

SANDWELL AIR QUALITY NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the June Edition of Our Air Quality Quarterly Newsletter!

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.....And lots more!

AIR POLLUTION: A THREAT BEFORE YOUR FIRST BREATH TO YOUR LAST

Air pollution is made up of tiny particles and gases in the air. It comes from things like burning fuel in factories and homes, as well as from natural sources like pollen and mould. When we breathe in polluted air, some of these harmful substances can pass from our lungs into our bloodstream.

For pregnant women, these pollutants can even reach the placenta. A 2022 study found black carbon in the placentas of pregnant women, and the amount was linked to how much black carbon they were exposed to where they lived during pregnancy.



Air pollution affects health from before a person's first breath to their last. Even though we often can't see it, air pollution can still cause health problems at every stage of life.

>>> How Air Pollution Affects Every Stage of Life

Pregnancy: A study in 2022 found that air pollution can harm unborn babies in two ways:

- Some pollutants can harm the placenta, making it harder for it to support the baby's growth and development.
- Some pollutants such as PM_{2.5} can pass through the placenta and reach the baby, directly affecting the development of its organs.

Childhood: Exposure to air pollution in the womb is linked to low birth weight and premature birth. It can affect the development of a child's lungs and brain, causing or worsening asthma and making hospital visits more likely during childhood.



Adulthood: Air pollution can harm every organ in your body, causing heart and lung disease, diabetes and strokes, as well as increasing your risk of dementia and mental health issues, heart attacks and cancer. A 2023 study found that being exposed to air pollution for just five days before birth led to a higher risk of hospital visits for breathing problems later in life, between the ages of 40 and 69.

End of Life: By causing or worsening serious health problems at every stage of life, air pollution may shorten a person's life. In the UK, it is linked to between 29,000 and 43,000 deaths each year.

.....AIR POLLUTION: A THREAT BEFORE YOUR FIRST BREATH TO YOUR LAST

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Air pollution affects everyone, but some people are more at risk than others. People living in deprived areas or near busy roads may breathe in more polluted air. Those from ethnic minority communities are also more likely to be exposed to high levels of pollution. Children, older adults, and people with health problems are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of air pollution.

Find out more about the health harms of air pollution by visiting the Clean Air Hub:

<https://www.cleanairhub.org.uk/>



>>> Let's Use Our Voices to Clean Up the Air This Clean Air Day!

Cleaning up the air helps everyone feel better now and in the future. It also means future generations can grow up healthier and happier. The UK Government has committed to reviewing its air quality targets, and we all have a role to play in making sure those targets are capable of making a real difference to truly protect the public's health.



It's [Clean Air Day](#) on **Thursday, 19 June**

2025 and Global Action Plan is encouraging everyone to ask their MP to support bringing the World Health Organization's air quality targets into UK law so that we can all breathe cleaner air and live healthier lives.

Make your voice heard! Contact your MP via this link:

<https://www.cleanairhub.org.uk/clean-air-day>

>>> How We are Commemorating Clean Air Day 2025 at Sandwell Council

Sandwell Council's Air Quality Team will be celebrating Clean Air Day with a series of **five** exciting events and activities. Here's what's happening:

1 Social Media Campaign

From **2 June to 19 June 2025**, we will be sharing a series of informative posts on our **Healthy Sandwell** social media page to raise awareness about the impact of air pollution on health, from before birth through to later life.

Follow our [Healthy Sandwell](#) Facebook page to stay updated, learn more, and find out how you can take action for cleaner air in Sandwell.



2 Auntie Duck Storytime With a VIP



We are thrilled to share that on **Clean Air Day, 19 June 2025**, a **VIP** has requested to visit a school in Sandwell, they are so impressed with the 'Auntie Duck' story book that that they would like to read it to a class.

WHO COULD IT BE?



Keep an eye out for the next edition of our newsletter, where we'll be revealing the VIP and sharing photos and highlights from the visit. How exciting!

3 Auntie Duck Poster Design Competition

We're excited to announce the **Auntie Duck Poster Design Competition** for primary schools across Sandwell as part of our Clean Air Day celebrations. This fun and creative activity invites Year 3 and Year 4 pupils from **seven selected primary schools** (out of around 93 in Sandwell) to design their own version of Auntie Duck, our clean air champion, along with a bold message about air quality.

One winning pupil will have their design turned into a large banner, displayed in a key location at their school. They will also receive an Auntie Duck certificate and goody bag, which will be presented by a local councillor - plus lots more!



The competition runs from **14 May to 6 June 2025**, and the winner will be announced during Clean Air Day week.

The competition aims to:

- ✦ Celebrate Clean Air Day in a meaningful way by sharing clear messages with parents about the importance of clean air for young lungs
- ✦ Discourage vehicle idling near schools
- ✦ Promote walking, cycling, and scooting as safer and more environmentally friendly ways to travel
- ✦ Inspire children to care about the environment and become clean air champions
- ✦ Encourage pupils to express their ideas through art
- ✦ Help everyone think more about how their actions affect air quality and the health of others

Which Pupil Will Win This? Watch This Space!





