



# Annual Report 2025



# OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

## OUR VISION

Is for a community in which all are valued and respected and have access to the information, support and quality services they need



## OUR MISSION

Is to be an asset to the local community by providing access to inclusive and supportive services



## OUR VALUES

Are honesty and integrity, dignity and respect, commitment to excellence and transparency & openness



# INTRODUCTION

Founded back in 1983 by Beryl Chandler, Pat Ryan and Barbara Bright who were committed to supporting the local community. Growing considerably since those early days we now offer more services than ever before. We pride ourselves on the warm, welcoming place with friendly, empathetic and passionate staff. We offer support to local people through our many services



We are incredibly grateful to the people who enable us to provide these services, with funding coming from the Local Authority, individual grants, donations, and service charges and the time given by members of our local community.



# CEO Report



## Celebrating a Year of Success and Community Impact

As we gather for our Annual General Meeting, it is a pleasure to reflect on what has been a truly successful year.

As CEO, I look back on the remarkable achievements of this past year with great pride and joy. Among our highlights is the successful completion of the building renovation and reconfiguration project. This endeavour not only transformed our facilities into a modern, functional space but also reaffirmed our commitment to serving the needs of our local community. It stands as a testament to our vision and resilience.

None of this would have been possible without our fantastic team, both staff and volunteers, whose dedication and passion have been the cornerstone of our organisation. Your tireless efforts ensure that our services remain not just operational but truly impactful, thoughtfully tailored to the needs of the people we serve. Through their dedication and the invaluable support of the local community, we have strengthened our commitment to inclusivity,

outreach, and meaningful impact.

It's your energy and purpose that breathe life into our mission every single day. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the board of directors. Your willingness to devote your time and support me as CEO is invaluable.



# CEO Report

Your collaborative spirit has been an anchor and a beacon, and I am incredibly grateful for your unwavering support and trust in our shared vision.

Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the passion and hard work of our staff and volunteers. Their unwavering commitment to serving our diverse community has brought about positive change, ensuring that individuals of all ages have access to essential support and opportunities for growth. We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed their time, energy, and expertise to make our projects a success. We take pride in working closely with the local community, embracing diversity and fostering connections that make a lasting difference. Each project has been designed with inclusivity in mind, ensuring that people from various backgrounds, age groups, and circumstances feel supported and valued. This year, we successfully delivered eight projects aimed at benefiting individuals across different stages of life. Each of these projects has made a meaningful impact, improving lives and strengthening community bonds.



## Acknowledgements



A huge Thank You to West Midlands Fire Service Smethwick. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to WMFS Smethwick, who have been absolutely amazing in supporting us over the past two years. Following the unfortunate theft of one of our minibuses in 2023, WMFS Smethwick generously offered to house our remaining three minibuses in their secure yard—completely free of charge. Their kindness and community spirit have meant the world to us. Thanks to their support, we've had peace of mind knowing our vehicles are safe and secure. We are incredibly grateful for their generosity and continued support. Thank you, WMFS Smethwick, for being true community heroes.



We extend our deepest gratitude to Jet Express for their generous provision of storage space, which has been instrumental in helping us support those most in need within our community. With limited space available at our centre, we were struggling to manage essential items, such as beds, furniture, and other vital necessities. Jet Express stepped in once again with incredible kindness, offering us access to their lock-up storage whenever needed. Their continued support makes a real difference, and we are truly thankful for their partnership in our mission to serve the community.

# Chair's Report



As usual in our reports to the AGM the Chair's report follows that of the Chief Executive which as always covers all aspects of the previous year's successful outcomes. Therefore, my report will follow similar lines but from a slightly different perspective.

I have long thought St Albans is the best small to medium local charity anywhere and I do not think I am alone in this view.

I then ask myself why is this the case, and there can only be one answer and that is the people involved. Whenever I visit, I am always conscious of how busy the Centre seems. Everyone is in good humour, getting on with the job and cooperating with each other, staff and visitors alike. The attitudes on display are not simply those of someone doing a job for the pay cheque at the end of the month. Rather they are those people who want the Centre to succeed, and are willing to go far beyond the words in their job descriptions to ensure success. You cannot achieve this state of affairs without equally skilled and committed management.



This extends not only to the day to day management role but planning for the future, be it short, medium or long term. Together with an awareness to continue to succeed, we cannot stand still but must evolve and expand. Our managers understand this and sign up wholeheartedly to this approach. A fact that both the Board of Trustees and, I am sure, many of the clients are thankful for.

I have purposely not identified any individuals or specific sections in this report as I feel all of them are equally as important.

I feel obliged however, to mention our CEO Tonia who, as head of the organisation, sets the standard, and an example, that all of the staff understand and accept.

Oh and guess what? We are running out of room so watch this space.....



# Meet the Board

## St Albans Board



Robert Evetts  
Chair



Ann-Marie Docker  
Treasurer



Simon Penn  
Director



Carol Coleman  
Director



Sharan Sohal  
Director



Richard Darlington  
Director



Mandy Hawkes  
Director



Robert Bruce  
Director



Tonia Flannagan  
CEO

# Meet the team

**CEO**  
**Tonia Flannagan**

**Operations Manager**  
**Tammy Clayton**

**Assistant**  
**Jill Shale**

**Pre-School Manager**  
**Samantha Oakley**

**HR Administrator**  
**Diane Blount**

**Daycare Manager**  
**Claire Bodenham**

**Carer**  
**Pauline Bachelar**

**Preschool Deputy**  
**Emma Dunne**

**Facilities Manager**  
**Delroy Thomas**

**Co-Ordinator**  
**Natalie Comley**

**Kitchen Manager**  
**Debbie Billington**

**Pre-school Assistant**  
**Chloe Wakefield**

**C.O.P. Team Leader**  
**Maria Wiseman**

**Carer**  
**Samantha Wakefield**

**Kitchen Assistant**  
**Louise Box**

**Pre-school Assistant**  
**Sally Harvey**

**Support Worker**  
**Michelle Garvey**

**Carer**  
**Esther Eley**

**Kitchen Assistant**  
**Surjeet Kaur**

**Pre-school Assistant**  
**Fhana Begum**

**Support Worker**  
**Sharnah Hughes**

**Driver/Carer**  
**Neil Dainty**

**Dementia Advisor**  
**Kath O'Callaghan**

**Pre-school Assistant**  
**Freya Banks**

**Support Worker**  
**Chanel Sylvester**

**Driver**  
**Windell Downer**

**Driver**  
**Mandy Read**

**Pre-school Assistant**  
**Sofia Spencer**

**Housekeeper**  
**Jayne Webb**

**Carer**  
**Donna Palmer**

**Welfare Rights Advisor**  
**Harninder Shergill**

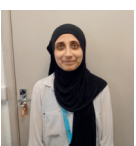
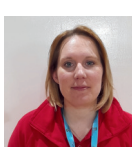
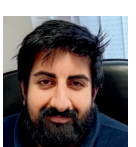
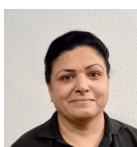
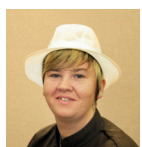
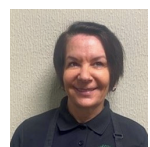
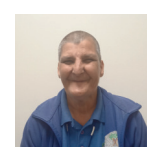
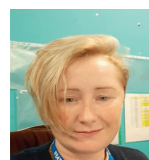
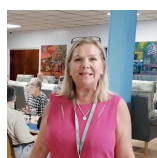
**Pre-school Assistant**  
**Ambreen Haq**

**Finance Officer**  
**Anne Calder**

**Driver/Assistant**  
**Lynda Coates**

**Family Support**  
**Sarah Yildirim**

**Pre-school Assistant**  
**Sumanpreet Kaur**



# Elderberries Day Opportunities

Our service users are thoroughly enjoying the newly built activity rooms. Everyone has adapted well, and we have been busy ensuring safety is paramount. All have been shown the new fire evacuation procedure, and the Elderberries passed with flying colours.

