

Annual Report 2026



Our Vision, Mission and Values

OUR VISION

Is for a community in which we are all 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 as well as transparency and 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, service charges and the time given by members of our local community.



Meet the Board



Carol Coleman
Chair



Simon Penn
Director



Sharan Sohal
Director

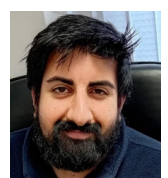
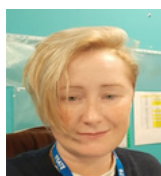
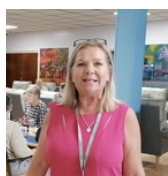


Mandy Hawkes
Director



Ann-Marie Docker
Treasurer

Meet the Team



CEO
Tonia Flannagan

Operations Manager
Tammy Clayton

Kitchen Manager
Debbie Billington

Daycare Manager
Claire Bodenham

Pre-School Manager
Samantha Oakley

Facilities Manager
Delroy Thomas

HR Administrator
Diane Blount

Finance Officer
Anne Calder

Housekeeper
Jayne Webb

Support Worker
Sharnah Hughes

Support Worker
Chanel Sylvester

Co-Ordinator
Natalie Comley

Carer
Esther Eley

Carer
Samantha Wakefield

Driver/Carer
Neil Dainty

Driver
Windell Downer

Carer
Donna Palmer

Driver/Assistant
Lynda Coates

Assistant
Jill Shale

Kitchen Assistant
Louise Box

Kitchen Assistant
Surjeet Kaur

Welfare Rights
Harninder Shergill

Preschool Deputy
Emma Dunne

Pre-school Assistant
Chloe Wakefield

Pre-school Assistant
Sally Harvey

Pre-school Assistant
Freya Banks

Pre-school Assistant
Sofia Spencer

Pre-school Assistant
Ambreen Haq

Chair's Report



It is a privilege to write my first report as Chair of St Albans Community Association, having taken on the role in November following the unexpected retirement of my predecessor. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Robert Evetts for his dedication and contributions to the organisation during his time.

My connection with St Albans Community Association spans several years. Prior to becoming Chair, I worked within the local authority, managing community buildings and held a senior role within St Albans itself for eight years. This has given me a deep understanding of the charity's values, its work, and the community it serves. I have had the opportunity to witness first-hand the organisation's growth and development, and I am proud to now support it in this new capacity.

Over the past year, the Association has continued to flourish and evolve. The introduction and expansion of key services, including carers support,

food initiatives, and recycling projects, have strengthened our offer to the community and ensured we are responding to emerging needs in a meaningful and practical way.

These initiatives reflect the organisation's innovative approach and its commitment to making a real difference in people's lives.

What stands out most strongly is the dedication and collaborative spirit of our staff team. I have seen how colleagues across the organisation work together to ensure that the people we support remain at the heart of everything we do. Their professionalism, compassion and commitment are the foundation of our success, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their continued hard work.

As Chair, I look forward to working closely with the CEO, our trustees, and the wider team to build on these achievements. Together, we will continue to strengthen the organisation, develop our services, and ensure that St Albans Community Association remains a vital and trusted resource within the community.

The future is full of opportunity, and I am confident that by continuing to work collaboratively and staying true to our values, we will achieve even more in the years ahead.

CEO Report



This year marks a significant milestone for me personally, as I celebrate 22 years with St Albans Community Association, alongside the organisation's 42nd year of serving the community. It is a moment to reflect with pride on how far we have come and the difference we continue to make.

Over my 22 years as CEO, I have seen many communities evolve, with people coming and going, and changing needs shaping how we deliver our services. Our work has continually adapted to reflect these demographic changes, and as a result, the nature of what we do has become increasingly complex. At the same time, funding streams have become more challenging, with resources increasingly limited and competition intensifying. Despite these pressures, we have remained committed to delivering high-quality support to those who need us most.

We have completed our first full year following the opening of our new build and the refurbishment of our existing facilities. The additional space has been transformative. We have welcomed the increase in rooms and desk space, enabling us to expand our services and support more people than ever before. However, demand continues to grow, and we find ourselves once again at full capacity—clear evidence of both the need for our services and the value they bring to the community.

Our staff team has continued to demonstrate exceptional dedication and resilience. Every day, they strive to improve what we do, ensuring that our services are delivered with quality, compassion, and a genuine focus on meeting the needs of local people. Their commitment to placing people at the heart of everything we do is something I am incredibly proud of.

This year has also seen our Community Response Team double in size, reflecting the growing demand for support within our community. The work they undertake is often complex and multi-faceted, involving collaboration with a wide range of external agencies. This partnership working adds further layers of complexity, but it is essential in ensuring that individuals and families receive the holistic support they need.

Over the past year, we have seen a significant increase in demand for

CEO Report

support, particularly in relation to food provision, furniture, and general assistance. The ongoing financial pressures faced by individuals and families have made it increasingly difficult for many to navigate daily life. In response, we have worked hard to adapt and expand our offer, ensuring that those who need help can access it in a timely and supportive way.

Alongside this, our pre-school continues to go from strength to strength, providing a nurturing and supportive environment for children and families. It has been a real pleasure to see the growing relationship between our pre-school and our Elderberries Day Care service, with a number of intergenerational activities taking place throughout the year. These moments are truly special, and it is wonderful to see how much joy they bring to both our younger and older members of the community.

This year has also been a time of reflection, as we have sadly lost some of our long-standing Elderberries. They are a cherished part of our community, and their presence is deeply valued. We recently celebrated a remarkable milestone with one of our members reaching 100 years old, a testament to the vibrant and meaningful lives within our community. We make it a priority to celebrate every birthday with our



treasured Elderberries, and we hope that through this, we bring them even a fraction of the joy that they bring to us.

Throughout this journey, I have had the privilege of working alongside a strong and supportive Board, who have consistently shown trust and confidence in the work being delivered. They recognise and value the dedication of our staff team and the vital role they play in the organisation's success. This support is not only evident in governance, but also in their generosity—particularly in supporting staff events that bring colleagues together, helping to build morale, strengthen relationships, and create opportunities for everyone to simply connect and enjoy time together.

We would also like to recognise the ongoing support of our Local Authority, which over many years has contributed towards the core costs of the charity. This continued commitment has been vital in sustaining our work. In addition, their support this year towards our food redistribution and hot food delivery services has enabled us to respond to

CEO Report

increasing levels of need within the community. This support is particularly valued given the challenging financial climate, and we are grateful that, even as Local Authorities face significant pressures themselves, they have continued to invest in and support the voluntary and community sector.

