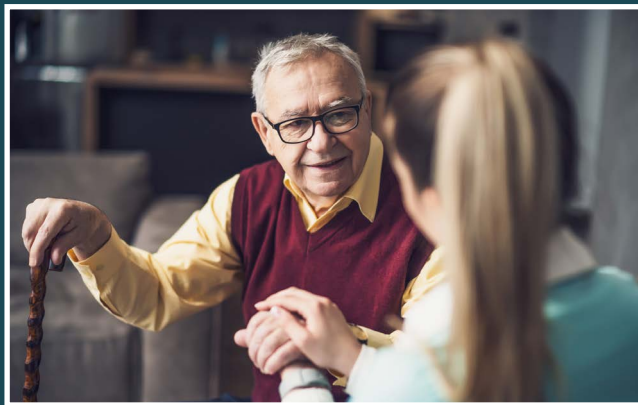




Engaging for Better Services

Adult Social Care Co-production and Engagement Report 2024-25





Key Highlights from our Engagement and Co-production in 2024-25

We are committed to putting the voice of people who draw on services at the centre of everything we do and understand the important role Co-production plays in helping us to understand the needs and aspirations of individuals and specific communities. Including the voice of people with lived experience is a key part of our commissioning cycle.

This report is intended to provide an overview and key highlights of the Co-production and engagement taking place with our adult social care stakeholders, people who draw on services and borough residents during 2024-25.

We have included examples to showcase the sorts of engagement that the directorate undertakes, both to report back to those involved, and we hope, to encourage more residents and people who draw on services to become involved in the future.

Co-production and Partnership Group

Highlights

- 11 individual members joined by representatives of local voluntary organisations (although fewer by year end due to ill health or other personal reasons).
- 3 meetings held in 2024-25.
- Members have taken part in projects including developing the script for the Voice Bot/ Automated Calling pilot and have sat on tender evaluation panels.
- Wandsworth Adult Social Care have invested in dedicated support from Wandsworth Care Alliance/ Healthwatch through a one year Lived Experience Pilot project, designed to grow the group and pool of residents willing to be involved in engagement, develop a Co-production Charter and lead on a project.

Jennifer Osodo, who has been an individual group member for 7 years, told us:

'I am passionate about adult social care and was looking for a volunteering position where I can also bring my background in computer science to good use for the community. I joined when it was early days of the council exploring the use of technology in social care.'

The group has a diverse range of people with real life experience of social care services, and I think that is essential to get a wide range of views and experience to add true value to the interaction. The group is a great place to come to share ideas with commissioners, policy makers and social care workers. I also enjoy getting to know what the council is developing for the future of services. I have welcomed the group becoming involved in a wider and interesting range of areas of social care and am pleased to see the agendas and opportunities to get involved expanding.'

Tender Evaluation Panel involvement

Reablement Services on a locality model

2 volunteers with lived experience were recruited to review part of the tenders, specifically referring to service delivery; to participate in the panel discussion and share their views on the information submitted by bidding care organisations.

John Gellett told us: 'I wholeheartedly agree that involving community members with experience is an integral part of the process of developing relevant local services. I have a personal interest through the experience of services of a close family member.'

My experience of being involved in this tender evaluation was genuinely very positive; it was a thorough process, and we were given a training session in advance. We were encouraged to be open and honest, and I felt comfortable sharing my views.'

As a result of this experience, John felt he would like to continue his involvement and has joined the Co-production and Partnership Group.

People with Lived Experience on Boards

- Learning Disabilities Partnership Board
- Transitions Improvement Board
- Young People's Group
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Carers Partnership Board
- Mental Health Project Insight Board.

Carer Partnership Board

- meets quarterly

Mark Pentlow, a Wandsworth Carer, tells us:

'I get a lot from being part of the Board. I find it hard to express myself in writing and find written responses often frustrating. The Carer Partnership Board is a place where I get true engagement and compassion and feel my views are heard. The council's staff take on what we say and give us feedback: and it's helpful to get the full picture and understand the barriers that local authorities face too. I want to help other carers and this gives me a sense of doing something positive and constructive, outside of caring for my partner. It also gets me out of the house and gives me a mental and physical break. I like to meet people face to face, as I don't have the internet, and sometimes I go to the Carers Centre, to join in, if the meeting is online.'

Bridget Conigliaro, a Wandsworth Carer, tells us:

'I have been a member since 2019. The board provides a two-way process: professional board members, who may have no experience of being a carer, can get a true view through what we share; and as carers we get early insight into what agencies and professional partners are doing to support carers and an opportunity to raise questions. We aim that what we share can help make services better for carers.'

