



# Local People, Local Views, We are Guided By You.

Report  
July 2023 DRAFT



Engaging  
Communities  
Solutions

**healthwatch**  
Sandwell



Sandwell Health  
and Care Partnership



Oldbury

Rowley Regis

Smethwick

Tipton

Wednesbury

West Bromwich

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## Healthwatch Sandwell

Healthwatch Sandwell is the independent consumer champion for health and social care services in Sandwell. Our role is to champion the consumer interests of those using the services and to give local people an opportunity to speak out about their concerns. We listen to views, concerns, and compliments about services to help shape and improve them, enabling people to access the best quality and most appropriate care for their needs.

We capture intelligence and views from local people through a number of sources and pass findings to commissioners and service providers in order to monitor, analyse, investigate and challenge how services are delivered.

## Guided by You

Healthwatch Sandwell were commissioned by Sandwell Health and Care Partnership to undertake citizen and public engagement through a series of public workshops across the 6 towns of West Bromwich, Tipton, Oldbury, Smethwick, Rowley Regis and Wednesbury. As these were aimed at capturing local views and ideas for change, we called these events Guided by You.

## Sandwell Heath & Care Partnership

Sandwell Health and Care Partnership is the local Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). The Sandwell Place Partnership is called the Sandwell Health and Care Partnership.

### **Who are they?**

Sandwell Health and Care Partnership is a partnership of health, social care, voluntary and community organisations who are working together to improve people's life choices and health outcomes.

They aim to work more closely together to support communities in Sandwell and reduce the widening gaps in health inequalities by not just focusing on health; but the wider determinants such as employment, education, lifestyle, housing and the local environment.

The partnership includes:

- The Voluntary sector, represented by Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)
- Healthwatch Sandwell
- Primary Care Networks (General Practice)
- Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Services
- Public Health
- Housing
- Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board

### **What are they trying to achieve?**

The purpose of the Sandwell Health and Care Partnership (SHCP) is to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities for all people who live and work within Sandwell's rich, diverse and multicultural communities. The SHCP Board recognise that many people in Sandwell experience deprivation and disadvantage which results in poorer health outcomes and reduced life expectancy.

**Source: [Blackcountryics.org.uk](https://blackcountryics.org.uk)**

## Sandwell Town Teams

Healthwatch were commissioned to support the emerging Sandwell Town Teams in relation to community priorities around health and wellbeing through holding a series of public workshops.

Each of the 6 towns will have a core multi-professional team (inclusive of community health, social care, mental health, public health, pharmacy, housing, social prescribers). They will:

- Be data informed
- Share records
- Have a proactive approach – utilisation of population health data to create a local 'at risk' register (the most vulnerable).
- Provide holistic support
- Be reactive – single referral & trusted assessor
- Create local health & wellbeing hubs with co-located teams



## Context

The purpose of the workshops was to identify key priorities for local people around health and social care and the wider determinants of health such as social, economic, educational and employment factors.

This in turn is planned to support the priorities of Sandwell Health and Care Partnerships Town Teams.

## Methodology

Healthwatch, in conjunction with Sandwell Health and Care Partnership, developed a series of 4 questions which were used to ask participants at each of the events.

These questions were:

**What is on the minds of local people in .....and the surrounding areas at the moment?**

**Healthier Communities (in the presentation) highlighted targeting key areas of proactive and preventative measures to support citizens relating to:**

**Obesity, Alcohol Reduction, Mental Health, Smoking Cessation, Child Education**

**Do you feel these are the priorities for local people and the communities around .....?**

**What do you feel are the other main challenges for residents of .....? What needs to change?**

**What do you feel are the top 3 priorities for change / investment in .....and the surrounding areas?**

## Workshop Promotion and Attendees

To be as inclusive as possible for patients, service users, citizens, community representative and providers of services, we promoted the events through social media, through community and provider networks and most importantly through extensive leafleting of local towns and communities and public venues.

The attendance at each event has been between 40 and 60 people and we have engaged with over 300 people capturing an array of valuable insight on ideas for change, issues and priorities for the health and wellbeing of local people.



Sandwell Health and Care Partnership

### Guided By You

Health and Social Care Services  
Be part of making changes in Rowley Regis



Wednesday 14th June 2023  
12 pm - 2 pm  
A BSL interpreter can be provided if required

Blackheath Coronation Club  
43 George Ave,  
Blackheath,  
Rowley Regis  
B65 9BD

To book a place email [info@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk) or call 07732 683 463  
Food and refreshments will be provided. Please let us know if you have any dietary requirements



Sandwell Health and Care Partnership

### Guided by You

Health and Social Care Services  
Be part of making changes in Oldbury



26th April 2023  
12 - 2 pm  
St James Church  
Shelsley Avenue  
Lion Farm Estate  
Oldbury  
B69 1BG

To book a place email [info@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk) or call 07732683463  
Food and refreshments will be provided. Please let us know if you have any dietary requirements  
A BSL interpreter can be provided if required



## Guided by You Health and Social Care Changes in Rowley Regis

Healthwatch Sandwell is an independent champion for people who use health and social care services, our role includes finding out what matters to people to help make sure their views shape the support they need.

We are working with Sandwell Health and Care Partnership to capture the patient and service user experience in helping to make change. We would like local people from Rowley Regis to share their views on what is important to you in order to help us shape local services. We are Guided by You.

