

Wandsworth Borough Council

Community Focus Groups

Leisure and Physical Activity Report

January 2023



LEISURE-NET
SOLUTIONS LTD

Table of Contents

01	Project Background	p. 3
02	Executive Summary/Key Findings – Young People	p. 4
03	Executive Summary/Key Findings – Over 55's	p. 8
04	Executive Summary/Key Findings – Men's Group	p. 12

01 Project Background

This report summarises the key findings of community engagement focus groups undertaken for Wandsworth Borough Council, on behalf of Max Associates.

Leisure-net Solutions, the industry leader for Customer Insight and Market Intelligence in the active leisure industry, is delighted to present this report of research.

The objective of these consultations was to explore attitudes and perceptions towards physical activity generally, and specifically local leisure centre provision. Also, to identify the barriers that people face when exercising at Wandsworth Borough Council's centres.

Four online focus groups took place – one for 'Young people', one for 'Over 55's', one for 'Men' and one for 'Children's centres'. The groups were conducted by Director Mike Hill, assisted by Business Development Director Julie Allen and Research Analyst Alison Rivers.

Regarding the 'Children's centres' group we wanted to hear from people that attend children's centres as they are parents of young children which were an interest group. The centres are also close to areas of deprivation and people that live in these areas are also an underrepresented group. The youth engagement lead put us in touch with the Children centres in Wandsworth and also the Parent champions, but unfortunately, despite promotion and 3 people signing up, this session was not attended by anyone.

02 Executive Summary

Young People Group

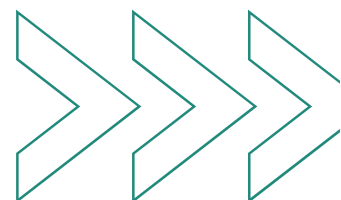
- The workshop was undertaken on the 18th of January at 16.30pm.
- The session was arranged by council officers.
- 8 young people attended the session which took place at the Devas Youth Club/ Community Centre.
- All attendees were aged between 14 and 16, with a mix of genders.

The council recruited people for this session through with the help of the youth engagement lead. They also assisted with facilitating this session in person at the Devas Youth Club in Wandsworth. A flyer and a gift voucher was offered as an incentive for this session.

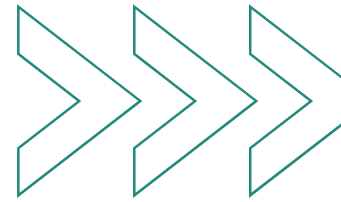
Detailed notes from the session can be found on page 16-18.

“Competitions and rewards would get more young people active”

The participants attending this group were already generally quite active and engaged in activities mostly at school, however, everyone wanted to be more active and acknowledged that physical activity was good for their mental health. Cost was an issue and they all said that if Leisure Centres were free, they would all use them. Encouragement factors included making activities more fun and using goals and rewards as incentives to exercise.



Key Findings – Young People



Please find below the key findings from each of the themes discussed in the group.

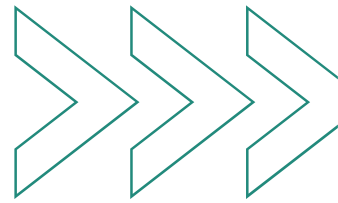
Topic 1: How active are you?

The group were all fairly active and felt it was natural and enjoyable to build sport and physical activity into their everyday life

Topic 2: Where do you currently do your activity?

The vast majority of activity took place in the school setting, with one or two clubs being attended, such as judo/martial arts, out of school.

Key Findings – Young People



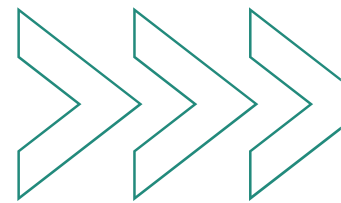
Topic 3: Would you like to be more active? If yes, what would encourage you to do more?