How our voice is heard has been improved over the years and we now have a dedicated slot on the agenda to raise our own questions and share our opinions. It is vital that we can put forward the experience and point of view of carers and I also enjoy being able to give something back to help improve support for carers to come.'

Transitions Improvement Board

- meets quarterly

Annette Davies-Jones, a Wandsworth parent and carer, tells us:

'Joining the board has given me a great insight into the work of the local authority and the challenges it faces. As a parent, it is easy to be very focussed on one child. Everyone has been very welcoming. Although at first it was bewildering to meet everybody from all the different teams and get my head around how they interact, it has enabled me to put a human face to the rather abstract concept of a panel. And it's clear they all have the best interest of the child at heart. The meetings are well run and although it takes courage to speak up, it is good to be able to contribute and share from my first-hand experience of employment and internships. I hope I can also bring views and opinions from friends who face similar needs for their children.'

Health and Wellbeing Board

- meets quarterly

Tihamer Orban, a full-time carer, told us:

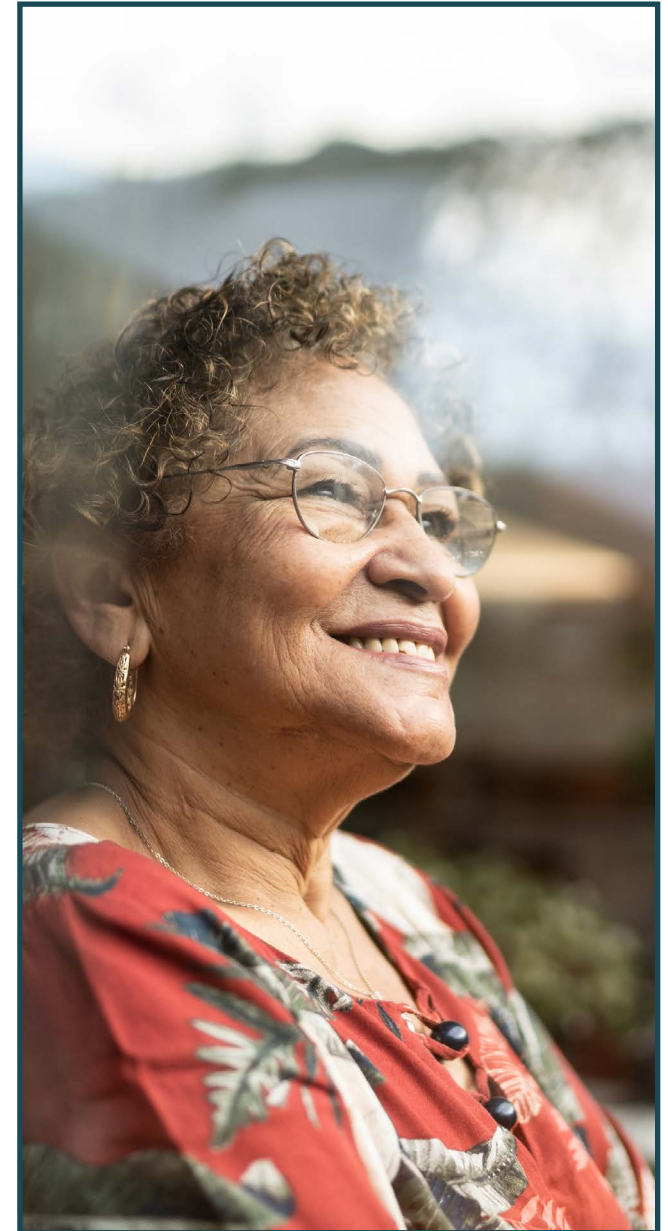
'I was delighted to be asked to join the Board to represent carers. I think this role provides a vital link for the Board to directly hear the perspective of carers. As the liaison between carers and the Board, I have the opportunity to raise questions and comments based on my own experience, and I can also bring the challenges of other carers from a support network group that I attend and my health network. The benefits go both ways: I also enjoy the opportunity to be more informed about carers' services and other services that are discussed by members. Even if some of these are not directly linked to carers, they are often relevant to their families or neighbours and I will share information with them.'

Engaging with Partners and their members

Generate (a charity which aims to support people with learning disabilities, autism and other disabilities to live their lives in the way they choose) runs the **Generate Voices Forum** to give members an opportunity to use their voices for positive change and have a say in how services are delivered to them.