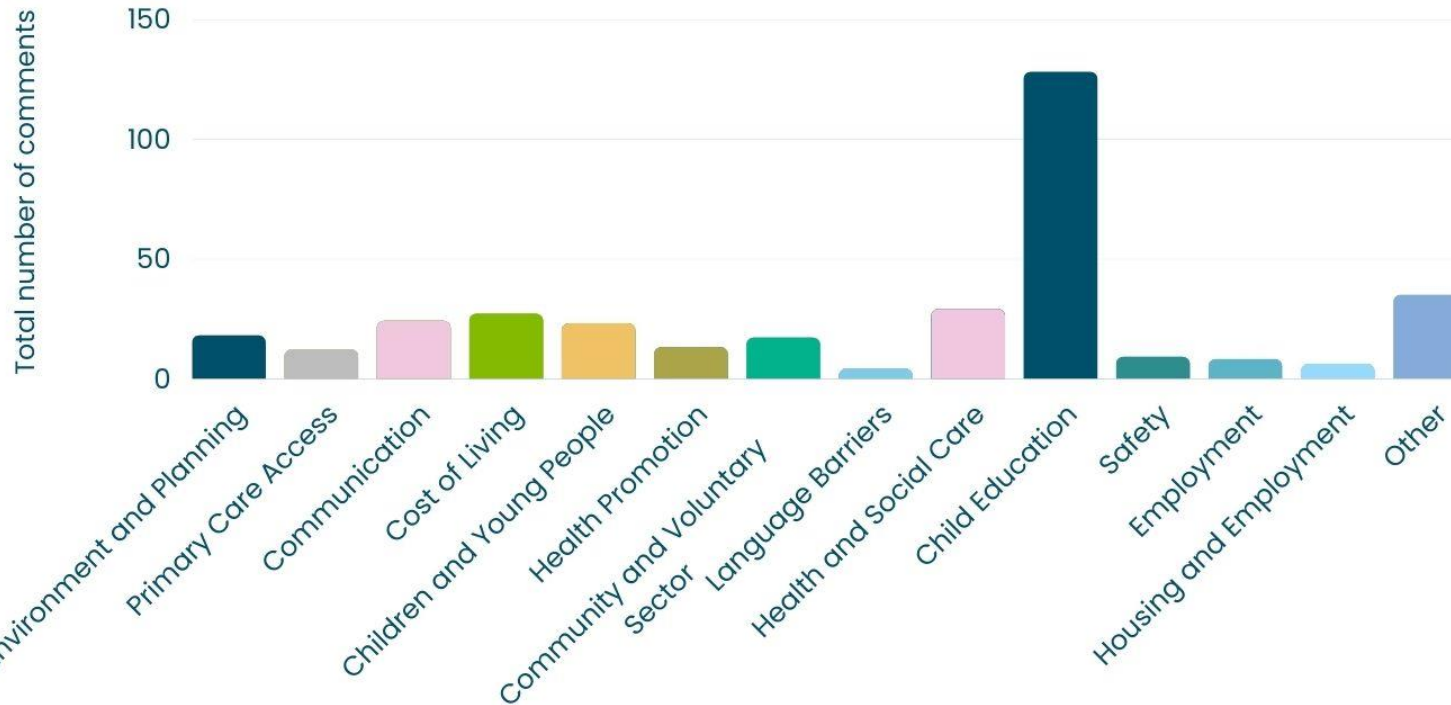
Come and join our workshop on Wednesday 14th June 2023 at Blackheath Coronation Club 43 George Ave, Blackheath, Rowley Regis B65 9BD 12-2 pm and share your views on what changes need to take place. Joining instructions are overleaf.

## Health Inequalities

As part of the presentation and support of the development of the Town Teams approach the data sets from each town were used as a backdrop to highlight some of the challenges that people face in our local communities but were also used to stimulate some of the conversations within each of the workshops.

We recorded the total number of comments made by attendees at each six Town Team workshops to see what really matters to local people. We arranged the comments by theme.

The chart below shows what people are saying and how often they mention it across all six towns.



"Unavailability of GP's and access to appointments"

"Demoralising when you have to keep telling the same story over again"

"Language barriers"

"We need to invest in prevention such as healthier lifestyles"

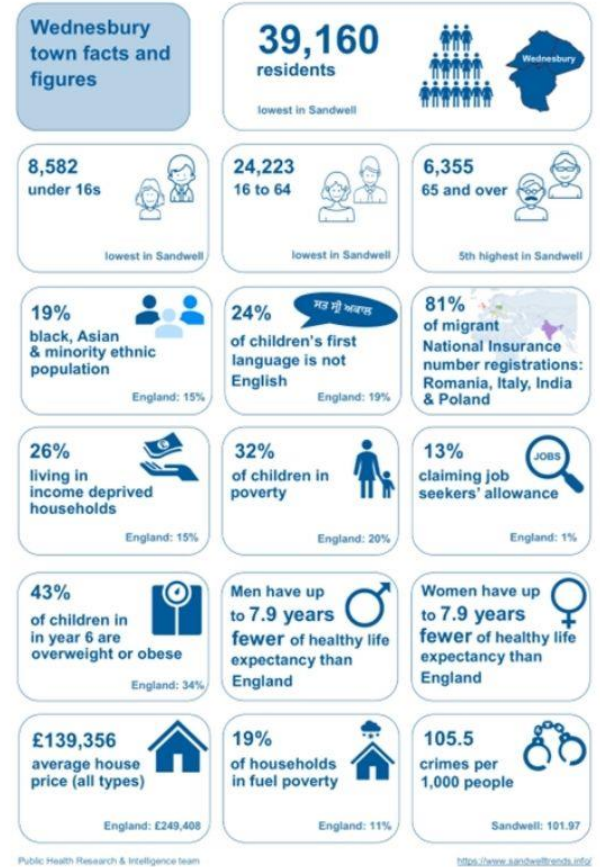
"Travel costs for hospital appointments"

"Need extra mental health support"

"Issue with professional data sharing"

"Damp homes and houses"

"Mental Health should now be top priority"



Public Health Research & Intelligence team

<https://www.sandwellcouncil.gov.uk>

## Guided By You West Bromwich

### What is on the mind of local people in West Bromwich and the surrounding wards at the moment?

#### Primary Care Access

Unavailability of GP's and access to appointments.

Language barriers and digital access and inconsistency of booking appointments online and digital exclusion particularly for elderly people.

Worrying, people with long term health conditions want ongoing support whilst in hospital and as part of home support.

- Getting a GP appointment particularly for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Need extra mental health support. 6 weeks of support is not enough and having to go back on the waiting list. Confusion if you can self-refer back into mental health services or do you have to go back to your GP.
- Residents not being informed of services available locally.

Accessing GP services, waiting times and appointment availability is a problem and we want to be more informed about what is going on locally around changes in health and social care particularly for underrepresented groups.

GP digital appointments doesn't work for everyone.

There is a huge difference across Sandwell and West Bromwich when it comes to GP quality and access. There is also a problem with private companies taking over Primary Care Networks and then limiting or diluting services locally. Are we recruiting new GPs, or do we still have an ageing GP base and what is being done to solve this issue?

