

Sunderland Carers' Centre

Sunderland Carers' Centre Satisfaction Survey 2012 Report

Sunderland Carers' Centre offers a confidential information, advice and support service to carers looking after ill, disabled or frail family members or friends in the City of Sunderland.

Sunderland Carers' Centre wants to give as good a service as possible to carers and in order to improve the work we do we conduct an annual Satisfaction Survey to obtain carers' views on the services we provide.

This year 190 carers took part in the survey and this report provides some of the main findings.

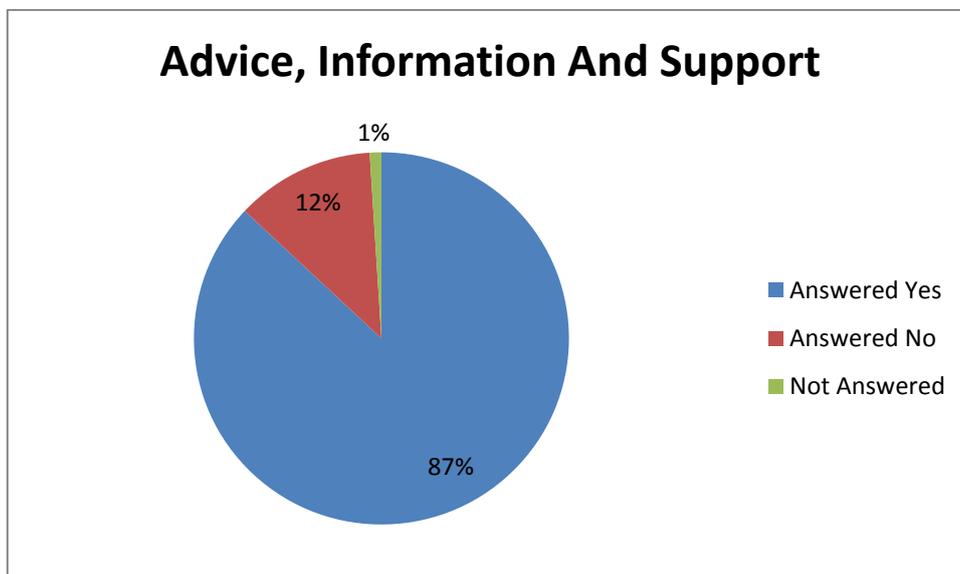
SECTION 1: ADVICE, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Sunderland Carers' Centre can provide information and advice to carers to help them in their caring role. As everyone's caring situation is different, we can give carers information relevant to their particular needs. This may be information about a specific illness or condition, or information about local services available for both carer and the person they care for.

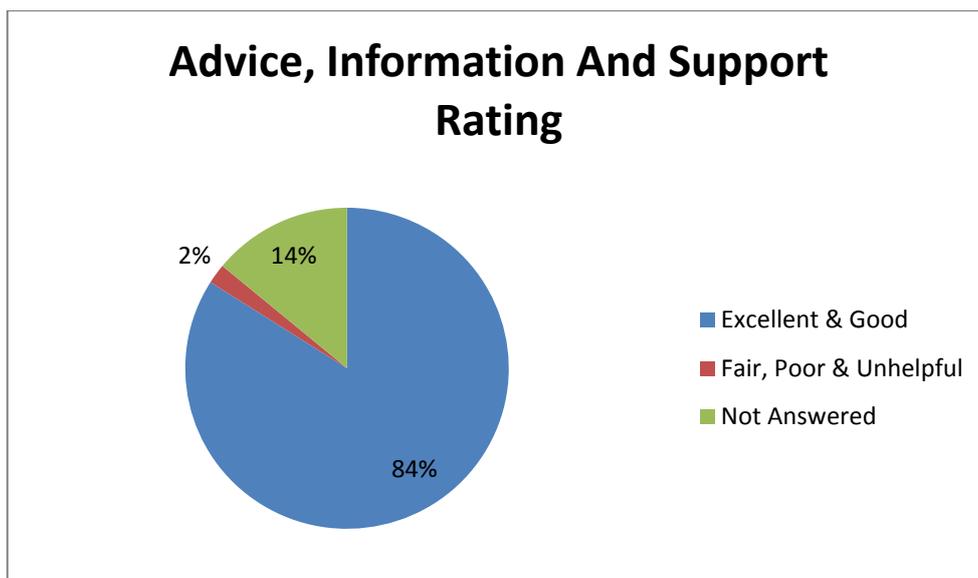
As a carer you can sometimes feel alone and need someone to talk to about your caring situation. Sunderland Carers' Centre can offer one-to-one support and a listening ear to carers. Workers can speak to carers over the phone or meet them at the Carers' Centre, in the carer's own home or at another convenient meeting place. If carers work during the day, workers can arrange appointments outside normal office hours.

