

# Wandsworth Carers' Centre

Impact Report 2020 / 2021





### Our vision...

Is a society where Carers are **recognised** and **valued** for their contribution and have choice and control that enables them to care, to stay healthy and to lead fulfilled lives.

### Our mission..

is to improve the quality of life for Carers and people affected by caring responsibilities.

## A message from our Chair & CEO

2020/2021 has been hugely difficult for many people across the world, and for the Carers we support this couldn't have been more true. Caring roles increased as many support services closed and the Carers' Centre and our partners quickly had to change the way in which we delivered services to Carers to make certain that we were able to offer the support that was needed.

This included weekly wellbeing calls to Carers who were vulnerable and digitally excluded and making many services available online.

Another change for us in 2020 was having to close our Wandsworth office in December as the landlord had other plans for the building and didn't renew the lease- quite a shock after 25 years! However, the team pulled together, and we moved lock stock and barrel into our Balham office 4 days before Christmas and shortly before another lock down. We are seeing this change as an opportunity to offer more outreach services across the borough with our colleagues in health, local churches and Citizens Advice Wandsworth.

We are delighted that we were successful in our bid to deliver the new Wandsworth Adult Carers Contract from February 2021 and we will continue to work in partnership with Carers, social services, health, the third sector and other agencies working with and for Carers in Wandsworth.

During Carers Week a number of events took place including a virtual baking competition, yoga, bingo, a 'live' cooking lesson and belly and Bollywood dancing sessions.

2020 was our 25th anniversary of working with and for Carers in Wandsworth of which we are proud. Although we were unable to celebrate as we would have liked due to Covid-19 restrictions we saved the celebration until 2021 when we will be able to celebrate together in person.

We would like to thank all Carers, volunteers, staff, board members and other partners.

Sarah Duncan (Chair) and Eglionna Treanor (CEO)

# Digital Inclusion



The last 18 months have been a challenging time for people everywhere, not least the Carers we support.

As an organisation, we had to adapt very quickly to the situation to ensure that we were able to continue to engage with and support Carers when they needed it most.

Staff carried out weekly wellbeing calls to Carers to check how people were doing and to make sure they were able to get shopping and medication and made referrals to local organisations who could help.

We moved quickly to make many of our services available online and by telephone including peer support groups, counselling and advice appointments, as well as introducing new things such as laughter yoga sessions.

We also redesigned our website, which included an online registration form and resources such as exercise videos, recipes and activities to help Carers during lockdown.

Additionally, we created an online version of our newsletter, making it easier for many Carers to sign up to our groups and activities and access important information.

As we moved many of our services online when lockdown began, we realised very quickly that there were Carers who were not able to engage in this way. For many, this was because they did not have a device to use and were not confident in navigating online services.

To address this, we secured funding to support Carers in both acquiring and using a device to engage with our services and other online activities.

As time has gone on and restrictions lifted, we have, thankfully, been able to slowly begin a return to face to face sessions which many Carers have wanted. We also know that for many Carers, being able to access support online, has meant they are able to engage with us, where perhaps, they couldn't before.

This has given us an opportunity to blend our services, offering face to face, online and telephone support which we look forward to building on in the coming year.

# Autism Project



Lockdown proved particularly challenging for parents caring for children and young adults with autism. The closure of schools and other daytime services meant Carers and their sons and daughters were at home 24/7, creating sky high levels of anxiety and stress.

In addition, a shortage of services coupled with the very high thresholds for interventions and extremely long waits for appointments left many parents feeling abandoned, alone and unsure where to turn for help.

The monthly ASD Peer Support group proved an oasis of support, information and laughs. The group's recently appointed co-facilitator, Carer Sheila O'Gorman says these meetings were a real lifeline for her.

"I found the group a genuine support , especially during lockdown when we were unable to visit family and friends and being part of the group was a real reassurance to me; it was a very safe space to share our experiences and offer up advice if people needed it." Themes of sessions have ranged from advice around autism-friendly festivities to stress relief and hormones.

The popularity of these events, the high level of need and the extraordinary resilience of families in such tough times, inspired us to organise a week of events to mark Autism Awareness Week in April 2021. These included workshops on self-care and relaxation and a Question and Answer session with funders and service providers from CAMHS, Wandsworth Council and the newly-establish Wandsworth Autism Advisory Service. We also welcomed author and journalist Jessie Hewitson to talk about her book *How to Raise A Happy Autistic Child* and laid on a special event for Carers of girls and young women with autism. The events attracted up to 50 Carers and brought a tremendous upsurge in referrals into our service.



# Carers say...

"A service which is fantastic, a wonderful newsletter and events to suit everyone"

"I received the most extraordinary help, a wonderful service overall"

"I didn't even realise I was a Carer but the pressures of looking after a loved one and not being able to find support led me to contact the Carers' Centre; they have been my main support system"


"You guys are amazing!"

"I was delighted to meet Carers in the same or similar position to my own who were very welcoming and understanding"

"I always mention this service to other carers I meet"

"I feel that I have made friends through attending meetings"

"I wish I had known about you 16 years ago!"