***"Many patients don't know what services are provided at their GP surgery and the detail of different practitioners. GP's need to promote more what they provided. "***

#### Communication

Lack of communication with other agencies such as between the patient, GP, hospital etc e.g., letter for follow up appointment not sent to me from the GP.

Many people don't know how to access low level anxiety and mental health support other than through the GP. We need a one stop shop and more Community Navigators.

GP's need to be more active in promoting what they can offer such as ANP's, (Advanced Nurse Practitioners) nurses, pharmacist prescribers.

***"Telling your story once to professionals is a must Its very demoralising when you have to keep telling the same story over again. Why is there such an issue with professional data sharing? "***

#### Health Services

Need to look at seasonal mental health and isolation. In winter some people don't want to go out and talk to people.

Hospital treatment waiting times in some areas are poor for elected surgery.

Still not sure how Town Teams will help with some of the wider determinants of health and socio-economic factors.

We have a massive shortage of Care Workers in Sandwell. What are we doing to tackle this issue?

#### Housing

We have a lot of damp homes and houses with multiple occupancy. We also need to strengthen the laws on private landlords and more fines if they don't improve living conditions.

### **Cost of Living**

Cost of living in particularly energy bills and travel costs to hospital appointments.  
Energy prices and poor diet due to financial issues will have a major impact on physical health and mental health. We need budgeting support for people. It's not just going to affect those who are in poverty but those who work and are going to be struggling to manage their financial situations.  
Eatwell, cook well, Change for life vouchers and access to these services. Look at health impact zones like there is with alcohol and planning.

### **Children and Young People**

In West Bromwich Town centre you can see children and teenagers under 18 vaping. The cost of living is and will have an impact on mental health and GP's by not having face to face appointments is a challenge. We need to have conversations with people about all factors in their lives.  
Food, obesity, and exercise seems to be overlooked. Too much convenience food and do people in West Bromwich think about exercise? It's too easy to give a child fast food.  
Organisations to stop referring people and take ownership and help people over longer periods and follow ups.

**Healthier Communities (in the presentation) highlighted targeting key areas of proactive and preventative measures to support citizens relating to: Obesity, Alcohol Reduction, Mental Health, Smoking Cessation and Child Education.**

**Do you feel these are the priorities for local people and the communities around West Bromwich?**

### **Communication**

Community tailored support for mental health and debt advice  
Understanding other cultures and asking the right questions. No one should be excluded, and everyone should feel welcome.  
Language barriers lead to the fear of not accessing services.  
Build on the Route2Wellbeing portal that exists. Route2Wellbeing.  
Portal website signposting for advice and guidance.  
With a diverse ethnic population in West Bromwich, we have a lot of basic literacy needs. This impacts on education, employment, and opportunities and in turn lifestyle opportunities.

### **Building Resilience**

People need reassurance from local and central government about the future as there is too much turmoil and as a result more reliance on coping mechanism such as tobacco and alcohol.  
Lifestyle issues are really important, and many people locally do not take these seriously enough.

### **Mental Health**

Why are CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) targets not being met? And are we using COVID as an excuse due to missed targets. Systems are not working over the phone for many.



***“Map what already exists and consolidated efforts on behalf of Sandwell Health and Care Partnership as a collective to promote what services already exist. Work closer with the community and voluntary sector to deliver more services.”***

***“Communication between GPs and consultants needs to be improved.”***

***“Why can’t we have a system which identifies when people need check-up such as blood pressure?”***

***“I have a condition which is linked to another but it’s not fully MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team) approached.”***

### **Health Promotion**

We need to invest in prevention such as healthier lifestyles reduce smoking and substance dependency and invest heavily in public health. Information access is key.

Long term impact of health issues on families and on services. There needs to be more investment in prevention.

There is a chance that we have increased obesity if people buy cheaper food which is often higher in fat and salt content and can sometime be poor quality.

People in West Bromwich may be dying earlier not just because of lifestyle factors but from a legacy of poor housing, previous heavy industry and being on road corridors with heavy pollution such as the M5 / M6.

The sheer quantity of fast-food outlets in West Bromwich is too high.

Cheap and the availability of alcohol locally is an issue / factor.

Mental Health should now be top priority and the link to healthier lifestyles.

We don’t know what the potential is of social prescribing and how the work or delivery is being measured. Who is measuring this?

There are women’s health hubs being piloted elsewhere. Can we look into these as a priority such as understanding the menopause as this affects staffing levels in health and social care services?

### **Housing**

We need to invest in supporting people on our streets who are vulnerable.

Support for refugees and asylum seekers.

### **Environment**

Need to protect green spaces and we also need to increase greenery in the town.

***“We need to target childhood obesity with a family centred approach and encourage / or have incentives for an active lifestyle.”***



## What do you feel are the other main challenges for residents of West Bromwich? What needs to change?

*“Need to promote Communities in Sync better; particularly for those who are lonely / isolated, and those in need.”*

### Community and Voluntary Sector

Where is the third sector in the Sandwell Health and Care Partnership and how is funding being invested more here. Voluntary organisations are the experts (decades of experience).

We can take courses into the community. We need a stronger relationship with faith communities and leaders.

Do we know what services already exist and how people access them?

Massive gaps in social prescribing, in relation to area, need and timescales.

Many people don't know where to go for low level mental health support.

Need to invest in things like Communities in Sync.

### Housing and Employment

There is a reducing number of quality social housing and an issue with private landlords in West Bromwich and the surrounding areas.

Public information portal where people can access information “Sandwell Google” there are too many local websites.

Conduct community asset mapping to highlight what already exists.

Learning campus on Midland Metropolitan University Hospital focused on growing the future workforce.

Attitudes to education needs to be improved in primary and secondary schools and support for parents. Need more after school support but it costs a lot for parents.

We need more apprenticeships. Some though pay very low and young people can't afford to do apprenticeships.

Health and social care students and student nurses used to get bursaries to encourage people to take up such courses, but these have been removed.

Not investing in nurses and care workers is an issue.

### Health and Social Care

We need to monitor service, are they fit for purpose such as social services and care. We need to invest to Community Support Workers and Care Workers as we have a shortage, and the system is fragile.

