

ST ALBANS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



Annual Report 2024

Delivering Growth and Innovation



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 & integrity, dignity & 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 service 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



“ I feel happy knowing dad is safe and well cared for ”

We are incredibly grateful to the people who enable us to provide this service, with funding coming from the local authority, individual grants, donations, and service charges.



“ I don't know what I would do without my club. I love it here everyone is lovely ”

TONIA FLANNAGAN

In my last annual report, I stated that the next few years would likely be challenging and exciting for us all, offering opportunity and renewal through a period of change and evolution. And so, it has been.

Challenges have been the cost-of-living crisis, impacting fuel and food prices, making it difficult for everyone in our communities, including the voluntary sector and public and private sectors, to keep pace with rising inflation. This means our most vulnerable people and the organisations supporting them have been the most severely impacted by the higher demand for VCSE sector services than ever. Staff have dealt with that tremendously, and their resilience always impresses me. Thank you to all our staff and volunteers for everything you do to contribute to the charity and your ongoing support. The differences you make to our local community's quality of life, sense of connection, security, and



happiness are tangible. We can't be all things to all people, but I feel we do an excellent job in trying to. Whether it's the warm welcome to everyone coming through the door or the extra mile staff go when trying to provide support to a person who has ended up in a crisis, we are the place to go. The impact of health and well-being on all of us is more significant than ever, and we could all do with a little more 'me time' to invest in our own personal mental health and well-being, but this never stops us from putting other people, our people first. Inevitably, it's a challenge to retain valuable team members in a sector unable to compete on the same salary levels

CEO REPORT

as its public or private sector cousins. I remain hugely grateful for the commitment of every person on our team. I'm also deeply thankful for our excellent board of trustees, who generously give their time, advice, and faith in the team and me and who are adamant that we will remain a "living wage employer." This year, we have said farewell to our Treasurer, and in August this year, our Facilities Manager, a good friend of the charity, and me personally, Carol, will be retiring, leaving a big gap here at St Alban's. This year, our focus has been raising income for the proposed renovation, reconfiguration, and new build. With an initial target of £800k and managing to raise over £1.1m, we have been so lucky to fully complete our original ambitious building project. The relationship with our funders this year has been more critical than ever. Having the opportunity to showcase our current service offer, our aspirations, and our plans for a bigger and better service provision has been invaluable. I would like to personally thank the National Lottery Community Fund, The Inclusive Communities Fund through Heart of England, The Eveson Trust, The Rowlands Trust,

Garfield Weston, Wolfson Foundation, and The Bernard Sunley Foundation for their generous contributions to the building project. Investing time in building relationships with the people we work with is not just a task but a crucial part of our work. It makes us feel more connected, enhancing our relationships in all directions. It's what makes us a team and a community and makes our work meaningful. We have great relationships with all our partners, and trust is crucial which is a good foundation to build the new structures, and we look forward to working with you all to improve the lives of people in Smethwick in years to come.





ROBERT EVETTS

another step forward on the road to self sustainability. I know tonia has thanked our funders and i would like to endorse that wholeheartedly, and to those that are here tonight or who may visit later, I sincerely hope they see we have spent their money wisely, and can envisage what a great asset they have helped us to provide to the people of our area.

The other side of the project has of course been the design and construction with Mark and Steve of Mark Bryant Design, and Graybuild our main contractor. during the early life of the project we saw many revisions and alterations than i thought possible.

But with great patience and ingenuity all of our ideas and wishes were accommodated. The selection of Graybuild as our contractor has also worked better than we could have wished for. they have worked with us, around us and, when necessary, when we were not there.

We have had a challenging yet exciting year. Managing the centre in the current climate of inflation has been difficult. Continuing to operate in a building site has also been a challenge. Keeping services running during this year has been testimony to our staff's willingness to get stuck in, adapt, and show flexibility. Our staff and volunteers should be congratulated for their efforts.

Hopefully, when you read this the building works will have been completed and we will be operatiing in our "new centre" with facilities for both staff and clients greatly improved, allowing us to provide local people with more opportunities and services than ever before, and also allowing the centre to take

CHAIR'S REPORT & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is worth remarking on the irony of the fact that it was Mark's late father David Bryant who drew up the plans to first convert St Albans from a church to a community centre 30 plus years ago. I hope mark gets a little satisfaction from this.