4 Clean Air Day Webinar for Elected Members

We're organising a Clean Air Day webinar with our elected members on **Wednesday, 11 June 2025**, to give them an overview of our clean air champion, Auntie Duck. She's been such a powerful tool for engaging children about the topic of air pollution, and we'd love for our councillors to get to know her, see the impact she's already making, and explore how they can help us promote her even further.



Sandwell is working towards becoming a UNICEF Child-Friendly Borough, and the Auntie Duck programme supports that goal from the air quality side. Every child in Sandwell deserves the right to breathe clean air so they can grow, learn, and thrive. This, along with other updates, is what we'll be sharing with our councillors during the session.

5 Auntie Duck Visits Midland Metropolitan University Hospital



On **Monday, 16 June 2025**, we will be hosting a fun Auntie Duck book reading session at the paediatric ward of the new Midland Met University Hospital. The last time we held a reading was when they were still based at Sandwell General Hospital.

Now that they have moved to the new hospital, this is a great chance to introduce Auntie Duck to the new site.

And what better way to celebrate Clean Air Day with the children than by sharing a story that helps them learn about air pollution, along with some fun and engaging activities!

Auntie Duck looks forward to having a great and exciting time with the kids!

Will you join us in commemorating Clean Air Day and helping to ensure that everyone has clean air to breathe today, tomorrow and every day?





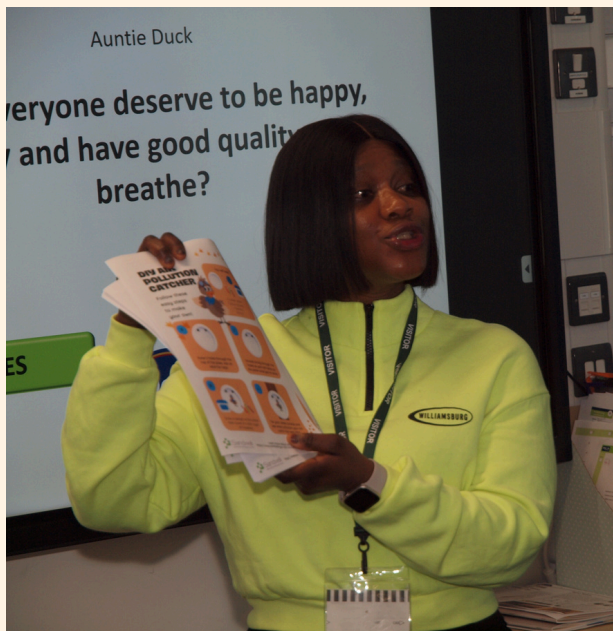
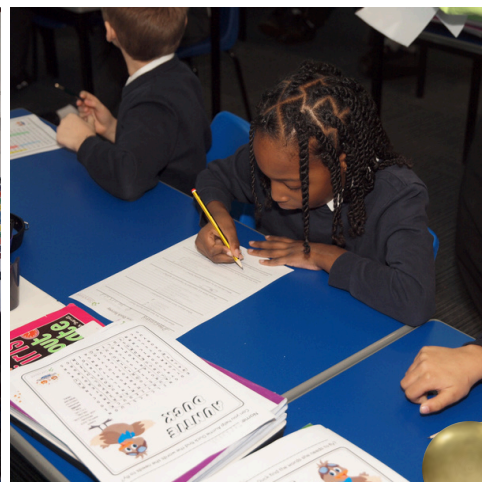
>>> Book Reading Sessions in Sandwell Schools and Libraries

Since the last edition of our newsletter, Auntie Duck has visited even more schools and libraries across Sandwell. Over the Easter break, we held book reading sessions at Bleakhouse, Rounds Green and Brandhall libraries.

Auntie Duck has also been warmly welcomed by several more schools, including Yew Tree Primary School, St Matthew's CE Primary School, Old Hill Primary School, Hargate Primary School, St Martin's CE Primary School, Harvills Hawthorn Primary School, Ferndale Primary School and Moorlands Primary School.

Picture Gallery





◀◀ We'd Love to Share Auntie Duck With You too!

Would you like Auntie Duck to visit your school, faith centre, community event, youth camp or charity group? We can facilitate a fun and engaging book reading session that children will enjoy and learn from.

To arrange a visit, just email us at pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk and we'll handle the rest.

If you'd prefer to run your own Auntie Duck session, that's absolutely fine! Contact us at the same email address and we'll send you everything you need to make it a great success.

The sessions and resources are totally **FREE!**

▶▶▶ Auntie Duck Webpage is Live!

Auntie Duck now has her very own webpage! Here you can catch up on her latest adventures, see where she's been and where she's going next, access teaching resources, book a visit and more!

Here's the link to the webpage: <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/AuntieDuck>



>>> Modeshift STARS Accreditations



Fourteen schools have been awarded **Approved Travel Plan** status so far in 2025, and we would like to recognise these schools for their efforts towards supporting safer and more sustainable travel and celebrate their achievements in supporting programmes to support active travel, such as **Living Streets WOW walk to school programme**, **Bikeability training**, and our very own **Auntie Duck Air Quality programme**.