Services need to be made aware for people in the community (areas where people are visiting such as local shops, schools and community centres).

People are attending Urgent Treatment Centres as they either don't know what services are available locally or as they cannot get an appointment. People need to be informed of their options.

### Other

There have been so many initiatives over the years, what is different this time?

Need to invest in talking to Neighbourhood Officers, Police and Fire Brigade as they are also on the ground.

*“We also need to invest in employment support specialist support is needed to help those who have been out of work for long periods of time. ”*  
*“The car navigation centre was mentioned in the presentation. What does this mean for local people? And how do they access it?”*

## What do you feel are the top 3 priorities for change / investment in West Bromwich and the surrounding wards?

### Primary Care Access

- Migrants often have good qualifications but cannot afford to get them converted, can something be done to make this easier.
- Many families have low aspirations, and some youth need more mentoring. They need to feel part of society.
- There used to be bursaries for students wanting to go into nursing. They need to be brought back and an incentive for people to go into nursing professions
- Language is a learning barrier for many in local schools but also attainment and learning are affected by bad behaviour and disrupted lessons. This comes from experience.
- School attendance and pupil discipline must be addressed as poor discipline affects the whole class and education. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Need more change in education subjects such as budgeting and life skills. We need to prepare children and teenagers for future life.
- We need more breakfast clubs, free school meals and after school clubs. Children won't learn if they are hungry.
- Air quality affects health and particularly in high urban areas like parts of West Bromwich and this also affects children's development.
- We seem to have a lack of motivation for many people to do exercise. The Black country is one of the most inactive areas in England as data shows.



**Guided by You – Tipton & Surrounding Wards – Tipton Muslim Community Centre**  
**What is on the mind of local people in Tipton and the surrounding wards at the moment?**

Cost of Living and inflation – cost of heating, eating, bills and particular on the impact on the vulnerable, children and the elderly.

We have heard about the care navigation centre, what is it, what does this entail and how do people access this.

There needs to be more support for people from ethnic minority communities who are pre-diabetic or diabetic to understand the condition, helping to self managing the condition and health checks. There is still a back log of people getting their annual health checks for diabetes.

Yes, however the waiting lists for specialist services and elected surgery are having an impact on the quality of life and mental health. People are having their appointments at hospital cancelled at the last minute with no update or communication.

Linked to obesity and the pandemic we are having an increase in diabetes and we need more people to access support.

**Healthier Sandwell**

There needs to be more advice and support for ethnic minority communities who have a high prevalence of diabetes.

Need more collaborative working so people know where to access the right services and not just through the GP.

During this cost-of-living crisis many people are eating convenience food due to the cost of supermarket food.

They are priorities but others that are important in parts of Tipton are educational attainment and supporting health.

Literacy in some of our ethnic minority communities. Many people still do not know about preventative measures and to reduce risk of respiratory, heart, kidney conditions.

We need to really support people to make better lifestyle choices and encourage people to take up more exercise.

Physical Health has a huge impact on mental health.

Mental Health – more support for local people to be helped to develop their own mental health support plans.



Cost of Living



Health Checks



Diabetes advice and support



More Literature in Ethnic Communities



Heart and Kidney Health advice

**Healthier Communities (in the presentation) highlighted targeting key areas of proactive and preventative measures to support citizens relating to: Obesity, Alcohol Reduction, Mental Health, Smoking Cessation and Child Education.**

**Do you feel these are the priorities for local people and the communities around Tipton?**

### **What people told us**

It is very difficult to navigate the health care system when English is not your first language. It needs to be simplified such as a one stop navigation hub.

Health and Social Care needs to work better together and use one IT system.

Appointments with GPs are a problem, and we don't understand why, and also why we are not able to access extended hours GP's.

Waiting times in hospitals, why can't we use a local hub.

Mental health issues in ethnic minority communities are hidden and go undiagnosed.

Not enough staff in health settings and social care, we need incentives to encourage people into the professions.

Language barriers for people to access health services and also to be supported to ask the right questions when talking to practitioners.

Counselling services for Ethnic Minority Communities - specialist services.

### **Children and Young People**

Anti-social behaviour around Tipton needs to be dealt with.

Racism and discrimination towards ethnic minorities is still an issue in Tipton.

Free facilities needed such as swimming, exercise, and outdoor activities for all people.

Lack of youth clubs in the area.



**Lets talk about mental health in ethnic minority communities**



**One stop community navigation hubs**



**Racism and discrimination is still an issue in Tipton**



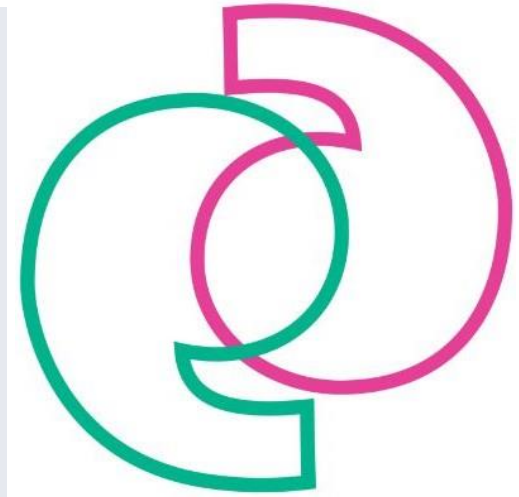
**Swimming, exercise and more for young and elderly**

**What do you feel are the other main challenges for the Residents of Tipton? What needs to change?**

**Education**

Education – the pandemic has had a huge impact on teaching and literacy, and we have seen some children’s educational attainment deteriorate.

We need to start teaching families more around health eating, batch / healthy cooking, active lifestyles, reduction in obesity and incentives to reduce weight and the risks and impacts of diabetes.



**What do you feel are the top 3 priorities for change / investment in Tipton and the surrounding wards?**

Protecting our parks and green spaces and clean up the canal.

Reduce fly tipping and dumped household items outside people’s homes which makes the area look dirty.

Invest in more support and health facilities in Tipton Community Centres. Use Tipton Community Centres more for youth activities.

Neptune Health Centre has an out of hours GP service which also runs at weekends, this is not promoted or known by local people.

More advice and guidance for young families around budgeting, lifestyles, cooking and activities.