Finally a repeated round of thanks to everyone, Clients, staff, volunteers, funders, and the design and building team. I am proud that you see us worthy of support and assistance. And a final thanks to the board of trustees. it is amazing what they will do for a cheese salad sandwich and a packet of crisps!!



Mark Bryant **Design**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Something we should never forget is that st albans was started with a vision for a community in which all are valued and respected where every resident has access to the information, support and quality services they need.

we would like to remember three people in particular, who are sadly no longer with us, but whose contribution should not be forgotten



SMETHWICK TOWN FACTS AND FIGURES



**FOR 53% OF CHILDREN
ENGLISH IS NOT THE
FIRST LANGUAGE**

**64007 RESIDENTS
IN SMETHWICK**



**116.5 CRIMES
PER
1000 PEOPLE**



CRIME
CRIME
!!! CRIME !!!
ME !!! CRIME



**76% ARE ETHNIC
MINORITIES**
(ENGLAND 27%)



**6667
RESIDENTS ARE
OVER 65**



**23%
children in
poverty
(England
= 17%)**

**46% of
children in Year
6 are
overweight or
obese
(England = 36%)**



**25% of
households
are income
deprived
(England =
13%)**

**25%
households in
fuel poverty
(England =
13%)**



DAYCARE OPPORTUNITIES



We have had another exciting and busy year in the day centre.

We have welcomed between 52-62 clients per week from across the borough. We receive new referrals weekly and regularly welcome new starters.

THE Majority of our referrals come from professionals such as Occupational Therapists and Social Workers who recommend our service because they have had good experiences previously. It's very encouraging that these people have been involved with the day service and are recommending clients. We RECEIVED SOME funding from SCVO which enabled us TO offer SOME free sessions to people that otherwise wouldn't get the opportunity to attend a day service and as a result were socially isolated



Thanks to the ongoing support from the Friendship Club, we were able to offer a number of parties this past year. We celebrated Easter, a beach themed summer party, Remembrance Day, and a Christmas party. These events are always well received and come with themed activities and live entertainment. We have also hosted a number of workshops and drop-in days to provide accessible and relevant support and information to our clients. We had a visit from South Staffs water customer representatives who hosted a dDrop in at the centre. This resulted in a lot of our clients saving hundreds of pounds on their bills. We also welcomed Healthwatch Sandwell and Diabetes Uk who delivered an information hub and a talk for clients living with Diabetes. The Diabetes engagement event was well received, and feedback was positive. We are planning more collaborations in the future as the day centre

DAYCARE OPPORTUNITIES

is a great platform for information sharing and reaching out to the community. Our service also facilitated a visit from the "Animal lady" where our services users had the opportunity to handle snakes, lizards, tortoise and even a skunk!

We are proud to have an excellent and caring team of staff that can offer consistent person-centred care to our clients. We recognise how important our team's core skills are and we are always looking for opportunities to build on this. This past year all staff attended a

Compassionate Communities workshop facilitated by staff from Murray Hall Community Trust.

This was a workshop that focused on bereavement and how to open up these difficult conversations with loved ones and families. This has enabled our staff to offer greater support to service users who have lost loved ones. Two of our full-time staff had



the opportunity to take part in the "Love to move" training program. This is a dementia friendly seated movement programme designed to stimulate clients by using special designed

coordination increasing our clients' cognitive reserve. We welcomed our new activities co-ordinator Natalie to the team in January. thanks to

Harborne Parish Lands Charity who have funded the post for us. Natalie held the role previously and has a lot of experience facilitating activities. She hit the ground running and has introduced a varied timetable of fun activities .for all abilities. Having the support of a dedicated activities co-ordinator to

DAYCARE OPPORTUNITIES

schedule and co-ordinate has had a really positive effect. The variety of activities available has grown and clients are enjoying trying new things.

We have welcomed 8 new volunteers to the daycentre as well as facilitating 10 work experience placements throughout the year from colleges. this has been a great help to the team and it is brilliant to see how the different generations interact whilst also helping them gain new skills and insights into working in health and social care.