Sunderland Carers' Centre can accompany and provide support to carers at meetings with health, social care services and other agencies. Examples of such meetings include carers' assessments and reviews and assessments for the cared-for person.

Have you received advice, information or support from a member of staff or volunteer?



Please tick the word that best describes the advice, information or support you received:



Please tell us why you think this:

“When you have nowhere else to turn they are always there for you no matter what.”

“I asked for information and received it promptly in the post.”

“The problem was solved very easily by the Carers’ Centre as we had tried before ourselves and got nowhere.”

Carers who found that the advice, information and support they received from the Carers’ Centre was excellent or good (84%) commented that staff had been helpful, informed, supportive, approachable, professional, empathetic, understanding and good listeners. The survey shows that carers value having someone to talk to and to listen to them and are happy knowing they can contact the Carers’ Centre when needed.

Sunderland Carers’ Centre Comments:

Not all carers who responded to the survey (13%) said they had received advice, information and support from the Centre. The Carers’ Centre will further raise awareness of these services in case these carers do not know about this part of our work.

SECTION 2: CARERS’ GROUPS

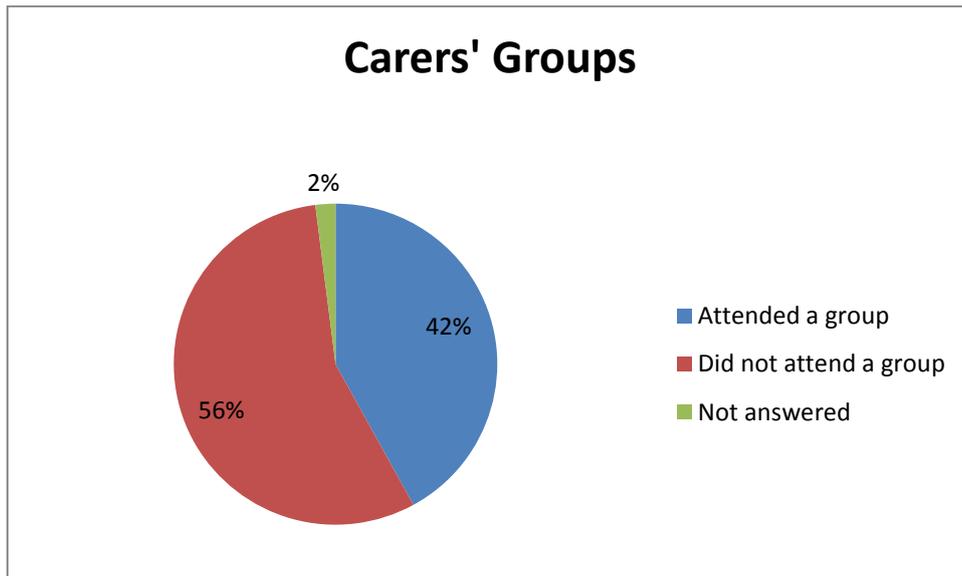
When you are a carer it is easy to become cut off from your friends and outside interests and often you feel that you are the only person in this situation. To help reassure carers that they are not alone Sunderland Carers’ Centre runs a number of carers’ groups to give carers the opportunity to meet others in a similar situation.

Some groups are for carers living in a particular area of the city; others are for carers looking after people with similar illnesses or conditions, for example, parent carers of disabled children or carers

