

Neighbourhood Partnership Team

# END OF YEAR REPORT

JUNE

20  
23



# Neighbourhood Partnership Team

The Neighbourhood Partnership Team are multi-skilled and experienced officers with a track record of success and delivery across Sandwell’s vibrant and diverse communities. The team has been delivering borough-wide since 2022, following a successful pilot in Rowley Regis and Wednesbury.

The team is guided and managed by Marcia Sandel-Massey with two officers in each of the borough’s six towns. Each town team consists of a Neighbourhood Partnerships Officer and a Community Development Worker.

The team are passionate about Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and they are committed to engaging with and building the capacity of the people, places and organisations within their towns. They have worked with and supported a total of 223 community and voluntary sector organisations this year alone.



The teams work aligns to Vision 2030 and the Council’s Strategic objectives. There is strong dialogue with our voluntary and community sector partners to explore new ways of doing things. They are keen to explore creative approaches about what can be done differently, and they empower tenants, residents, and local groups to identify local need and help people to help themselves.



They work effectively as catalysts within their neighbourhoods to bring people and organisations together so that they can work co-productively. This report highlights some of their excellent work over the last 12 months.

## Community Partnerships and Support Services Team

“Building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods through creating partnerships, developing prevention-focused services and empowering local communities.”

The role of the team is to transform and develop services by making the best possible use of Sandwell’s voluntary and community sector offer. It involves building strong partnerships and potentially redesigning services. The sections below set out some of this year’s highlights and the diverse range of work they have been involved in across Sandwell’s neighbourhoods.

### Tenant Engagement work

The voice of tenants has been an integral part of the work of the team over the past year. It demonstrates how the team delivers the council’s strategic objectives: **Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods and Strong Resilient Communities.**

The team has led on the development of the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TLSG) which consists of 8 tenants and 2 leaseholders, building their confidence and providing support to enable them to scrutinise and report on Housing Services, including the call centre and the home checks process. The team has delivered training and facilitated meetings with senior housing staff including service leads and the assistant director.



*Members of the Tenant and Leaseholders Scrutiny Group, May 2023.*



During the summer of 2022, the Neighbourhood Partnerships Team also recruited and developed a group of Tenant Auditors Group (TAG). TAG consists of 5 tenants. During the autumn of 2022, acknowledging gaps in the initial training of the group, team members also appointed a key partner, SCIPS, to provide additional support to the group. To date, the Tenant Auditors have completed one full Audit on how to end a Tenancy. They are currently finalising their second more in depth Audit on fire safety in high-rise blocks.

For both the TLSG and TAG, the team have ensured that the tenant volunteers have been provided with all the necessary information they needed in order to deliver a thorough assessment of services that enabled them to reach their own conclusions and recommendations.

The majority of recommendations made by both groups are due to be implemented during the next financial year.

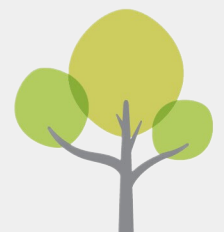
In addition to these two formal structures, the team has supported tenants to be involved in other consultations including:

- Review of the Annual Report 2021/22
- Review of Housing Website design/layout
- Five Year Housing Strategy 2023-2028
- Planning for Sandwell Tenant Conference 2023
- Changes to Disabled Facilities Grant



The Team has also provided advice and guidance to colleagues in asset management, consulting residents of our high-rise buildings on building safety. Looking forward, they will in the coming year be recruiting more tenant auditors and providing further opportunities for tenants to engage in the improvement of housing services.

The Neighbourhood Partnerships Team deliver on all 6 of the council's Strategic Objectives with a particular focus on:



# Strong, Resilient Communities

## Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) in Action

The ABCD approach links in directly with the council's strategic objective to Build Strong and Resilient Communities. It focuses on the strengths and assets of a community and its own unique ability to understand and address its 'problems' and with the encouragement of an ABCD practitioner from the Neighbourhood Partnerships team, a community realised its own unique ability to manage and resolve an issue that concerned them.