We would not be able to deliver this vital work without the continued support of our wider funders. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Eveson Charitable Trust, Harborne Parish Lands Charity, The Henry Smith Charity, and The National Lottery Community Fund for their ongoing financial commitment to our centre. We are also grateful to our valued partners, including Communities in Sync, Murray Hall Community Trust, and SCIPS.

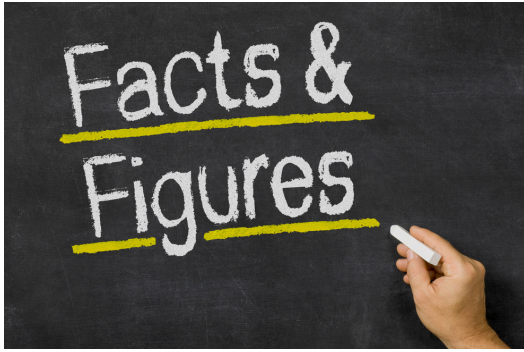


Through these partnerships, we have built strong, collaborative and mutually respectful relationships, enabling us to extend our reach and enhance the support we offer. We look forward to continuing and strengthening these partnerships in the future.

As we move forward, we remain committed to growth, collaboration and innovation, ensuring that St Albans Community Association continues to respond effectively to the evolving needs of our community.



Smethwick Facts and Figures



Smethwick is a rapidly growing and highly diverse community, with population growth exceeding both the Sandwell and national averages. However, this growth is accompanied by significant socio-economic challenges.

Nearly 60% of neighbourhoods fall within the most deprived 20% nationally, with high levels of child and older person income deprivation and fuel poverty affecting over a quarter of households. Labour market participation remains below regional levels, with over 40% of adults economically inactive and around 30% lacking formal qualifications.

These factors, combined with housing pressures such as overcrowding, underline the need for continued investment in skills, employment support and community infrastructure.

1. Demographics

Smethwick Population
estimate, 2021

64,007

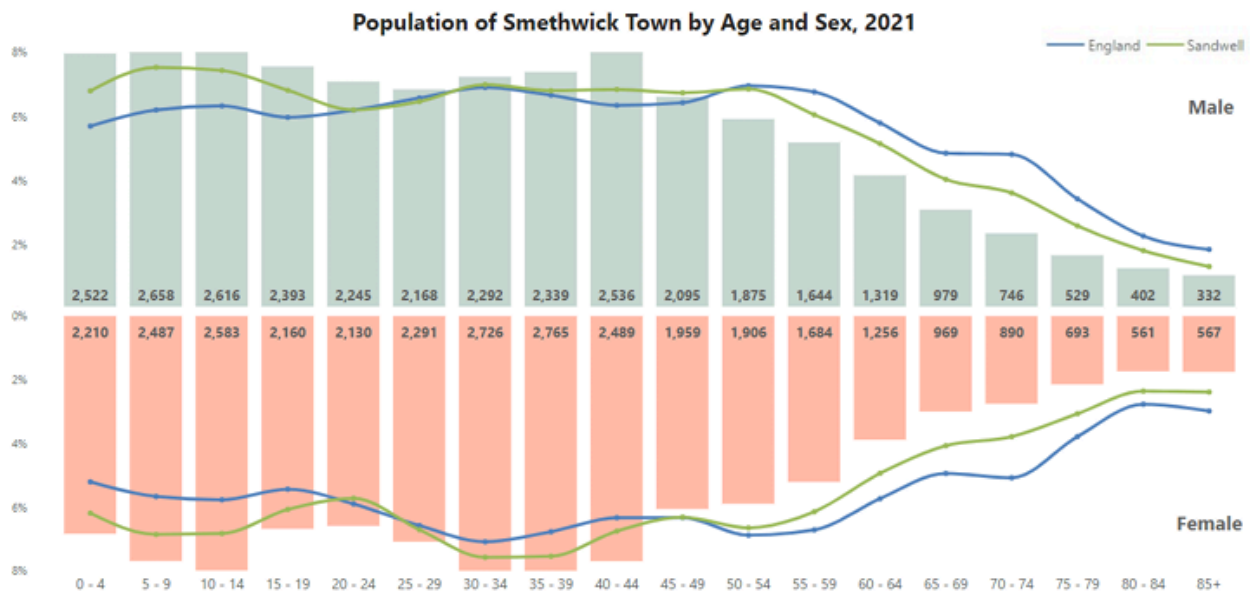
Male
49.5%
31,690



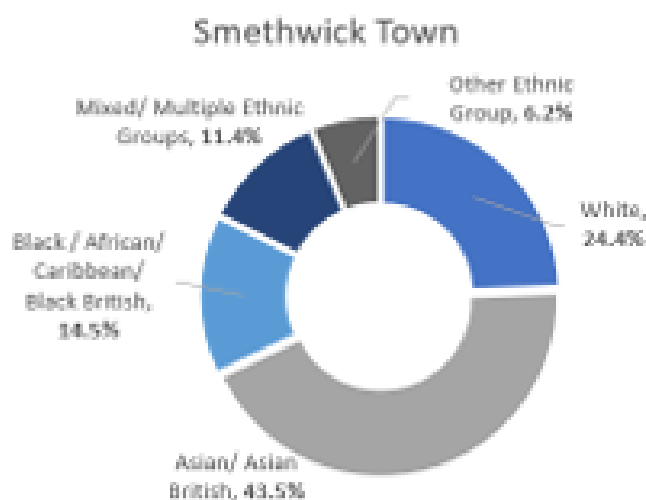
Female
50.5%
32,326



Smethwick Facts and Figures



Ethnicity, 2021



Economically Active

57.7%

Sandwell: 58.3%

Abbey: 67.2%

Smethwick: 54.9%

Soho and Victoria: 56.1%

St Pauls: 54.7%



76% of Smethwick's population are from ethnic minorities. This is much higher than Sandwell (48%) and England (27%).

