

2024 - 2025

Annual Report



Grants to Voluntary and Community Sector Partners

[Visit our VCS Support Webpage](#)

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Introduction

We are pleased to present the 2024–25 Annual Report on grants to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners. The report provides a clear overview of how grant funding has supported VCS organisations to deliver services that respond to local needs, improve outcomes for residents and contribute to the Council’s strategic priorities. It evidences the power of partnership in addressing inequalities, supporting vulnerable groups and building resilient communities.

The report aims to provide transparency and insight into the Council’s investment in the VCS, demonstrating how funding has been used to support residents across Sandwell. It highlights the range of services delivered, the outcomes achieved and the added value created through partnership working, volunteering and community-led action.

It reflects the Council’s commitment to working collaboratively with the VCS to deliver high-impact, community-focused services that make a real difference in people’s lives.

Statement from Cabinet Member

I am delighted to share the 2024–25 VCS Annual Report, which reflects the remarkable work of Sandwell’s Voluntary and Community Sector. It reflects your dedication and commitment to our borough.

Throughout the year, VCS organisations have continued to support residents in ways that are both practical and deeply personal. Whether through community centres, advice services, family support, mental health programmes, cultural activity, specialist help for vulnerable adults, or the countless groups that bring people together, your work has created safe, welcoming and trusted places for residents to turn to. Volunteers have played an extraordinary role too, bringing goodwill, energy and a sense of community that cannot be replicated by any statutory service.

As we look to the future, we know there are financial pressures and increasing demands on services. Despite these challenges, I want to emphasise my personal commitment and the Council’s commitment to continuing this partnership with you. We remain focused on prevention, early help and community-led solutions that build resilience and reduce the need for crisis intervention. Your insight and experience will continue to shape how we work together in the months and years ahead.

This year’s report demonstrates not just the impact of the work you do, but the spirit in which you do it. The sector’s compassion, professionalism and rootedness in our neighbourhoods are vital to the wellbeing of Sandwell’s residents. You help create communities where people feel supported, connected and proud to belong.

I want to express my sincere thanks to every organisation, every volunteer and every member of staff who contributes to this essential work. Together, we are building stronger, healthier and more confident communities and it is your commitment that makes this possible.



Cllr Suzanne Hartwell
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community

Executive Summary

In 2024–25, the Council invested approximately £10 million in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), supporting organisations to deliver a diverse range of services that reached hundreds of thousands of residents across all six towns. This funding was sourced from a combination of local, regional and national programmes including Public Health, the Council’s General Fund, the Department for Education, the Better Care Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The VCS has been instrumental in delivering services aligned with our strategic themes:

Growing up in Sandwell

Family hubs, childcare and holiday activities supported over 45,000 children and families, offering early help, peer support and inclusive development opportunities.

Living in Sandwell

Living in Sandwell: Over 340,000 visits were made to community centres, which provided residents with access to information, digital support, volunteering opportunities and safe spaces to connect. Food banks and pantries supported more than 107,000 people, helping to reduce food insecurity and financial hardship.

Healthy in Sandwell

Healthy in Sandwell: Mental health services, substance misuse recovery programmes, carers support and preventative health initiatives reached tens of thousands, improving wellbeing and enabling residents to live independently.

Thriving Economy in Sandwell

Thriving Economy in Sandwell: Employment support and skills development programmes helped over 1,300 residents move closer to work or training, contributing to economic resilience.

One Council One Team

Executive Summary

continued

The impact of this investment is reflected not only in service delivery but in the wider social impact. VCS organisations have helped families navigate the cost-of-living crisis, supported older adults to remain active and connected, empowered young people to feel safe and included and improved access to advice, health services and community spaces.



The grants provided added value by helping organisations build stronger relationships with residents, respond quickly to local challenges and create lasting community benefits. Many organisations used their local knowledge and trusted connections to reach people who might not otherwise engage with formal services, making the support more relevant and effective.

Volunteers played a vital role in this success, contributing over 35,000 hours across various programmes, from community centres and food support to mental health and carers services. Their dedication helped extend the reach of services, strengthen community relationships and increase the support available to residents.