We continue to receive regular new referrals from social prescribers, dementia services, social workers, and other professionals. Unfortunately, we have also lost some regulars to hospital admissions, care homes, and, sadly, some have passed away. We aim to transition from referral to attending sessions within two weeks. There has been a significant uptake in our "Take a Break" offer, with clients favouring a more ad hoc service.

Attendance for the day opportunities increased towards the end of the year, thanks to funding from the NHS and the Black Country ICB, which has enabled us to offer 18 free places every week at the club for those who met the criteria. All of the spaces were utilised over the 3 months and this was an initiative that supported people recently released from hospital or at risk of admission to have the opportunity to attend the centre for a trial. Those who took up the free spaces experienced many positive outcomes, including increased social opportunities, improved overall health, and decreased hospital re-admissions.



**Claire Bodenham**  
**Care Manager**

When the free spaces ceased, the majority of clients wished to continue and took up self-funded spaces. This demonstrates the value of the service and support we offer.

We have hosted several parties and theme days this year. We celebrated the 100th birthday of one of our Elderberries, which included a visit from the Mayor of Sandwell and other special guests. Other events included an Easter party and a summer party with a beach theme, St Albans' 40th birthday later in the year, and a Remembrance Day celebration, where we welcomed a visit from the Deputy Lord Lieutenant. Our Christmas Party was a great success, and we provided excellent entertainment and presents were distributed to 33 clients.

We also enjoyed visits from schools for

# Elderberries Day Opportunities

poetry readings, craft sessions, and choir performances. Additionally, we introduced armchair yoga and sound bath sessions to our repertoire of activity sessions. We have seen more changes to our team, recruiting new drivers who have settled well into the team dynamic. The staff team has undergone training refreshers for the defibrillator, oxygen support mask, and De-choker. We maintain fresh skills with rigorous competency checks to ensure compliance. We also launched Dysphagia training for all staff in response to the high number of clients requiring eating and drinking support as per SLT guidelines. Staff completed their "Love to Move" training accreditation for gentle exercise.

We have seen an uptake in student volunteers from UCB Hired and Sandwell College, with students completing 100 hours of voluntary work. We also welcomed job seekers and local school students for work experience placements.



**Feedback from SBB family: All the staff are so kind, patient, and caring with the clients. It was heart warming to see. We both left the centre feeling happy and grateful mom gets to go there. Thank you for all the hard work ... the team were amazing. It really does make a difference to clients and their families.**

**You have been so amazing with mom, we can't thank you enough for everything you have done.**

**Mum is so happy. She really looks forward to going to the club. You've made such a difference. Thank you.**

# Kitchen Services / Outmeals

## A Year of Growth and Dedication

At St Albans Community Centre's Kitchen and Outmeals Service, we take pride in providing high-quality, nutritious meals to our community. With a Level 5 food hygiene rating, our commitment to excellence in food preparation and safety remains unwavering.

## Celebrating New Beginnings

One of our biggest milestones this year was the opening of Cranberries Community Café in January 2025. The café has quickly become a beloved spot, praised for its homemade meals and affordability. Due to its popularity, we are now exploring extended opening hours to better serve our visitors.

## Adapting to Challenges

While we celebrate our achievements, we also acknowledge the financial challenges we've faced. The completion of our building extension impacted our revenue, and BUDS' reduction in orders led to further losses. However, we responded proactively by launching buffet catering services, which have been well received. One satisfied client shared, "Amazing food, good value for money."

## Commitment to Quality & Training

Our dedicated team of three staff members and two volunteers work tirelessly to provide fresh, delicious meals every day. All staff undergo continuous training, ensuring compliance with Natasha's Law and the highest food hygiene standards.



## Expanding Our Services

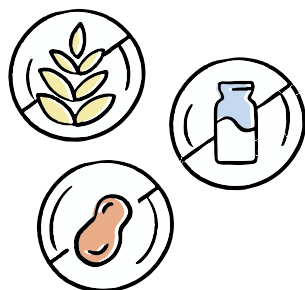
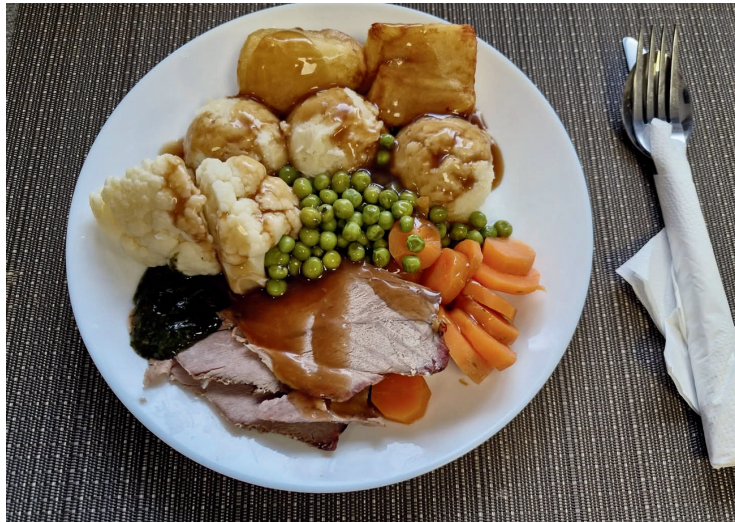
We proudly cater for party events, having provided meals for up to 50 guests per event across four occasions, complete with entertainment. Additionally, our outmeal service continues to thrive, delivering hot, freshly prepared plated meals to the community at lunchtime. With approximately 120 meals served weekly, our service remains essential to many.



# Kitchen Services / Outmeals

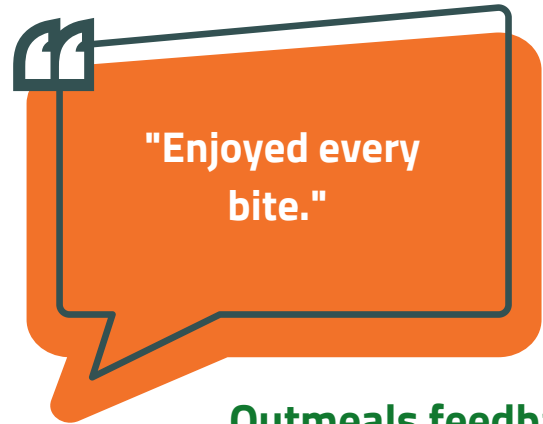
## Seasonal Menus & Community Impact

With seasonal menu updates for summer and winter, we ensure variety and quality year-round. Across all of our services, we prepare and deliver around 20,000 meals annually, making a substantial impact on the well-being of our community.



## Heartfelt Feedback

Nothing is more rewarding than hearing positive feedback. This is what some of our clients had to say about our food.



**Outmeals feedback**



**Elderberries feedback**



**Cranberries Cafe feedback**

# Kitchen Services / Outmeals

## Newcomen PCN Diabetes project

St Albans were extremely proud to be part of a fabulous initiative to trial a meal service to a control group of diabetic adults, with the aim of reducing their blood sugar and teaching them about healthier options and portion control. We delivered a freshly cooked hot meal daily. As part of the initiative St Albans also produced recipe cards detailing how to make the dishes that the group had been eating. The cards contained nutritional information enabling people to carefully monitor their intake of calories, carbs, fat and sugar.



