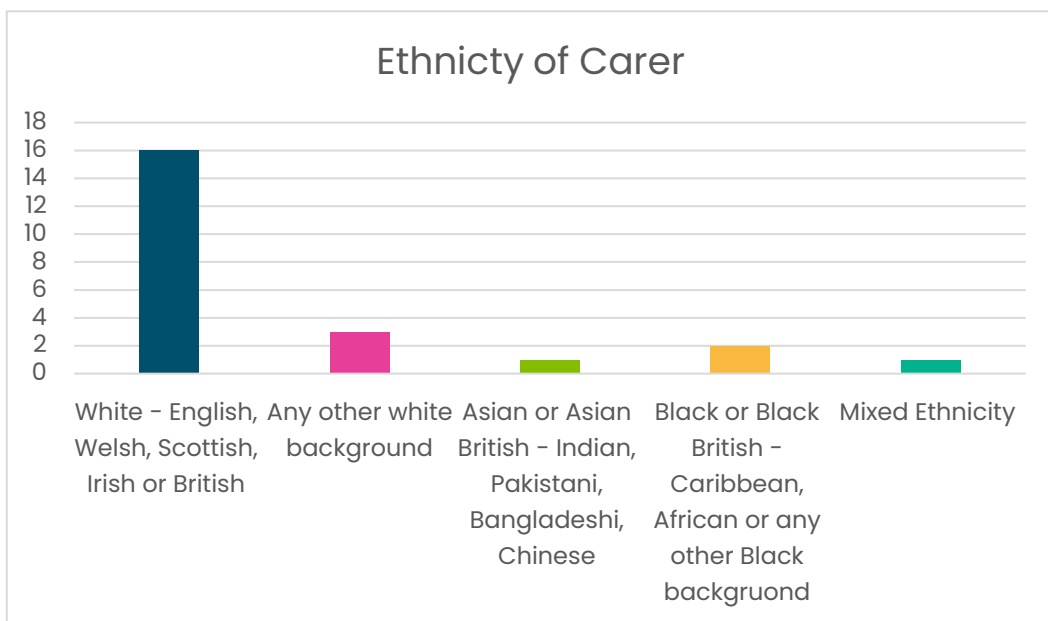
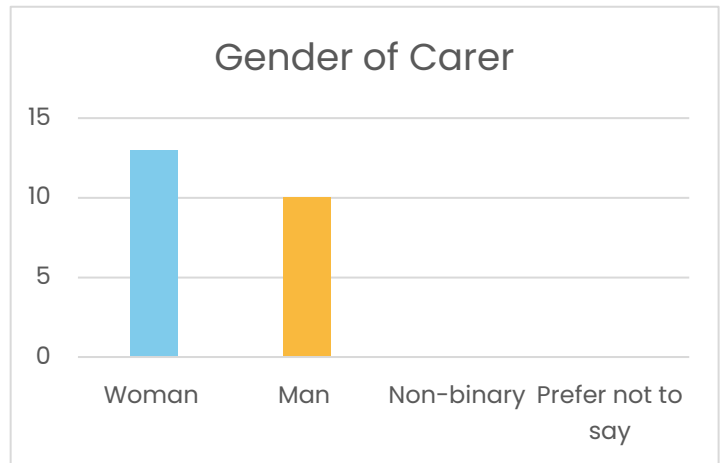
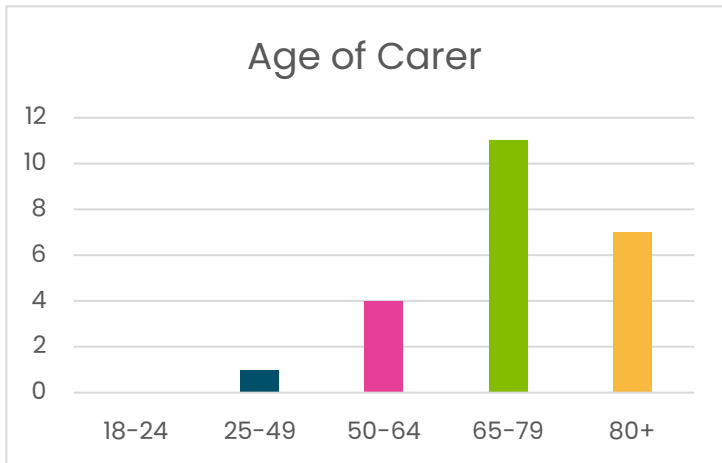