Grants were awarded through a combination of direct awards and competitive application processes, enabling both strategic alignment and responsiveness to emerging needs. The programme supported organisations of all sizes, from small grassroots groups to established charities, delivering services in every town.

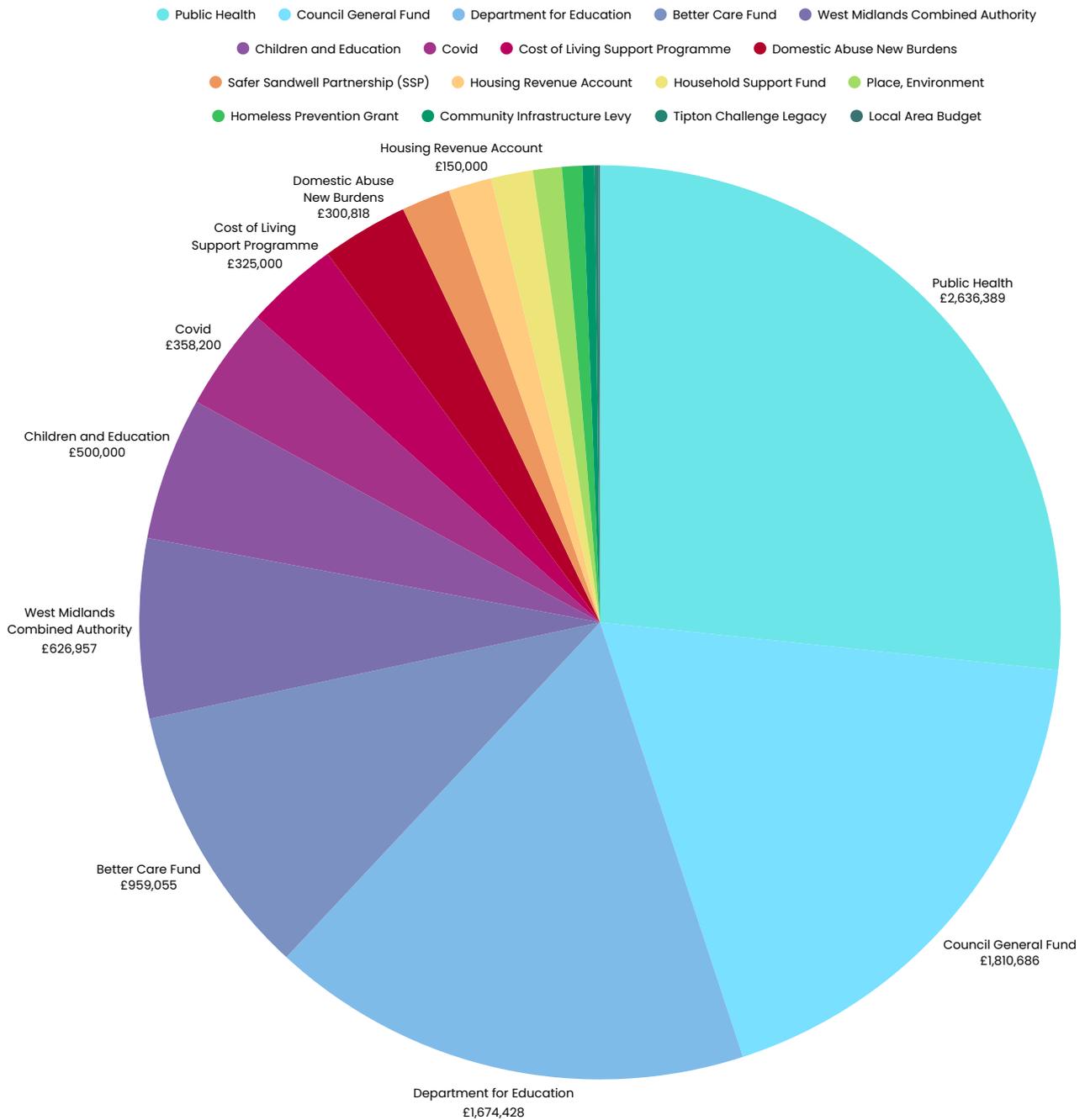
The Council's strategic approach to funding has enabled organisations to grow, innovate and collaborate, resulting in more joined-up, responsive and resilient support for residents. Infrastructure support, capacity building and targeted grant programmes have helped smaller groups thrive and ensured that services are culturally appropriate, locally accessible and tailored to community needs.