The Holiday Activities Fund (HAF) programme needs to be better promoted and in particular for those who are in employment but just managing financially.

**Guided by You – Wednesbury & Surrounding Wards – Wednesbury Apostolic Church**

**What is on the mind of local people in Wednesbury and the surrounding wards at the moment?**

**Environment**

Friar Park – more investment to tackle drug, alcohol misuse and anti-social behaviour. Recently we have had more PCSO presence but the local view and support of the Police needs improving.

**Health and Social Care**

Mental Health – people don't know where to go for support. Need more information locally.

Access to blood tests taking too long or having to wait for GP's to notify you.

Where will local Wednesbury people go when the new hospital is opened. There needs to be wider communication. Will the urgent treatment care be as good at Walsall Manor and/or the Midland Metropolitan Hospital?

Financial support for those struggling when they have numerous and regular health appointments.

Lack of appointments to see a doctor and physio are still not seeing some patients face to face, and referrals being sent to the wrong place.

Teams not working together and there needs to be one system to communicate better.

Lack of support for health conditions, only offering support for some over the phone.

Mental Health services are not based in Wednesbury, and this is true of many services.

When the new hospital is opened there will there be more of a focus on us going to Walsall Manor, making it less local and hard to get to. Communication between Walsall Manor hospital and local Sandwell GP's needs improving.

COVID backlog, cancelled appointments, some people are not going to their GP's as they are waiting too long for an appointment.

**Community**

Invest more in the Millennium Centre as we offer a wide range of support, projects and programmes. Millennium Centre could be used more as a Community Hub for additional services.

Wednesbury Art Gallery Wednesday Men's Mental Health group is a good resource.

**Local Support**

Lack of help for people with learning disabilities and for carers. Sandwell Council and some Social Workers are not offering enough support. Some Social Workers don't listen to the needs of the carers and the individual in order for the client to keep independence.

Older person groups are not very well advertised locally.

***“Need more community hubs for elderly people. As more and more services become digital this is increasing loneliness and isolation.”***

### Cost of Living

Cost of living crisis affecting quality of life and mental wellbeing.  
Can people afford heating.  
Can local people afford food.  
Cost of prescriptions.  
Increased poor health as a result of food and heating costs.  
Patients are not informed about out of hours appointments.  
Cost of living – need to continue with the warm spaces and provide support and food banks, these have been a lifeline for many people.  
More children locally in poverty and the potential issues of youth crime  
Continue with the warm spaces and more debt advice support.  
Lack of support for benefits advice generally.



*“Warm spaces are still needed; these have been a lifeline for many people.”*

**Healthier Communities (in the presentation) highlighted targeting key areas of proactive and preventative measures to support citizens relating to: Obesity, Alcohol Reduction, Mental Health, Smoking Cessation, Child Education.**

**Do you feel these are the priorities for local people and the communities around Wednesbury?**

### Health and Social Care

All of these are priorities but probably the most important is obesity and the impact on other health related issues such as risk of diabetes, skeletal issues etc. We need to see a commitment and priority from this partnership reducing obesity. Fast food is cheap and convenient though.  
Development of cooking clubs for free.  
Although Sandwell Leisure Trust offer some good packages, we need prices to be reduced and even free for young children.  
These are priorities that impact on health and wellbeing however some of these are down to lifestyle choices, how can we get a large proportion of the population to become more active and to have a healthier lifestyle.



*“If poverty was addressed maybe some of these targeted areas would not be as bad. People smoke and misuse of alcohol as coping mechanisms and sometimes due to mental health. We need cheaper and easier access to fresh fruit and vegetables.”*



### Local Services

With the cost-of-living young people need early budgeting advice to learn before adulthood.

Need focused activities for people with early on set dementia. The dementia navigators are under too much pressure and there is a significant increasing demand for the service. People are waiting months to see their Dementia Support Worker.

Other issues include access to vapes for young people and the increased use of cannabis in young people.

Not everyone knows what's on offer to support the issues raised around healthier communities.

There seem to be few or no mental health services in Wednesbury and the surrounding areas.

***"I have been waiting for over 3 months for a mental health referral. Patients have said that they have been waiting for over 6 months for a referral."***

### Community

Offers and vouchers for people to use more leisure facilities. Things have also been made worse by people not being able to get appointments. The system is all blocked up.

More prevention support in schools.

Delayed diagnosis for special educational needs and the impact on education. Assessments need to be quicker.

Life skills in schools such as:

Money management

Cooking skills

More apprentices' opportunities and more investment in people taking up jobs local with large employers.

Need a private housing support strategy as people are not getting the repairs and landlords are increasing rents.

Poverty – these impacts on many of the 5 priorities above. E.g. buying healthy food, coping with alcohol, and the need to break the cycle.

More support and awareness around domestic abuse and the impact on children.

### What do you feel are the other main challenges for the Residents of Wednesbury? What needs to change?

#### The Environment

Green Spaces, they are planning to build a large housing estate at the back of the Millennium Centre of Friar Park estate, this is one of the only green spaces that we have in the area. Can we ensure that there will be investment in the local area and allocate some quality green space. Also, who are these houses for?

Mental Health – people use this green space and families and for community events.

Wednesbury is a key traffic route to and from the motorway and into Walsall. Air pollution is a major concern. We need more incentives for people to use public transport.

We also need the bus companies to speed up their programme of using cleaner buses in and around Wednesbury.

## Children & Young People

There is also a lack of opportunity in Wednesbury for afterschool activity which reflects on the levels of antisocial behaviour.

There is though some great support through the WHO project at Friar Park Millennium Centre.

Need to invest in community hubs for more advice session including basic health conditions. Need more social prescribers and in particular in community settings.

Schools don't teach enough life skills i.e., cooking, paying bills, money management. We also need to work with local business and create more apprentices.

We need to protect our green spaces for future generations.

Parenting support need more local services as good parenting is key to life skills and confidence. Need more parent support centres.

***"I've heard about the HAF programme in Sandwell, who can benefit and what does it entail."***



***Millenium Community Centre – "We run a great Healthy Activities and Food Programme (HAF) to give children and young people breakfast and dinner, and we get 80 plus children a day. We are also inclusive doing one to one session with children with additional needs and we support families in learning healthy lifestyles with cooking sessions and sports".***

## Health and Social Care

Wednesbury, we feel is the forgotten town when it comes to health and social care services. They seem to be mostly placed in West Bromwich and Oldbury.