### *Sausage and Mash*

🕒 20 min prep , 25 min cook

#### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

##### Per Serving

- 1,339kJ / 320kcal
- 21g protein
- 51g carbohydrate, of which 12g sugar
- 5g fat, of which 1g saturates
- 7g fibre
- 0.8g salt

#### METHOD

1. Cook the carrots, swede or turnip and potatoes in a large saucepan of gently boiling water for about 20 minutes, until tender.
2. Meanwhile, preheat the grill. Arrange the sausages on the grill rack and start to cook them when the vegetables have been cooking for 10 minutes. Grill them for 10 to 12 minutes, turning often.
3. At the same time, start to make the red onion gravy. Heat the vegetable oil in a large non-stick frying pan and add the onion, cooking until soft and lightly browned – about 3 to 4 minutes.
4. Pour in the stock and water, add the herbs, then simmer for 4 to 5 minutes. Add the blended cornflour and stir until thickened. Keep hot over a low heat.
5. Drain and mash the vegetables, seasoning with black pepper. Serve 2 sausages per person with the red onion gravy.

#### INGREDIENTS

##### For 1 person

- 1 carrot, chopped
- 75g swede or turnip, cut into chunks
- 125g potatoes, cut into chunks
- 2 reduced-fat sausages
- 1/4 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1/4 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 25ml reduced-salt vegetable or chicken stock
- 50ml cold water
- 1/4 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 1/2 tablespoons cornflour blended with 1/4 tbsp of cold water
- 1/4 pinch ground black pepper

##### For 2 people

- 2 carrots, chopped
- 150g swede or turnip, cut into chunks
- 250g potatoes, cut into chunks
- 4 reduced-fat sausages
- 1/2 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 50ml reduced-salt vegetable or chicken stock
- 100ml cold water
- 1/2 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 1 tablespoons cornflour blended with 1/2 tbsp of cold water
- 1/2 pinch ground black pepper

##### For 4 people

- 4 carrots, chopped
- 300g swede or turnip, cut into chunks
- 700g potatoes, cut into chunks
- 8 reduced-fat sausages
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 100ml reduced-salt vegetable or chicken stock
- 200ml cold water
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 2 tablespoons cornflour blended with 1/2 tbsp of cold water
- 1 pinch ground black pepper

#### NOTES

- Swap the swede for sweet potato or butternut squash, to make a change.
- Make the recipe with vegetarian sausages if you prefer
- Try serving with some extra green vegetables like cabbage, kale or broccoli

The recipes were broken down into portions for 1, 2 or 4 people so that they were easily scaled up/down. Feedback was excellent and many of the clients who took part saw an improvement of their diabetes.

**“Loved them all. Staff really friendly, all meals very tasty and hot.”**

**“Would like to carry on with the meals. Very good meals, very tasty, enjoyed most but I am fussy so left a couple. Loved that it was fresh.”**

**“Loved all the meals - ate every bit, couldn't fault them.”**

## Introduction and context

In January, St Albans Community Association began a new chapter in community service delivery by entering into a contract with Murray Hall as the lead provider. This contract introduced the Community Offer Plus — a collaborative programme funded by Sandwell Local Authority and the NHS that brings together a network of organisations dedicated to ensuring that essential, free services are accessible to local residents.

Under this new framework, we embarked on a training programme, rapidly addressing initial contract implementation challenges while laying the foundation for a robust, multi-agency approach in meeting the varied needs of the community.

## Service Delivery Overview

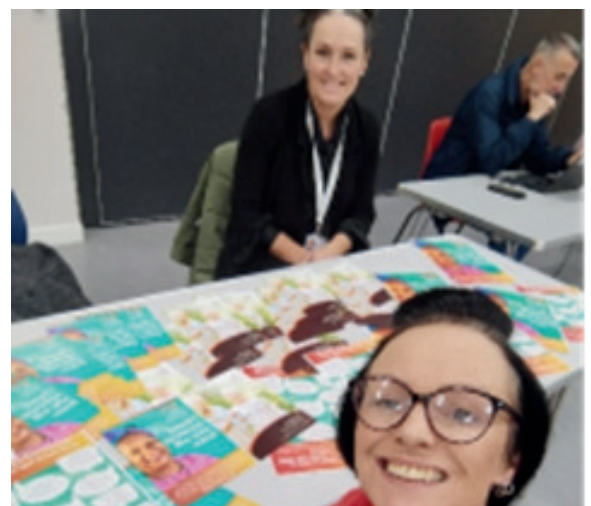
Throughout the year, our service has been underpinned by a proactive and inclusive approach:

- People Supported: 482 residents in total.
- Proactive Networking: Our strategic partnerships and outreach efforts generated 59% of referrals directly through networking.



- Service Visits: We conducted 700 visits, starting with initial needs-led assessments and progressing to ongoing community support.
- Multi-functional Referrals and Support: Our team delivered tailored interventions across housing, welfare, food support, and beyond.

The integrated, cross-agency methodology has enabled us to adapt quickly to complex issues while ensuring that every resident can access the help needed to thrive.



# Community Offer Plus

## Multi-Agency Working and Partnerships

A cornerstone of the Community Offer Plus is its robust collaborative network. Our multi-agency approach brings together key players including:

- Adult Social Care & Sandwell Children's Trust
- Housing Services & Healthy Homes, WMFS and Police
- Private sector housing team and Homeless team
- Health and Icares
- Various Charitable and Voluntary Organisations such as Sandwell Clothing Bank, Foodbanks and food pantries, New Beginnings,
- GP's and social prescribers, dentists
- Education – Inclusion support, Admissions, SEND teams

This coordinated effort means that residents benefit from a seamless

service experience where the expertise of each partner is leveraged for maximum impact. Regular networking events and community meetings have been instrumental in raising the profile of our offer while ensuring that local needs are efficiently met. Ongoing collaboration with external organisations, such as the Fire Service and Harborne Parish Land Churches, further solidifies our commitment to holistic community support.

## Key Performance Data

To provide a clear picture of our annual activity, please review the summary below:

Service Category Numbers & Details

- **People Supported:** 482 residents
- **Visits Carried Out:** 700 visits (including initial needs-led assessments & follow-up community support)
- **Housing Issues Addressed:** 127 cases (including Section 21's, disrepair, and damp concerns)
- **Aids & Adaptations Referrals:** 26 referrals to help clients live safely and better in their homes



# Community Offer Plus

- **Welfare Rights Referrals:** 181 referrals focusing on income maximisation and debt solutions
- **Food Vouchers Issued:** 355 vouchers for individuals facing rising costs and benefit sanctions
- **Referrals to West Midlands Fire Service:** 44 referrals
- **Water Discounts Applications:** Applied for water discounts for 43 households
- **Grant Applications:** 37 applications to Harborne Parish Land Churches for white goods & furniture
- **Household Items Support:** Supported 82 individuals with donated household items
- **Christmas Support:** 47 families assisted with gifts and food hampers
- **Baby Bundles:** 13 women supported through New Beginnings
- **Clothing Support:** 32 families received clothing from Sandwell Clothing Bank
- **Care Packages Delivered:** 74 packages containing toiletries and household cleaning products



Our data highlights not only the volume of our operation but also the depth and variety of support provided over the past year.