Residents providing unpaid care

7.6%

Sandwell: 9.3%

Abbey: 8.2%

Smethwick: 7.9%

Soho and Victoria: 6.7%

St Pauls: 8.0%



2.4% providing 50 hrs a week or more

Sandwell: 3.2%

Abbey: 2.2%

Smethwick: 2.7%

Soho and Victoria: 2.2%

St Pauls: 2.4%

Smethwick Facts and Figures

Economic Activity, 2021

Economically Active

57.7%

Sandwell: 58.3%
Abbey: 67.2%
Smethwick: 54.9%
Soho and Victoria: 56.1%
St Pauls: 54.7%



29% Full-time employed

Sandwell: 32.5%
Abbey: 39.3%
Smethwick: 27.9%
Soho and Victoria: 25.5%
St Pauls: 25.9%

5.4% Unemployed

Sandwell: 4.5%
Abbey: 4.6%
Smethwick: 4.8%
Soho and Victoria: 6.2%
St Pauls: 5.5%

Economically Inactive

42.3%

Sandwell: 41.7%
Abbey: 32.8%
Smethwick: 45.1%
Soho and Victoria: 43.9%
St Pauls: 45.3%



12.5% Retired

Sandwell: 17.4%
Abbey: 16.0%
Smethwick: 15.2%
Soho and Victoria: 9.2%
St Pauls: 11.0%

5.1% Long-term sick / Disabled

Sandwell: 5.8%
Abbey: 3.0%
Smethwick: 6.5%
Soho and Victoria: 5.1%
St Pauls: 5.5%

Source: Census 2021, ONS

% of Residents Long-Term Sick / Disabled *

18.6%

Sandwell: 22.8%
Abbey: 22.3%
Smethwick: 21%
Soho and Victoria: 16%
St Pauls: 16.9%



% of households where no resident speaks English as a main language

16.4%

Sandwell: 8.6%
Abbey: 8.0%
Smethwick: 16.5%
Soho and Victoria: 20.0%
St Pauls: 20.7%



Source: Census 2021, ONS

* This includes people disabled under the equality act and people with long term conditions with no limits on day-to-day activities (not disabled under equality act)

16% of households in Smethwick town have no resident who speaks English as a main language, compared to 9% in Sandwell. This is lower in Abbey (8%) and much higher in Soho and Victoria and St Pauls wards (20% and 21% respectively).

Our Approach

Everything starts with people and place. St Albans Community Association provides a welcoming, trusted and accessible community space where people can connect, learn, contribute and access support. As custodians of the St Albans Community Centre lease, we are committed to ensuring that this valued local asset remains at the heart of the community for current and future generations.

Whether people come to attend an activity, volunteer, access support, meet friends, learn new skills or simply enjoy being part of their community, we aim to create opportunities that help individuals and families thrive. We measure our impact through what our community tells us matters most:



1. Meeting Basic Needs

Providing access to food support, advice, information, affordable activities and practical assistance when people need it most.



2. Building Knowledge, Skills and Opportunities

Creating opportunities for learning, volunteering, training, employment support and personal development.

Our Approach

3. Increasing Confidence and Independence

Helping people develop the confidence, resilience and skills needed to improve their wellbeing and achieve their goals.



4. Strengthening Connections

Reducing isolation by bringing people together through activities, events, groups and shared experiences.



5. Building Community and Pride in Place

Protecting and developing the community centre as a welcoming hub where people feel a sense of belonging and ownership.

6. Taking Action for Yourself and Your Community

Encouraging residents to volunteer, lead activities, support one another and play an active role in shaping their neighbourhood.

Our Approach

As a locally rooted organisation, we are proud to serve our surrounding communities and provide a safe, trusted and inclusive space for people of all ages and backgrounds. The community centre is home to a diverse range of activities, support services, community groups and events that improve quality of life and strengthen community resilience.

We work in partnership with local organisations, statutory services, schools, faith groups and community networks to maximise the benefit of the centre and ensure it responds to local needs. Through these collaborations, we are able to extend opportunities, reduce duplication and create greater impact for local residents.

Our vision is not simply to manage a building, but to ensure that the St Albans Community Centre lease delivers lasting social value. By maintaining a vibrant, accessible and sustainable community hub, we are investing in stronger communities, improved wellbeing and greater opportunities for local people for many years to come.



Elderberries Day Opportunities



Bringing Joy, Connection, and Community to Every Day

At Elderberries Day Centre, the past year has been nothing short of inspiring. From vibrant celebrations to meaningful community partnerships, the service has continued to create a welcoming, joyful space where older adults can thrive, connect, and enjoy life to the fullest.

A Calendar Full of Celebration

Throughout the year, the Centre has been alive with colour, laughter, and creativity, delivering an exciting programme of themed days and special events.

Winter brought a fantastic Burns Night celebration, complete with a live piper and traditional treats, giving everyone the chance to enjoy music, reminisce, and try something new.

Spring was bursting with joy as the Centre celebrated Valentine's Day, Pancake Day, and a spectacular Easter party, which doubled as a 100th birthday celebration. It was an unforgettable occasion featuring a live tribute act, dancing, games, and even a visit from the Easter Bunny!

Patriotic spirit shone through with St Patrick's Day festivities, where staff dressed up and performed their own lively dance routines, and St George's Day, celebrated with fun and creative games like a dragon-slaying piñata.

In May, service users enjoyed a nostalgic VE Day party, complete with themed food, music, and dancing, alongside a reflective VJ Day commemoration, bringing history and memories to life. And who could forget the summer beach party—with Hawaiian shirts, live music, fish and chips, and classic seaside game, bringing sunshine and smiles for everyone involved.

Connecting Generations and the Community

A standout feature of the year has been the Centre's strong commitment to community and intergenerational work. Local schools and preschools have regularly joined activities, creating heartwarming connections between young people and older adults. From school choir performances to joint craft sessions, these visits have brought energy, laughter, and meaningful shared experiences.

Special visits from SEN pupils and preschool groups have supported social skills development while fostering empathy and understanding across generations.

Events like "The Big Lunch" brought together different community groups, demonstrating the Centre's role as a vibrant hub for connection and inclusion.

Elderberries Day Opportunities

Activities That Inspire Wellbeing

Every day at Elderberries is designed to support wellbeing, independence, and enjoyment. Service users have taken part in a wide variety of enriching activities. These include gardening and planting sessions in the warmer months. Outdoor games like skittles and group competitions, creative crafts and themed quizzes, storytelling sessions that spark imagination and conversation.

Health and wellbeing initiatives have also played a key role. Educational sessions on hydration and falls prevention empowered individuals with practical knowledge, while the Better Slippers project helped reduce fall risks and improve safety at home.