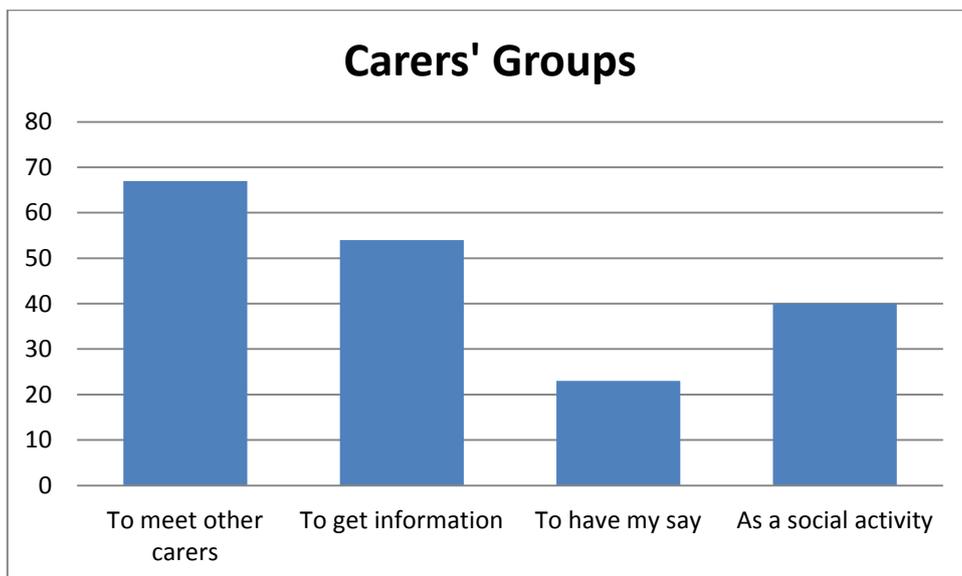
of people with mental illnesses or addiction problems. There are also groups specifically for male carers or female carers. Some groups take place during the evening for carers who find it difficult to attend during the day, for example, working carers.

Groups can be weekly or monthly. Some groups have speakers, presentations or social activities; others have discussions on specific topics or have no set agenda other than giving carers an opportunity to chat over tea and coffee.

Have you attended a regular group run by Sunderland Carers' Centre?



Please tell us why you attended the group:



How do you think the group could be improved?

Suggestions made by carers for improving the groups (depending on the type of group they attend) included having more speakers, presentations, activities and social events; providing more information for carers at the groups; increasing the membership of the groups; and holding meetings more than once a month.

Sunderland Carers' Centre Comments:

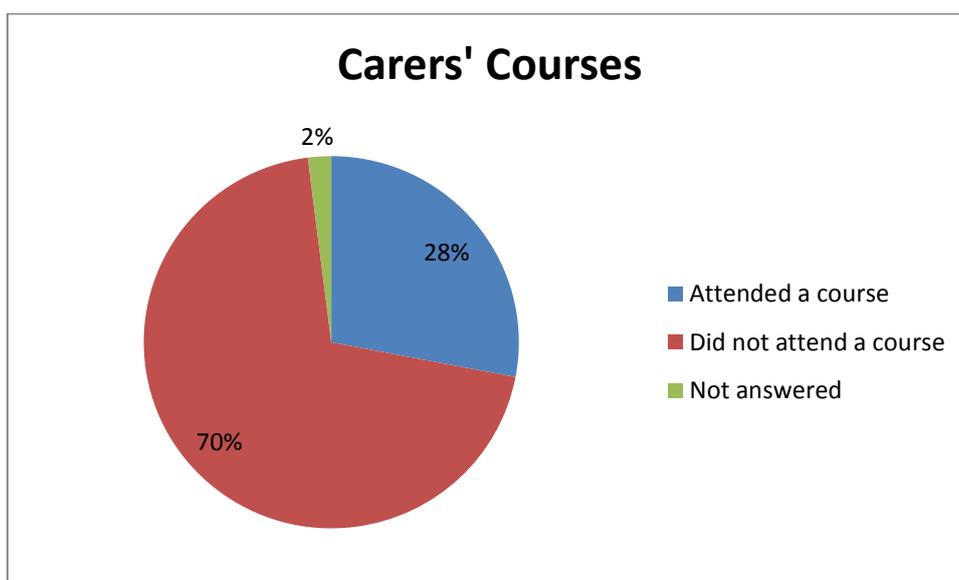
The carers' groups discuss and decide their own programme of speakers, activities etc. and any necessary arrangements are made by the Carers' Centre workers. Following the survey, further discussions will take place within the individual groups to identify if group members have suggestions for improvement for the particular groups they attend.

In order to increase group membership the Carers' Centre will promote the different types of groups, what they do and when they take place. For example, working carers may not be aware that there are groups in the evening. This will be done in a number of ways, such as via the newsletter, website, and social media (Facebook and Twitter). In addition we will continue to distribute the quarterly group programme to all carers on the mailing list.