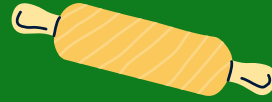


"The daycentre is what has kept me going"

"I don't know what would do it without my club"



KITCHEN SERVICES / OUTMEALS



The biggest achievement this year has been to maintain our service in the present climate, and provide our bespoke service to the community keeping our elderly involved in the community and giving them a social interaction to be a part of. We are really excited in the kitchen. with the new build coming to an end the dining room will only be used for eating, meaning we can expand the capacity of clients including opening as a community cafe. We have had to implement an increase in our prices due to the rising cost of food and utilities. we are sourcing value for money produce/ groceries where possible to maintain the high quality , nutritious, home made meals and desserts at a reasonable cost. All the kitchen staff are fully trained and adhere to Natasha's law requirements and clients with dysphasia and different dietary needs are catered for. Staff are very confident in providing the service. Our bespoke graze system has been an asset for all the information it provides us with. We can easily check for allergies and dietary requirements. We have recruited a new volunteer, Manjit, who's fabulous, helping us out



at short notice whenever we need her. Christine, our long serving volunteer, continues to dedicate 15 hrs per week to us and has done for nearly 6 years. we are still maintaining our inmeal numbers(150) and outmeals (120) ,being able to expand the dining room ,we are expecting a substantial rise.

Buds are still utilising us for meals and we are providing 80 to 100 meals a week, and their business is also expanding which is good news for us . The builders have increased our work load but have also brought additional food sales with their breakfasts and sandwiches increasing our income, including our preschool 75 meals, overall we are supplying 500 meals per week averaging 25,000 per year, plus catering our 6 party events which adds additional meals to the total.



DIGICOMM POWER UP AND UNITY PROJECTS



The Digi-Comm Power Up Project aim is to empower digitally excluded communities in Sandwell to get connected and online in order to engage with local services and connect with the wider community including family and friends. St Albans Community Association and SCIPS have continued to work together in partnership to deliver DigiComm Power Up by providing support and training to community organisations, centres and individuals.

Welcomed Additional Support
Sandwell MBC were allocated a



significant amount of digital equipment to distribute across the borough. We were approached to explore the possibility of using our project to identify recipients of these devices. We secured 41 Chrome Books and a number of 4G enabled dongles which can be issued to those in need free of charge. We have distributed these to community centres who require devices to enable them to continue to develop their digital offer. We have also been able to allocate them to individuals who attend our training or receive a digital support package if they are needed. In addition, a number have been allocated to parents through the pre-school.



DIGICOMM POWER UP AND UNITY PROJECTS

Supporting Individuals

We provide digital support packages for older people which is a one-to-one approach to build skills and confidence for clients who have never used a device and who may be excluded or vulnerable. The client is offered a device and is supported over an 8–12 week period to use it covering issues and topics that are important or necessary to the individual e.g. accessing NHS, online shopping, emails etc. At the end of the package, we work with the client to enable them to access digital devices and ongoing support moving forward. Where possible participants were encouraged to use their own digital equipment which results in better learning retention.



Preschool and Digital

Through St Albans Junipers Preschool we have engaged parents and families in building digital confidence. The Pre School is utilised by families from a wide variety of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We have worked with parents and families providing support to enable them to access the Babydays app which enables them to follow their child's early years development. We have also utilised the project to support parents register their children for school placements which is now predominately a digital process. The Google translate function has enabled the project to effectively engage parents whose first language is not English.

DIGICOMM POWER UP AND UNITY PROJECTS

Digital Champions

One aspect within the program was to offer digital sessions around targeted Sandwell high rise flats and within the same area recruit local residents with digital skills to become Digital Champions to support us to deliver digital sessions in their community rooms. Digital Champions have been a vital resource when supporting our group sessions with some continuing to offer support at additional venues. We can't thank them enough for their time and continued dedication to the program.



DIGICOMM POWER UP AND UNITY PROJECTS

Group work

Groups are sourced through negotiations with accessible venues where there is interest and connectivity can be established. Whilst they may not be suitable for all they are a proven way to tackle the issues of social isolation, loneliness and health and well-being by bringing people together and providing a safe space.

Participants' starting points with digital may vary but the sessions and tutor are very accommodating. Taking that into consideration and surprising to those who attend in most cases they come to the realisation that they have the same or familiar issues hearing other personal stories about how they are finding it difficult dealing with this digital age. These make for very interesting and in some cases dramatic group conversations.



Feedback has been very positive with some participants making life changing choices to how they access and receive services digitally to make their own and their families' lives better. As a consequence of the program we have an awareness of the wider areas of additional support sought by others, especially with the cost of living being a contributing factor.

"I'm very happy to be able to use my phone and tablet to better use as it makes life a bit better".