708 Advice  
appointments  
delivered



Over 300 Hours  
of Free  
Counselling  
Given



£192,074 gained in  
benefits and grants  
for Carers



204 groups &  
Activities  
Provided



Over 5,000 hours  
of respite offered  
to Carers



5044 Carers  
Registered with  
our Service



Almost 20,000  
Newsletters Sent

## Case Study

Carer X was caring for her adult son who has a mental health condition which impacted on his ability to go about his day to day life, including socialising, working and also having a huge impact on his relationship with his parents. Carer X needed support to apply for Personal Independence Payments for her son to help him in everyday life and an application was submitted to the DWP. When the decision came, it had been decided that PIP was not to be awarded. Due to the pandemic's impact on nearly everything, the Carer received the letter one day before the appeal deadline. Despite many attempts, the Carer was unable to get through to speak to someone to ask for an extension on this deadline. We submitted a request to appeal the decision explaining the reasons for not having completed a mandatory reconsideration and why the appeal was late in being requested; we received a letter a few weeks later allowing the appeal to go ahead. The original decision stated that no points had been awarded to the Carer's son. We put together, point by point, why we felt the decision was wrong, explaining that much of the decision had been based on the physical aspects of being able to complete certain tasks and not the mental health aspect. We eventually received a response from the tribunal and the decision was to overturn the original decision made by the DWP, awarding the Carer's son the higher rate of the care element and the middle rate of the mobility element. Additionally, as the original application had been some time before, a back payment of over £6,500 was also awarded. The benefits of being awarded the Personal Independence Payment have been hugely positive for the Carer's son, and has also taken pressure off the Carer both financially and emotionally.



# Volunteers

Wandsworth Carers' Centre is incredibly fortunate to have wonderful volunteers supporting us to provide so many great services to Carers. From administrative volunteers to volunteer counsellors, therapists, group facilitators and more, our volunteers are committed to supporting the community.

During the pandemic we have been able to continue to offer services such as counselling, groups and relaxation sessions thanks to our volunteers. The impact of Carers being able to still access some services has been hugely positive and a great help in such difficult times.

Rachel joined Wandsworth Carers' Centre in the early part of 2020 as a relaxation therapist, just before the country went into lockdown. We were very lucky that Rachel was able to offer sessions to Carers online at a time when people were struggling both mentally and physically.

Rachel has continued to offer regular sessions since lockdown began, incorporating different techniques, including mindfulness to help Carers look after their own wellbeing.

Rachel says "I've always gotten a lot from volunteering and I was looking for a new opportunity to do so. I thought the carers who use Wandsworth Carers' Centre would benefit from the skills I have developed in helping people to relax during my work as a hypnotherapist.

I get to use my training in hypnotherapy, mindfulness and meditation which is my passion. I enjoy running the classes and seeing the immediate benefit they have for those who attend. It's rewarding to know I'm making a difference to people who have such a lot of stress in their lives."



# LGBT+ Project



2020 saw the start of a brand-new project, the LGBT+ Carers Connect project.

This project provides specialist support to all Carers in and around greater London who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender.

The project set out to provide support to LGBTQ+ Carers by offering listening support, advocacy for Carers who face discrimination and LGBTQ+ Carer awareness training for health and social care settings.

We also host LGBTQ+ Carer socials which provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ Carers to meet, discuss their caring roles and socialise.

LGBTQ+ people are largely underrepresented across Carer support services in the UK, and according to Carers Trust are known as a "seldom heard from community". As such, the project aims to raise awareness of Caring within the LGBTQ+ community as well as raising awareness of LGBTQ+ Carers within services.

"Charles is a gay man in his 50s caring for his partner James.

Charles and James met in the 1970's; James was diagnosed with Minor Cognitive impairment (MCI) and HIV-associated neurocognitive disorder (HAND).

Charles has been supporting James with his health needs since his diagnosis and is a campaigner for LGBTQ+ Carers rights. Charles was referred into the project by a support worker within the partnership and has accessed listening support from the project and attended the socials. Charles has helped organising events for Carers as part of the socials including musicians and access to online films".



**"I feel that LGBT+ people going into heteronormative groups can be difficult so that is why I think it is so important to have LGBT+ Carers Groups".**

**WANDSWORTH CARERS' CENTRE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED  
31st MARCH 2021 (includes an Income and Expenditure Account)**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>2020 Total Funds</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Income from:</b>				
Donations and legacies	7,534	0	7,534	16,963
Charitable activities	701,025	25,734	726,759	676,715
Other trading activities	0	0	0	0
Investments	399	0	399	11
Other	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>708,958</b>	<b>25,734</b>	<b>734,692</b>	<b>693,689</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>				
Raising funds	25,743	0	25,743	1,111
Charitable activities	538,043	43,588	581,631	684,697
<b>Total</b>	<b>563,786</b>	<b>43,588</b>	<b>607,374</b>	<b>685,808</b>
Net Income / (expenditure)	<b>145,172</b>	<b>-17,854</b>	<b>127,318</b>	<b>7,881</b>
Transfers between funds	<b>-6,459</b>	<b>6,459</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>138,713</b>	<b>-11,395</b>	<b>127,318</b>	<b>7,881</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>				
- total funds - brought forward	367,284	11,395	378,679	370,798
<b>- carried forward</b>	<b>505,997</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>505,997</b>	<b>378,679</b>

All items dealt with in the Statement of Financial Activities relate to continuing activities. There are no recognised gains or losses other than those passing through the Statement of Financial Activities

# Wandsworth Carers' Centre

## Show your support for Carers

Identify  
a Carer

Refer a  
Carer

Volunteer  
with us

Donate  
to us

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Company Number 3152094