Moments of Joy and Therapy

Some of the most memorable moments came from unique and engaging experiences. Animal visits—from playful puppies to fascinating reptiles—brought smiles, sparked conversation, and evoked cherished memories. Music has also been a powerful tool for wellbeing, with percussion sessions and sound baths encouraging participation, rhythm, and fun while promoting mental health.



A Supportive and Caring Environment

Behind every activity is a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who make everything possible. Their commitment ensures that every person who walks through the doors is supported, valued, and included. The Centre has also maintained excellent standards of care, with strong safeguarding practices in place, giving reassurance to families and the wider community.

Looking Ahead

While the year has brought some challenges, including changes in attendance due to health and care transitions, the spirit of Elderberries remains strong. The focus continues to be on growing the service, welcoming new members, and building on the incredible sense of community that has been created.

Celebrating What Matters Most

At its heart, Elderberries Day Centre is about people—bringing joy, companionship, and purpose to each day. Whether it's dancing at a party, planting seeds in the garden, sharing stories with schoolchildren, or enjoying a quiet moment with a therapy animal, each experience adds to a rich and meaningful journey.

This has truly been a year to celebrate—and there's so much more to come.



Elderberries Day Opportunities



At Christmas we enjoyed a special set of visitors and the Elderberries enjoyed petting the reindeer and sitting in the sleigh meeting Santa

"In all my years I have never seen a live reindeer. What a special treat!!!"



"May I send continuing thanks to you and your team for all you do, mom gets so much out of her visits and is always full of what she's been doing"

Thank you for all the loving care you gave to Ivy during her time attending St. Albans. A special thank you to Claire Bodenham for advising and supporting us family when we hit problems along the way. Your support enabled Ivy to continue attending until her admission to a care home. Much appreciated.

"Lovely team of staff who would do anything for the Elderberries. My nan loved going to her club."



"It's a fantastic place to be I love everything, the staff, the food, the activities..."

We have some amazing news to share! As you know, matrix Standard have assessed us... and we are thrilled to let you know that we have officially achieved matrix Standard accreditation!

Thank you so much for your contribution! We really appreciate your time and support. This is a great achievement for us and we will continue to improve our information, advice, and guidance services.

Feedback from University College Birmingham

Community Offer Plus

Community Offer

and Intermediate Care
Support Service



Community Offer Plus: A Year of Growth, Impact, and Community Strength

Over the past year, Community Offer Plus (COP) has continued to cement its role as a vital lifeline for adults across Sandwell.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the service supported 1,221 residents, many of whom were facing complex challenges linked to poverty, ill-health, digital exclusion, and social isolation. What emerges from this year's activity is a picture of a service that is not only responsive but deeply embedded in the fabric of the community it serves.

Rising Demand and Expanding Reach

Demand for COP grew steadily throughout the year, with winter months bringing the highest surge in referrals. This rise was driven by a combination of increased community need, cost-of-living pressures, and the service's expanding visibility across Sandwell.

Through outreach events, professional networking, and strengthened partnerships, COP reached hundreds of residents and professionals who were previously unaware of the support available. Engagements at Midland Met Hospital, local schools, community centres, and food distribution points helped ensure that those most in need were connected to timely and compassionate support.

Supporting Residents Through Practical, Life-Changing Interventions

The breadth of support delivered this year reflects the diverse needs of the community. COP provided:

- 553 food vouchers, ensuring individuals and families had access to essential nutrition during times of crisis.
- 216 Blue Badge applications, a significant figure that highlights the ongoing impact of digital exclusion and the barriers created by online-only systems.
- Extensive housing and accessibility support, including fire safety referrals, aids and adaptations, and assistance with housing applications.
- Financial and utility support, with many clients benefiting from reduced water bills and improved access to welfare entitlements.

These interventions were not simply transactional. They often represented the difference between vulnerability and stability, between isolation and connection, and in some cases, between unsafe and safe living conditions.

Partnerships That Strengthen Outcomes

A defining feature of COP this year has been its collaborative approach. The team worked closely with Adult Social Care, Public Health, SHARP, Murray Hall, Sandwell Carers, local schools, and voluntary organisations to deliver joined-up support.

This multi-agency approach proved essential in complex cases—such as hospital discharges requiring coordinated home adaptations, or

Community Offer Plus

long-term support packages for residents with significant needs. These examples demonstrate CO+'s ability to bring agencies together, ensuring residents receive the right support at the right time.

Community Events That Made a Difference

Several key events shaped the year's impact:

A Homeless Outreach Day provided warm clothing, essentials, and meals to those sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness.

A Family Winter Support Event offered warm clothing, gifts, and food, generating 37 new referrals.

The Food Bank Christmas Drive supported families facing festive hardship and led to 17 additional referrals.

COP also delivered spotlight sessions and presentations to professionals, strengthening referral pathways and raising awareness of the service's offer. These events not only met immediate needs but also helped build trust and visibility within the community.



Challenges That Shaped the Year

The year was not without its difficulties. Digital poverty continued to hinder residents' ability to access essential services, particularly Blue Badge applications. Food bank restrictions and reduced opening hours created additional barriers for those in crisis. Increasingly complex cases placed pressure on capacity, and winter brought heightened demand for emergency support. Yet, through resilience and strong partnership working, COP continued to deliver high-quality, person-centred support.



Safeguarding, Safety, and Staff Wellbeing

Safeguarding remained a core priority throughout the year. Alerts and "My Concern" forms were raised where necessary, ensuring vulnerable adults received timely intervention. The team also navigated challenges linked to client aggression and unrealistic expectations, reinforcing the importance of staff safety and clear referral protocols. Despite these pressures, the service received a remarkable volume of compliments—reflecting the professionalism, empathy, and dedication of the COP team.

Community Offer Plus

A Year Defined by Gratitude and Impact

Perhaps the most powerful reflection of CO+'s impact comes from the voices of those it supported:

"You've been an absolute godsend."

"I can't believe how quick you sorted my Blue Badge out for me."

"You helped me stop the financial abuse I was experiencing."

"You helped me give my children a magical Christmas."

These messages capture the essence of COP: a service that not only meets practical needs but restores dignity, safety, and hope.

Looking Ahead

As COP moves into the next year, the focus remains on strengthening partnerships, expanding outreach, and ensuring residents across Sandwell know where to turn when they need support. With demand continuing to rise, the service's role is more crucial than ever.