"Digital seems to be FOREVER changing but the support I've got has put me at a good starting point".

"Because the tutor has been patient and explained things in a way I understand makes sure I get it."

"Without this course and the endless assistance from Delroy who has been exceptional with patience, and understanding I would've given up with my device. Thank you".

DIGICOMM POWER UP AND UNITY PROJECTS



Our Outcomes

Delivered 1 group session and in the process of delivering another 3

37 group participants taking part with a total of 40 sessions.

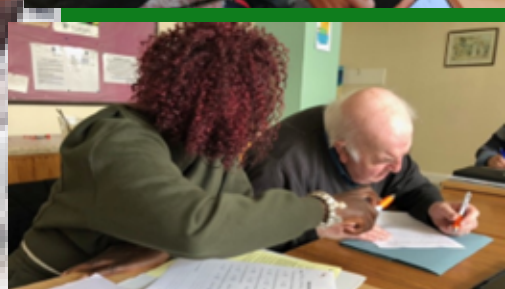
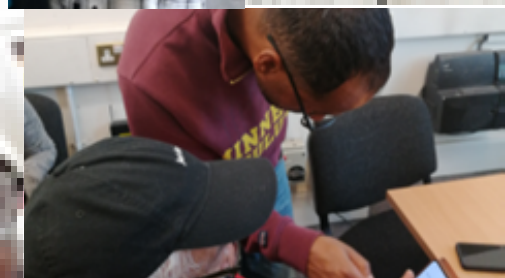
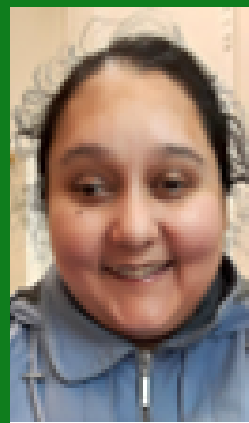
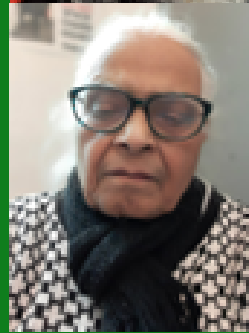
19 Clients received one-to-one tailored digital support on average over 10 weeks at 1–2 hours per session for each client.

24 Digital Champions were recruited, trained and supported. With the offer of additional accredited online courses made available.

The Digital Champions donated 350 hours of time to support the project thus far.

Created 36 volunteering opportunities for Digital Champions to practise their skills.

15 Parent and family sessions





Our UKSPF program was funded by the UK Government through Communities in Sync. There were 2 other partners involved which were Age UK and The Kuumba Centre. The aim of the project was to support people into volunteering roles to build on current skills, gain new ones and encourage growth of confidence to help them to find employment or continue into further education. We offered a comprehensive training package of up to 13 courses, support to produce a CV and a dedicated volunteer co-ordinator who would find them a role either within St Albans or in another local placement to help the volunteer to meet their goals. The project began in June 2023 and was due to end March 2024 although this has now been extended. During that time 113 people requested to become a volunteer.



We have had some fantastic outcomes from the project. We were able to offer people a choice of 15 roles and we held 17 community events. We have supported people back into work, supported them to gain qualifications, referred people to other services such as Digicomm to help them to be digitally able and assist with online job searches and form filling. Feedback from the project has been really positive!



This is what some of our volunteers had to say about their experiences and the reasons they choose to volunteer

“People need to be aware of volunteering opportunities not just available locally which helps with mental health loneliness and provides new learning opportunities”



“Volunteering gives people the chance to do new things and experiences whether or not they are seeking to improve their employability or are not able to work but want to contribute to their local community.”



“You have given me an insight into the real needs in the community for digital and communication skills that have been taken for granted by the Government and business, and the danger of exclusion to the older generation and persons of alternative needs and requirements”.



COMMUNITY OFFER

Community Offer



Objective

The Community Offer was launched by sandwell metropolitan borough council in March 2020 following consultation with local providers to create a stronger Sandwell by offering a 3-year funded initiative to support the needs of the community and ensure that people aged 18+ live safe, independent and healthy lives. The aim of the project is to provide information, advice, guidance and low level practical support to meet individual needs.

We are now in our 5th year of delivering the service in Smethwick whereby the outreach element has enabled life changing transformations for some people and families.