The summarised case study below sets out the journey of how the ABCD approach was embraced by a Mosque in Rowley Regis and how the Neighbourhood Partnership's NPO was instrumental in ensuring this approach was adopted. A simple and non-ABCD way to address the problem might be **'let's find an external provider to deliver training'** but questions can be asked about how that approach serves, strengthens and builds resilience within a community in the longer term. This case study demonstrates how the team is delivering on ABCD and the council's strategic objectives: Strong and Resilient Communities and The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People.

### ABCD Case Study - Rowley Regis

Mosque Elders asked the Neighbourhood Partnerships Officer (NPO) for assistance with a problem they had with young people feeling unsafe on their way to Mosque.



The group, which consisted of younger members of the Mosque, two local police officers and the NPO officer, had meetings over the next seven weeks. Rather than simply identifying an organisation who could deliver the training, the meetings adopted the ABCD approach. They realised that a 'personal safety' course would be more appropriate than 'self-defence' and they identified the strengths of those around the table, the type of content that the course needed and who should be involved in the delivery of the course.

### Clear Vision and Objectives

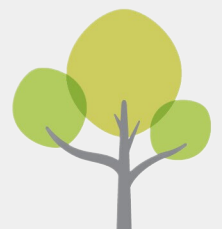
The NPO was able to assist the group in identifying the main issues and then develop clear objectives to address them. To enable the group to apply for funding, a constituted group 'The Sacred Chain' was established with assistance from the NPO.

Most importantly, emails, letters and funding applications were compiled by different members of the Sacred Chain Group and assistance was given by the NPO on an 'as required' basis and in a sensitive manner to encourage ownership.

The NPO encouraged the group to work together by embracing the already existing 'brotherhood' and appreciation of each other's skills and abilities whilst learning from each other. The NPO assisted the group to devise a 10-week course, with an additional week for presentations, for young people aged 8 – 12.

By asking pertinent questions, the NPO assisted the group to identify costs including venue, resources, presentations and refreshments. Sources of funding were identified and the NPO offered guidance in the completion and submission of the forms.

The course commenced on 2nd November 2022 and concluded successfully on 18th January 2023 with a presentation evening attended by suggested parties given by the NPO along with the rationale for their invite, this included, partner organisations, current funders and possible future funders: the Director of Housing, Councillor for Cradley Heath, First Aid Course Director, uniformed services, the Fitness Instructor and representatives from SCVO.



## Litter Pick with Blackheath Primary School



The Rowley Regis Community Development Worker (CDW) has been attending weekly tea and toast sessions with parents, carers, and young children at Blackheath Primary School's Tea and Toast sessions, run by the school's Parent Friends Association (PFA). This has been with the initial intent of providing Cost of Living Support and delivering a session on Better Off Sandwell/Supporting Sandwell/Resilient Residents/My Sandwell and reporting repairs. With a hope of further community development opportunities being created.

As the team works within the scope of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), instead of organising a one off session that people may not turn up to or care about the content, the CDW has been attending regularly to build trusted relationships. This has enabled people to feel comfortable enough to open up about their own experiences, find out what resources they already access and would like to know about, and hear the voices of tenants and residents. This has encouraged local people to share their concerns and take action to address what matters to them.

By using ABCD questioning techniques, it became clear that there were parents of 'Lockdown babies' who felt isolated and wanted to strengthen relationships with other parents, concerns about the six weeks holiday being an expensively long time to fill with young children and an interest by one of the group to litter pick as a means to build social circles.

Partnering with Tipton Litter Watch, who loaned the equipment, the CDW organised a Litter Pick and invited the group to attend. Eight adults and five children, age range nine months to sixty plus, attended. It provided an opportunity for people to get outside and chat, side by side and to discuss issues that they were not comfortable sharing in the closed environment of the sessions.

Afterwards, one person suggested involving the school community in September, with a view to have regular litter picks and use as an opportunity to grow the PFA and to teach the children to take ownership of their local community. This is something a few have offered to be involved with, with support from the CDW. They also had ideas for a picnic in Britannia Park over the summer holidays and the CDW has offered to support with tea and toast sessions in the community room at St Giles court, with tenants of both St Giles and Moorlands Court invited too.