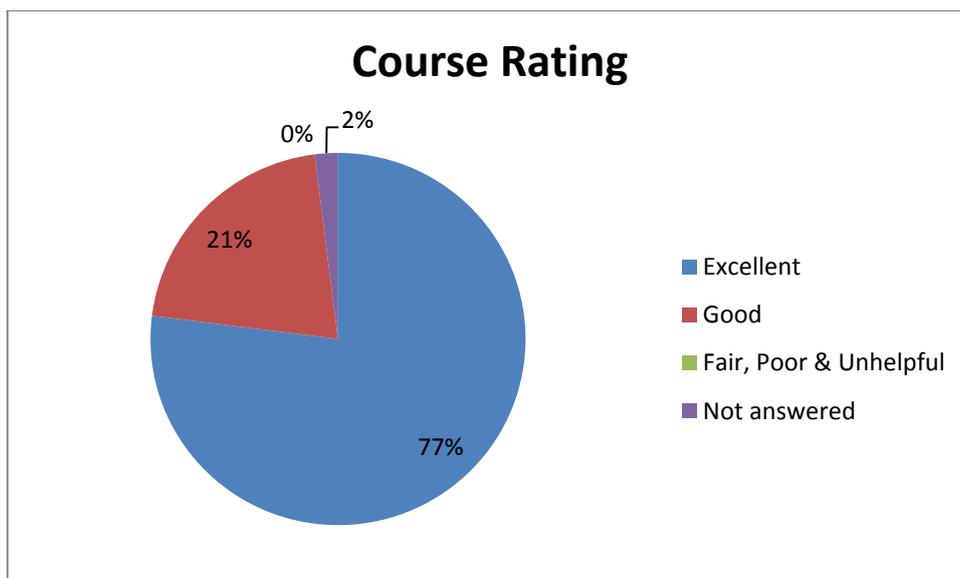
SECTION 3: COURSES

Sunderland Carers' Centre runs a variety of free courses for carers to give them the opportunity to develop their skills and to learn about things that may help them in their caring situation, for example, Caring with Confidence. Caring with Confidence is a series of free local group sessions for carers aged over 18. The sessions help carers make a positive difference to their life and that of the person they care for. Themes range from handling emotions and looking after your own health to dealing with professionals and service providers.

Have you attended a course run by Sunderland Carers' Centre e.g. Caring with Confidence?



Please tick the word that best describes the course:



Please tell us why you think this:

“It made you think more about yourself which you don’t do being a carer.”

“It built my confidence, made me feel better.”

“I have used some of the tips learned regularly since.”

98% of the carers who attended a course run by Sunderland Carers’ Centre described it as excellent or good. Carers commented that the courses were very informative, had excellent content, good delivery and were helpful in their caring situation. As well as building confidence and gaining coping strategies, the carers welcomed the opportunity to meet other carers, to hear the views of others and to exchange ideas.

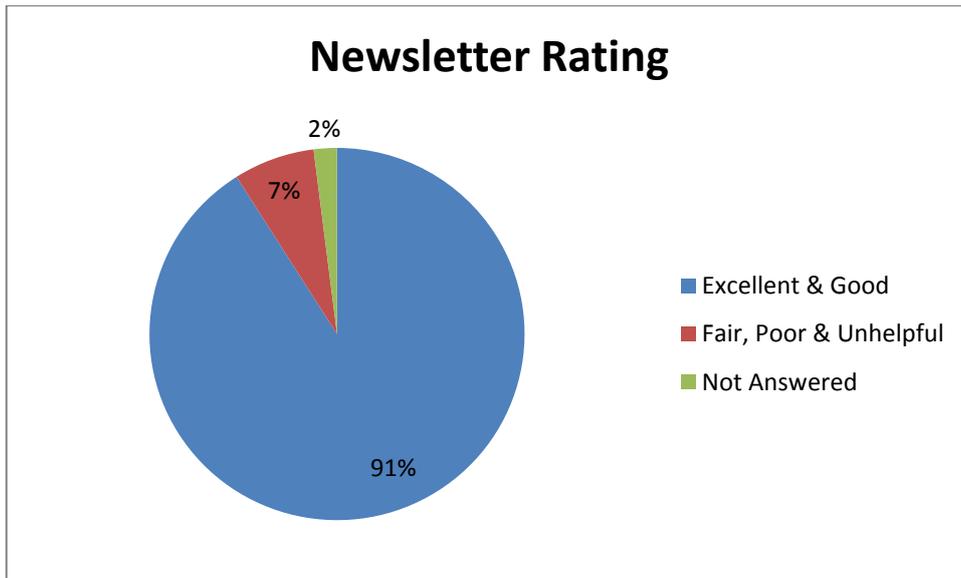
Sunderland Carers’ Centre Comments:

70% of carers who participated in the survey had not attended a course. This may be due to circumstances relating to their caring or work situation or they may not be aware of them. The Carers’ Centre will continue to promote the courses such as Caring with Confidence and encourage carers to attend as the survey shows that carers really do benefit from attending.