Can people in Wednesbury have a choice which hospital they want to go to when in an Ambulance?

GP access for dementia patients, they can't get through for regular medication and there is little signposting or referrals for non-clinical dementia support.

Better support for people coming off long term medication. Currently there is not enough support to help people come off medication safely. Patients should be reviewed regularly.

## Health and Social Care (continued)

Community discharge from hospital for some is taking too long from Walsall Manor and Sandwell and it is taking too long to get the right care packages in place including aids and adaptations. Sandwell STAR is good, but some assessments mean patients are getting the limited support they need.

Obesity – there is a lack of knowledge in some of the young generations in how to cook or even batch cook. Too much emphasis on what is quick and easy. Basic foods are getting expensive and cheap food is being purchased more.

Most people don't know how to navigate the health system as the GP's is seen as the go to. GP's need to promote better what patient's options are such as Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Nurses, Social Prescribers etc.

Continuity of care with same health professionals is important. We need to stop that you can only talk about one health condition as many are interrelated.

Need to support migrant communities to access health care services.



*“More investment in lifestyle support for people who are overweight / have diabetes.”*

*“Having to repeat yourself when you speak to somebody from the health care service because there is no communication.”*

## Other

Local buses, we need better access, and the buses are not value for money, which in turn increases isolation.

No contact to the Council by phone and not everyone is online.

More digital support services for the elderly and free training.

Communication with Sandwell Council is very poor as no one seems accountable and it is hard to get to touch with someone to get answers. Also, when you report it online there is no response if the issue has been dealt with.



More affordable and better access to public transport



Speaking to staff at our local council via the phone and better support from them



More digital support for those who need it with free training

## What do you feel are the 3 priorities for change / investment in Wednesbury and the surrounding wards?

More affordable and accessible social activities for more age ranges. In order to:

- Help loneliness and isolation.
- Reduce crime rates in the town.
- Get people moving.
- Build on social capital.

## Health and Social Care

GP services locally need to be more accessible, and it doesn't help that we are on the boundary with Walsall and accessibility to acute services. Need to be back up and running and there needs to be more public information about why GP services have changed so much since COVID-19 pandemic.

Need a none urgent walk in system for Wednesbury, and a better understanding of how the extended hours system works.

We also need more mental health services locally in Wednesbury as a kind of hub.

Lack of Mental health services in and around Wednesbury.

Sign posting services, are there any? Do local people know about them, are service working together such as mental health and substance misuse services?

Better communication and advice on how to understand how to access the correct services for a health condition.

Promotion of local services that are easy to access.

More investment in health prevention and better communication between services.

## Guided by You Smethwick and Surrounding Wards

### What is on the minds of local people in Smethwick, and the surrounding wards at the moment?

#### Health and Social Care

Hospital appointments and getting to hospital appointments is a challenge.

Frustrations of accessing out of hours services.

COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) support in Bearwood is poor. Check-ups have been stopped and the pulmonary rehabilitation service in Hurst Road stopped since the pandemic.

***“Not aware until today's workshop, that you can refer through the Care Navigation Centre.”***

Smethwick – waiting times for blood test and the lack of mental health support locally. We need to know what the mental health offer for low level mental health support.

Waiting times for adult social care support. Structured regulation and monitoring, safeguarding of care homes and adult social care services.

#### Community Services

Demand for digital support yet neglecting face to face services. Duplication in services in the community and voluntary service in providing services.

Bearwood although a ward in Sandwell we feel forgotten in terms of communication and services as we are close bordering Birmingham. We are also seeing an increase in intimidating begging in Bearwood and Smethwick.

We seem to have lost some pride in our community with increasing litter and fly tipping. Main high street areas need a clean-up.

#### Healthy Lifestyles

Bearwood – there are too many fast-food outlets and on the high street there as nearly 20 fast food outlets. This causes a great deal of litter, and it doesn't set a good example for health lifestyles and with the increasing challenge around obesity.



## Environment

Bearwood – There are lots of green spaces and woods and these were really important through the pandemic. They need to be protected and ensure that there is no development.

We also have a good community electronic notice board which could be further utilised. Bearwood also has a good library.

Planning and public health need to work more closely together.

Rubbish on the streets and overcrowding and housing in a state of need or repair. Loneliness and isolation of the elderly population.

Quality of local public services, there seems to be a closed door policy since the pandemic and it's very hard to speak to someone at Sandwell Council to get advice.

People in Smethwick are a creative population and great diversity in cafes and shops. There are vibrant high street economies and day to day living is more local in Smethwick.

Under 5's and older peoples facilities are available but there doesn't seem to be much for people between those age groups.

**Healthier communities target key areas or proactive and preventative measures to support citizens specifically relating to:  
Obesity, Alcohol Reduction, Mental Health, Smoking Cessation, Education**

**Do you feel these are the priorities for local people and communities in Smethwick, Bearwood and the surrounding wards.**

## Health and Social Care

Yes, these are the main priorities, but they are exacerbated by mental health, cost of living and lifestyle choices. There needs to be a public health push on the benefits of healthier living and incentives to do this.

In relation to mental health financial insecurities are exacerbating mental health with the economic uncertainty continuing and the cost of living.

Mental health care in Sandwell needs to be improved.

Mental health is still a taboo subject in some ethnic minority communities.

Not enough early education around life skills such as managing money and learning to cook.

People are going to place like Costa Coffee but then say they have no money. Cheap food is also so easy to access.

Because some people are not having regular health checks there is a danger that people become addicted to certain medications.

***“We also need to ensure that people get reviews on medication. As example as I'm aware of people who have become self-reliant on medication through not having GP reviews.”***

## Housing

Need for more affordable private housing and to reduce houses of multiple occupants.  
Prevent people from leaving large, bulky items on the front of their homes for long periods of time.

## Language Barriers

Many people with English as a second language are finding it very difficult to access the right health care services.

We need more information on social prescribers, who they are, what they provide, where and how to access them.

Although a lot of services are in place, they are inaccessible to many Smethwick communities due to language barriers, poverty. More services need to be based in community centres.  
In relation to obesity within the Asian communities we need to take into consideration cultural diets.