## Reflection

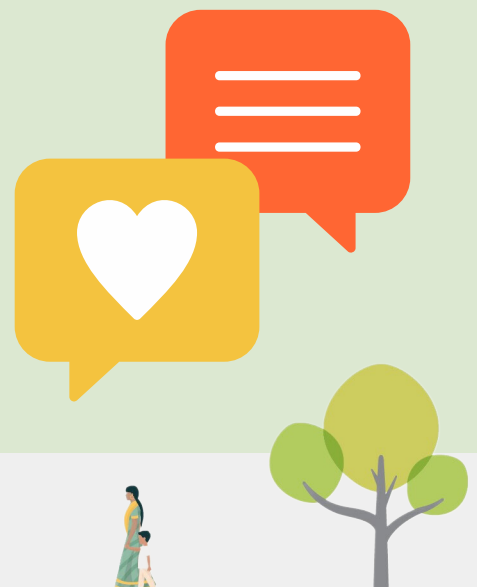
On reflection, if a one-hour session on Cost of Living Support had been delivered at the school, without having built these trusted relationships, it might have had low attendance and not been relevant to those that attended. Now we can deliver a relevant Cost of Living session that can make a difference and build on the good foundations laid. Relationships have formed/ strengthened and there's a sense of stronger social cohesion within the group. There was also an added 'unforeseen benefit' as some of the parents shared conversations about their experiences with Autism and ADHD. This led to them setting up a new WhatsApp group to enable them to stay in contact and support each other.

With further opportunities of community development promised. This is a process that can be replicated and offered to other schools in Sandwell.

## Feedback from the group

'It's useful to the group as a whole to have you there as you have the ability to access information more easily than some of the people at the club. You are an 'approachable face of the Council', and a welcome presence to the group.

Thank you'





## Celebrating Volunteers Builds Strong Resilient Communities

The town teams are proactive in recognising the impact of local activism and voluntary time contributed in the community.

The Oldbury Neighbourhood Partnerships team initiated and organised the Oldbury Community Awards to celebrate and acknowledge the significant impact that the community and voluntary sector continue to make across the town. A total of 32 nominations were received; this demonstrates both the level of volunteer activity and the strong working relationships that have been established with the local community by the Oldbury Neighbourhood Partnerships team.



**Oldbury Community Awards**

Do you know someone whose voluntary work in Oldbury makes a difference to others?

Nominations are now open to recognise Oldbury volunteers who have helped others over the last two years.  
You can nominate an individual or an organisation.  
Individual nominations must be for someone who volunteers and lives in Oldbury or who volunteers to benefit the people of Oldbury.  
Nominations for a group or organisation must be Oldbury based and benefit Oldbury people.

Deadline for nominations to be completed and submitted by Friday 19 May 2023 at 5pm.

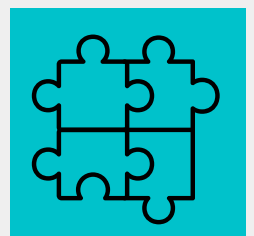
### Resident-led initiatives

In Rowley Regis, the team were contacted by Housing Officers who requested their support for issues affecting Churchill Drive residents.

The residents requested *full* closure of the alleyway behind their homes; one end of the same alley had been closed for 10 years.

The work included:

- Supporting 19 residents to organise themselves into a group
- Supporting the group when setting up meetings with SMBC Officers and elected members
- Identifying the issues and the long and short-term solutions
- Supported residents to establish an ‘Alley Watch’ group using social platforms to contact each other when there were incidents in the alley. This was an alternative to ‘Street Watch’ which the group were critical of.
- This is an example of the team building strong and resilient communities and then empowering them to develop the skills and capacity to solve issues within their own communities.



# Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

## Partnership Working

The Wednesbury team have taken part in several tenant/resident engagement sessions with Neighbourhood staff, the local Police team and the Community Transport initiative 'Let's Chat' bus. The team have carried out Fire Safety surveys in Russell House and assisted Neighbourhood staff with tenant engagement in Thorn Close. They engaged with local residents and carried out door-to-door surveys on behalf of Bilston Road TRA. They continue to support the group to attract new members.



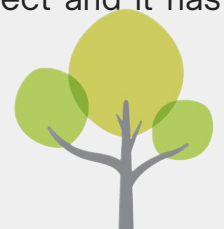
The team are proud of their strong relationships with partners in the town. A recent initiative alongside Public Health and Riverside Housing is to develop menopause support groups in all 3 wards known as 'Blooming Menopause.'