## Outcomes, Successes, and Impact

The outcomes of our work this year have been tangible and far-reaching:

- **Housing Stability:** With 127 housing-related issues successfully addressed, many residents received critical support that prevented imminent homelessness or unsafe living conditions.

**Client FS commented: "I was a bit worried with it all, but you made it easier for me to understand and helped me feel less anxious over the whole Section 21. I feel better now knowing the process."**



# Community Offer Plus

- **Financial and Welfare Support:** Through 181 welfare rights referrals, clients have received guidance on income maximisation and debt solutions—ensuring more stable financial futures.

Client PE's sister shared, "Thank you for taking the time to visit our brother and supporting him with his debt, to help with getting everything sorted. Our brother has additional needs, and you were able to build a relationship with him where he felt safe."

- **Daily Essentials and Wellbeing:** With 355 food vouchers issued and extensive support provided through household items, baby bundles, clothing, and care packages, our community members have felt both valued and cared for during times of rising cost pressures and benefit sanctions.

Client WW expressed, "Thank you for your support. When we were made homeless, we lost so much of our items and you ladies came in and was able to support us in getting a cooker, kitchen items and beds for the children. Your love and support will always leave a lasting effect on me and my family."

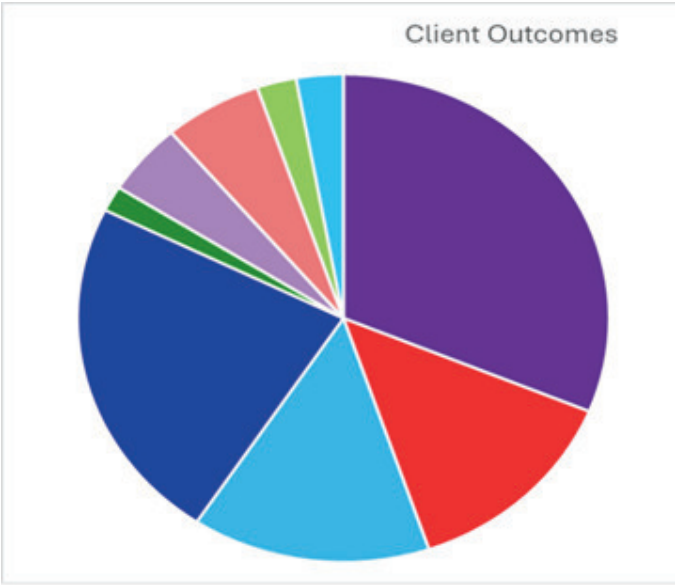
- **Community Engagement and Empowerment:** Our proactive networking efforts not only generated 59% of referrals but also ensured that individuals received personalised, empathetic support tailored to their unique circumstances.

Client MR noted, "Thanks, my daughter now has school place because of you."

Client CU added, "Yo, thank u on a real 4 all ur help, ur proper god bless."

A Work Coach DWP, H Taylor, acknowledged, "I'd like to thank you for the work you did with our client and how you were able to establish things which we were not; this just shows that grassroots organisations like yours really do play a massive part in the community."

# Community Offer Plus

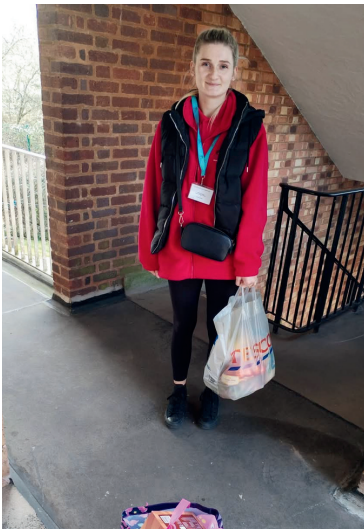


- Initial Need Assessments & Support Visits
- Housing Support
- Welfare Rights Referrals
- Food Poverty
- Aids and Adaptations Referrals
- Care Packages Distributed
- Seasonal and Special Assistance
- Grant Applications
- Fire Service Referrals



## Conclusion

The delivery of the Community Offer Plus has been a year marked by remarkable achievements and community resilience. Thanks to the unified efforts of our staff, partners, and the trust placed in us by local residents, we have made significant strides in supporting families, ensuring housing stability, and safeguarding the welfare of individuals across Smethwick and Oldbury. As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to innovation, compassion, and continuous improvement, always working to create a supportive, connected community.



## Introduction

The Sandwell Community Dementia Service (SCDS) is a collaborative partnership of seven dedicated organisations working together to provide holistic, person-centred support to individuals living with dementia and their carers across the borough of Sandwell. The partnership is led by Murray Hall Community Trust, and includes:

- Alzheimer's Society
- BUDS (Better Understanding of Dementia for Sandwell)
- Age UK Sandwell
- Agewell
- West Bromwich African Caribbean Resource Centre (WBACRC)

Together, we aim to empower individuals, reduce isolation, and improve the quality of life for people affected by dementia.

## Our Role in Smethwick

In the Smethwick locality, our Dementia Advisor, Kath O'Callaghan, has provided exceptional support to 344 individuals and families over the past year. This includes:

- 196 people living with dementia, mild cognitive impairment (MCI), or suspected dementia
- 148 carers or family members supporting loved ones

Kath's work is rooted in compassion,,



**Kath O'Callaghan**  
**Dementia Advisor**

knowledge, and a deep understanding of the challenges faced by those living with dementia and their carers.

## Key Support Provided

Kath offers a wide range of support services, including:

- Emotional support and active listening during times of distress or uncertainty
- Information and advice on dementia, available services, and coping strategies
- Referrals to appropriate health and social care services
- Empowerment through Living Well Plans and guidance on Lasting Power of Attorney
- Encouragement to participate in brain-stimulating activities to help slow cognitive decline
- Support for independence, ensuring safety and dignity are maintained

# Sandwell Community Dementia Service

## Collaborative Working

To ensure the best outcomes for clients, Kath works closely with:

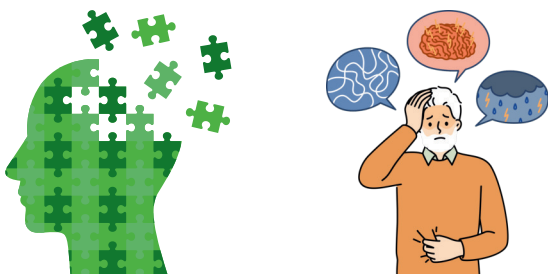
- Social Workers and Care Managers
- GPs and Social Prescribers
- Admiral Nurses and the Continence Team
- Memory Assessment Services
- Occupational Therapists and Equipment Services
- Advocates and Link Workers

This multi-agency approach ensures that individuals receive timely, coordinated, and effective support.