SECTION 4: NEWSLETTER

Sunderland Carers’ Centre produces a free newsletter every two months to keep people up-to-date with services for carers and to tell them about carers’ groups, social activities and courses. For many carers the newsletter is the main, and sometimes, the only contact they have with the Centre. Some carers may not need regular advice and support or may be unable to attend carers’ groups or social activities because of work or their caring responsibilities. The newsletter can keep them informed about what is happening locally and nationally.

Please tick the word that best describes how useful you find the Carers' Centre newsletter:



Please tell us why you think this:

“It has plenty of different information every month.”

“It lets you know you are not alone and you can join in with other people like yourself.”

“I can’t always attend but look forward to and enjoy the newsletter.”

“It’s a way to keep informed, not feel isolated and not feel guilty to take 5 minutes out.”

91% of carers thought the newsletter was excellent or good. They commented that the newsletter is informative, easy to read, bright, useful and is a good way to keep in touch and up-to-date with what is happening, particularly if you have not got a computer or cannot get to the Centre.

How do you think the newsletter could be improved?

Although many carers said they were happy with the newsletter the way it is and that no improvements are needed, some carers did make some suggestions about what could be included in the newsletter. There were requests for more detailed information articles and more contributions from carers, for example, carers’ stories or case studies, poems, recipes, celebrations, tips etc.

There were also differing opinions about the length of the newsletter. Some carers felt it was just the right length and liked the “bite-sized” articles, whilst others would like to see it expanding, perhaps into a magazine.

Sunderland Carers’ Centre Comments:

Currently, due to the limited space available in the newsletter and the frequency it is distributed, the Carers’ Centre is not always able to include detailed information articles. The newsletter is

written with all types of carers in mind so we aim to include articles that are relevant to as many carers as possible.

We will take this opportunity to further review the newsletter taking into account the comments made by carers. We will continue to include a variety of information and ensure that there are more contributions from carers.

We will also look at other ways for carers to contribute and share their stories, poems and other items of interest, perhaps through the website and social media.

SECTION 5: WEBSITE

Sunderland Carers' Centre has its own website - www.sunderlandcarers.co.uk – which not only contains information for carers already in contact with the Centre, it also allows us to reach many new carers, particularly those who are isolated or working.

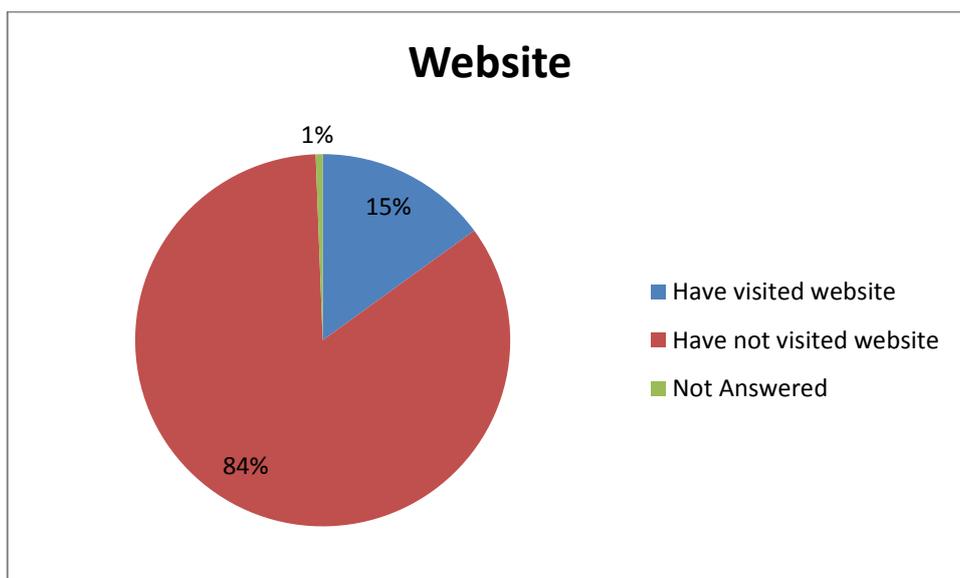
People visiting the website can find out how the Carers' Centre can help carers; how carers can meet other carers; receive the latest information on new services, courses, social activities and other special events for carers; and take part in carers' surveys, petitions and consultations. There are also links to other useful websites, including Carers Trust, Carers UK, Sunderland City Council and the local NHS trusts. The site is continuously updated.