Despite being fairly active, all the group would like to be more active than they currently were, as they recognised the benefits to both their physical and mental health from being so.

Topic 4: What is stopping you getting more active

Time commitments in terms of school work were mentioned by several of the group, but mainly barriers were around the right activities that would be attractive, being offered at the right time and place. Some activities that they wanted to do were not available to children of their age/height etc.

Key Findings – Young People



Topic 5: Who has been to a leisure centre activity in the last 3 months?

Interestingly none of the group had visited a local leisure centre in the borough in the last few months. A couple of the young people used a leisure centre gym but in another borough, but most of the activity was taking place in the school environment.

Topic 6: What is missing in your area?

The group had lots of ideas for activities/services that were missing in the area and would encourage them or their friends to be more active.

The main themes were around more clubs – but at better locations and the right times for them to use, taster/introductory sessions aimed at young people to encourage them to try new activities, and also better promotion and information about what is currently available.

Finally there were some interesting ideas around making trying new activities more fun and engaging by using competitions, challenges and rewards.

03

Executive Summary Over 55's Group

- The virtual workshop was undertaken on the 16th of January at 16.30pm.
- The session was arranged by council officers who recruited Over 55's who had completed the online community survey.
- A total of nine adults joined the focus group with a mix of genders and ages over 55.
- Detailed notes from the session can be found on pages 19-22.

All of the attendees for this group were recruited via the survey. This group was the only group that was oversubscribed. 9 people attended on the day..

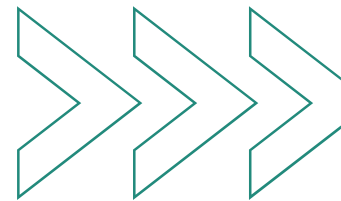
“ We need more information on the facilities that already exist”



All participants attending this group were already active but had clear opinions about the barriers they faced to being more active and what would encourage them to participate more. There was a strong opinion on the need for more class and swim sessions and the need for more information on what is already accessible to all ages, levels and abilities.



Key Findings – Over 55's



Please find below the key findings from each of the themes discussed in the group.

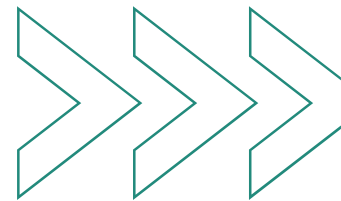
Topic 1: How active are you?

All of the group were even fairly or very active, recognising the importance of physical activity to their mental and physical health, which had been heightened by the experience of Covid/lockdowns. The group were doing a variety of activities ranging from daily walks to regular gym and swimming sessions.

Topic 2: What other forms of activity do you do outside of Leisure Centres?

About half the group walked or cycled, either as a form of active travel or in local open spaces. One of the group also used the local park to play tennis during the summer.

Key Findings – Over 55's



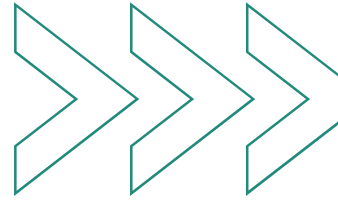
Topic 3: Would you like to be more active? If yes what would encourage you to do more?

Generally all the group wanted to be more active, for both their physical and mental health. Better access to appropriate swimming sessions was mentioned by several of the group in terms of encouraging them to be more active, as was better targeted “special sessions” such as mixed ability classes and facilities being more local to them. The importance of the social side of things was also mentioned both in terms of encouraging them to start activities but also motivating them to continue them.

Topic 4: If you were to start more physically activity, where would you do it?

Most of the group would ideally like to use their local leisure centres more as they are local and they value the support given by staff. But concerns were raised about how they were run in terms of ease of booking – for swimming especially – and the making sure that the centres were run in a sustainable way going forward. It was felt by several members of the group that changes made to how they were run during Covid, had not been reversed, and this was making it more difficult to access.

Key Findings – Over 55's



Topic 5: What would encourage you to use a leisure centre more?