Generate Voices members have:

- Attended the **Learning Disability Partnership Board** meetings bringing their lived experience to the board.
- Spoken to commissioners about the Wandsworth Learning Disabilities Framework, sharing their thoughts and opinions on the services that they use, addressed their concerns with service charges and how some information on service charges is hard to understand.
- Invited commissioning managers to the Generate Voices Forum to hear members thoughts and views on transitioning from youth services to adult services. Many members shared that having your own safe and stable home in the community was important when transitioning to adult services.



Engaging with Carers - Carers Online Assessment Pilot

An AI-powered assessment and support solution for carers delivered through the Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF), led by Wandsworth and Richmond on behalf of 6 SW London boroughs.

- The aim of the ARF fund is to address barriers to adopting innovative practices, build capability and capacity in adult social care.
- The discovery phase featured in depth interviews with carers recruited through the 6 Carer Centres.
- The research found that unpaid carers do not think of themselves as 'carers' and often do not seek support until they reach 'crisis point'.
- The **key insight** emerging about the support experience of carers finding themselves in this situation was:

When accessing support, carers value guided conversations: to help identify their needs; to help navigate support options; to acknowledge and empathise.

Carers told us:

- There is no one place to find all support information, local organisations and activities.
- Conversations bring out things you wouldn't think of yourself.
- Most people need help navigating support systems.
- Prompts make it easier to complete an assessment.
- Communication is a must - we must be able to ask questions and receive answers.
- There is lots of support available [but it] needs discovery - I don't know what I don't know.

The importance of conversations led us to focus our exploration of online carers assessment solutions on artificial intelligence - specifically conversational AI.

To rapidly gain learning we selected a 6 month pilot in Wandsworth and Richmond to test how effective and acceptable AI-led self-service Carers Assessments are to unpaid carers seeking support.

Our pilot solution will combine:

- A conversation tool trained to lead assessments by prompting and guiding;
- A knowledge base of local and national support organisations and activities; and
- Immediate support recommendations based on each individual's caring role and circumstances.

The AI pilot solution is currently in development and carers who participated in the discovery research have been invited to help test the solution which their observations have helped to design. Once the test findings are consolidated, for the next phase, we will make the service available to all unpaid carers in Wandsworth and Richmond for approx. 3 months.

Learnings throughout will inform the wider project.

Focus Groups - Young People's Groups

During the year, the **Wandsworth Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) Service** held **3 young people's groups**, to connect with young people going through the Preparing for Adulthood transitions process and hear their feedback and views of their experience.

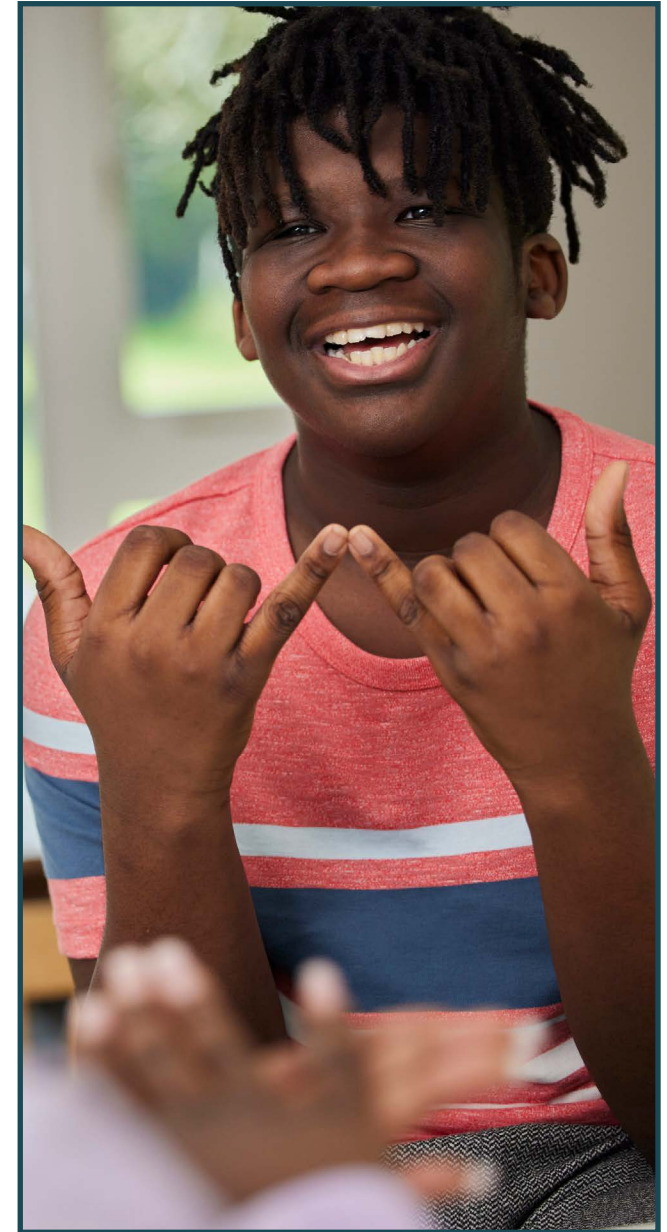
In addition, an **Information and Q&A event** was held for parents and carers of young people aged 14+ years with special education needs or disabilities (SEND) to meet the professionals from the PfA Service, Special Education Needs Assessment Service, the Integrated Care Board, Continuing Health Care, Ruils and other associated services.