The achievements of 2025–2026 reflect a team that is committed, compassionate, and deeply connected to its community. CO+ has not only responded to need—it has helped shape a stronger, safer, and more supported Sandwell.



Welfare Rights



A new year has brought many changes by the government that have been implemented. This has changed the way the public has accessed benefits and consequently our clients. There have been more stringent criteria to previously awarded benefits making it harder for people to be successfully awarded. Nevertheless, this has not deterred the rate of people accessing our services.

The cost of living continues to rise leading to an increasing amount of people are looking to supplement their revenue streams through benefits. This means that people new to benefits are now more likely to make claims.

The mandatory migration from old legacy benefits to Universal Credit applications have continued. Personal Independence Payments and Attendance Allowance applications have continued to rise as working age clients and pensioner age clients who no longer have the ability to work due to health reasons are greatly affected by the cost of living.

However, the government implemented several changes to health disability benefits, creating more stringent criteria to award in order to get more people in the workforce. This means difficulty in obtaining stronger medical evidence for those who are in visibly poor health but not being currently supported by their medical practitioners.

The rise in cost of essentials and the trend of people in hardship continues to affect the community. Our service has also seen applications for utility and council tax reductions successfully awarded.

We as a service provider continue to successfully assist clients in increasing their income and minimising their expenditures.

The importance of our services is felt as we continue to ensure that all of our clients are receiving their full entitlements and are in the best possible position to face the challenges of the economy.



Welfare Rights

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.

Total Figures 2025/2026

Telephone appointments = 78

Home Visits = 67

Face to Face appointments = 537

Welfare rights issues resolved = 264

Total number of clients who have used this service = 268



Attendance Allowance	£ 189,332.59
Bereavement Support Payment	£ 3,900.00
Carers Allowance	£ 37,744.90
Utility Discounts	£ 5,576.13
Employment Support Allowance	£ 16,356.60
Housing Element/Benefit	£ 19,256.20
Council Tax Relief	£ 9488.65
Personal Independent Payments	£ 142,426.32
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefits	£ 8,097.56
Disability Living Allowance	£ 40,335.70
Pension Credit	£ 27,298.18
Universal Credit	£ 94,006.92
Annual Total	£ 593,819.75

Welfare Rights

Other Support:

Blue Badge	27
Disabled Bus Pass and Rail Card	5
Older Persons Bus Pass	3
Debts	7
Benefit Appeals	9
Utility Discount Applications	9



We have continued to receive positive feedback from our clients stating they are thankful for our advice and support in this challenging time.

Client Feedback:

"Thank you for the help, much appreciated."

"Thank you for helping get through this last year, I couldn't have done it without your help"

H is very good and patient, what a wonderful asset to your team

Sandwell Community Dementia Service



Sandwell Community Dementia Service

The Sandwell Community Dementia Service (SCDS) continues to demonstrate strong performance, resilience, and meaningful impact in supporting people living with dementia, their families, and carers. Across recent reporting periods, the service has not only maintained high levels of activity but also delivered tangible outcomes in complex and often challenging circumstances.

At its core, SCDS exists to provide coordinated, compassionate, and practical support to individuals experiencing memory concerns and dementia, ensuring they—and their families—receive the help they need at the right time. This collaborative approach has enabled the service to respond effectively to both routine and highly complex cases.

Demand for the service remains consistently high, reflecting both increasing need and the trust placed in SCDS by the community.

- 514 contacts delivered in January–February 2026 alone
- Support provided to over 327 families
- 325 active cases currently being managed, many requiring intensive support.

Despite this sustained pressure, the team has remained responsive, ensuring all calls and follow-ups are completed in a timely manner and that case management stays fully up to date.

Beyond the numbers, SCDS has delivered impactful outcomes that directly improve lives:

- Safeguarding interventions ensuring vulnerable individuals remain safe and supported
- Joint working with social workers, successfully resolving complex and sensitive cases
- Emergency respite arrangements for families in crisis
- Close collaboration with Day Opportunities services to overcome challenges faced by clients living with dementia
- These achievements highlight the service's proactive and collaborative approach, ensuring that people receive holistic, joined-up care

Even with increasing complexity, service delivery has remained stable and effective:

- Consistent provision of advice, guidance, and case management support
- Effective handling of complex, high-risk cases requiring intensive input
- Continued responsiveness across all incoming contacts, maintaining performance under pressure



Sandwell Community Dementia Service

While achievements are significant, the service continues to navigate a number of external challenges:

- Changes to Adult Social Care referral pathways, causing delays and confusion for carers
- Increased administrative workload due to revised processes
- Ongoing pressures from high caseloads and complex needs
- Limited access to some referral routes such as Memory Assessment Services (MAS)

Despite this, we have maintained performance and continued delivering high-quality, person-centred support.

SCDS is actively taking steps to strengthen and sustain its impact, including:

- Working with partners to improve referral pathways and reduce delays
- Enhancing communication with carers to improve their experience
- Reviewing caseload distribution to ensure long-term sustainability
- Increasing engagement with partners such as Admiral Nurses
- Continuing to promote the service to reach more people in need

Feedback for the service has been very positive:

I think and I speak alot about you. You are and have been AMAZING. I could never have done this or got any sort of help if it wasn't for you. You have no idea of what you have done or the kind of effect or impact (positive) you have had on me and the situation I was in. I can't think of the right word event amazing seems less.

13:48

I just wanted to express my ongoing thanks and appreciation to Kath O'Callaghan both as a wonderful colleague and to the exemplary support she gives to the families she supports. Her knowledge, approach and kindness shines through at every opportunity.

With many thanks as always to yourself , Kath and SCDS

"Admiral Nurse"

Can't thank you enough for what you have done for nan. We would have been lost without you





April 2025 to March 2026 marks the final year of our three-year Digicomm project, which has focused on supporting adults within the local community to navigate an increasingly digital world. The project has aimed to reduce digital exclusion by building confidence, improving essential digital skills, and increasing access to devices and connectivity.

Throughout the year, we have delivered a combination of structured group sessions and personalised one-to-one support. These sessions have been designed to meet a wide range of needs, from complete beginners with little or no digital experience to individuals looking to improve existing skills for employment, communication, and daily living.

A key element of our work has been improving access to digital equipment.