## Impact and Outcomes

Over the past year, Kath has completed an impressive 4,233 actions across her caseload. These actions have led to meaningful outcomes, including:

- Supporting individuals to move to safer living environments
- Facilitating access to continence services and social care assessments



- Coordinating emergency care packages (PIP)
- Complete referrals home adaptations and mobility aids
- Supporting access to GP services and medication reviews
- Helping families navigate complex care systems
- Supporting individuals to live well
- Providing coping strategies to carers



# Sandwell Community Dementia Service



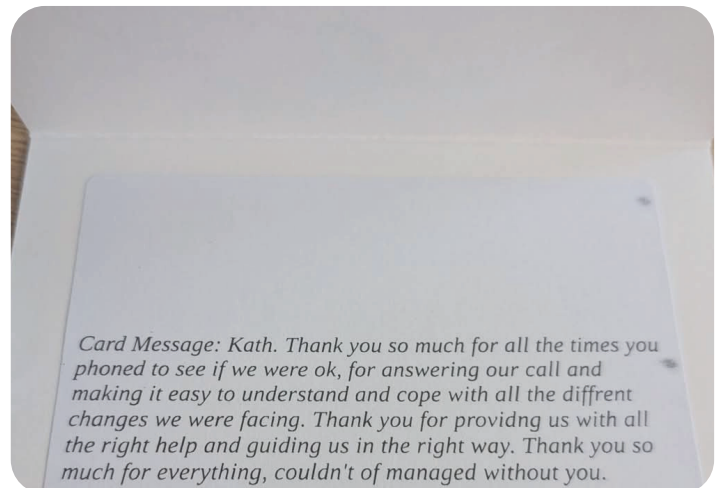
## Looking Ahead

As we move into the next year, we remain committed to:

- Strengthening partnerships across Sandwell
- Enhancing awareness and understanding of dementia
- Promoting early intervention and diagnosis
- Supporting carers with tailored resources and respite options
- Continuing to empower individuals to live well with dementia
- Providing information sessions on Dementia to support carers and/or family members

## Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our partners, funders, and community stakeholders. Most importantly, we thank the individuals and families who place their trust in us. Your resilience and courage inspire everything we do.



Through Digicomm, our mission is to empower adults aged 55+ in Sandwell to navigate the digital world with confidence. By providing personalised support and resources, we help our learners embrace technology as a tool for connection, entertainment, and convenience. Whether it's learning to shop online, send emails, or stay in touch with loved ones, we tailor our services to meet individual needs.

We offer a range of learning opportunities to accommodate different preferences and circumstances:

- **One-to-One Home Lessons:** For those who prefer learning in the comfort of their own homes, we provide personalised sessions that cater to their goals.



- **Tablet Lending Service:** We lend internet-ready tablets to learners without access to devices, ensuring everyone has the tools they need to succeed.
- **Community-Based Learning:** Our Digicomm programme focuses on small group sessions and one-to-one support in community settings, fostering a collaborative and engaging learning environment.

At the heart of our programme is a commitment to patience, understanding, and respect. We work at our learners' pace, helping them build confidence and overcome any fears they may have about using technology. This year has been another success story for Digicomm. Here's a snapshot of our impact:

- Delivered **96** one-to-one sessions, providing personalised support to **22** learners in their homes across twelve weeks of support. This has varied from sending emails, accessing online courses, and simply navigating the device for casual browsing.
- Delivered **25** group sessions, attended by a total of **33** individual participants in **4** community settings. These sessions followed a structured guide learning



# Digicomm

how to use the tablet as a complete beginner but ended up with so much progress being made.

- Loaned out **11** internet-ready tablets, enabling learners to gain hands-on experience with digital devices. This enables our clients to practise what they have learned in the week to refresh their knowledge. It also gives them the opportunity to see if they would like to purchase a similar device in the future for themselves.



Digicomm continues to transform lives by breaking down barriers to digital inclusion. For many of our learners, mastering technology has opened doors to new possibilities, whether it's reconnecting with distant family members, accessing online services with ease, or discovering new hobbies. By creating a supportive and encouraging atmosphere, we

empower individuals to embrace the digital age without fear.

As we reflect on the past year, we remain committed to expanding our reach and impact. In the coming year, we aim to:

- Increase the number of one-to-one and group sessions.
- Explore partnerships with local organisations to extend our services.
- Continue to adapt our programme based on the evolving needs of our learners.

We believe that technology should be accessible to everyone, regardless of age or experience. Together, we can bridge the digital divide and create a more connected, inclusive community.





## WDH Sandwell – an overview

WDH Sandwell (Wider Determinants of Health Sandwell) addresses social, environmental, and economic factors impacting the health and well-being of Sandwell Residents. These factors, known as the wider determinants of health, directly influence both physical and mental health outcomes, and our aim was to create a healthier, more resilient community by tackling underlying health issues. In the first year, we supported 1,967 residents, improving their overall health and well-being through 2,860 interventions and 21,116 contacts have been recorded. Of these:

- **1,403 people received one intervention**
- **366 people received two interventions**
- **197 people received three or more interventions**
- **1,248 people received contact between 1 and 9 times**
- **590 people received contact between 10 and 49 times**
- **42 people received contact over 50 times**

We recognize that health is influenced by more than just medical care and that social and economic conditions play a crucial role in shaping health outcomes. We provide person-centered support, with a range of options to suit various needs, and help to overcome barriers to accessing support. The following partners were involved in delivery:



## Some of the key services offered include:

- **Holistic, person-centered one-to-one support:** This service provides tailored support to individuals, addressing their unique needs and circumstances. By focusing on personalised care, it helps residents overcome specific barriers and improves their overall well-being.
- **Practical and emotional support:** Offering both practical assistance and emotional support, this service helps individuals manage daily challenges and improve their mental health. It enhances residents' quality of life by addressing immediate needs and providing a supportive environment.
- **Exercise & Fitness activities including walking groups and gym sessions:** These activities

# Wider Determinants of Health

encourage social interaction among residents. Regular exercise and community engagement contribute to better mental and physical well-being.

• **Employment Support:** This service helps residents develop vocational plans, improve interview skills, and conduct job searches. By enhancing employability and financial independence, it addresses economic determinants of health.

• **Wellbeing programmes and activities:** These programmes promote social inclusion and positive emotional health through various activities. They help residents build life skills and improve their mental well-being, contributing to a healthier community.

• **Gardening and back to nature physical and wellbeing focused activities:** These

activities encourage residents to engage with nature, promoting both physical and mental health. Gardening and outdoor activities provide therapeutic benefits and foster a sense of community.

• **Advice on welfare rights and budgeting support:** This service provides residents with essential information on their rights and helps them manage their finances effectively. By addressing financial stability, it reduces stress and improves overall well-being.

• **Sound relaxation sessions:** These sessions offer a calming environment for residents to relax and reduce stress. Sound relaxation techniques can improve mental health and contribute to a sense of well-being.

• **Targeted ESOL & Employability Support for BAME women:** This service

provides language and employment support specifically for BAME women, helping them integrate into the community and improve their job prospects. It addresses both social and economic determinants of health.

• **Family focused support:** This service offers support to families, addressing their unique needs and challenges. By strengthening family units, it promotes a stable and supportive environment for all members.

• **Targeted women's health and wellbeing groups:** These groups provide a safe space for women to discuss health and well-being issues. They offer tailored support and resources, improving women's overall health and quality of life.

• **Refugees and Migrants advice and wellbeing support (including Eastern Europeans housed in the Homes for Ukraine scheme):** This service offers specialised support to refugees and migrants, helping them navigate their new environment and access essential resources. It promotes social inclusion and addresses the unique challenges faced by these communities.