More consideration around cultural diets in regards to obesity



Language barriers when accessing the right healthcare



More information on Social Prescribers

## What do you feel are the other main challenges for residents of Smethwick, Bearwood and the surrounding wards? / What needs to change?

## Community

Parts of Smethwick have had a long periods of poverty driven by inequalities, long term deprivation and education. There are a lack of opportunities for young people.

More education around cooking and healthy lifestyles.

Need more safe places for young people and to discuss issues with social media.

Local pride - need to clean up parts of Smethwick and change the culture so that people take pride in where they live.

General litter in and around the town centres. More education in schools about taking pride in their community.

### **Housing**

Some private housing in Smethwick is a real issue with over occupancy and some landlords are not keeping housing up to an acceptable standard. Some landlords should be legally forced to maintain properties.

### **Health**

Medical support is a huge problem for people when English is not their first language, and it becomes difficult to navigate the health system.

NHS dentistry pricing is too confusing on what you have to pay for as a percentage. Needs to be much clearer.

### **What do you feel are the top 3 priorities for change / investment in Smethwick, Bearwood and the surrounding wards?**

#### **Communication**

Preventing service duplication. Better collaboration and reviewing current resources and how we can improve them.

Flexible access, out of hours services and weekend provision is needed.

More sustainable community and voluntary sector support programmes.

Joined up working and accessible health services and more investment in prevention and health start in life. Bring back Sure Start.

#### **Health and Social Care**

GP's and social prescribers should do more events, such as this one.

If nothing gets done as a result of events such as this people lose hope. People need to be fed back to in what is being done or not done and why.

Improvements in local public transport and affordability.

Encourage and promote health living and reduction in takeaways.

Getting the new hospital up and running and invest in local people in employment opportunities, not just clinical staff but all the associated links to the hospital.

Use local community centres as community hubs for low level health intervention. Promote Healthy Sandwell more to local ethnic communities.



## Community and Voluntary Sector

Poverty – Subsidised and affordable services. More support for families on the poverty line and very low-income families.

Pride in our local area and community clean ups.

What happened to Probation Service community payback. We haven't seen this for a while and the scheme could help clean up some of the areas.

Need to ensure there are strong negotiations for enough genuine affordable housing to meet local demand.

Invest in local communities and address local needs. We need further engagement session like this to ensure we consult with as many people as possible on their priorities.

More investment in front line services and more investment in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and community centres.

More business and promotional advice for community centres to better promote what they offer.

There is also over consultation within the community and voluntary sector to access funding for projects.

## Guided by You – Oldbury & Surrounding Wards – St James Community Church

### What is on the minds of local people in Oldbury and the surrounding wards at the moment?

## Housing & Safety

Homeless and intimidating begging around Oldbury centre. We are seeing an increase and there is need for outreach. Also, animal welfare as dogs are being used as a tool for begging.

Too many cars being stolen / vandalised on the Lion Farm estate and the Police do not attend the scene.

In Oldbury some unhealthy homes, with damp, mould, and lack of investment. Sandwell Council are unresponsive to requests to inspect and improve housing.

There is not enough suitable social housing for people with physical disabilities and people are not getting aids and adaptations that they need. The assessment process for aids and adaptations needs to be made fairer.

## **Environmental and Planning Issues**

Litter around McDonald's – Birchfield Island, public health needed to deal with the issue.

Underpass near Aldi / ASDA health hazard and needs a clean-up.

What is happening to Lion Farm playing fields on Rounds Green people are hearing that is to be used for commercial purposes however there has been no consultation.

Lion Farm is a densely populated estate and there is already a lack of quality green space. There is not much for the kids to do in the area.

Trees In Tividale Park not well maintained and causing accessibility issues. This has been a problem for over 5 years and Sandwell Council are aware of the issue.

Lack of proper infrastructure for public transport not encouraging people to stop using cars as much as possible.

Lack of safe areas to exercise around Lion Farm estate.

## **Communication**

Not hearing about things because everything seems to be digital. Need for information and advice for people in different formats.

Since the pandemic and the restructuring of services in the Council it is very difficult to get to contact someone and it is difficult for residents to make complaints.

Ring and Ride service is not reliable and for people with additional needs to access the service to get to Portway Health Centre.

There is a lack of local knowledge of what is available to support people around advice and guidance. There are lots of organisations supporting people, but many people do not know how to access them.

There needs to be more consultation and feedback around where public funds are being spent. There has been talk around levelling up money but who makes the decision on where and how it is spent.

There needs to be a review of the community and voluntary sector in relations to what organisations are delivering in relation to health, wellbeing, support, advice etc. There is a lot of duplication, room for expansion and the need to see how financially sound the organisations are.

***“We aren't always hearing about things if they are shared digitally”***

***“We need information and advice in different formats”***

## Health and Wellbeing

Social Prescribing is not being utilised enough and it is hit and miss whether you are referred to the service.

Mental Health crisis team are over capacity and the service is not good, there are too many people at risk of self-harm.

Long waits for MRI scans at Sandwell and Birmingham and slow process of being referred.

Hospital appointments being cancelled and some even cancelled and the patient has not been informed and still attend the hospital to be told it has been cancelled.

People don't know where to go to access help and are becoming more and more reliant on community centres for advice and support.

Hospitals and GP's not talking to each other and the need for more robust shared records.

We need to know from the people who commission GP services what is the plan to improve access.

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Parents and Carers not knowing what support is on offer to them such as allowances, support at home. Support needs to be made more clearer in a number of settings. Where and how do parents get a true diagnosis for their children.

There needs to be a full assessment of the offer in Sandwell for health prevention and more focused and targeted approaches plus incentives such as subsidised swimming etc.

Sandwell Health and Care Partnership needs to regularly update people on what they are doing and what is being planned to support change.

**Healthier Communities (in the presentation) highlighted targeting key areas of proactive and preventative measures to support citizens relating to:**

**Obesity, Alcohol Reduction, Mental Health, Smoking Cessation, Child Education**

**Do you feel these are the priorities for local people and the communities around Oldbury?**

## Health and Wellbeing

Obesity – Some local keep fit classes are well attended with Weigh to Go scales.