The Wednesbury Neighbourhood Partnerships team are a key part of the Multistory working group 'We are Wednesbury' which is a multi-agency group working on events throughout the year. The group also includes resident and local business representatives. The team supported 'Wednesbury Day' on 16th June which celebrated the town's history and re-development, and will also support a Lantern Parade and other events later in the year.

Surveys are also being completed with residents in Hill Top to identify their priorities for Hill Top Community Centre. It is hoped that the centre can be accessed by more residents in the local community in the future, with new activities for them to enjoy.

In Tipton, the team have worked towards strategic objective: People Live Well and Age Well. They supported Just Straight Talk to identify appropriate locations to deliver services to Tipton Residents in Ocker Hill.

Links and introductions were made with other networks including Beat it Percussion. This work has continued at Walker Grange where Just Straight Talk are tendering for funds to deliver digital project support in care homes in Tipton. The team are supporting the work as it enables and empowers residents to learn new skills including the importance of online safety, paying bills digitally, online shopping and making health appointments. The impact of this work has served to combat isolation, encourage local residents to reconnect and it has enabled Tipton's residents to stay connected and learn new skills.



## Wednesbury Day

Wednesbury Day was a celebration of the history of the town with a focus on art, music and dance. It was organised by Multistory, with the assistance of partners and community groups in the town. The event was opened by the Mayor and local councillors were also present. The town centre had colourful stalls with competitions and activities, there were also performances by a brass band and a dance company - and there was street entertainment from Wednesbury favourites the Lollipop ladies, and 2 rather large pigeons! We engaged with various partners and the general public to make them aware of our role and to discuss priorities and opinions.



Wednesbury Library was the focal point for a celebration of all the arts and crafts produced by local groups. We were able to connect with the various groups who had items on display, make introductions and encourage partnership working, also to meet people attending the exhibition and encourage them to get involved in local groups.

Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery also had displays of art and crafts – we spoke to providers to see how some of their work might be adapted to deliver a session with a local community group.

The day ended unexpectedly when we were called upon to assist staff from the Art Gallery to deal with a young man who was experiencing suicidal thoughts. We were unable to convince him to stay at the venue, but fortunately were able to track his movements and summon emergency services to attend the area to take him to a place of safety.



## Communal Spaces

The team have engaged with tenants and explored opportunities to reinvigorate and reclaim communal spaces where they live. This has been especially evident in high-rise blocks. In Rowley Regis the team engaged with tenants of a high-rise block to raise awareness that they fund the community flat through their rents and therefore should play a more pivotal role in deciding what happens in their communal spaces. The team engaged with tenants about the spaces and produced some model protocols and community room risk assessments that would enable colleagues from the team to share good practice that will in turn empower council tenants and enable them to explore their communal areas and how they can be utilised to meet the needs of the surrounding community.

In Oldbury, the team identified an under-utilised community room in Lancaster House. They organised an inclusive coffee afternoon in March to invite all residents in the block. They began conversations to find out which tenants wanted to get involved in planning and make a difference in how the community space could be used.

## Supporting Councillors

The Neighbourhood Partnerships Team support their local councillors in variety of ways. Councillor Suzanne Hartwell (Oldbury) contacted the Tipton Neighbourhood Partnership Team about a neighbour who wanted to recognise the fantastic work of another neighbour who regularly cleans neighbours' bins, tends to flowerbeds, disinfects bins, and put them out for collection.



The team from Tipton organised a visit from the Mayor and they worked closely with the family and local community to ensure that a co-ordinated event took place that celebrated the achievements of this individual.



# People Live Well and Age Well

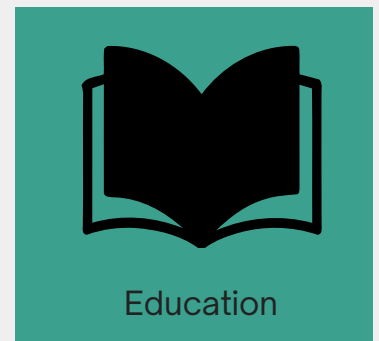
## Wellbeing, Mental health and Suicide Prevention

A combination of factors, including the strain of the macro-economic situation, has increased demand on household incomes. Along with other factors, this had a ripple effect, placing increased demand on both voluntary sector and the NHS mental health services.