In terms of specifically using their local leisure centre more, again key themes focused around current management practices and policies, that were implemented during Covid but not reversed, making it difficult to book and access facilities. Linked to this, was general programming and availability of classes and activities, it was felt that these were often not put on at the right times. Finally information and promotion of what was available could be significantly improved. It was interesting that new facilities/developments were not mentioned much, it was much more about using what was already there better.

Topic 6: What is missing in your area?

Again better information about what is already available was mentioned, but the group then went on to discuss utilising open spaces and community facilities such as community and church halls better. The importance of staff in terms of support and motivation, along with social areas to relax in afterwards, were also discussed at length.

Executive Summary

Men's Group

- The virtual workshop was undertaken on the 19th of January at 9am.
- It was organised by the council's officers.
- Detailed notes from the session can be found on pages 23-25.

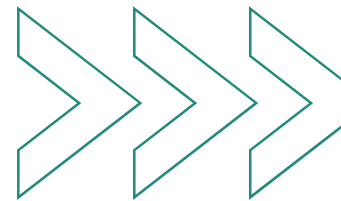
In the first instance, people from the survey were contacted about this group. There was a low uptake so the session was also advertised on Facebook and twitter. However, there was still a low turn out on the day with only 1 person attending. Subsequently, the man attending did collate some additional views of women using Putney Leisure Centre, which have been included in the detailed notes of this group.

"The council are running a great service and I hope it stays that way"

The one attendee and his family were very active users of leisure centres and parks. He had positive things to say about facility locations, transport links and services with his only main concern being pollution and the affects on his children doing more outdoor activities.



Key Findings – Men's Group



Please find below the key findings from each of the themes discussed in the group.

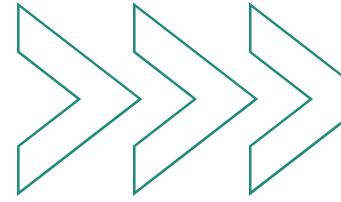
Topic 1: Current physical activity patterns; where do you go and what do you do?

The one attendee was very active, using Putney Leisure Centre and Wandsworth Park in particular. His family also used these facilities, and they all cycled regularly as well.

Topic 2: What things have made it easy for you to be active?

Accessibility of local facilities such as the leisure centre, due to its location, transport links and parking, were key to him using local services so much. But also local open spaces such as the tow path and even being able to swim in the river locks.

Key Findings – Men's Group



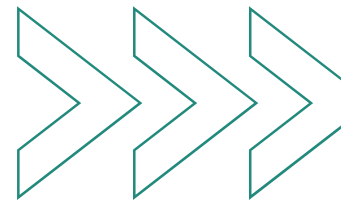
Topic 3: Do you think there is anything stopping you/your family from being active?

Air quality was a key consideration to exercising outdoor in the local area, not so much for himself but for his children. Other factors mentioned were cleanliness of facilities and safety considerations.

Topic 4: Is there anything missing in the area from a physical activity point of view?

The attendee was much more concerned about the state of current facilities rather than the provision of any new ones. He felt that they needed significant investment in terms of maintenance.

Key Findings – Men’s Group



Topic 5: Is there anything that changed during Covid that affected you that hasn’t gone back to pre-Covid operations?

And how did Covid affect you?

What did you do in terms of activity while leisure centres were closed?

It was felt that most things had gone back to how they were pre-covid, apart from the long waiting list for swimming lessons. During Covid the attendee exercised a lot more outdoors, including swimming in the Thames.

Topic 6: Is there anything else that you would like to share – future strategy for leisure services in the borough?

The attendee felt that the service being provided was great and hoped that it would continue to be provided in an accessible way. The only area of change he would like to see was swimming becoming more important as a focus in schools in the borough.

Acknowledgements

With special thanks to:

- The residents of Wandsworth Borough Council for their engagement and contribution to this piece of research.