We have also recently launched our own Facebook page which can be found via our website and there is a Twitter feed on the website home page:

Facebook: www.sunderlandcarers.co.uk/facebook

Twitter: www.twitter.com/@sunderlandcarer

Have you visited the Sunderland Carers' Centre website?



Please tell us why you have not visited the website?

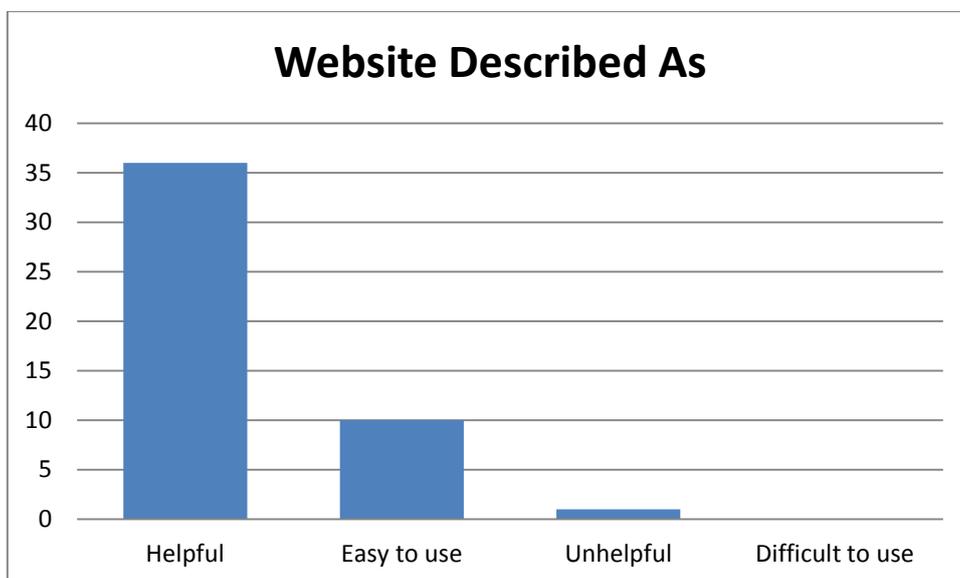
“I did not know the Carers’ Centre had a website - will visit very soon.”

“Computer phobic”

“Not very good with computers - a course would be a good idea for the Carers’ Centre to do!”

A significant number of carers (84%) said that they had not visited the website because they either did not have a computer or internet access, did not know how to use a computer or did not know the Carers’ Centre has a website.

Please tick the words which best describe the website:



What do you like about the website?

“Everything – it keeps me up to date with what is happening.”

“You can look at it at any time.”

“Easy access – also days when the centre is closed you can still keep in touch with what’s going on.”

Carers who had visited the website commented that it was simple, user friendly, colourful, easy to navigate, clear to read, well-maintained, very up-to-date and good for news and information.

How do you think the website could be improved?

“Keep doing what you are doing.”

Carers would like us to ensure the site is kept updated and to include more information about the carers’ groups.

Sunderland Carers' Centre Comments:

The Carers' Centre will continue to constantly maintain and develop the website. We will add more information about the carers' groups in the near future. More work needs to be carried out to raise awareness of the existence of the website and this will be carried out alongside the promotion of our new Facebook and Twitter pages. The survey has highlighted the fact that a large number of carers do not have access to a computer and/or do not know how to use one. The Carers' Centre is exploring how best we can support carers with computers to receive training and also enabling access for more carers who are unable to own their own computer.