55 people attended and verbal feedback from parents was positive and complimented the accessibility of the council's representatives.

Feedback forms after the Information and Q&A event for parents, shared....

'The session was very informative and educative. I took lots of notes and will refer back to them to make sure I am covering all aspects of support for my son. Thank you for your time and efforts with our children.'

'Thank you so much for holding this event. It was extremely helpful. I heard about many things I had no idea about, let alone the support that was available to help access them. The enthusiasm, knowledge and dedication of all your team was so obvious, and I just wanted to say that was really impressive and very reassuring. Making yourself available in this way, and being able to discuss things in person, is simply invaluable, especially to those of us trying to navigate a complex system. It makes it more accessible and really humanises what can seem a very bureaucratic system, that is difficult to understand and navigate. Many thanks!'



Engaging with Providers

Transforming Social Care Programme

Market Sustainability and Commissioning

The benefits of engaging with Care Homes during this ongoing project have already been numerous, including highlighting:

1. Previously unrecognised social value being delivered by some homes including;
 - a. Offering training in dementia care to local families and carers;
 - b. Being strong influencers in building integration with the local community;
 - linking with nurseries, artists, musicians, schools, voluntary sector etc coming in to visit;
 - welcoming in local lonely people for a cup of tea, whenever they want;
 - inviting neighbours in for special events
 - c. Offering use of bathrooms for local residents who are no longer able to use their own;
 - d. Provision of respite for those caring for loved ones with dementia/multiple morbidities living locally, while their loved ones join in activities or lunch at the home.
 - e. Community creation - connecting with neighbours on a community WhatsApp group, offering support and seeking help when needed, e.g. when a care home resident escaped and was found by a community group member.
2. New commissioning opportunities in social value aspects of the witnessed best practices across other care homes in the borough; provision of respite; training in the community.
3. Highlighting issues and concerns not previously raised in Provider Forums.

Social Care Provider workforce

Structured workshops designed to capture the voice of the provider workforce were run. Sessions focused on idea generation, issue collation, and collective problem-solving:

1. Provider Forum - Workshop 1

- Collaborative brainstorming session with care providers to identify 10 tangible actions that could be tackled together as a sector.
- Helped prioritise shared challenges and build consensus on realistic, co-delivered solutions.

2. Provider Forum - Workshop 2

- Focused specifically on the most pressing issues around recruitment and retention in both care home and domiciliary care settings.
- Gathered provider views on root causes, existing barriers, and tested possible workforce solutions.

3. Provider Forum - Workshop 3

- Aimed at exploring how to better promote social care as a career pathway.
- Included discussions on improving the visibility of the sector, and the marketing of available training opportunities.

4. Provider Forum - Workshop 4

- Engaged providers on building robust workforce development plans within their organisations.
- Encouraged best practice sharing and helped providers align their internal workforce strategy with broader sector ambitions.

Local and National User Surveys

The latest **national user and carer survey** data (2023-4) indicates that Wandsworth Council is top in London for the percentage of people who use services who find it easy to find information about support.

The Council is second in London for:

- The proportion of people who use services who have control over their daily life.
- Social care-related quality of life, and
- The proportion of people who use services who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like.

Local Feedback Surveys

We also survey all residents who have contact with our Social Work and Occupational Therapy teams. This is what they tell us:

72% of respondents rated their interaction with us as good or very good overall.

70% of respondents said they now feel more independent as a result of their interaction with us.