Over the past 12 months, we have continued to loan internet-ready tablets to individuals who would otherwise have no access to devices or connectivity. This has enabled participants to engage with online services, maintain communication with others, and practise newly learned skills independently. These devices have also supported internal staff training.

We have also established a strong partnership with the National Databank, which has provided preloaded SIM cards offering free minutes, texts, and data for up to 12 months. Through this initiative, St Albans has been able to distribute SIM cards to vulnerable adults and individuals on low incomes. This has had a significant impact in enabling clients to carry out job searches, send and receive emails, access essential online services, and maintain contact with family and support networks.

It has also supported individuals in accessing education and training opportunities that would otherwise have been out of reach.

In total, we have directly supported 20 community members through device and connectivity provision, with this support set to continue beyond the lifespan of the Digicomm project.

Our community-based digital learning offer has been a central part of the project. We have delivered targeted group sessions focused on developing core digital skills in a supportive and accessible environment.

These sessions have covered a broad range of topics, including how to use tablets and smartphones, setting up and managing email accounts, navigating online platforms, downloading and safely using apps, and accessing local services such as MySandwell.

A strong emphasis has been placed on building confidence alongside technical ability. Many participants initially lacked confidence or felt anxious about using digital technology. Through step-by-step guidance, repetition, and opportunities to practise, learners have developed the skills

needed to use their own devices independently at home. Sessions have also incorporated guidance on online safety, recognising scams, protecting personal information, and using the internet responsibly—skills which are increasingly essential in everyday life.



In addition to digital skills development, we delivered two Cost of Living support groups, one in winter and one in spring. These sessions combined practical digital learning with wider financial resilience support. Participants were shown how to access online tools and resources to reduce household costs, including comparing utility providers, finding discounts, accessing vouchers, and locating local support services. Across both programmes, we delivered 20 group sessions and supported 14 learners. Participant feedback has been consistently positive, highlighting both the quality of delivery and the supportive learning environment:

- “Very useful information, explained in simple words, in a friendly environment.”
- “Very informative and useful information, including help with food banks and vouchers, in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.”
- “Well explained, giving us time to discuss and ask questions.”
- “more confident and less scared of using technology”



Alongside group delivery, one-to-one support has played a vital role in addressing more complex or individualised needs.

We delivered 105 one-to-one sessions, supporting 102 clients. These sessions provided tailored support to help individuals navigate often complex online processes, including council and government applications. Support included helping clients to report local issues, apply for childcare placements, and access essential services online as well as applications for Blue Badges.

We also worked with older adults to build confidence in using mobile phones and digital devices, often starting with basic functions such as making calls, sending messages, and accessing key applications. In addition, we supported individuals with employability skills, including creating and updating CVs, completing online job applications, and registering with employment platforms.



Digicomm

A significant proportion of the individuals supported through the Digicomm project come from ethnically diverse backgrounds or speak English as a second language.

Many participants faced additional barriers linked to language, cultural differences, or limited familiarity with UK digital systems. By providing patient, accessible, and culturally sensitive support, the project has played an important role in reducing inequalities for residents who are both digitally excluded and part of minority ethnic communities. This has ensured that our offer remains inclusive and responsive to the needs of the wider community.



Overall, the Digicomm project has made a meaningful impact in reducing digital exclusion within the community. By combining access to devices, connectivity, and tailored learning opportunities, we have enabled individuals to become more confident, independent, and engaged in an increasingly digital society. Importantly, the relationships built and skills developed will continue to benefit participants beyond the life of the project.



“

Louise was
brilliant, highly
recommend

”

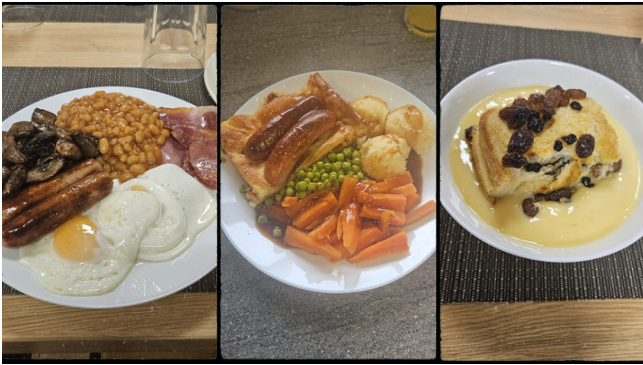
“

Very good, very
useful

”



Community Cafe / Outmeals



Dedication

At St Albans Community Centre kitchen, the dedication of our 3 long-serving members of staff and 1 volunteer continues to provide a high quality of freshly homemade meals daily. We provide high standards of food service, hygiene and safety, maintaining our Level 5 food hygiene rating for over 20 years.

Celebrating

The launch of Cranberries Café in 2025 is thriving with word-of-mouth recommendations for the quality of homemade meals and value for money, becoming a hub in the community room.

Challenges

Maintaining high quality, nutritious meals and sourcing high quality produce at competitive prices is a major challenge. We have introduced a small price increase but are doing everything possible to keep meals affordable, being resourceful and imaginative while remaining conscious of waste.

Training

All staff undergo continuous training to comply with food hygiene regulations

and Natasha's Law on allergens, as well as Ofsted pre-school requirements.

Menus

We supply a five-week rolling menu, updated seasonally, with an additional six options for customers who want something different or a special meal where possible.

Services

We host 4 party events per year, providing 2–3 course themed meals for approximately 50–60 people, including entertainment. Across all services, we deliver around 25,000 meals per year, providing a unique service that supports the community and wellbeing of our clients.

“That was delicious”

“I love my roast dinner”

“Every mouthful is enjoyable”

“I really enjoy my dinners”

“We would pay double!”

'The homemade chips are delightful.'

Expanding into outside catering for functions, our buffets are very popular, catering for meetings and room hire within the centre. We are now also being asked to cater for weekend events.

Junipers Pre-School



Junipers Preschool continues to welcome a growing number of families from various ethnic backgrounds. Currently, we have approximately 67 families on role and offer pre-school places for approximately 40 children per session.

Since the increase in funding opportunities for parents, we have seen a steady increase in the amount of children wanting to stay over the lunch time period. We have also had an increase in children accessing 30-hour funding.

Most families at our setting have English as an additional language. To ensure effective communication and support, our staff is equipped to speak Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi 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 year 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.

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.