## Armed Forces

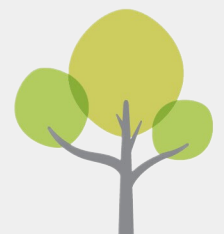
The Armed Forces Act 2021 is new legislation that imposes a duty on local authorities when exercising certain aspects of public functions in the three key areas:



The Covenant Duty came into force in November 2022 and it seeks to raise awareness of how Service life can impact on the Armed Forces community and how disadvantages can arise when members of that community are trying to access key services that are often provided by local authorities.

The NPO within the Oldbury team continues to work closely with the Armed Forces Partnership Panel and Sandwell MBC officers to ensure consideration is given to the Armed Forces Covenant duty and the requirement to provide due regard to the Armed Forces Community.

The impact of the new Armed Forces Act and work of the NPO across the borough is delivering on the council's strategic objectives: The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People, by supporting children and young people to access services and improve their health and wellbeing; People Live Well and Age Well, by supporting communities to access suitable housing so that they stay independent for longer; Strong and Resilient Communities, by supporting the integration of communities and building cohesive neighbourhoods.



## Tanhouse Community Centre Fun Day

Over a period of several months the West Bromwich Community Development Worker (CDW) has been working with and supporting the Management Committee at Tanhouse Community Centre. During this time the management committee discussed the need to increase and develop the usage of the centre. To understand the views of local residents, the CDW suggested to the committee that a Fun Day, held at the centre, would be an opportunity to showcase the existing activities on offer and to talk to residents to determine what additional activities they would access if they were available at the centre. It was also an opportunity for organisations to promote their services. A short questionnaire would be developed which would help to identify potential future activities and centre users.

Following the agreement to hold a fun day that should attract children and families, the CDW established a planning group to develop the event. She invited partner organisations to come along on the day to promote their services and she also developed a short questionnaire seeking the views of visitors coming along on the day. The questionnaire will be used to support the committee to develop activities and services at the centre.



On the day more than 100 people attended the centre, many of whom were unaware of the activities currently on offer there. The team distributed the centre's programme of activities to all who attended and during the day people moved around the various rooms which enabled them to see what space was available for hire, visit the library and take part in the activities on offer during the event.



To ensure people spoke to the service providers, they were handed the names of organisations promoting their services. The CDW used a sticker system which she designed so that visitors had to collect a stamp from each of the organisations for them to enter into the prize draw. As a result, Barnardo's registered 8 new families to their service. Parents who were unaware of the Youth Service and Powered by Can, an organisation which works with young people at the centre were able to speak with the leaders of both services to find out more about how their children could access the sessions. The Albion Foundation expressed an interest in running activities from Tanhouse Community Centre.

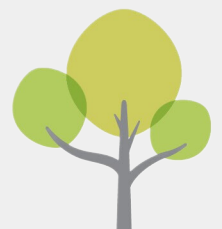
As a result of the fun day, new people were introduced to what Tanhouse Community Centre offers and the CDW has been able to identify that health and wellbeing activities, sporting activities and social/ friendships groups are of interest to local residents. These are activities that can be discussed and developed with the committee and partner organisations. The Albion Foundation are also looking to run Fit Baggies Sessions at the centre from September 2023. The Fun Day also helped to raise the profile of the centre as well as demonstrated the need to promote the centre and the activities which take place there.



One of our raffle prize winners



Children at the craft table being run by the Youth Service with a helping hand from the Police Community Support officers



## Funding Leveraged

The team have supported groups to apply for funds from both the council and external grant giving bodies.

In Oldbury, the team have helped leverage in a total of £22,526 between 5 voluntary sector organisations. They have helped with the application process and provided information on a range of initiatives including fundraising opportunities, getting involved with local events and being part of the Oldbury Network.