Comments included:

Social services were wonderful to me since I was sick, not only to me but also my wife.

Extremely caring and passionate.

Reviews: The lady was polite, friendly and patient and listened to what I had to say.

Occupational Therapy: Really impressed with the OT who helped our mum, really friendly and professional.

Occupational Therapy: Very pleased with my shower stool and waiting for the rails to be fitted for the 2 steps at the front of the house, one step at the back door into the garden. A small rail at the top of the stairs to help me on and off my stairlift. This will be done next week. Will all be done within a month of the self referral.

Unpaid Carers Surveys

60% of carers report that they found it easy to find information about care and support themselves.

Some told us they rely on friends and family to help them. When carers said it was difficult to find information, they often cited lack of time as a carer. Feedback from unpaid carers also tells us that too many carers have little to no social contact.

We continue to work with the Carer Partnership in Wandsworth to reduce loneliness through peer support sessions, dementia carers café and other social interaction offers. We are improving support with social isolation via our Age Well contracts with voluntary sector providers, focusing on creating opportunities for older people at risk of loneliness and improving digital inclusion for unpaid carers.

Carers' survey feedback: *For the past two years I have had a very good service. My social worker communicates well and supports me.*

Local and National User Surveys

Local Feedback Surveys

Safeguarding - Feedback Calls to those involved

99% of people said that the information was clear and easy to understand.

70% said that they felt safer following the process.

Comments included:

- Very positive outcome for mum, it was brilliant, issue identified, spoke to the home, spoke to family, explained process and gave me space to raise other issues. The home has actioned it and mum is now safer. It was brilliant.*
- The whole thing was awful as I was upset, felt so guilty and wasn't thinking straight. The people I was involved with from social services were very good, they always made sure I was OK, comfortable, they always came to me for my input, I really felt like I had a voice, they really respected my position as a family member and representative for my dad.*

We actively identify learning from the feedback

we receive and are taking action to: ensure the safeguarding pathway is explained better; we reflect the traumatic process more; explore further leaflets pre-process and do further family preparation before meetings.



What people say about Adult Social Care

Compliments

Tony Tuck of our Co-production and Partnership Group told us:

'My experience of the 'discharge from hospital' service run by WBC is that it is very thorough and very effective. They have arranged for me to have the equipment that I need to manage at home (delivered within 4 hours of being ordered), have input home care straight away, have arranged physiotherapy immediately and in all respects I can say that the system works. All of this has been arranged within 24 hours of my discharge from hospital. In terms of marks out of 10, I would score it as a 10.'

What people using our services say

"I'd like to thank you both very much for all the time and hard work you have put into getting our daughter's move into supported living signed off."

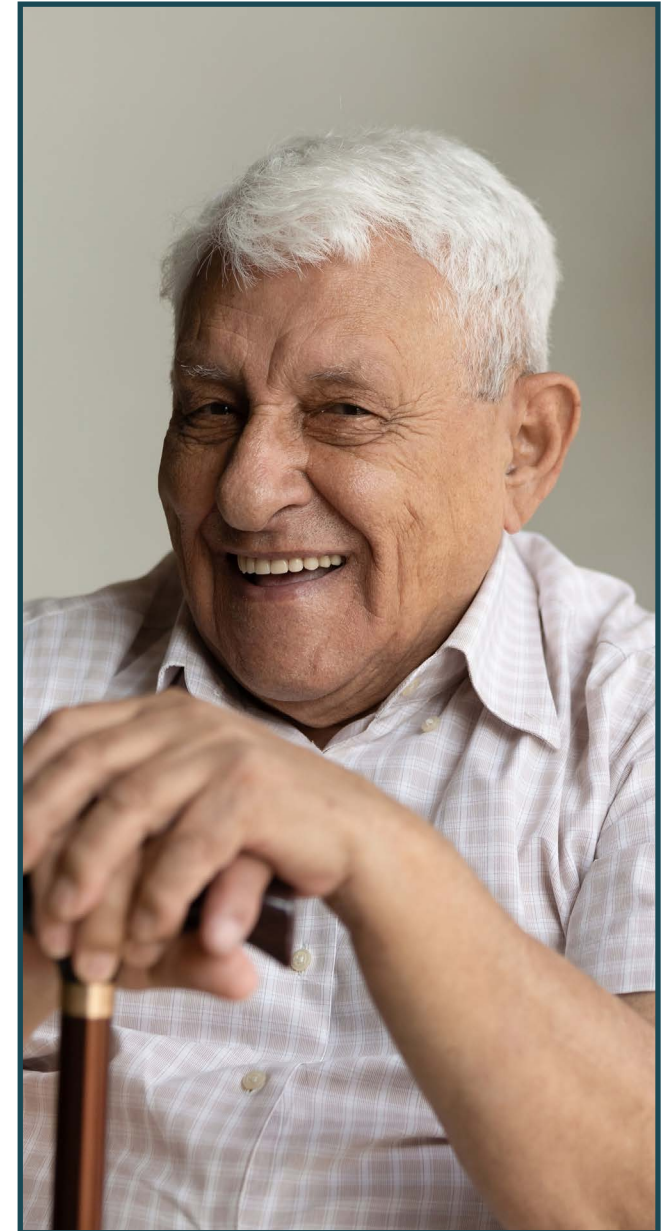
"You've been so thoughtful in understanding both her wellness needs and her cultural background, which means the world to us."