Junipers Pre-School

Key activities include:

Role Play, Real life experiences such as meeting some reindeers over our Christmas period, planting and caring for caterpillars and watching their life cycle as they turn into butterflies and feeding our fish and resident turtle.



painting, sensory play and music sessions



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 continue to deliver our 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 child. The setting has also introduced a Numicon programme into their curriculum to support children in their mathematical development.



Family Work:

As our family work came to an end, we continue to support families through providing opportunities for them to access our home reading scheme, grab and go packs and access resources and videos provided on baby days to support their children's development at home.

Junipers Pre-School

We continue to provide home visits to families at the beginning of their preschool journey and when a need arises, working closely with Health Visitors and Family Hubs. This support helps strengthen the relationship between home and preschool and other agencies, helping families overcome challenges while laying a solid foundation for their children's future learning and development.

The Numicon Programme

During this year, the setting implemented the Numicon approach to strengthen children's early mathematical understanding. Numicon is a multi-sensory programme that supports children in developing key mathematical concepts through practical exploration, visual representation, and hands-on learning. The programme was embedded across daily provision, enabling children to engage with numbers in meaningful and accessible ways. Through the use of Numicon resources such as shapes, baseboards, and number lines, children were encouraged to explore counting, number recognition, patterning, and early calculation skills. The impact of the Numicon programme has been highly positive. Children demonstrated increased engagement and enthusiasm for mathematics, with many showing improved confidence when counting, comparing quantities, and recognising numbers.



Soft Play Room

In October 2025, the Preschool's soft playroom was fully refurbished and enhanced, creating a stimulating and engaging space for children to develop their gross motor skills and build core strength. The updated soft play room provides a range of opportunities for climbing, balancing, crawling, and coordinated movement, supporting children's physical development in a safe and purposeful way.

The new equipment has helped children to improve their balance, spatial awareness, and overall body control. The soft play area has also supported children in developing confidence, resilience, and risk awareness as they explore and challenge themselves within a secure environment. In addition to physical benefits, the space has encouraged collaborative play, turn-taking, and communication, contributing positively to children's social and emotional development.

Junipers Pre-School

The calming yet engaging design has also proven beneficial for children who require sensory input or additional support with regulation.

Overall, the redevelopment of the soft playroom has significantly enhanced the quality of provision, promoting active learning and contributing to children's holistic development across physical, social, and emotional areas.



Intergenerational Experiences

Throughout the year, the Preschool has continued to strengthen its relationship with Elderberries, providing valuable intergenerational experiences for both children and older adults. These regular interactions have created meaningful opportunities for connection, communication, and shared learning.

Children and residents have come together for a range of activities, including creative craft sessions, shared storytelling, games, and musical experiences such as listening to bagpipes. They have also enjoyed

spending time together informally during shared mealtimes, helping to build familiarity and a strong sense of community.

These experiences have had a positive impact on children's communication and language development, social skills, and emotional wellbeing. Children have shown increased confidence when interacting with others, as well as developing empathy, patience, and respect for different generations. The calm and nurturing environment has supported children in forming meaningful relationships outside of their immediate peer group.

Overall, the continued collaboration between the Preschool and Elderberries has been highly successful, enriching the learning environment and supporting children's personal, social, and emotional development in a unique and valuable way



Junipers Pre-School



“My child has progressed so much with their talking and it’s down to the support and work the preschool is doing.” - Parent July 2025



“Just wanted to say a big thank you to you and all the staff for their hard work. A loves pre-school and is always talking about what she is learning. She is doing amazing at phonics, numeracy and all the songs she’s been learning about the week and months of the year. She even told me the butterfly is symmetrical explaining it means the same. So, wow you all have done an amazing job.” Parent – March 2026

Achievements

- Successfully integrated innovative learning tools and techniques, enhancing the educational experience.
- Found new ways to engage parents in their children's learning and to extend learning into their home environments.
- Words of encouragement and testimonies from parents and children ...

“This is the best soft play. I like it better.” - Child

“I’m so grateful for the effort that you’ve done with C, and for being so nice and professional with C and us, you’ll be forever an example and a beautiful memory for us.” Parent – April 2026

“You are a fantastically strong manager and always strive to do the best for the families in your care. When I visited the other week, what we saw was a lovely warm and supportive nursery run by you. Keep going and stay strong because you are making a difference for the children in your care.” Local Authority – August 2026

Community Initiative Recycling Cost of Living Essentials - (CIRCLE)

This year, we have responded to a need for clothing and furniture and met the demand for food for people experiencing food poverty.

This also supports St Albans' commitment to creating a more sustainable community by giving pre-loved items and surplus resources a second life.

Through our recycling and redistribution project, we help reduce waste, support those in need, and protect the environment.

Clothing & Furniture Recycling

We collected good-quality clothing, footwear, and furniture that might otherwise end up in a landfill. These items are sorted, refreshed, and redistributed to local families and individuals who can make good use of them. By rehoming these essentials, we not only reduce waste but also provide affordable, practical solutions for people in our community. This project helped families who were struggling to live without washing machines,



Surplus Food Distribution

Working in partnership with organisations such as COPES, Fareshare and Helping Hands, we rescued surplus food that would otherwise go to waste—often perfectly good produce with a short shelf life. Twice a week, with a paid member of staff and volunteers, this food was shared with local people experiencing food poverty, helping to ensure that no good food goes unused while reducing the environmental impact of waste.

Our future Plans

St Albans, in Partnership with SCIPS, intends to continue and grow the CIRCLE project by combining this with support for the cost-of-living crisis, helping people reduce waste, and supporting them in identifying ways to save money through a number of workshops.

Why It Matters

Every item reused is one less item in landfill. Every meal shared is one less person going hungry. Together, we can make small changes that have a significant impact—protecting our planet while supporting our neighbours.

Volunteers

At St Albans Community Association, volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. Their time, energy, and commitment enable us to support local residents, deliver essential services, and create a welcoming space for everyone in our community.

Volunteers bring life to our charity. Whether helping run activities, supporting events, assisting with administration, or simply offering a friendly face, each contribution makes a real difference. Without volunteers, many of the services that people rely on—especially vulnerable individuals and families—would not be possible.

Beyond practical support, volunteering builds stronger connections. It brings people together from different backgrounds, encourages a sense of belonging, and helps reduce social isolation. At a time when many face challenges, volunteers help create a network of support that strengthens the whole community.