We have made 1,412 onward referrals throughout the first year of delivery (including 365 cross-referrals between delivery partners) including to other voluntary sector organisations, colleges



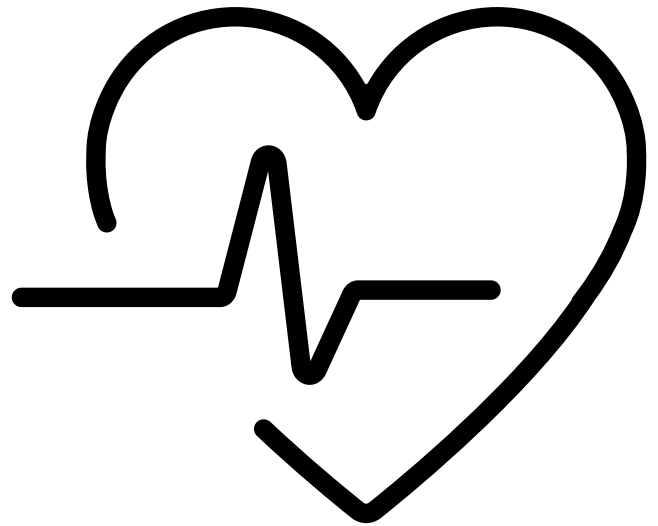
# Wider Determinants of Health

and higher education facilities, foodbanks, housing, leisure centres, and other projects such as Community Offer and Talking Therapies Plus.

## Impact and outcomes

We have received lots of feedback from our service users which indicates that WDH Sandwell has had a significant positive impact on health outcomes and preventative work. Here are some key statistics from the formal feedback completed to date:

- **Positive Difference:** 95% of service users reported that the support they received made a positive difference to them.
- **Improved Situations:** 79% of service users reported improvements in their situation.
- **Mental Wellbeing:** 76% of service users reported improvements in their mental wellbeing.
- **Confidence in Health Management:** 73% of service users feel more confident managing their health and wellbeing.
- **Satisfaction and Recommendation:** 94% of service users were satisfied with the service, and 97% would recommend it.



# Junipers Pre-School



**Samantha Oakley**  
**Pre-School Manager**

Junipers Preschool continues to welcome a growing number of families from various ethnic backgrounds. Currently, we have approximately 74 families on role and offer pre-school places for approximately 40 children per session. Most families in our setting have English as an additional language. To ensure effective communication and support, our staff are equipped to speak Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Turkish, Cantonese, Mirpuri and Bengali, reflecting the rich diversity of our local community.

Junipers Preschool is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and stimulating environment where children can grow socially, emotionally, and intellectually. The preschool emphasizes play-based learning, fostering curiosity, creativity, and confidence.

Junipers Preschool is a popular and trusted early years setting, dedicated to nurturing young children's curiosity, promoting development, and preparing children aged 2 to 5 years for a smooth and seamless transition into reception class.



## Core Services

Over the past 12 months, Junipers Preschool has provided the following core services.



# Junipers Pre-School

## Childcare and Early Education:

Sessional and term time childcare tailored to support families' needs from 2 years of age. Junipers Pre-school follows their own curriculum designed to work alongside the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, focusing on all areas of learning and are committed to supporting children and their families with the skills they need for future learning.



## Key activities include:

- **Role-Playing Games:** Opportunities to explore imagination and social skills through activities like pretend cooking, shopping, or being a teacher.
- **Outdoor Exploration:** Nature walks, treasure hunts, and sensory gardens allow children to connect with the environment and explore the world around them.
- **Creative Arts:** Painting,

sensory play and music sessions inspire self-expression and fine motor skill development.

- **Building Challenges:** Using blocks, sand, and other materials to encourage problem-solving and spatial awareness.

This approach ensures that children have a safe, fun, and stimulating environment where they can develop their skills while enjoying the process of learning.



## Specialised Programmes:

Over the last 12 months, our team of highly qualified, experienced and competent practitioners have been delivering small group interventions to work specifically with those children who have been identified as needing additional support. Each staff member brings a wealth of knowledge and skills to their role, ensuring the highest standards of care and education for every

# Junipers Pre-School

child. The setting has also had a big emphasis on Literacy, where two of our Literacy Champions have been a part of delivering the Making it REAL initiative.

## Family Work:

We understand that the well-being of children goes hand in hand with the care, love, support and stability of their home environment. Our team works collaboratively with families to foster positive relationships and provide the tools and guidance needed to create nurturing spaces for children to thrive.

Through workshops, home visits, and tailored interventions, we strive to address not only the developmental needs of children but also the challenges families may face, ensuring a stable and supportive foundation for growth and learning. Over the last 12 months, our family work has provided support to parents facing a range of challenges, including illness, domestic violence, evictions, and homelessness.



**Sarah Yildirim**  
**Family Worker**

We take a holistic approach to supporting families, focusing not only on addressing immediate difficulties but also on fostering a nurturing environment for children's early development. Our initiatives include:

- **Workshops and Events:** Hosting sessions that empower families with practical knowledge and skills.
- **Training Opportunities:** Offering specialised programmes to enhance parental engagement and capacity.
- **Home Visits:** Providing individualised support to families in their own environments, ensuring tailored care and guidance.

This support helps strengthen the relationship between home and preschool, helping families overcome challenges while laying a solid foundation for their children's future learning and development.

# Junipers Pre-School



## The Making it REAL Project

Junipers Preschool has proudly collaborated with the Sandwell Early Years Team to pilot the Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) project. This innovative programme focuses on enhancing early literacy skills and strengthening parental engagement in their children's learning journey. The project involved a dedicated cohort of families who received personalised support through home visits. These visits provided families with engaging activities and resources designed to promote literacy development.

Additionally, a series of literacy-focused events was organized, including:

- Library Visits to introduce children and families to a world of books and a free resource for them to utilise.



- **Meeting Sandy Bear**, a beloved literacy mascot, to inspire a love of reading.
- **A trip to the Safari Park** as a creative way to explore vocabulary building.
- **Book Hunt in the Local Park**, encouraging outdoor learning and reading excitement.



The outcomes of this project have been significant. Parental confidence and awareness of their children's literacy development have notably increased, highlighting the positive impact of this initiative.



# Junipers Pre-School

## Achievements

- Received outstanding ratings from parents and local education authorities.
- Successfully integrated innovative learning tools and techniques, enhancing the educational experience.
- Facilitated community events and workshops to support parental engagement and build strong partnerships.

An award was received for our exceptional delivery of the Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) initiative. This recognition celebrates the preschool's success in engaging parents in their children's early literacy development.

The award highlighted how the initiative has contributed to improving children's outcomes, demonstrating its value as an effective intervention for narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers.

Through home visits, literacy events, and ongoing support, the Making it REAL programme has empowered families and enriched the literacy journey for many children.



A Recognition of SEND Practice Award was received from Inclusion Support Early Years, where the setting was presented with a certificate for:

"The support you not only give to the children but also to the parents throughout their Early Years SEND Journey. This has included developing coffee morning groups for parents to then find support in each other and to develop their confidence."

- For embracing children into the setting, adapting the environment, and taking on board all the strategies that have been suggested.
- Helping children to make a smooth transition to school, liaising with the schools and welcoming them to the setting."

**"You all very much deserved this recognition and the certificate..."**

# SUPPORT

Telephone appointments = 59

Home Visits = 29

Face to Face appointments = 487

Welfare rights issues resolved = 208

Total number of clients who have used this service = 224

Total amounts awarded to clients who utilised this service for our support:

**Attendance Allowance**  
£ 134,053.70

**Carers Allowance**  
£4,258.80

**Utility Discounts**  
£4,110.42

**Employment Support Allowance**  
£10,641.80

**Housing Benefit Refund**  
£ 856.52

**Housing Element/Benefit**  
£ 14,012.72

**Council Tax Relief**  
£ 13,234.02

**HMRC Tax Relief**  
£ 1,267.40

**Personal Independent Payments**  
£ 183,524.75



**Harninder Shergill**  
Welfare Rights

**State Pension and Pension Credit**  
£ 32,580.88

**Universal Credit**  
£ 84,504

**Annual Total**  
£ 483,044.31

Blue Badge	21
Disabled Bus Pass	4
Debts	5
Benefit Appeals	20
Utility Discount Applications	13

# Welfare Rights

Over the last year there have been considerable changes made to accessing benefits by the new government. Though these changes have been met with varying responses, the continuing trend in people applying for benefits has continued to rise.