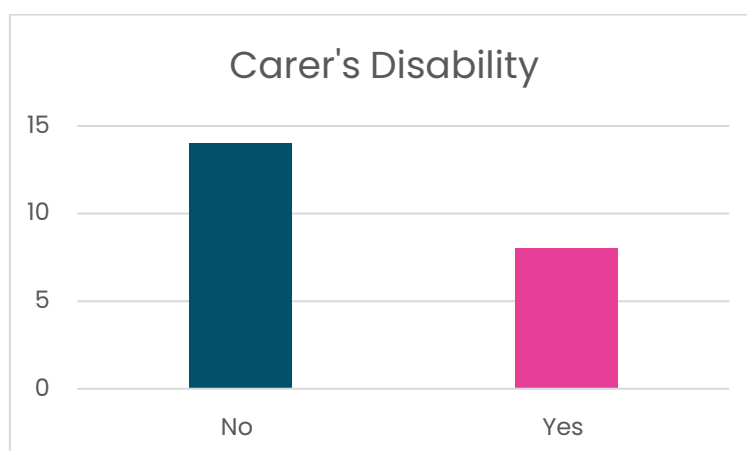
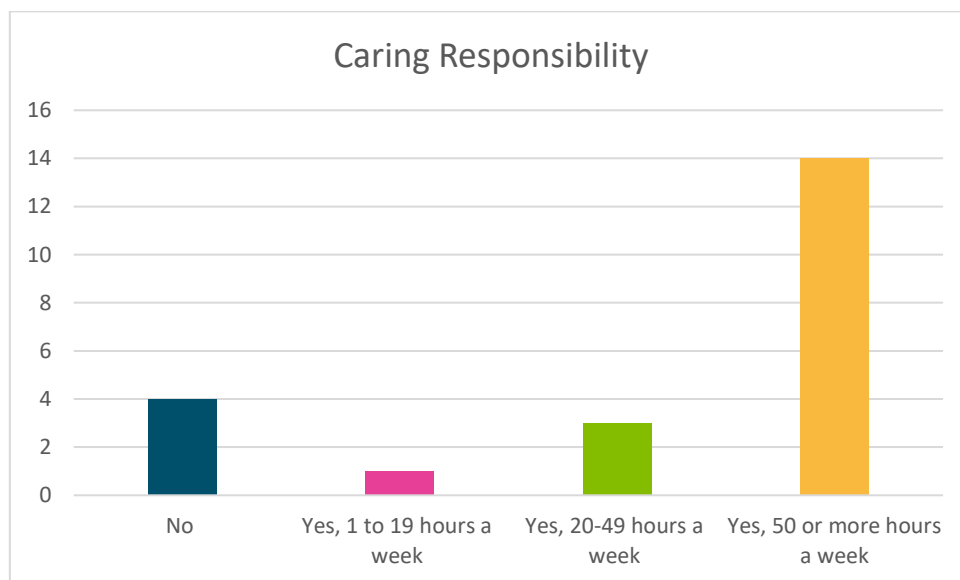
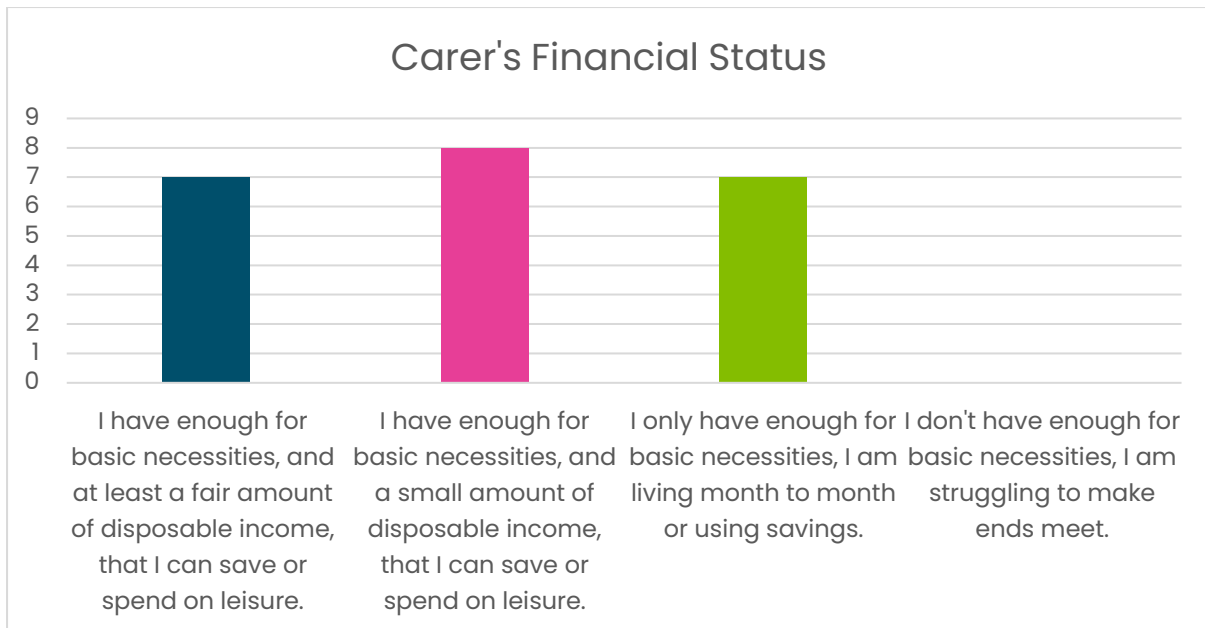
Other included:

"Important that my partner sees the outside world and tries to make friends and join in."

"Finding it hard at home and was bored. So wanted to go to day centre."

"Because they enjoy it and feel safe."





Answers to "yes" included: cardiovascular conditions; arthritis; and mobility issues.