Client MD – Your support since finding out that mum had cancer and all the way through her journey until the end was person centred and done with love. You made her laugh when all she wanted to do was cry. We as a family will be forever grateful for all that you did.



From the commencement of the project to date, we have supported 1406 individuals and in the past year we supported 325 referrals. Recent analysis of such statistics highlight that we as a team generated between 70 and 79% of all referrals recorded. This is testament to the proactive approach we take to supporting local people.

We continue to build relationships with private, voluntary, and statutory organisations which has led us to achieving increased positive outcomes for local people in a more cohesive and joined up way.

COMMUNITY OFFER

Social Prescriber CW – you provide an outstanding service, frequently going above and beyond to provide outstanding support to their clients. I am so grateful for all their hard work to support and assist the patients I refer to them.

We spend time with each person to do a home visit to carry out a needs assessment to fully ascertain what support people require to make informed decisions about what is important to them. Based on this, we complete a wellbeing plan to monitor actions, set goals and any outcomes achieved. Our role is varied and can consist of supporting a client to access a food voucher, complete referrals to aids/adaptations, dealing with safeguarding issues, advocating on a clients behalf, referrals to relevant services such as support with mental health. Over the past year we have seen a significant increase in clients being served with eviction notices and the impact this is having on the housing crisis



Foodbank SE – I have found referring clients to the Community Offer a very simple process with a quick turnaround. Feedback from clients that attend the foodbank has been positive and we can see the impact of the support on the individual as they no longer need to use our service.

in Sandwell We work very closely with the private sector housing team who support tenants living in private rented properties that fall below the required letting standard. We continue to seek opportunities to increase clients' social engagement through referrals into social groups, day centres or volunteering opportunities. We refer into our inhouse advice project for welfare rights to provide support to clients with household bills, income

COMMUNITY OFFER

maximisation and encouraging people to maintain their independence.

The following are testimonials from people we have supported about the work we carry out and the impact we have on their lives.



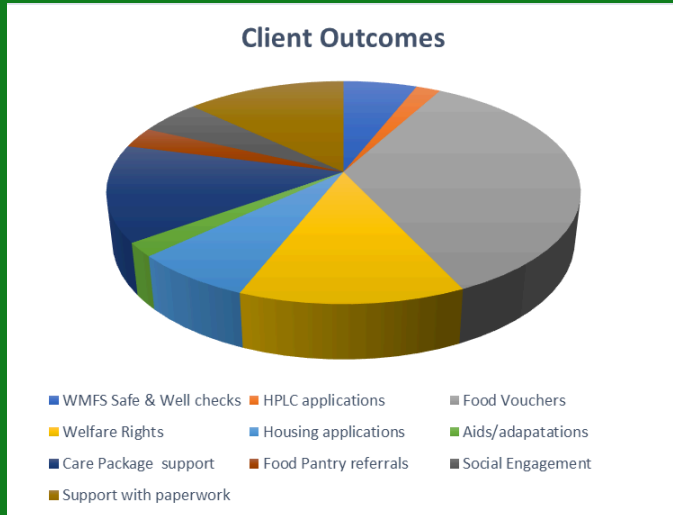
Client SH- I am so thankful at the speed at which my issues were resolved as this was something I needed help with for many months. I really appreciate everything they did to make my life better and the thoughtfulness of their actions and continuous feedback.

Client C - Thank you for helping me see the outside world, thank you for being with me on the first day. Your kindness has made such a tremendous difference to me. I plan what I'm going to wear the next day, I have a reason to get up in the morning, a reason to get dressed and go out. I love that I have made new friends and that I'm able to be confident enough to enter a room. I now have a reason to live life and for that I thank you.



COMMUNITY OFFER

Client Outcomes



- WMFS – safe and well checks carried out to ensure the fire service are aware of clients with mobility issues, hoarders etc to implement evacuation plans and ensure their fire alarms are working effectively
- Welfare Rights saw a significant increase in clients requiring support to access the correct benefits and look at other potential revenue streams, supporting clients with income maximisation.
- We have supported clients to access grants from SMBC in relation to aids and adaptations to increase mobility and independence around their homes.