The rise of essentials has seen an increase in people applying for alternative revenue streams to hopefully maximise their income to meet these growing economic challenges. People who ordinarily would not apply for such benefits, either due to negative views upon them or ignorance of the system have come to us for advice and assistance.

The government finally implemented the much-discussed legacy benefit migration to Universal Credit (UC). This has seen a much-increasing number of UC applications over the last year with more to come.

Applications for health disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Attendance Allowance (AA) have continued. There has been an increase in PIP applications as more working age clients have used our services, due to a combination of their health difficulties, not having the ability to work and the cost of living.



The rise in energy and water prices has negatively affected even our previous clients who were already benefiting from utility discounts that were successfully awarded last year.

The issues related to the cost of living have continued to progress as we have continued to successfully assist clients in increasing their income and minimising their expenditure.

Our services have been vitally important over the last year as we continue to ensure all our clients are receiving their full entitlements. We have received positive feedback from our clients stating they are thankful for our advice and support due to the unexpected challenges.

Our service has maintained our reach and continued to receive referrals from several organisations including Crossroads/AgeUK, Community Offer and the Sandwell Community Dementia Service which provided many clients affected with dementia, Parkinson's disease and other similar health difficulties.

Over the last twelve months our services have seen continued growth as we have successfully supported our clients during these unprecedented changes, and we will continue to ensure they receive the best advice and support possible.

# Welfare Rights

## Feedback

**"Thank you so much for all the help you have given me with everything."**

**"I couldn't have done it without your help."**

**"We would be lost without your help, we can't thank you enough."**

**"I'm so grateful you were able to help us."**

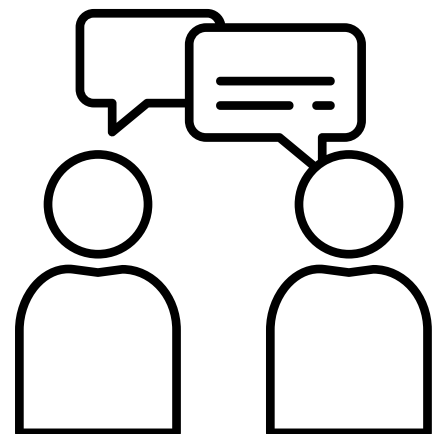
## Testimonial

Harninder has been my advisor since the day he arrived at the centre. He is very meticulous, professional and polite and always ensures he gets the correct information to enable him to help you with your issues as quickly and easily as possible.

My wife and I have had reason to use his services on several occasions and he has successfully resolved our problems each time. He is currently helping me with something else and I feel sure we will receive the outcome we require.

He is an ambassador for St Albans and I feel he should be recognised in some way for all his efforts and hard work

*thank  
★ you ★*



# Old Cross Pirate Day 2024



In June 2024 St Albans took part in its first ever Old Cross Pirate Day.

Every year, 3 volunteers organise a charity event to raise money. They run from the Old Cross pub in Langley. In 2024 for the first time they agreed to raise money for 2 charities, one of which was St Albans. We were extremely grateful to be chosen by them.

St Albans staff got together with friends and family and entered 4 separate teams to help raise money on the day.

We had an excellent day with our highest ranking team coming 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 18 teams that took part.

This event was an excellent Team Building exercise and I am proud to say that almost every staff member took part. The total raised for St Albans was £550.00

We invited the organisers to come along to our volunteer awards as they themselves are volunteers who spend many months organising this day. As a thank you we presented them with a small award, as we wanted to recognise the effort they put in and the achievement.



# Old Cross Pirate Day 2024



Neil Harris

Admin Nov 8, 2024 · 🌐

On behalf of all of you pirates, myself, Gilly and Trev are unbelievably proud to accept this award from **St Albans Community Association**.

Thank you to Tonia and her fantastic team for recognition of our Pirate Day. It was an absolute pleasure and we look forward to seeing you all again soon.

The association is an incredible local charity that supports all corners of the local community including the elderly and vulnerable.

The just giving page is still live, so if you have a spare pound, I am sure they will appreciate it.

I know it has been a few months since our pirate day, but thank you once again.....not long till the next one 😊



# Volunteers

## Volunteering with St Albans: A Path to Growth and Fulfilment

At the heart of every thriving community lies a network of dedicated individuals who selflessly contribute their time and skills to make a difference. At St Albans, our vibrant community centre, we are proud to provide a platform where volunteers can not only give back but also grow and thrive.

Volunteering with St Albans is more than just lending a hand; it's about becoming part of a family that supports and uplifts each other. Our volunteers engage in a variety of roles, ranging from working in daycare to delivering meals to those in need, assisting with grounds maintenance, administration tasks, and kitchen duties. Each role is tailored to match the skills and aspirations of the individual, ensuring a rewarding and enriching experience.

We understand that volunteering is a journey, and we are committed to supporting our volunteers every step of the way. Through training sessions, shadowing opportunities, and practical work experience, we equip our volunteers with the tools they need to excel. For those looking to enhance their qualifications, we provide guidance and assistance to help them achieve their goals

The impact of volunteering with St Albans extends far beyond the tasks at hand. Our volunteers often share how their time with us has transformed their lives. One member beautifully expressed, "I love it here, I enjoy making people happy, it makes me happy." Another heartfelt testimonial reads, "Thank you. I really enjoyed my time and that's down to the people I worked with." These words reflect the spirit of camaraderie and fulfilment that defines the St Albans experience.



# Volunteers

By volunteering with us, you will not only gain valuable skills and experience but also contribute to the wellbeing of our community. You'll make lasting connections, create cherished memories, and bring joy to those around you. At St Albans, every act of kindness creates ripples of positivity that touch countless lives.



So why wait? Join our volunteer family and be a part of something extraordinary. Whether you're looking to gain experience, explore new opportunities, or simply make a difference, St Albans is the place to be.

Together, we can build a stronger, more connected community—one smile at a time.



## Feedback from volunteers:

"I have learnt about GDPR and food Safety as well as learning lots of old songs which I had not heard of before but I know will help me in my degree"

"I gained resilience, gained confidence to be more outspoken, I have learned about service users care plans and how they should be completed. Next thing is to look for a job as I want to work part time and go back to college for my access to higher education so that I can train as a Mental Health Nurse"

"Gained experience in a kitchen and support that helped me integrate into the community. I am now confident and happy"

# Groups

## The Friendship Club

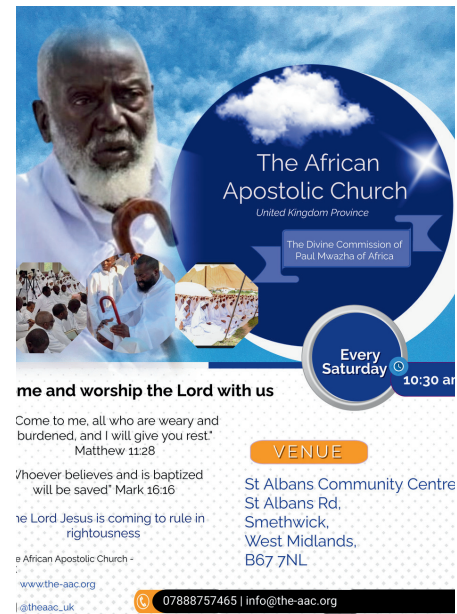


The Friendship Club were lucky enough to secure funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to enable us to hire space at St Albans to use for a group of people living with dementia and their carers to meet for social engagement, a non-judgmental environment, where they can talk to their peers about the difficulties and the achievements. We offer refreshments, support people to access services and we engage in activities to encourage friendships to develop to combat social isolation.