This report highlights the power of partnership and the importance of sustained investment in the VCS. It demonstrates how collaborative working, shared purpose and community-led action continue to deliver meaningful outcomes for residents.

Sources of funding

Total funding awarded in 2024-25 - £9,886,626



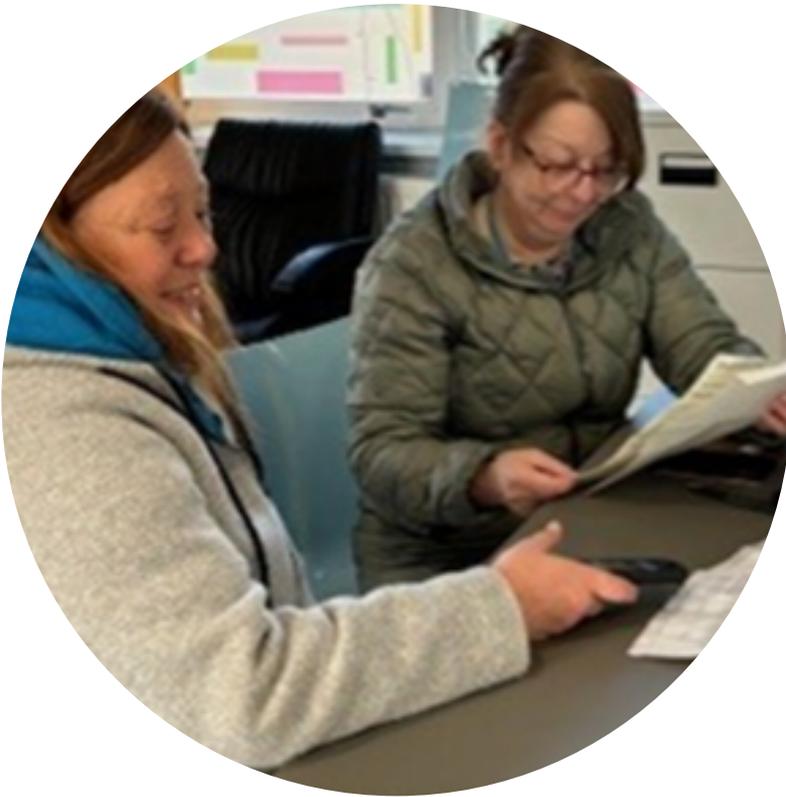
Advice

Living in Sandwell and Thriving Economy in Sandwell



Organisations funded:

Brushstrokes
Citizens Advice Sandwell & Walsall
Sandwell Consortium
Smethwick Pakistani Muslim Association
(SPMA Ltd)



Specialist immigration advice

Phone and internet advice and specialist debt service

Improve household income, increase financial stability, reduce homelessness, reduce problem debt

Generalist advice in community settings and 9 Family Hubs

Total Funding:
£1,410,736



22,197

residents supported



£16,176,827

in confirmed benefit gains for residents



Support for people on a low income

Healthy in Sandwell

Organisations funded: Food Pantries

Brandhall Food Pantry (Brandhall Community Hub)
Brasshouse Food Pantry (North Smethwick Development Trust)
J's Pantry Hateley Heath (4 Community Trust)
The Manna House Pantry (The Manna House CIO)
Tipton Food Pantry (Murray Hall Community Trust)
Wednesbury Food Pantry (Open Heaven Wednesbury)
Smethwick Food Pantry (Smethwick Church Action Network)

Total Funding:
£144,800



107,483

residents supported

SUPPORT

40,708

visits/parcels distributed

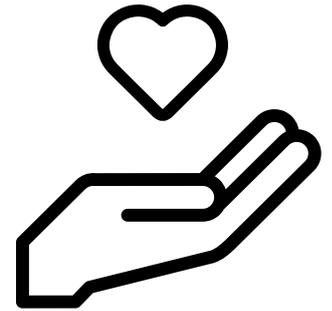


Organisations funded: Foodbanks

Black Country Foodbank
Breaking Bread Foodbank (Wednesbury)
Brushstrokes Food Bank
Smethwick Foodbank (Smethwick Church Action Network)
West Bromwich Food Bank (West Bromwich Community Church)

Employment Support

Thriving Economy in Sandwell



Organisations funded:

Ideal for All Ltd
Lion Farm Action Centre (Sandwell) Ltd
Skills Work and Enterprise Development Agency Ltd
(SWEDA)



Intensive support for hard to reach residents with few or no qualifications and experience, enabling them to move closer to work or training.