- Due to funding received, we devised a care package which consisted of cleaning products and toiletries to give to clients we support. We received funding from National Grid and we put together a warm pack to support people over the winter months to keep warm. 100 such packs were distributed to clients.
- We support clients with literacy issues to access services and complete essential paperwork. We also look to refer to appropriate agencies to help improve literacy skills and increase their independence.
- We continue to work closely with Harbourne parish lands charity and apply for white goods for clients that are struggling financially for a number of reasons such as low income, No Recourse to Public Funds or due to debts. This is an invaluable support as they can receive white goods and bedroom furniture to make their life more comfortable.
- People are more empowered to self-manage their health & wellbeing.

COMMUNITY OFFER

- Housing cases have proved to be a challenge due to the volume of evictions being served, properties in substandard letting conditions. We support people to understand the process, complete applications and submit evidence. We follow up for resolution and look at other options.

- We continue to support clients to tackle issues in relation to poverty to include referrals to food banks. each client is assessed to establish the need and identify support moving forward, referrals to pantries – both Brasshouse community centre and Smethwick – to support families with the cost of living crisis.

- People have reported they feel more connected because of referrals to local support groups and therefore less socially isolated.

- 12 Easter packs given out to families that we support and 10 easter eggs to adults in the community.

- 14 food hampers given to struggling families the week of Christmas donated by British Gas. 25 presents were given to families with children that had been collected by staff throughout the past year. 18 Food parcels were issued to clients as a local shop donated food to support local clients.



WELFARE RIGHTS

FUNDED BY

The
Henry Smith
Charity

founded in 1628

Telephone appointments = 30

Home Visits = 9

Face to Face appointments = 412

Welfare rights issues resolved = 235

**Total number of clients who have used
this service = 188**

Attendance Allowance	£ 193,447.80
Carers Allowance	£ 7,690.80
Utility Discounts	£ 7,150.08
Housing Benefit	£ 17,265.90
Council Tax Relief	£ 14,508.72
Personal Independent Payments	£ 121,999.28
State Pension and Pension Credit	£ 37,207.93
Universal Credit	£ 31,619.57

**Total
Amount
£430.890.08**



Blue Badge	20
Debts	7
Benefit Appeals	24
Utility Discount Applications	8

The effects of pandemic and consequences of cost of living crisis are still continued to this day. The persistent backlog of benefit applications has continued, in addition more and more clients are in need of support from our service.

The rise in people applying for health benefits such as Personal independent payments and Attendance Allowance has continued as result of their deteriorating health and the cost of living. The continued increase in utility bills and council tax has enabled clients to obtain entitlements and reductions based on their low incomes. The current cost of living crisis does not seem slow and only progressed with many families affected, and this will continue. as such, we have continued to successfully assist clients to increase their income and review and evaluate their expenditure.



WELFARE RIGHTS



Many new benefit applications have been successfully awarded. our service has supported these clients with determining whether they were receiving all they were entitled to. We continue to receive positive feedback from our clients stating they are thankful for the support the service has offered as the cost of living crisis and inflation negatively affect the public.

There has been a significant increase in referrals this year. Our service has maintained our reach and continued to receive referrals from several organisations, including Community Offer and the Sandwell Community Dementia Service which provided many clients affected with dementia. as a result, Attendance Allowance applications have increased.

This past year has shown that our continued service has successfully supported our clients during this current crisis and will continue to ensure they receive the best advice and support possible.



"Just wanted to say thank you for your help and support."

"Thank you for helping me sort everything out, it's a huge relief!"



Welfare Rights Advice Service

We offer free support to anyone aged 18+ living in Sandwell with the following:

- Benefits such as UC/PIP/AA/PC etc
- Arrears/debt
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax reductions
- The advocacy worker can support you to deal with problems, do a benefits check and support you to apply for a benefit or appeal a decision.

SANDWELL COMMUNITY DEMENTIA SERVICE



scds is a partner collaborative involving 8 organisations including ourselves. We work with Murray Hall Community Trust, BUDS (better understanding for dementia in Sandwell) Age UK Sandwell, West Bromwich Afro Caribbean Resource Centre, Agewell, Alzheimers Society and Dementia Pathfinders. It comprises a Service Lead, 3 FTE Dementia Navigators, and each of the towns in Sandwell has a Dementia Advisor. We are responsible for supporting clients living in Smethwick, both people living with Dementia and their carers/family members.

The aims of the project are:

- To increase diagnosis rates
- To create/encourage Dementia friendly communities in Sandwell
- To support people living with Dementia throughout their journey
- To support carers and family members of people living with Dementia
 - To provide advice and guidance throughout the journey
- To refer and/or signpost people to relevant services
 - To provide a single point of contact for people within the service

The service has been live since August 2021 and we currently have a caseload of 324 for Smethwick.

