



SANDWELL Consortium

Impact Report



Multi-agency partnership



Hub and spoke model



Coordinated by Sandwell Consortium



Delivered by community partners



Supported by local staff and volunteers

About us

Sandwell Consortium is a partnership of ten community organisations who collectively provide services to the diverse communities of Sandwell in areas of greatest need. We also work with 19 additional community delivery partners to ensure we reach residents across the six towns and to reflect the growing diversity of the borough. The central Consortium team secures funding and provides monitoring and support systems, so our community partners can focus on frontline services for residents.

Our services include advice and advocacy, health and wellbeing, community learning, and employment and skills support. We work closely with Sandwell Council, local NHS organisations and other partners, to co-design services with local communities and to deliver services on their behalf to residents who may not otherwise have this support.



Louise Kilbride
Chief Executive Officer



Davinder Kaur
Chairperson

This report tells the story of how Sandwell Consortium and its partners have made a difference to the borough. We are proud to work with and for residents as they strive for healthier and happier lives. Our partnerships mean that we reach and support people in trusted community settings, in their local neighbourhoods. Here, they build confidence and skills to connect to wider services and opportunities. Together, we enable individuals and communities to overcome many of the challenges they face.

Thank you to our funders and partners for their commitment, and to our fantastic staff and volunteers who work so hard to make a difference in Sandwell.

Sandwell Consortium core members and service providers





Sandwell Language Network - community-based English language learning with 19 community partners across the six towns.

The **Sandwell Language Network (SLN)**, funded by Sandwell Public Health, offers free basic level ESOL learning in community sites across the borough, with digital access in all courses. This enables residents to learn English for everyday life, to:

- access health and wellbeing services
- look for work
- communicate with school
- get to know their neighbours.

SLN also provides professional development for tutors and volunteers to build skills, qualifications and capacity in our communities.

We worked with Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust to deliver the Ambassadors programme to support the opening of the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. This provided additional ESOL sessions about service changes and how to access the new hospital.



**525
Learners**



**35 Courses
delivered**



**Delivery in
six towns**



**260 Volunteer
led sessions**

Becoming a Health Literate Organisation:



Clear communication for better health



Funded by
Sandwell Council

Community and family welfare advice

Our Advice Workers are based in eight community centres, providing advice on welfare benefits, budgeting, housing, immigration, council tax and referrals to specialist services. Three Advisers are also located in Family Hubs across Sandwell with a dedicated service for families.



For every £1 invested in our Advice services, £12.83 was directly gained by residents

Cost of living programme

Sandwell Consortium leads this outreach advice programme, funded by Sandwell Council, with our delivery partner Citizens Advice. This has provided cost of living advice at 26 sites across Sandwell, including libraries, food pantries, schools and community centres. The team helped people to access benefits, housing and budgeting advice, gave support to get online and employment support.



Welfare Advice for people with severe mental illness

In 2024-25, we joined a pilot project to provide benefits and housing Advice for people with severe mental illness, in community settings, funded by Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. This reached and supported 62 vulnerable residents in Sandwell. The learning from the pilot will inform future provision in the Black Country.

Silver Linings

Silver Linings is a three-year project, which launched in October 2024, funded by Independent Age. The project provides advice to residents aged 65+ on welfare benefits, housing, fuel poverty, aids and adaptations, and referral for debt advice and specialist support. This is delivered in eight community hubs with outreach to elders in local faith centres and health centres. Advice is provided in community languages as well as English to ensure that those in need can access support.

Sandwell Health Inequalities Programme (SHIP)



The **Sandwell Health Inequalities Programme (SHIP)** supports people with their mental health and wellbeing, and to help people prevent and manage long-term physical health conditions.

SHIP is a four-year programme, funded by Sandwell Council and delivered by 11 community partners. In year three, 2024-25, it achieved improvements in health for residents, which included:

- social activities to reduce isolation
- projects to tackle childhood and adult obesity
- maternity and women’s health groups
- exercise groups for older residents
- cycling in Sandwell’s green spaces
- a community swimming group
- football sessions for adults and young people.