Total Funding:
£180,684



427

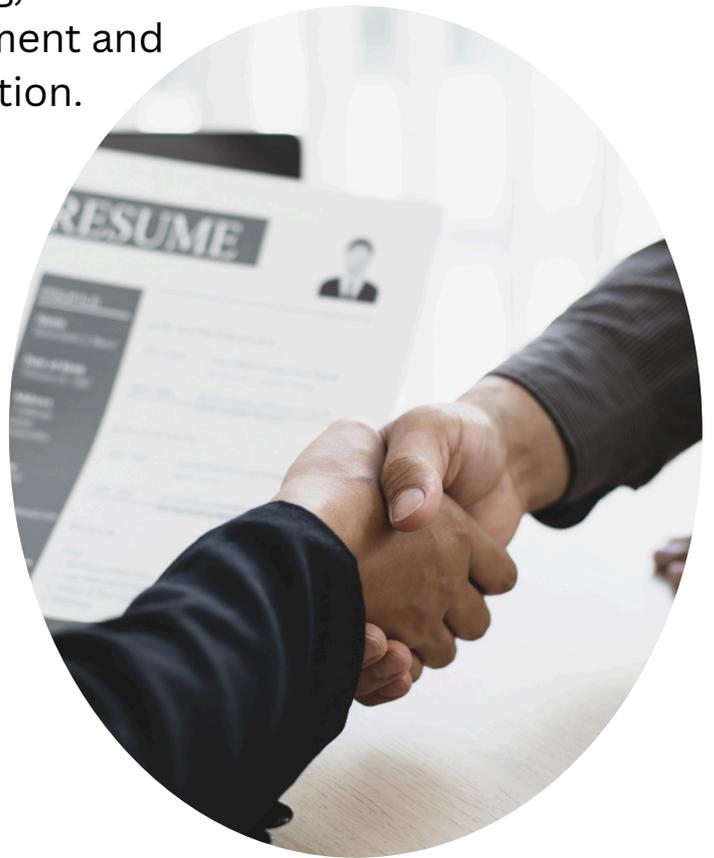
residents supported



UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Thriving Economy in Sandwell

Employment support for economically inactive residents including engagement, IAG (information, advise and guidance), action planning, skills development, preparation for employment and progression into a positive destination.



Total Funding:
£626,957



941

residents supported

SUPPORT

Organisations funded:

African French Speaking Community Support
Beacon Centre for the Blind
Citizens Advice Sandwell & Walsall
Sandwell Asian Development Agency
Sandwell Consortium
YMCA Black Country

Community Centres

Living in Sandwell, Healthy in Sandwell, Thriving Economy in Sandwell and Growing up in Sandwell

Organisations funded:

Bangladeshi Islamic Association, Smethwick
Bangladeshi Women's Association Ltd
Friar Park Millennium Centre
Gayton Road Community Association
Great Bridge Community Forum
Hill Top Community Development Association
Murray Hall Community Trust
North Smethwick Development Trust
Sandwell Irish Community Association
Sandwell Irish Society
Smethwick Pakistani Muslim Association (SPMA Ltd)
St Albans Community Association
St Paul's Community Association
Yemeni Community Association in Sandwell (Greets Green Access Centre)
Yemeni Community Association in Sandwell (Lodge Road, West Bromwich)
Yew Tree & Tamebridge Community Centre Association



Total Funding:
£501,787



Number of visits:

340,395



**Number of volunteer hours
in community centres:**

33,169

**External funding
accessed:**

£995,990



Support for children and families

Growing up in Sandwell

Parent and peer support groups
Family Hub Spokes in West Bromwich, Smethwick and Tipton
Pre-school support
briefings from health providers and well-being sessions