These clients can be at varying stages, and some may require more support than others. This can also be true of the carers with some struggling more than others due to their personal commitments i.e. work,



children/grandchildren, financial pressures etc.

In the past year over 3700 support interactions were recorded on Charity Log.

Raising awareness of the condition and our support service highlights during the past year have included:

- Carers event held at Hurst Road Community Centre.
- Awareness session held at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Smethwick with the Admiral Nurse service.
- Observing the dementia friendly events provided by the Albion Foundation at WBAFC, who have also provided us with free match tickets.
- Developing relationships with Crafting for Communities who now provide us with various handmade "fidget" items and the Lions Club who have supplied. Message In A Bottle containers. These products can be passed on to our clients where appropriate.
- Cross service working, attending joint home visits Admiral Nurse Service. and Social Workers.

SANDWELL COMMUNITY DEMENTIA SERVICE



We have also provided support to Creative Active Lives CIC when they trialled a dementia friendly cafe in West Smethwick Park.

Feedback for our service has been excellent with several people thanking us for the support we have given, showing appreciation including financial donations to the centre in memory of their loved one, and comments such as:

"Kath has been a tower of strength to me"

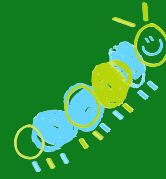
"Thank you Kath, you mean so much to so many"



"I can highly recommend anyone who has a loved one with dementia to have a chat with this lovely lady. She will give you an ear to listen, a shoulder to cry on and rant at. she can help you understand the mine field of what help is available to you. Personally I will never forget her kindness"



JUNIPER'S PRESCHOOL



This year Junipers have worked hard to overcome challenges within the children's environment, embracing changes positively and optimistically.

We continue to have many more families from different ethnicities join us. We continue to provide pre-school places for up to 40 children per session and have around 74 families on roll. Most families that attend our setting, continue to have English as an additional language, where we continue to be able to offer extensive support with staff who can speak Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali.

Continual Professional Development

CPD time is really valued within the Pre-school. One staff member has achieved their level 2 Early years qualification, and two apprentices are currently working towards their level 2 qualification. All staff are working towards completing their Dingley's Promise Training which focuses upon Special Educational Needs and will award us with a Dingley's Promise Kitemark. The setting has also completed a Covid Recovery Programme called the Experts and Mentors Programme. This provided the Pre-school with an Expert to



work alongside management, looking at the leadership of the setting and a mentor for 3 staff members to regularly meet and discuss any difficulties and challenges they may need help to overcome.

Baby's days

The Pre-school uses nursery management software which opens communication between home and the setting. The software records progress within the child's development, stores photos of the child's time at Pre-school, allows parents to message the manager or a teacher directly, sign permission forms, receive termly newsletter, receive messages and updates, know when their child has had an accident, sign funding forms etc.

JUNIPER'S PRESCHOOL



The children's development is recorded on this online tool to help us observe and assess the child's learning and development. All children will be added to the system, which help us provide more purposeful support and teaching for each child within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Twinkl

Twinkl is an online educational platform producing teaching and educational materials for all age groups. It provides access to inspirational lesson plans, assessments, interactive activities, resource packs and a number of CPD opportunities.

The setting has also signed up for Noodle Now, which offers a range of certified CPD opportunities covering topics such as safeguarding, disadvantaged families, adverse childhood experiences, behaviour, bereavement, emotional literacy, fussy eaters, open ended questioning, sensory learning and so much more



Early Years SENCO

In July 2023, Junipers Pre-school was awarded an Early Years SENCO certification, and Manager sam oakley became a qualified Level 3 Early Years SENCO. We have continued to have an increase of children who we have identified as needing additional support from Inclusion Services.



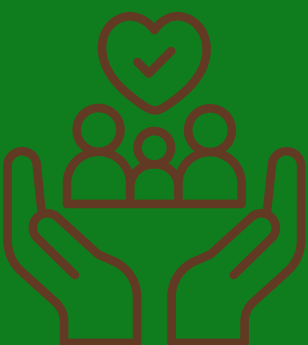
JUNIPER'S PRESCHOOL



Thanks to Communities in Sync for supporting our application as part of the Wider Determinants of Health funding from Public Health we have been excited to welcome a new member of the team as a family support worker. Sarah joined us in February 2024 and her role is to help our Preschool families to access services, get support, make referrals and give them the support they need to make informed decisions about their families future.