## African Apostolic Church

We hold our meeting at St Albans Community Centre in Smethwick. We have been there since October 2022. Our weekly service is from 10.30am to 14.30pm every Saturday. The service is comprised of Faith healing, teaching, bible reading, group singing, prayer and counselling. The Apostolic Church invites you to come and worship the Lord with us.



## Rabb Di Awaaz Ministries International

Our church meets at St Albans Sunday 4pm – 7pm and we welcome everyone to our congregation. Presently we have around 60 people attending our church. Our venue is so warm and welcoming.

On behalf of Rabb Di Awaaz Ministries International, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to St Albans Community Centre for the many years of partnership and support. Our experience with the centre has been truly wonderful. The team has consistently provided us with excellent service and high-quality products that have greatly enhanced our ability to host smooth and effective events.



# Groups

## GForce Martial Arts

We have been providing our sessions at St Albans Community Centre for 2 years now and we are growing with numbers. We present a life changing opportunity to help you and your child to become the most successful, confident, and resilient version of you. Our proven track record of transformation leads to happy and fulfilled individuals where discipline and respect drive your journey towards positive mental and physical health. Our work with teenagers has provided direction, purpose, and self-defence skills, while our adult classes have offered a supportive outlet for fitness and confidence.

Our transformative programme for ladies has empowered them to achieve remarkable health and wellness goals.



## Pilgrim Church

We have been using St Albans Community centre now for several years and it is a wonderful centre to be in, welcoming and warm. We meet every Saturday 3.30pm – 7pm and Sundays 11am – 4pm. We have got about 130 people attending on a weekly

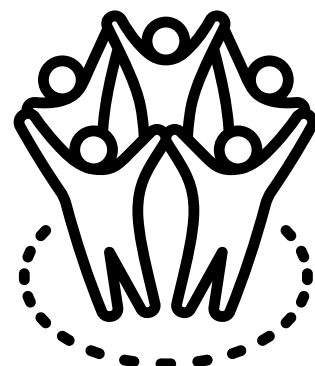
basis. We have church where you can come and pray and have Sunday School for the young people and children. Our doors are always open for the community to join in.

## Bhagwan Shree Lakshmi

We hire the hall at St Albans Community Centre every Sunday from 4.30-6.30pm. We have been using the centre now for 18 years and we do love being here. We hold prayer meetings and are mainly concentrated on Hinduism. We continue to pray each week for the wellbeing of all communities

## Pathway Ministries

We are enjoying the use of St Albans Community Centre where we offer a friendly atmosphere for people within and beyond Smethwick to come chill out, refresh and seek spiritual uplifting. We occasionally offer free revision lessons to secondary school students, especially on science subjects. We carry out leisure, social and community development activities. We regularly pray and have social chats or bible studies during our meetings. Our activities enhance and uplift the spirit, soul and body. Please join us on Thursdays at 6-8pm and online at <https://pathway-ministries.org>



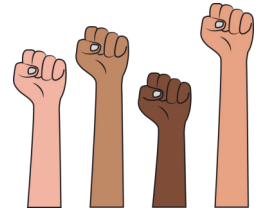
# Smethwick facts and figures

Smethwick, part of the Sandwell borough in the West Midlands, presents a rich and complex demographic and socioeconomic profile. Here's a snapshot across the key areas

## Ethnicity

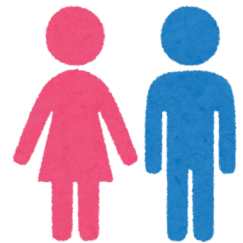
Smethwick is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in Sandwell:

Asian/Asian British: 42.3%  
White: 30.7%  
Black/Black British: 14.9%  
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: 4.9%  
Other ethnic groups: 7.1%



## Age & Gender

Population: Around 56,343 (2021)  
Median age: 33 years (younger than the England average of 39)  
Under 16s: 25.2% of the population  
65 and over: 10.7%  
Gender split: Roughly equal — 50.5% female, 49.5% male



## Employment & Economic Activity

Employment rate (16–64): 58.2% (lower than the England average of 71.0%)  
Job density: 0.49 jobs per working-age person (England average is 0.82)  
Unemployment: 6.3% in the Warley constituency, which includes much of Smethwick

## Education & Attainment

No qualifications (16–64): 24.6% (England average: 12.6%)  
Level 3+ qualifications: 43.5% (England average: 55.6%)  
Attainment 8 score: 42.3 (England average: 46.7)  
Progress 8 score: -0.15 (slightly better than Sandwell overall, but below national average)



## Indices of Deprivation

Smethwick is among the most deprived areas in England:

81.3% of its neighbourhoods fall within the 30% most deprived nationally  
Particularly high deprivation in income, employment, and living environment  
Child poverty and older people's deprivation are also significantly above national averages

# Smethwick facts and figures

## Population Growth

Between 2011 and 2021, Smethwick's population grew by 16.4%, outpacing Sandwell's overall growth of 11%. That's the largest increase among Sandwell's towns. This growth reflects both natural increase and migration, particularly from overseas.



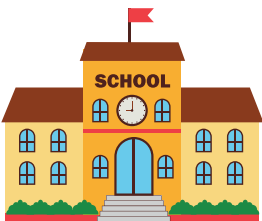
## 😊 Age Structure

Smethwick is getting younger:

23.6% of residents are under 14 (vs 17.4% in England)

Only 31.9% are aged 45+ (vs 44.2% in England)

This youthful profile has implications for schools, housing, and future employment needs.



## 🌍 Ethnic Diversity

Smethwick has become even more diverse:

75.6% of residents are from ethnic minority backgrounds (vs 48% in Sandwell and 26.5% in England)

Households where no one speaks English as a main language rose to 16.4%, nearly double the Sandwell average

# Smethwick facts and figures

## Education & Skills

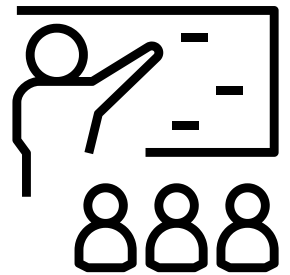
There's been some progress, but challenges remain:

30% of adults 16+ have no formal qualifications (vs 28.9% in Sandwell)

Abbey ward has the lowest rate (19%), while Smethwick ward is among the highest at 33.5%



E D U C A T I O N



## Employment & Inactivity

Economic inactivity is high and rising:

42.3% of adults 16+ are economically inactive (vs 41.7% in Sandwell)

Many are inactive due to caring responsibilities or being students, especially in Soho & Victoria and St Pauls wards



## Housing & Deprivation

59.4% of Smethwick's neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived in England

Overcrowding affects 11.8% of households (vs 8.2% in Sandwell)

Fuel poverty is a growing concern: 25.5% of households are affected (vs 13.2% in England)

These trends paint a picture of a vibrant, youthful, and diverse town facing real socioeconomic challenges.

# ST ALBANS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



Chair: Robert Evetts  
Chief Executive Officer: Tonia Flannagan

## Directors:

R D Darlington  
R Bruce  
M Hawkes  
S Penn  
G Sohal  
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