1616

residents active on
SHIP



55%

increase in residents
taking part in exercise



86%

improvement in
mental health



77%

residents satisfied
with the program

Wider Determinants of Health Sandwell

The ‘wider determinants of health’ are the social, environmental and economic factors which impact directly on the health of the population. Funded by the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and in partnership with Communities In Sync, we are working to address some of the wider determinants of health, and their impact on the wellbeing of local residents.

Services include advice and advocacy, digital skills, healthy cooking, walking groups, yoga and relaxation. We focus on areas across Sandwell where residents experience poor health outcomes.



Skills, Volunteering and Employment



We deliver projects to enable residents to learn new skills, build confidence, complete training, and move closer to employment. This builds more resilient communities.

Skills for Sandwell

The Skills for Sandwell project supports local residents to improve their skills, confidence, and access employment opportunities. It engages people through workshops, one-to-one support, and community-based learning sessions. The project particularly focuses on those facing barriers to work or training, e.g. health issues, confidence, job search and interview skills. By building core skills, gaining qualifications, and through volunteering and work placements, people can make a journey into sustainable employment. The project builds local employment networks by strengthening links with training providers, job centres and local employers.

Project Impact

- 621** Residents engaged
- 391** Residents supported to access basic skills courses
- 332** Residents developing digital skills
- 291** Residents supported to gain employment
- 58** Residents moved into employment/self-employment



Numbers for Life

In 2024-2025, we enrolled 80 new participants onto our Numbers 4 Life project, part of the national Multiply programme. We helped residents to enhance numeracy skills, through face to face and online training, with one to one support.

72 Residents completed the programme and achieved a range of outcomes including:

- started formal learning
- additional hours at work following completion of training
- an increase in pay
- a promotion at work
- improved money management skills.



Funded by
UK Government

Case Study

Skills, Volunteering and Employment



Amina's Journey to Employment: Building Confidence and Skills in a New Country

Amina joined the CCF programme in early 2024 after arriving in the UK from Bangladesh. She was eager to find work in the care sector, driven by a strong desire to help others. However, Amina faced multiple challenges, including language barriers, low confidence, no previous care experience, and limited knowledge of the UK job market. Not being able to drive also restricted her job options in the sector.

Through the CCF programme, Amina received tailored support to help her overcome these barriers. She took part in a range of activities, including a Basic English Conversation Workshop, a Digital Support Class, and Employability Skills Training. These sessions helped her improve her language and IT skills while also preparing her for job applications and interviews. She also gained key qualifications in Food Hygiene and First Aid.

Alongside group sessions, Amina benefited from regular one-to-one support, where she received help to develop her CV, search for jobs, and practice interview techniques. These sessions helped her build confidence, stay motivated, and develop a focused plan to achieve her goal of working in the care sector.

Within three months of joining the programme, Amina successfully secured a full-time job in the care sector. She continues to volunteer and participate in community sessions and is now planning to further boost her qualifications.

Amina's story is a powerful example of how the right support can help someone overcome multiple challenges and take meaningful steps towards long-term independence and employment.



"I really enjoyed the training and felt supported throughout. I've learned so many useful skills, and I now feel confident in my job and daily life." - Amina



Reach and Reconnect

Our *Reach and Reconnect* project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, focuses on increasing health and digital literacy skills through group sessions and one to one support. The project works with minority communities who experience poor health outcomes, and who are often excluded and isolated.



The Reach and Reconnect project has enabled us to reach people through our community hubs in culturally sensitive ways, and help them to re-connect with local support and rebuild confidence. Residents have learned to access online health and welfare services and to support family and friends to do so.