"I'm so grateful for your visit today. It was quite a thrill to find myself sitting in a chair after so many months."

"Your warmth and empathy shine through in everything you do, and it's making such a positive impact on my mum."

"I am writing to thank you and your team for all the equipment you have provided. It has been invaluable."

"The best part about having Direct Payments is that they enable both boys to go out with their PAs and give me some free time. We all benefit from the support and enjoy a little time for ourselves."



Learning from Complaints

In Wandsworth Adult Social Care, we are committed to putting the voice of people who draw on services at the centre of everything we do; and promoting a learning culture that uses feedback from people to gain and share valuable learning. Through our learning framework we incorporate feedback from complaints and compliments into our ways of working and embed learning from quality assurance activity and case file audits.

Over 2024 -25 there were no significant themes to the teams that had received complaints, but the most raised principal issue of complaint was 'delays'.

Examples of action taken on delays in service:

- Team members reminded of the importance of following up promises to residents and resilience/handling difficult situations training offered to the whole team.
- Staff briefed on the good practice of transferring cases when leaving the service in a planned way; and ensuring families are informed when there are changes to an assigned social worker or delays in appointments or the assessment process.
- Staff reminded, and supported where needed, to organise information comprehensively and concisely so that timely decisions can be made, especially in the cases where there are high needs and costs.

Examples of action taken on communication:

- Team discussed effective communication strategies and the importance of proactive outreach to service users to ensure they feel supported in engaging with our services.
- Team reminded to ensure they are communicating clearly the rationale to decisions around support or no support.
- Team reminded of the importance of mindfulness when making initial contact with service users and to reach out directly to identify contact preferences.
- Team reminded about funding agreement process and the correct terminology to use.

Examples of action taken - other:

- New measures implemented to ensure the accuracy of records when receiving post.
- Refresher training on Autism provided for all front-line staff through our Professional Standards team.
- Social workers reminded to ensure that the comments in draft assessments accurately reflect the latest input from families.
- Safeguarding managers reminded of the need to emphasise to staff that all contributions to Safeguarding meetings are incorporated, including written contributions.
- Social workers reminded to be clearer with people when discussing care and support plans that adult social care is chargeable, even if a person is receiving benefits, and to document this discussion on file.
- Ensure teams provide information at initial assessment of the complaint's procedure for the council and commissioned providers.

What Has Been Achieved

- New pilot investment aims to support the Wandsworth Coproduction and Partnership group membership to grow and diversify and will support members with the co-design of a Co-production Charter for Wandsworth.
- Two residents with lived experience of Wandsworth's services have been involved on a procurement panel to review tenders for new Reablement services on a locality model.
- More Boards have welcomed people with lived experience as members. This increases our ability to include the voice of residents and carers in the work that we do and recognises the positive impact of including their skills and experience.
- Concentrated engagement with carers has opened an opportunity to provide a support service through further developing an early pilot project using conversational AI.
- The Market Sustainability and Commissioning workstream's engagement with care home providers has highlighted multiple previously unrecognised social value benefits to the local community, which can inform future contract specifications.
- The national user and carer survey showed that Wandsworth is top in London for the percentage of people who use services who find it easy to find information and support.
- This survey also puts Wandsworth second in London for i) social care-related quality of life; and ii) the proportion of people who draw on services who have control over their daily life, and ii) the proportion of those who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like.
- In local surveys, 72% of respondents rated their interaction with Adult Social Care as good or very good and 70% of respondents reported feeling more independent as a result of their interaction with us.