In Wednesbury, the team have worked consistently to ensure that local groups have received information about appropriate grants, and they have been supported by the team with the application process. The team are proud to have supported a total of 30 local groups and organisations to access funding this year. Some of the highlights in Wednesbury include:



Organisation	Funding	Status
Wednesbury Bowling Club	£1,150	Completed- Portable toilets & shed/shelter to protect players in bad weather
Scouts 617	£2500	Successful for camping equipment
St Francis Church Friar Park	£3,500 Awards for All	Completed – Awaiting group to purchase chairs & tables
Wednesbury Cultural Hub	£3,000 Healthy Lifestyle Grant	Ongoing
Wednesbury SOR	£3,200 Awards for All	Completed - Equipment & chairs
Let's Dance Again, Barlow Rd Allotments, Leabrook Church, Millennium Centre, St Mary's Church, St Bart's Church Hall, Knights of Wednesbury	£3,500  Kings Coronation, 7 applications, £500 each	Successful bids for King's Coronation events

In Tipton, the team have worked alongside LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership), South Staffs Water and Welfare Rights and by doing so they have been able to deliver financial support totalling £113,606.50. This has been achieved through signposting, empowering residents to talk and ensuring that an increasing number of residents are able to access the services that have enabled them to make such significant savings.



# TIBBY SAVINGS!

## WHITE GOODS AND BOILER REPLACEMENT SAVINGS

**63**  
Referrals

**57**  
Home visits

Home visits



Free Replacement White Goods	Free additional White good Replacement	Free Boiler Replacement	Additional Support with prepayment credit (£150)	Additional Misc Support
45	34	2	35	57
45 x £249 = <b>£11,205</b>	34 x £699 = <b>£23,766</b>	2 x £1200 = <b>£2,400</b>	35 x £150 = <b>£5,250</b>	
<b>TOTAL SAVINGS</b>				
<b>£42,621</b> (Estimated)				



NB. Old White goods are taken away by LEAP during replacement

Average Fridge Freezer Cost **£249.00** Average Washer/Dryer Cost **£699.00**

## WHITE GOOD/ BULKY ITEM DISPOSAL COST SAVINGS (SMBC RATES VIA MY SANDWELL)

1 item	2 items
11 x £15.10 = £166.10	34 x £22.60 = £768.40

**TOTAL SAVINGS**

**£934.50**



## COMPOST BINS

57 x £25  
**£1425**



**£113,606.50**

Total financial support via signposting & empowering residents to talk

## HAF SAVINGS (AVERAGE)

(HAF - Holidays, Activities and Food)

Cost to buy and cook a nutritious hot meal and provide fresh fruit	£4
Cost of an activity	£15
Savings on utilities	£5
Total savings average per person	<b>£24</b> Per Day

HAF places on average 30 spaces per day Total estimated savings: **£2880**

## WATER SAVINGS

Unmetered	Metered	Water Saving Devices	Support with Debt
£6,880	£5,720	£826	£55,200

**TOTAL WATER SUPPORT**

**£68,626**



## The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People

The Smethwick team supported local councillors and delivered on strategic objective: **The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People.**



The Neighbourhood Partnerships Team have actively engaged and made themselves accessible to elected representatives to triage complaints and concerns that are reported to them. They have taken ownership of issues to ensure that enquiries are dealt with diligently from the initial report through to resolution. The team have endeavoured to become the ‘go to’ team for elected representatives who want to see action on local issues.

In response to crime, anti-social behaviour, and a lack of organised activity in Victoria Park, local Councillors established the ‘Victoria Park Partnership’ that included a range of council officers and the police.

The Smethwick team were tasked by Councillors to carry out a community consultation to find out residents’ perception of the park, if they felt safe and what type of activities they would like to see. The team ensured a quick turnaround and devised a community questionnaire that was delivered face to face in the park and by a range of voluntary sectors organisations and faith groups within the locality.

In total, 13 different organisations returned completed surveys with their service users, these included community centres, places of worship and schools. Due to the team’s positive working relationships with local organisations, they were able to both engage and rely on the local voluntary sector to assist with reaching communities across the area, in addition to the face to face questionnaires carried out by the team.



The Smethwick team collated 222 surveys and Youth Services collated an additional 56. The team then worked with the council’s in-house Business Excellence team who produced a detailed analysis of the consultation that was shared with the Partnership.

The responses to the survey helped inform a programme of holiday activities for children and young people and on-going work within the park. It also helped to get a more accurate and balanced picture of residents both positive and negative perceptions of safety within the park.