Total Funding:
£477,418



432

Peer support referrals

512

Family Hub registrations

30,996

families supported



Organisations funded:

Autism West Midlands
Brushstrokes
Citizens Advice Sandwell and Walsall
Cradley Heath Community Link
Ferndale Primary School
Groundwork West Midlands
Harvills Hawthorn Primary School
Heart of England Community Foundation
New Beginnings Community
Powered by CAN (Creative Academies Ltd)
SADWICA Day Nursery
Sandwell Parents for Disabled Children
Singlepoint Plus
West Smethwick Enterprise



Grant programmes to support vulnerable children and families

Growing up in Sandwell

Grant programmes:

Holiday Activities & Food Programme
School Holiday Activities Programme -
Creating a Playable Sandwell



Support play activities, food and targeted support for eligible free school meal and universal children and families during school holiday periods.



Total Funding:
£1,406,723



13,959
children supported



Support for older people

Healthy in Sandwell and Living in Sandwell

Organisations funded:

Age UK Sandwell

Agewell (Sapphire Services)

Cape Community Care Day Centre

Driving Miss Daisy

West Bromwich African Caribbean Resource Centre

Yemeni Community Association in Sandwell



Total Funding:
£464,589



14,383

residents supported



Information & advice

Food Parcels, Signposting, Wellbeing Checks,
Prescription Collection

Day care, lunch club and wellbeing activities
Hospital transport for residents discharged
from Sandwell acute hospitals or community
beds, whose discharge would otherwise be
delayed

Hot nutritious lunches &
wrap around information, advice & advocacy

Community Offer

Healthy in Sandwell and Living in Sandwell

Organisations funded:

Communities in Sync
Ideal for All Ltd
Murray Hall Community Trust
St Albans Community Association
The Kaleidoscope Plus Group



A range of community based low level preventative support services to residents aged 18 plus. Delivered via a partnership of providers to build stronger, more resilient communities, contributing to Sandwell's 2030 vision.



Total Funding: 
£679,800
from April to September 2024



1,512
individuals supported



Carers Support

Living in Sandwell and Thriving Economy in Sandwell

Organisations funded:

Better Understanding of Dementia for Sandwell
Crossroads Caring for Carers
Halesowen Asian Elderly Association
Omega, the National Association for End of Life Care
Sandwell Parents for Disabled Children
South Asian Family Support Service (SAFS)
West Bromwich African Caribbean Resource Centre



Total Funding:
£86,250



948

carers supported



Improve carer health and wellbeing,
help to sustain caring relationships
and enable carers to take part in
social and leisure activities.

Carers supported:

Carers of people with dementia
Bereaved carers
Parent carers
Parent carers of children with
disabilities
Training for carers

Support for vulnerable adults

Living in Sandwell



Organisations funded:
Brushstrokes
Sandwell Citizens Advocacy



Total Funding:
£155,252



Complex No Recourse to Public Funds cases

Delaying homelessness cases and preventing homelessness

Training provided to Sandwell Council and Sandwell Children's Trust Social Workers

Orientation sessions around social and cultural integration

Immigration advice and what to expect from Home Office interviews

Supporting vulnerable individuals who feel that their needs, rights, and wishes have not been considered when planning and delivering health and social care services

Regular health drop-in sessions

Football, swimming lessons, cookery, crafts, gardening, stay and play, games nights, wellbeing walks and film nights



2,841

residents supported



Community Safety & Prevent

Living in Sandwell

Specialist support for domestic and sexual abuse
Psychologically informed therapeutic interventions for adults and children in safe accommodation
Additional specialist staff
Therapeutic boxing mentoring
Music and video skills development for young people
Specialist support service to parents to recognise and overcome low level domestic abuse
Preventative mentoring for children
Theatre sessions
Bespoke one to one mentoring from mentors with lived experience
Therapeutic support promoting cohesion and reducing hate incidents
Suicide Prevention Training for those who work with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse
Training in relation to domestic abuse to hospital staff