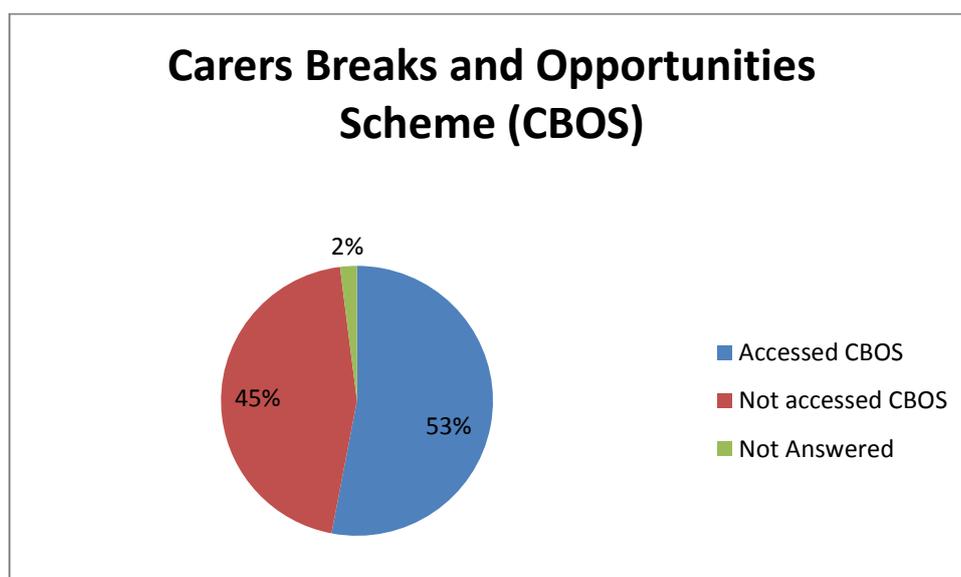
SECTION 6: CARERS BREAKS AND OPPORTUNITIES SCHEME

The Carers Breaks and Opportunities Scheme offers carers the chance to take a break from their caring responsibilities and take part in opportunities or activities that they would like to do and that will help to maintain or improve their quality of life. It can also provide care to the person cared for while the carer is away from their caring responsibilities. Examples of the types of breaks or opportunities that carers can apply for include:

- Funding to enable the carer and person they care for have a break together but where help is provided with caring, so the carer has a break from their caring responsibilities
- Funding to enable the carer to try something new, for example, courses for leisure or learning, gym membership and even help with the costs of driving lessons to enable the carer to meet the needs of their caring role
- Funding to help groups of carers to try something new or take a break together

The scheme is open to adult carers, parent carers of disabled children, young carers and group applications. It is a free service and the decision to give funding is based on the carer's individual caring circumstances, not their income.

Have you accessed the Carers Breaks and Opportunities Scheme?



If you have answered no, please tell us why you have not accessed the scheme?

“I work and thought I would not be eligible.”

“A bit too involved. Don’t know what to choose.”

“Never knew much about it. But I am going to check it out.”

45% of carers said that they had not accessed the scheme. The reasons included not knowing about the scheme, not being aware of or understanding the eligibility criteria, and not knowing what to choose. Some carers felt they could not take up the scheme because they would not be able to leave the person they care for or because they work. Other carers commented that they would like to access the scheme but would feel guilty asking for money or because “there are people worse off than me.”

How do you think the scheme could be improved?

The survey shows that carers are happy with and value the scheme and would like it to continue. They also benefit from the support the Carers’ Centre gives to guide them through the process.

Carers have suggested that the scheme be better advertised and that carers be provided with a list of suggestions or examples of possible opportunities they could apply for funding for.

Carers would like the scheme to allow them to take more breaks or opportunities (not just one), and if the maximum grant is not requested in one application for the remainder to be available in subsequent applications. They would like the award process to be quicker and the scheme to be more flexible – some carers have said booking a holiday can be difficult as often their hotel choice is no longer available.

Sunderland Carers’ Centre Comments:

The survey results and comments will be provided to the Carers Breaks and Opportunities Scheme Steering Group for consideration. The Steering Group is made up of carers and representatives from the Local Authority, Health Partners and the Carers’ Centre.

In the meantime the Carers’ Centre will also widely promote the scheme to carers and organisations which work with carers and clearly outline and explain the eligibility criteria. We have already included an article in the January 2013 edition of the newsletter (which was sent out with the survey questionnaire) and as a result had a number of new applications from carers who previously did not know about the scheme. We will continue to use the newsletter, website and social media to update carers about the scheme and include suggestions and examples of how the scheme can be used by carers.