708

residents
enrolled onto R&R



630

residents
can now access health
information online



754

residents reported
improved access to
primary care/pharmacies



566

residents reported
improved access to digital
day-to-day skills



575

residents are now
able to use the
internet safely

Hateley Cross: Community Navigators



2024-25 saw the second and final year of our *Community Navigators* project for the *Hateley Cross Big Local* programme in the Hateley Heath and Stone Cross areas of Sandwell, funded by the National Lottery.

Two Community Navigators worked with residents to signpost and support access to local services, and to set up community led activities. These include welfare advice, IT access, job clubs, ESOL class, and a group to maintain local green spaces.

Digital Communities



Our 'Digital Communities' project, funded by Sandwell Council, was a six-month pilot project which explored ways to increase digital inclusion among marginalised communities.

We piloted community-based approaches to gaining digital skills and online access with 195 residents. They learned how to access essential online services, training and education, and improve employability and online job search.

The project and its learning ensures that Sandwell residents are not left behind in a digitally driven world.

Case Study

Skills and Digital Access

Donna's Journey to Digital Independence and Confidence

Donna joined the Reach & Reconnect (R&R) programme looking for support with digital skills and job searching. She had previously relied on her daughter for help with emails and online tasks and felt anxious about using technology on her own. Due to her learning difficulties and wellbeing needs, Donna needed extra support to build confidence and learn how to use a laptop safely and independently.

Through a series of one-to-one sessions and weekly workshops, Donna was gradually introduced to online tools and supported step-by-step in developing digital confidence. She learned how to log on, navigate job search websites, use Google, and access key services. Her confidence grew rapidly, and with encouragement from staff, she began job searching independently. She was also supported to access free online training and completed a Level 2 Food Safety qualification.

Thanks to SMBC's Digital Inclusion support, Donna was given her own laptop, which she now uses at home to continue learning and practising her skills. She can now check emails, explore job opportunities, and manage her health more independently, including using the NHS app to check prescriptions and order medication.

Donna hopes to find work in a kitchen, using her new qualification to support job applications. She will continue attending sessions to enhance her digital skills and is exploring ways to access online mental wellbeing support to strengthen her resilience.



"Getting my own laptop is amazing. I can now practice at home, and I feel a lot better now that I can do things for myself." - Donna

Key milestones for Donna

- ✓ Attending sessions regularly
- ✓ Improved digital confidence and skills
- ✓ Can now access online services
- ✓ Taking part in courses online

At Sandwell Consortium, we recognise that residents understand their own needs best and that their voices should play a central role in shaping services in their communities.

Reach & Reconnect - Residents' Panel

Reach & Reconnect Residents' Panel brings together local residents from across our community hubs in Sandwell to share their experiences, reflect on the support they've received, and help to co-design future services. The meetings are informal, welcoming spaces where residents are encouraged to speak openly, share feedback, and help us understand what's working and what isn't. Each session has a theme and includes group discussions and guest speakers. Themes thus far have included digital inclusion, health literacy, mental wellbeing, working with local councillors, and local cancer support groups.

All sessions provide the opportunity for residents to explore tools such as the NHS App and websites such as Let's Go Sandwell and Route2Wellbeing. Panel members have highlighted barriers faced by people in their communities and have developed skills and confidence to support other residents and to volunteer at our local centres.