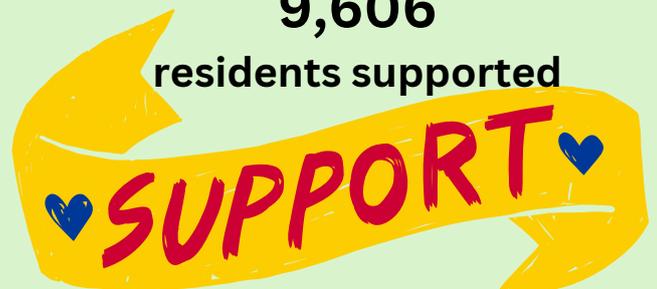
Organisations funded:

Black Country Women's Aid
Believe 2 Achieve
BoxClever Mentoring
Community Skills and Knowledge Network
Family Action
KRUNCH UK
Loudmouth Education & Training
More Talk More Action
Murray Hall Community Trust
The Albion Foundation
The Violet Project
Victim Support
Your Trust Charity

Total Funding:
£946,501



9,606
residents supported



Better Health

Healthy in Sandwell

Organisations funded:

Cruse Bereavement Care

Ideal for All Ltd

Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation

Sandwell Consortium

Sandwell Deaf Community Association

Sandwell Visually Impaired

The Kaleidoscope Plus Group



Total Funding:
£851,284



9,944

residents supported



115 training sessions delivered

52 languages spoken

93 volunteers

149 British Sign Language interpreter sessions

Bereavement counselling

Peer support groups for a range of disabilities

Information, advice and support primarily for members of the Black, African and Caribbean

Community

Sandwell Health Inequalities Programme

Sandwell Language Network

Support services for deaf people and for professionals working with deaf people

Provide short- or medium-term support to deaf people who live in their own/rented housing in

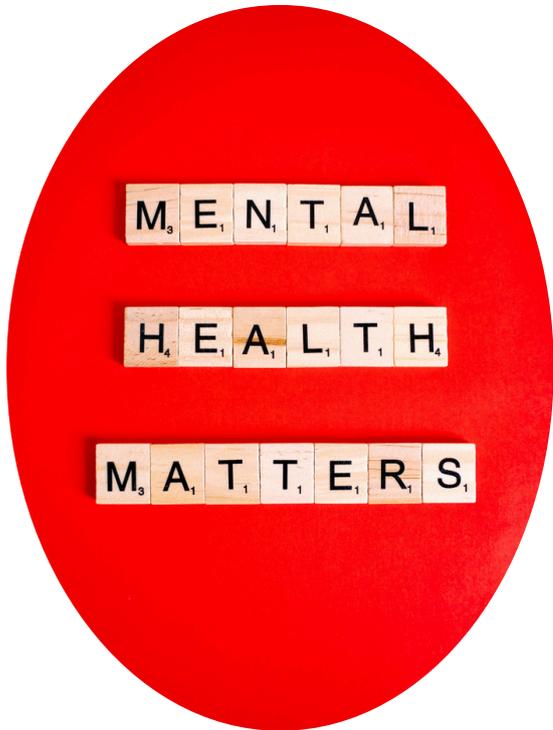
Sandwell and prevent crises and ill health

Support services to registered blind and partially sighted residents and their families,

To support the provision of services for people suffering mental illness and their carers/family

Better Mental Health

Healthy in Sandwell



Community Food Champions: 52

Training provided: 131

Mental Health First Aid training places: 28

Football sessions for men aged 18+ and a 5-a-side
Football League

1:1, group activities, awareness workshops &
creative arts for adults

Sound relaxation sessions to provide support for
mental wellbeing for adults with learning
disabilities or long-term conditions

Healthy eating, mental health & wellbeing for
adults aged 55+

I-act training for the staff and volunteers

Buddying, monthly discussion meetings, Carers
MOT, telephone helpline, managing stress &
anxiety and self-care

Sport and physical activity sessions for young
people aged 12-25 years from the Black & African
Caribbean community

Yoga, meditation and creative therapy sessions for
adults with disabilities, autism and PMLD

Provide peer support and advocacy for people
who are visually impaired, deaf or have hearing
impairment

Organisations funded:

Bearwood Community Hub

Beat It Percussion

European Welfare Association CIC

Groundwork West Midlands

Ideal for All Ltd

Oldbury United CIC

Options for Life

Sandwell Deaf Community Association

Sandwell Visually Impaired

The Albion Foundation

The Kaleidoscope Plus Group

Total Funding:

£244,037



444

sessions delivered

1,933

residents supported



Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment & Recovery Grant (SSMTRG)

Healthy in Sandwell and Living in Sandwell

Organisations funded:

Bangladeshi Women's Association Ltd

Beat it Percussions CIC

Cradley Heath Community Link

Friar Park Millennium Centre

Ideal for All Ltd

Places For People (West Bromwich Leisure Centre)

Sandwell Leisure Trust

The Kaleidoscope Plus Group

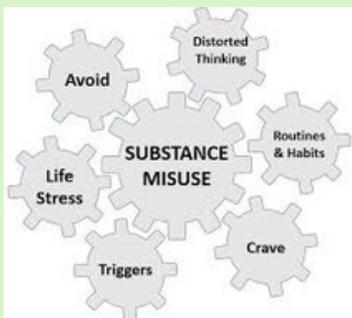
The Salvation Army

Urja Ltd

Warley Amateur Boxing Club



Total Funding:
£149,478



754

residents supported



Support towards full recovery, reduced harm from drugs & alcohol, increased opportunities for employment and other positive activities to support recovery from drug and alcohol misuse.

Suicide Prevention Staff Training

Healthy in Sandwell and Living in Sandwell



Organisation funded:
Papyrus Prevention of Young Suicide



Total Funding:
£49,970



Training offer to provide suicide prevention knowledge and skills to the workforce to intervene early and equip them with the skills and knowledge to have supportive conversations. It aims to encourage all staff to work together to support the communities of Sandwell, and each other, to prevent loss of life to suicide.

394

residents supported



Environmental

Living in Sandwell

Organisation funded:

Warley Woods Community Trust



Total Funding:
£68,864



Maintain and manage Warley Woods Park, Warley Woods, an outstanding green flag park in Sandwell and an (Royal Forestry Society (RFS silver) award winner



Arts and Culture

Healthy in Sandwell. Living in Sandwell and Thriving Economy in Sandwell

Organisations funded:
Black Country Touring
Multistory



Professional theatre, dance, cinema
activities in community venues

Environmental, heritage and placemaking
activities co-created with local groups,
residents and young people in community
spaces

Total Funding:
£104,225



21,690
people attending

467
events



45

**Freelance artists and
creatives employed**



Support for our voluntary and community groups (VCS infrastructure)

Living in Sandwell, Healthy in Sandwell and Thriving Economy in Sandwell

Organisations funded:

SCIPS (Sandwell Community Information and Participation Services Ltd)

SCVO (Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations)



Total Funding:
£453,625



451 organisations supported
45 training sessions delivered

3,734 residents supported



Support for groups of council tenants and residents
TRA/Community Group meetings
Capacity building, networking, funding, communication and volunteering
Early Help partnership Work



Voluntary sector grants programmes

Growing up in Sandwell and Living in Sandwell

Council grant funding enabled SCVO to run grant programmes



Grant Programmes:

- Vision 2030
- Vision 2030 Community Grant Programmes
- Young People's Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing Programme

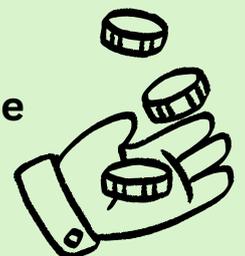
Total Funding:
£752,000



5,303
residents supported



74
Grant awards made



EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Have a positive attitude, high self-esteem, a strong sense of self, and the ability to recognize & share a wide range of feelings with others in a constructive way.



Community Partnership Innovation Fund

Growing up in Sandwell, Living in Sandwell, Healthy in Sandwell and Thriving Economy in Sandwell

Organisations funded:

4 Community Trust
Bangladeshi Islamic Association
Bangladeshi Women's Association Limited
Birmingham Empowerment Forum
Gambian Islamic Community Centre
PCC of the Good Shepherd Parish
Hamstead TRA
Oakham Community Club
Tanhouse Shedders TRA
The Methodist Centre



Total Funding:
£83,876



1,854

residents supported



Sandwell's first food distribution hub
Lifelong learning bringing vulnerable women together to improve skills and support local enterprise
Tipton based environmental project supporting NET Zero targets

Bleed control training sessions across Sandwell 2 courses per town and donation of a Bleed control Kit for each centre who have held the training

Supporting older people with gaining new skills

School holiday-based activity aimed at predominately younger children with parents

Seasonal events and activities bringing communities together

Support for older people around mental health, dementia, falls prevention, health and wellbeing and financial stability
Regular workshop activities in mental health, health and wellbeing and new skills.