Sarah holds regular coffee mornings every Wednesday during Term Time so that parents can meet and get to know each other for peer support and to build friendships and to share their experiences and ideas for example how to deal with difficult situations



SUPPORT



Sarah has also started some digital training with families to support them with applying for funding, applying for school places and much more.

JUNIPER'S PRESCHOOL



Ofsted Report

In May 2023 we had our Ofsted report and kept our GOOD Ofsted rating. The report states:

"Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour, which means that their behaviour is good. Children develop good social skills."



"Staff plan an ambitious curriculum, which is based on children's interests. They are efficient at adapting the curriculum and environment to meet children's needs."



"Staff place a strong focus on children's social and emotional well-being. This is promoted exceptionally well in the pre-school. Children are taught to recognise and regulate their emotions with the support of staff."



"British values are a top priority in the setting. Children are taught that everyone is unique and are encouraged to celebrate this."



"Parents say they receive excellent communication from pre-school."



"Partnership working and support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are excellent. The manager and staff work closely with external agencies to ensure that children with SEND receive the support they require."



JUNIPER'S PRESCHOOL



PARENT PARTNERSHIPS AND TESTIMONIES



"I think the report perfectly describes your setting. Keep up the amazing work and thank you for all you do for K." Parent 2023

"It is great to hear that British Values are being taught. You encourage children to treat everyone and anyone with respect." Parent 2023

Celebrating and acknowledging different cultures is important to us in the Pre-school and we like to get parents involved to share with us traditions from their homeland including Africa, the Caribbean, Portugal, Turkey, Germany and Slovakia.



"Thank you so much. You all are such very helpful and nice. I feel blessed to have the persons like you. Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart." Parent 2023

"To us you are an outstanding childcare provider. You somehow manage to make everyday fun and exciting for the children so much they don't seem to want to come home.

You are a gem in the heart of Smethwick and cannot do enough to help the families you work with. Thank you." Parent 2023

There have also been a number of other workshops for parents to be involved with including our big cook, little cook workshops where we made fruit salad and encouraged parents to allow their child to develop their independence skills.



GROUPS

Gforce Martial arts



We have been providing our sessions at St Albans Community Centre for over A year 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. As a parent you will enjoy watching your child flourish, gaining skills and habits they will need in the 21st century that will serve them throughout their lives. If you embark on this journey, you will develop skills that lead you and your family towards a happier, healthier, and brighter future. I invite you to join our G-Force family and can't wait to see you soon.



Laxmi Narayan



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

Rabb Di Awaaz Ministries



Our church meets at St AlbanS Saturdays 16.30 – 18.30pm and Sundays 16.00 – 21.00. we welcome everyone to our congregation. presently we have around 60 people attending our church. our venue is so warm and welcoming.

GROUPS

The Friendship Club



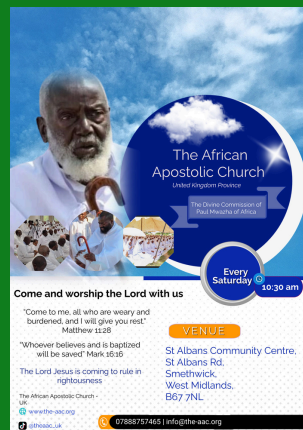
The Friendship Club continues to meet at St Albans twice a week. We support St Albans by organising joint celebratory events such as the Summer beach party, the remembrance party and the Christmas party. We also organised trips to the Black Country museum and the Botanical Gardens to which St Albans daycare clients were invited. The funding we received from SCVO supporting the feedback for the digital surveys enabled us to purchase some arts and crafts resources which were a lovely treat for the group. We would like to thank our volunteers, for their support throughout the year. Without you we would not be able to continue with the group. We look forward to another successful year working in partnership with St Albans

Pilgrim International Ministries

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 attend 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.

The 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 counseling. The Apostolic Church invites you to come and worship the Lord with us.



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 Saturdays at 2-4pm and online at <https://pathway-ministries.org>

ST ALBANS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



Chair: Robert Evetts
Chief Executive Officer:
Tonia Flannagan

Directors:

R D Darlington
R Bruce
M Hawkes
S Penn
G Sohal
G Darby
A-M Docker



Thanks to our funders