8318 volunteer hours given



The Pat Ryan Volunteer Awards

Our volunteer awards took place in October 2025, we had an excellent turn out with many of our regular volunteers in attendance to celebrate their achievements. The Pat Ryan Award for Excellence was given to Kath O'Callaghan for her contributions to both our social media and our recycling projects



Volunteers

Volunteering also offers personal benefits. It provides opportunities to learn new skills, gain confidence, and make meaningful relationships. Many of our volunteers tell us they get as much out of the experience as they give.

At St Albans Community Association, we are proud of our volunteers and deeply grateful for their dedication. They are not just helpers—they are the driving force behind our work and a key part of making Smethwick a stronger, more connected place.

If you are interested in getting involved, we always welcome new volunteers to join our community. Together, we can continue to make a positive difference.



Pirate Day 2025



Old Cross Pirate Day 2025

All of our **legendary crews** from **St Albans Community Association** brought the energy, the giggles, and the glittering pirate spirit:

Rum & Cokes – our feisty Pre-School Team strutted their stuff!

Route: Langley Green → Blackheath → Rowley Regis → Hagley → Oldwinsford → Stourbridge → Langley Green

Cut Throat Slappy Pants – Day Care Team pirates with attitude and laughs aplenty!

Route: Langley Green → Blackheath → Worcester → Stourbridge → Langley Green

Flannagan's Shenanigans – our fearless CEO & family crew, seasoned swashbucklers with serious flair!

Route: Langley Green → Blackheath → Hagley → Stourbridge → Langley Green

Abandoned Barnacles of The Black Pearl – returning in their iconic shirts, full of sass and sea legs!

Route: Langley Green → Rowley Regis → Blackheath → Cradley Heath → Kidderminster → Oldwinsford → Stourbridge → Langley Green

Travel was by **Route: bus, train, and pure pirate footwork!**

Clues solved, challenges accepted, pubs visited, and plenty of booty 'borrowed' along the way!

With over **200 pirates** out causing wonderfully joyful mayhem, it truly was a **sight to behold**.

We lived every second, and then some!
Huge congratulations to **Abandoned Barnacles of The Black Pearl** for snagging **3rd place** out of 22 brilliant crews!

We couldn't be prouder
Bring on next year—we've got pirate fever now!

A massive £7000 raised with Gift Aid Shared equally between St Albans and the British Heart Foundation



Community Award Winners



Community Award Winners – A Proud Moment

2025 was a year of celebration and recognition for St Albans Community Association as we were honoured to receive the Community Award at the prestigious Community Inspiration Awards.

Being named the winner was an incredible achievement. With almost 1,000 nominations received from across the West Midlands and 90 outstanding finalists shortlisted, we were both humbled and delighted that the work taking place within our community in Smethwick was recognised on such a significant stage.

This award represents far more than the organisation itself. It is a tribute to every volunteer who gives their time so generously, every member of staff who goes above and beyond, every supporter who believes in our mission, every individual, family and Trustee who has become part of the St Albans community.

Together, we have created a place where people can find support,

friendship, belonging and hope.

The awards ceremony was a wonderful celebration of community spirit, highlighting the remarkable contributions being made across the region. From safeguarding champions and environmental advocates to grassroots community groups, the evening showcased the power of people working together to make a positive difference in others' lives.

To be recognised alongside so many inspiring individuals and organisations was a privilege. We are deeply grateful to the Community Foundation, the organisers, presenters, nominators and judges for making the event such a memorable occasion.

While we are incredibly proud of this achievement, the award also strengthens our commitment to continue serving our community with compassion, dignity and purpose. It reflects what can be achieved when people come together with a shared vision of creating stronger, kinder and more connected communities.

This award belongs to everyone who has been part of the St Albans journey, and we thank each and every one of you for helping make our community such a special place.

PROUD

Groups

Pilgrim Church

"Hiring a room at St Albans Community Centre in Smethwick this year was a seamless and highly positive experience. The staff are incredibly welcoming and accommodating, and the facilities provided a clean, well-equipped, and perfect space for our needs." Thank you - Mr Yeboah

Skate Buddies UK CIC

We have absolutely loved our time at St Albans Community Centre. I believe we started sessions in Aug 2025, and from the very first day, our classes have been sold out and full. Our sessions are targeted at the 50+, and we have had a great response from people of that demographic in the area of Sandwell. The students have been requesting for more frequent sessions, and as we continue to build our relationship with the area, the Centre, and the local community that attend the classes, we really look forward to continuing this amazing opportunity and activity in the centre and the area. We are grateful for having the opportunity to break into a new community in a space that is set up and dedicated to the community it serves.



Gforce

We have been regularly attending St Albans for over 3 years now. The team provides an excellent service, their facilities are always clean, and they never hesitate to go the extra mile for their customers. Communications are always clear, consistent, and approachable. Very happy with the overall service provided. Thank you, team!



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.



Pathway Ministries

The Centre has very good facilities that are well maintained to a very good standard. The Centre is more than adequate for our needs. Our requests for support have always been granted. We do not have any concerns and look forward to enjoying the existing cordial relationship with the Centre.

Muzi Ka Nkulunkulu

Nice clean building. In the room that we use, we have nice green chairs that match our uniforms. It is difficult to find parking there, though. Very reliable. The centre is absolutely clean and tidy. You always listen to our problems and quickly attend to them.

Laxmi Narayan Dham

I would like to give my positive feedback about the hall upstairs at St. Albans Community Centre. We are very happy with the facilities and the help. The manager, Delroy, understands and goes out of his way, even on his days off, to help and listen to us if there is any problem. We, as a group from Laxmi Narayan Dham (London) are thankful to the community centre who are facilitating us and helping us get through our sessions for the past over twenty years...we are hoping to continue our sessions and hoping to expand in the future.

We really appreciate it, thank you, Delroy.

Thank You



Huge thank you to Jet Express for the continued use of a space to store our Pre-Loved furniture for recycling to those in need.



Copes Potatoes



A big thank you to Copes for supporting us with our Table For All by donating fruit and vegetables and helping to reduce food waste.



WMFS
West Midlands
Fire Service

A massive thank you to WMFS Smethwick for allowing us to keep our minibuses stored safely and securely every night.

**THANK
YOU!**

ST ALBANS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



Working with the community

Chair: Carol Coleman
Chief Executive Officer: Tonia Flannagan

Directors:

M Hawkes
S Penn
G Sohal
A Docker



Thank you to our funders



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