Luncheon club for older people to help support and improve face-to-face interactions

Town Grants

Growing up in Sandwell, Living in Sandwell, Healthy in Sandwell and Thriving Economy in Sandwell



1st Old Hill Guides - Walkie Talkies and 6 Tablets
Christ Church (and Brandhall) - Shelving and boxes, Pavement sign frame, mannequins, vertical blind and portable heaters

Community Connect Foundation - Multi games tables, pool cues, TV, PS5 and football items

Cradley Heath Community Link - Stair lift



Gambian Islamic Community Centre - TV, PS5 with controllers, folding football game and kick boxing equipment

Khushi South Asian Women Group - Karaoke machine, bingo machine, Dholki, Yoga resistance bands and tablets.

KRUNCH UK - 2 Disabled Toilets

Millennium Beat - 2 Tabla and Bayan Set. 2x Folding Harmonium, Gents Tanpura with Fiber Case

Sandwell Parents for Disabled Children - Portable goal nets, footballs, foam balls, space hoppers and bouncy balls

Smethwick Photographic Society - Display Board Illumination Lighting

St Bernard's Church - Cooker, utensils and pots and pans

St Mary's on the Hill - tables, chairs and trolley

The Abrahamic Foundation - 40 tables and chairs

Tipton Town Library Local History - Fashion Display Counter

Wednesbury Cricket Club - Practice Cricket Net with 2.4m Security Fencing

Wednesbury Tennis Club - Tennis nets, floor and line marking paint, red and green tarmac coating

Wodensborough Amateur Boxing Club - Boxing Ring



Total Funding:
£41,847



1,310

residents supported



Events

Living in Sandwell

Organisations funded:
Friends of Langley Park
Open Heaven Wednesbury

Additional Christmas lights events for individual towns



Total Funding:
£5,923



1,550
residents supported



Future Priorities and Commitments

As we move into 2025–26, the Council remains committed to working in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector to deliver services that support residents and contribute to the Council’s strategic priorities, ensuring people live well, age well and have access to opportunities.

However, we recognise the increasing financial pressures facing both the Council and the sector. Rising demand, inflationary costs and reduced national funding streams present significant challenges.

To address this, we will:

- Strengthen collaboration: Continue to co-design services with VCS partners, focusing on prevention, early help and community-led solutions.
- Maximise impact: Use data and resident feedback to target resources where they are most needed, ensuring equity and effectiveness.
- Support sustainability: Help VCS organisations access external funding, build resilience, and adapt to changing needs.
- Champion innovation: Encourage grassroots initiatives that improve wellbeing, reduce demand on statutory services and make best use of local assets.

We will also explore opportunities to align future funding with key priorities such as tackling health inequalities, supporting vulnerable groups, enhancing community safety, and improving access to services. The Council will continue to work with infrastructure partners to strengthen the sector’s capacity and ensure that support reaches those who need it most.



Conclusion

The 2024–25 Annual Report reflects the strength, commitment and adaptability of our Voluntary and Community Sector. Through genuine collaboration with the Council, VCS organisations and partners have delivered services that have made a real and lasting difference, helping residents stay well, feel safe and access opportunities that improve their quality of life.

Despite ongoing financial pressures, the sector continues to provide trusted, inclusive and locally rooted support. Its ability to respond quickly, work creatively and build relationships within communities has been vital in addressing inequalities and supporting those most in need.

The Council remains committed to working alongside the VCS to build strong, responsive and resilient community networks. Together, we will continue to explore new ways to support residents, strengthen partnerships and deliver on our shared vision for a better Sandwell.

We would like to thank all voluntary and community organisations, volunteers, partners and Council colleagues for their dedication, compassion and continued support. Your commitment has been instrumental in improving lives and building stronger communities across the borough.