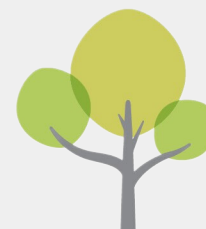
## A Strong and Inclusive Economy

Early in 2023 Tipton was successful in securing **£20 million** of “Levelling Up Funding” to regenerate the shopping precinct, increase social housing and to future proof accommodation that will be more energy efficient.



Sandwell MBC Planning department have undertaken a number of consultation events with local businesses to discuss how the proposed demolition and regeneration work will affect the businesses over the next two years, whilst building works take place.

The Tipton Neighbourhood Partnership Team will meet with a local charity that has assisted families across Tipton for a number of years. The first meeting will seek to identify a number of co-production ways of working and to identify possible alternative locations in and around Tipton to ensure the group remain operational throughout the build. The team will work to enable the charity to find a new base. They will support with exploring empty units and low cost rentals within the local shopping area and utilise their relationships with planning and regeneration officers within the Council.

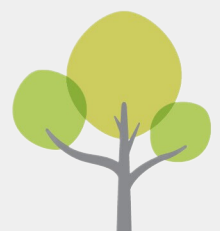


The Tipton Neighbourhood Partnership Team have recently worked with two community groups that operate within a 5-minute walk of each other. Interestingly the two groups, St. Pauls Community Association and “The Well” knew very little about each other even though they operate in close proximity and both have been long established. The two groups have now met on a number of occasions to discuss the possible relocation of the “The Well” (Black Country Foodbank) to St. Paul’s Community Centre, Brick Kiln Street in Tipton.



The room and facilities on offer at St. Paul’s Community Centre are ideal and offer greater scope for future development along with the potential for joint partnership working between the two groups. Negotiations are currently taking place regarding rental agreements and financial assistance with this will be available through Sandwell MBC discretionary grant fund via the council’s ascendant portal that is due to go ‘live’ before the end of August 2023. The Levelling Up re-development in Union Street is due start March/ April 2024, it is hoped that “The Well” will relocate if all goes to plan in October/ November or before Christmas 2023.

The Tipton Neighbourhood Partnership Team are now in regular contact with the Strategic Lead for Assets, Land & Commercial and have offered further support to him and his team regarding future business and community consultation events regarding the “Tipton Levelling Up Fund”. The Tipton Neighbourhood Partnership Team have recently received a request for similar assistance in terms of support for the relocation of “The Murray Hall Trust Charity Shop”, a meeting is due to take place before the end of August 2023 to progress this.



# A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

## Support to local organisations (including new build projects)

The team are highly experienced in practising Asset Based Community Development and their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the areas they cover means that they can easily recognise opportunities for co-production. One of the team's strengths is their ability to take a pro-active approach to neighbourhood working.



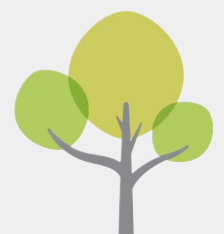
In Smethwick, the team have worked towards the council's strategic objective: **A Connected and Accessible Sandwell** by helping to address community concerns about road layout and infrastructure.

After a number of years of unanswered and unaddressed concerns, the team encouraged residents to raise concerns and articulate their questions about the road layout, increased traffic and parking issues in relation to the building of a new Place of Worship in Smethwick and the new Midlands Metropolitan University (MMU) Hospital.

The site of the new MMU hospital had been exacerbating local concern and questions around how the congestion and parking issues and infrastructure in the area will impact on the local community. The team supported residents to build their confidence and capacity to influence and understand the process that needs to be taken with local Councillors and senior officers. The team advocated for residents and requested Highways attend Ward Partnership meetings to explain more about the rationale and how they expect the concerns to be alleviated.



In addition to this, the team supported the 'Near neighbours' meetings that were organised by the new hospital's engagement team and they helped the hospital reach more local residents. In turn, this enabled the local community to both raise their concerns and have an opportunity for face to face dialogue with hospital directors.



## Community Partnership Team The Innovation Fund



The Community Partnership Innovation Fund offers an opportunity to work collaboratively within the voluntary sector to develop and deliver projects that are original and creative and are co-designed, community focused and responding to communities’ needs.