>>> Auntie Duck Encourages More Schools to Sign Up for Modeshift STARS

Modeshift STARS is the Centre of Excellence for the delivery of effective Travel Plans in Education, Business and Community settings.

The **STARS** Education scheme recognises schools and other educational establishments that have shown excellence in supporting walking cycling, wheeling, and other forms of sustainable and active travel.

Schools can be recognised nationally for progress on their active travel and sustainable travel initiatives.

Modeshift STARS is FREE for all Sandwell schools, please contact Suzy_Street-Hall@sandwell.gov.uk if you would like your school to become accredited.



>>> Special Shout Out to Yew Tree Primary!

Shout out to Yew Tree Primary School, one of our most committed and enthusiastic active travel champions! ⭐

They recently appeared on ITN News to celebrate their fantastic success with the Living Streets WOW Walk to School programme. Well done, Yew Tree, keep it up!



>>> Bike Week 2025

Bike Week 2025 is taking place from **June 9–15**, and it's your chance to be part of the UK's biggest celebration of cycling. Whether you ride every day or haven't cycled in years, Bike Week is all about showcasing how cycling can fit into daily life - for everyone.

Bike Week shines a spotlight on the many ways cycling benefits us all - from boosting health and wellbeing to cutting carbon emissions and creating more connected communities. It's a week to celebrate the simple joy of getting on a bike and to inspire others to give it a go.

Find out how you can get involved at:

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/bikeweek>



Auntie Duck Says, "Let's Cycle for Clean Air"





◀◀◀ Big Bike Brunch 2025

This year, Cycling UK are also inviting everyone to take part in their **Big Bike Brunch**! It's the perfect way to celebrate Bike Week.

Love coffee and cake? Love riding your bike?

Celebrate the joy of cycling by hosting a Big Bike Brunch for us this Bike Week (9-15 June). Ride together, share good food and create memories whilst making a difference.

[Register your Big Bike Brunch today.](#)



➤➤➤ Sustrans Big Walk & Wheel 2025

We had 16 schools take part in Sustrans Big Walk & Wheel active travel challenge which took place on 24th March – 4th April 2025. Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel inspires pupils to make active journeys to school, improve air quality in their neighbourhood and discover how these changes benefit their world.

Bristnall Hall Academy finished in a very impressive **2nd place in the West Midlands** and was **21st on the national leaderboard** for secondary schools for their efforts to log student's active journeys in the Big Walk & Wheel.



Our small primary schools in Sandwell who took part include: **Jubilee Park Academy, Ocker Hill Infant School, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, and St Martin's CofE Primary School.** **St Martin's CofE Primary school scored a fantastic 82.49%** total active journeys during the 10-day challenge which included walking, cycling, scooting and wheeling.

Eleven large primary schools also took part including **Moat Farm Infant School (who scored a fantastic 78.10%), Crocketts Community Primary School (who scored a fantastic 72.65%), Summerhill Primary Academy, St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Hargate Primary School, Brandhall Primary School, Ferndale Primary School, Sacred Heart Primary School, Glebefields Primary School, Our Lady and St Hubert's Catholic Primary School, and Perryfields Primary School.**

We are very proud of these schools who are making great efforts towards more sustainable travel, and this is reflected in their Modeshift STARS accreditations.

>>> Meet Our Active Travel Hero for This Month!

Kiera is our Active Travel Hero for this month! She cycles to get around Sandwell and anywhere she can. Check out Kiera's profile to discover what motivates her to cycle and her tips for anyone who wants to give cycling a go!



Hello, my name is
KIERA

 Smethwick

Age: 35

MY BIKE



Q&A

Q: When did you start cycling to get around Sandwell?

A: Around 8 years ago.

Q: Where do you cycle to and from regularly?

A: I usually cycle to my gym in Selly Oak, to my allotment and to visit my parents who live locally.

Q: How do you plan your bike routes?

A: Google maps, but also a bit of trial and error to find the nicest route.

Q: What bike do you have?

A: Specialised Vita Sport.

Q: What is your favourite part about running?

A: The flexibility – it can be quicker than public transport but you can also take a bike on the train if you need to.

TOP TIPS:

- ✓ I love having a bike that can hold panniers. You can get a decent amount of stuff in them and they make a bike really practical.
- ✓ For me it's always worth adding an extra few minutes onto the journey to cycle a quieter route, it makes cycling much more enjoyable.
- ✓ It's good to carry spare lights, even if you don't expect to use them.





Would you like to be our next Active Travel Hero, or know someone who should be? Just drop us an email at pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk

Thank you for reading this edition of our newsletter.

We hope you've enjoyed finding out what we've been working on and how we're making a difference across Sandwell.

If you have any feedback or ideas, we'd love to hear from you! Drop us an email at [**pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk**](mailto:pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk)

We look forward to sharing more updates with you soon!

The Air Quality Team