MMUH Community Ambassadors Initiative

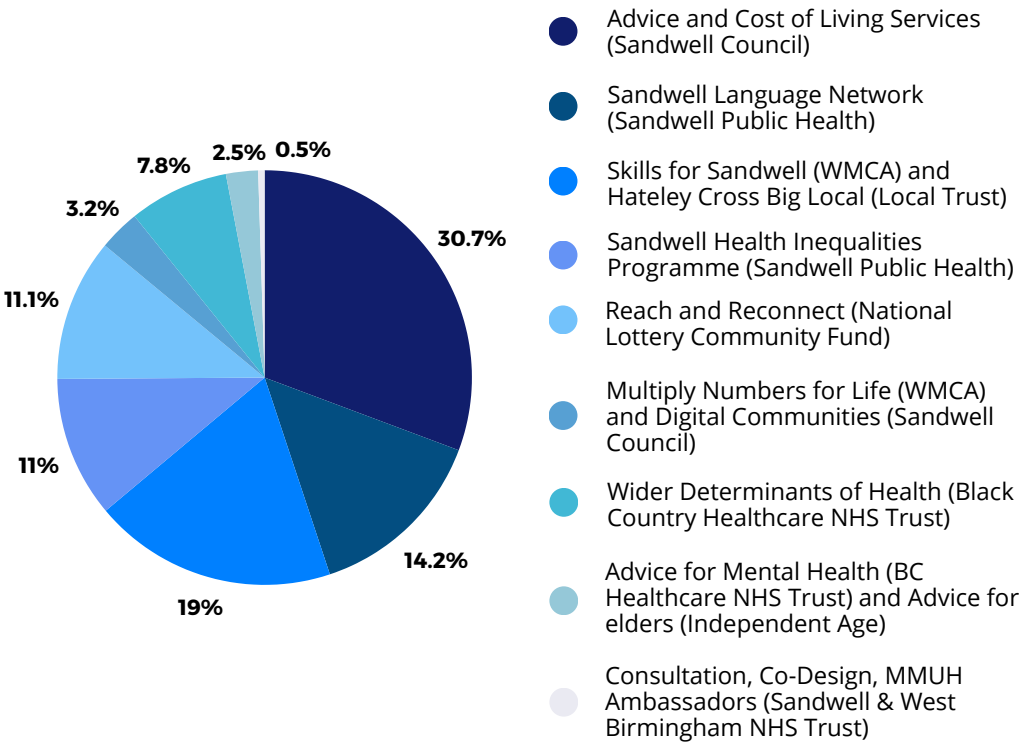
Sandwell Consortium leads the MMUH Community Ambassadors initiative, a partnership with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust to support the transition to the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH).

The project enables trusted local partners to act as a bridge between the hospital and communities. Ambassadors share important updates on health services while gathering residents' questions, concerns, and ideas to feed back to the Trust.

Through briefings, community conversations, and community language noticeboards and videos, the programme ensures residents stay informed and their voices are heard to shape how the NHS communicates during this period of change. This is much more than sharing information, it's about listening, responding, and ensuring residents are part of the conversation.



£1,512,823 total income for services to Sandwell residents 2024-2025



Direct income for residents through Advice services funded by Sandwell Council

- Our Community Advice services secured **£4,558,667 in additional income for Sandwell residents.**
- Our advice service across Sandwell's Family Hub sites has secured **£1,297,637 in additional income for Sandwell families.**
- The Cost of Living outreach advice programme delivered across Sandwell's six towns secured over **£1,356,687 in additional income for Sandwell residents.**

In 2024-25, as well as the outcomes achieved through our services, Sandwell Consortium's ten core members have generated significant social value for residents. Highlights include:



123

Sandwell residents
employed



327

Sandwell
volunteers



£2.9m

independent
funding raised



£12.83

gained from every
£1 invested in our
Advice services

"If I hadn't had your support I don't know what I would have done"
Sandwell resident

Targeting funds for impact

Sandwell Consortium targets its funding to meet the needs of people in local communities. With our delivery partners, we reach and support residents in all corners of Sandwell. We aim to influence as well as support the priorities of our funders and partners. We align our work to local, regional and national strategies to reduce health and economic inequalities. We support:

- Sandwell Council's Vision 2030 to be a thriving, optimistic and resilient community.
- West Midlands Combined Authority's plan to achieve inclusive economic growth.
- National and Black Country NHS strategies to tackle health inequalities.

Sincere thanks to our funding partners:



Sandwell Consortium CIC

Old Municipal Buildings, Oldbury, B69 2AB,

Tel: 0121 533 2568, Email: info@sandwellconsortium.co.uk, www.sandwellconsortium.co.uk