A diverse range of projects received a grant from the Community Partnership Innovation Fund. The funding has enabled projects to begin delivery within 4 weeks of the project being agreed, reducing delays in delivery and enabling team members and grassroots organisations to have access to funds that support innovative projects within their towns and neighbourhoods.






All applicants have needed to demonstrate how they meet community partnership objectives:

- To help communities become more resilient
- Demonstrate an innovative approach to service delivery
- Strong emphasis on partnership working
- Project demonstrates sustainability
- Deliver services that bridge gaps in the current market
- Meets identified local need (improve quality of life, reduce demands in service)
- Project offers value for money

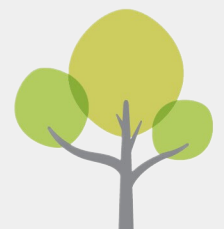


### Community Partnership Grants awarded 2022/23


Organisation	Strategic Objective	Activity
		<p>Langley Falls prevention</p> <p>A holistic service to support older people in the community and in the home with exercise safety and wellbeing. The project has developed into a partnership with Wolverhampton University and the local Hospital Trust that now sees young trainee Physiotherapists gain experience in community-based therapy.</p>

Organisation	Strategic Objective	Activity
		<p>Hate Crime project (toolkit)</p> <p>Toolkit developed to help address Hate Crime, raise awareness and provide support to vulnerable communities. Developing a number of videos aimed at welcoming new communities in their own language and helping them to access support and knowledge around Hate Crime.</p> <p>The grant helped fund the design and facilitation of 6x workshops in each of Sandwell's towns that engage, inform, build capacity on reporting and gathering intelligence to help further inform Hate Crime strategy and policy.</p>
<p>The Sacred Chain</p>		<p>Planning and delivery of an 11-week course aimed at young people aged 7-15 years who attend the Cradley Heath Masjid. The course was developed due to the tragic outcome of a Hate Crime incident that led to local young people feeling unsafe when they travelled to and from their local mosque.</p>
		<p>Developing both energy efficiency and renewable energy options reports across 20 Sandwell voluntary sector managed community buildings.</p> <p>Giving organisations (and the Local Authority where relevant) information and detailed knowledge about how to reduce costs, maximise assets and access to resources, in order to improve efficiency.</p>

Organisation	Strategic Objective	Activity
		<p>Wellbeing youth club based in Wednesbury town centre. The project is based around creating a youth club that has a focus on mental health. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the youth club experienced a significant increase of young people attending sessions who needed support with their mental health.</p> <p>The group aims to meet every 3 weeks (this was suggested by the young people), enabling the club to become established within the local area.</p>
		<p>Homework club The team are regularly supporting up to 20 families to ensure young people can enjoy both extracurricular activity and also benefit from homework support.</p> <p>The club ensure all students have access to both the internet and digital equipment to support learning.</p>
<p>Yew Tree Community Association</p>		<p>Yew Tree Community Orchard</p> <p>This project will develop a community fruit garden adjacent to the external fencing at the Community Centre.</p> <p>Once trees are developed, the fruit will be available for local residents to pick and consume, supporting both local cost of living, food poverty and healthy eating.</p>





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		<p>Youth activity in Rowley Regis Developing activities for young people in the Rowley area. The project delivers a variety of activity to safely engage young people. Activities include cooking, music and dance.</p> <p>The grant helped fund play and stay sessions/youth provisions and resources for these sessions. An average of 25 young people have attended each session since start up and over 350 families also received corporate Zoo passes to attend Dudley Zoo for free.</p> <p>Participants have fed back that the sessions are a fun way to make new friends and cook food.</p>

### Looking ahead to 2023/24

The team will continue to build on what’s been achieved this year, embracing the ABCD approach and identifying opportunities to meet the council’s strategic objectives. This in turn will ensure the team continues to deliver on Vision 2030.

For Sandwell’s residents and voluntary sector organisations, it’s been an incredibly challenging 12 months. With inflationary pressures, a growing demand for affordable housing and the energy crisis, the year ahead will no doubt be a testing time. The team will endeavour to tailor their work, pro-actively and collaboratively to utilise the ABCD approach and the relationships they have established within their respective towns.