SECTION 7: SUNDERLAND CARERS’ CENTRE

In addition to the services mentioned above:

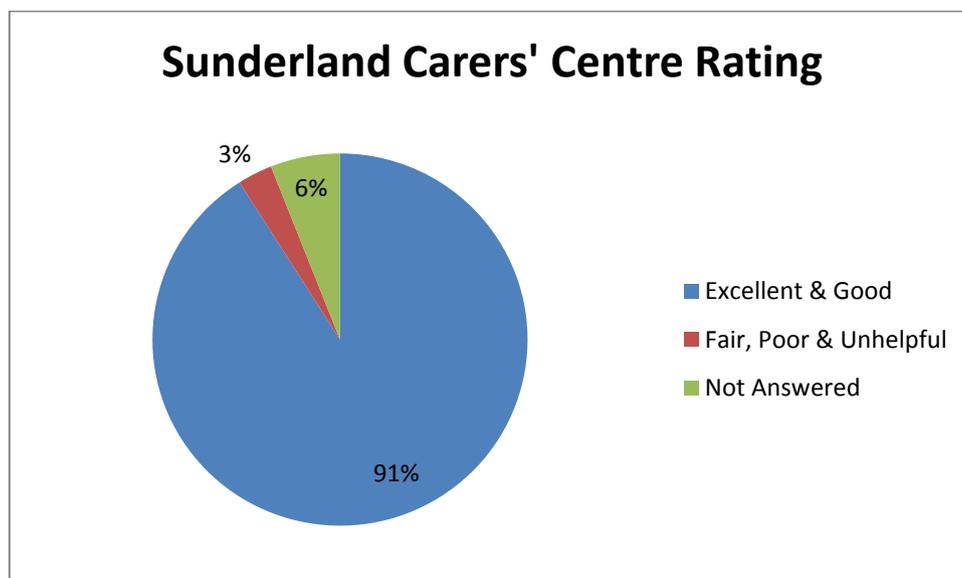
Sunderland Carers' Centre arranges social activities and events throughout the year to give carers a break from their caring responsibilities and enjoy some leisure time with other carers.

Sunderland Carers' Centre enables carers to work together to give carers a voice to influence policy and service development for the people they care for and for themselves as carers. Carers are invited to give their views to the Centre as individuals, through groups or specially arranged meetings.

Sunderland Carers' Centre provides support and activities to young carers aged between 4 and 25 who look after a family member with an illness or disability.

In April 2012 Sunderland Carers' Centre moved from its city centre premises in Toward Road to new premises with its own car park and garden at Thompson Park, Southwick. During the summer an area of the garden was transformed for use by the young carers as part of a BBC TV programme called "The Flower Pot Gang".

Please tick the word which best describes overall the services of Sunderland Carers' Centre:



Out of 10 how would you rate Sunderland Carers' Centre?

Average rating = 9

Please provide any other comments you would like to make about Sunderland Carers' Centre, for example, about the new building.

"It is very good to know there is someone out there who understands and cares."

"The help you give us and others is outstanding, you put the smile back on our faces."

"Thanks for giving me a voice."

“Lovely building”, “Very nice, home from home” and “Love the garden!”

Carers said the Carers’ Centre provides the opportunity to talk to people in a similar situation and to make new friends, and that they know advice and help is “just a phone call away”. They would, however, like more day trips with other carers.

Carers described the new building at Thompson Park as easily accessible, friendly, warm and welcoming, fresh and spacious, having a good ambience and comfortable. It is a great improvement to the old building with parking, nearby bus stops and more accessibility as it is all on one level. For some carers, particularly those living south of the river, the central location of the Toward Road building, was easier to get to.

Carers also commented very positively on the new garden (many having watched the BBC TV programme) and they are looking forward to enjoying the garden in the summer months.

Conclusion

The Satisfaction Survey has identified that not all the carers we are in contact with may be fully aware of the range of services we provide.

Sunderland Carers’ Centre is committed to carrying out more awareness raising of the different services available. For example, it is evident that carers who work do not know that we can offer special support to them, including offering them appointments on an evening or weekend, running carers’ groups and get-togethers on an evening, and working carers being eligible for the Carers Breaks and Opportunities Scheme.

We will report on any progress made as a result of changes following this survey via the newsletter and website.

Sunderland Carers’ Centre would like to thank all the carers who participated in this year’s survey.

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