Cooking skills seem to have been lost although there is a lot of advice and support on TV some people have become apathetic over home cooking.

***“Alcohol and Drugs – people need to know where these services are based but some people are reluctant to say they have a problem due to fear, addiction and embarrassment. ”***

## Mental Health

These are priorities however child and adult literacy are big issues and impact of quality of life and accessibility to services.

Drug use and drug dealing concerns and the influence on young people. We are concerned that parts of Oldbury are being used as county lines.

Some young people are not accessing health services as the perception of not being able to access services.

Travelling distances for basic services such as hearing aids.

There is even more loneliness and isolation with the elderly.

Need to make available other quality support services available to help manage issues with mental health provision.

“

***“There is a need for positive influencers in the community”***

***“The service around bereavement support is poor in Sandwell”.***

***“We need better coordination for people with complex needs / more care coordinators.”***



## Housing

Housing access and quality of housing are a big issue in parts of Oldbury and particular around the Lion Farm estate. There is housing development taking place but some of the flats have had no investment in years.

We also need clarity and understanding of social housing allocation policy.

## Child Education

Local SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) diagnosis for children is taking too much time and it is difficult for some families to get an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) in place for their children.

Nursery fees have become unaffordable for many who want to work. There is a need for bursaries to encourage people back into work.

## What do you feel are the other main challenges for residents of Oldbury? What needs to change?

### Health and Wellbeing

Inconsistency of GP access in Oldbury depending on practice and not being offered alternatives.

Residents having to travel to Russell's Hall, City Hospital, Sandwell for appointments. Some of these could be provided locally.

Long queues at the Blood Testing Department (Oldbury Health Centre)

Why aren't people being given a choice if they want a telephone or face to face appointment.

Communication from Primary Care Networks, between GP's and patients, there is a huge variation in services.

More designated food banks and support in Oldbury and the surrounding areas.

### Safety

No police patrolling around Lion Farm estate in the evening and at night and big issue with illegal / not insured motorbikes.

Fear of knife crime amongst young people

Drug dealing and openly smoking cannabis in public places.

### Housing & the Environment

Home improvements on Council Properties, older 60's / 70's housing falling into a state of disrepair.

Repairs through the Council are taking far too long.

Some of the communal areas in the flats are dirty and no cleaning contractors.

Council grass cutting in areas in Oldbury are not regular. My Sandwell portal is hard to use and it is difficult to get any feedback, there is a need for a variety of communication methods to contact the council.

### Children and Young People

Provision for Young People and parents such as after school free activities, cooking classes etc

***"People in Great Barr are often missed out and there is no engagement. Many a time we are not recognised as Sandwell people and many health services are not local."***



Free afterschool activities needed



Waiting times for council property repairs are too long



We need more police patrolling the area

## What do you feel are the top 3 priorities for change / investment in Oldbury and the surrounding wards?

### Community

Make local areas cleaner. It's all well and good cleaning up around the Council House in Oldbury but what about cleaning our local communities. Bring back Probation service and community payback.

### Health and Wellbeing

Improve Mental Health crisis teamwork.

More support for the community and voluntary sector that support people's health and wellbeing. More funding for community-based projects around helping people get back on track, community safety, pride in community projects.

We need better community hubs that are invested in. Lion Farm Action Centre do a great job, but the building is not disability friendly. There also needs to be more support with the current delivery of services.

GP's need to stop presuming that everyone has access and knowledge of IT access.

There needs to be a huge shift in investment to prevention, health education and to encourage people to tackle their health problems and inequalities. We also need to look at the planning system for fast food takeaways or incentives for health food takeaways. Maybe set up a social enterprise with young people and the College.

### Housing and the Environment

More Green Spaces that are looked after by the community.

The green space on the edge of Lion Farm estate need protecting.

More social housing to meet demand.

There is a large housing estate being built by Sandwell and Dudley station in Oldbury. How many of these homes are for social housing and local people.

Efficient management of existing housing stock.

### Young People

Youth clubs and investment in young people and families. Bring back the Surestart programme.

Lack of community support for children and young people.

Information and support across the Borough to keep children and vulnerable people safe online.

For Oldbury and the surrounding areas there are very few youth clubs, it seems to be all reliant on the community and voluntary sector. We need more investment from public health in services for young people.

Families that access benefits can also access other free services and support but in Oldbury and the surrounding areas there are many people that are on the threshold of their income which means they cannot access some free services.

Through the conversations with local people and as highlighted within the report many factors that impact on local people's health and wellbeing are around safety, housing, the environment and youth access. It is recommended that discussions with wider partners take place such as with the Police, Environment and Planning departments with Sandwell Council and wider partners to determine what actions are being undertaking and what actions can be factored in to support local communities.

## Guided by you Rowley Regis and surrounding wards

### What is on the minds of local people in Rowley Regis, Blackheath and the surrounding wards at the moment?

#### Health & Social Care

GP's around the area and the use of the Anima booking system. It's not fit for purpose and many of the older generation either don't use the internet or find it hard to navigate the system. There needs to be choice. Loss of basic services.

Accessing a GP to get a referral. Even such as accessing hydrotherapy you need to get a GP referral. Lack of communication via GP's and the services that they offer.

Remove GP auto phone systems. Look at a universal system where possible.

Similar issue with dentists being able to get an NHS appointment and the NHS charging system is hard to understand.

Social care communication between doctors and the social care system is poor.

Cancer support – where do people go in particular the mental health and wellbeing part.

More accessible information about health issues and paper copies.



GP internet booking systems not fit for purpose, elderly people also struggle



Getting and NHS dental appointment is difficult and NHS dental charging system is hard to understand



More accessible information and paper copies available too

More local support for health issues around cancer, diabetes, and dementia.

Health advice and referrals should not just be through the GP. There is too much reliance on the GP and access is difficult.

Channels open to people who have caring responsibilities such as respite care. Associated with this who to turn to if the carer is in crisis.

List of directories for day centre opportunities for people with dementia.

Better sharing of information on things such as walking groups for people with dementia and their carers.

Would like to see more cultural / community events in the local area. Promotion of community things not just online.

Set up and re-establish PPG (Patient Participant Groups) but give them a stronger voice and make Primary Care Networks more transparent.

Poor environmental maintenance of green spaces and not enough street cleaning for leaves and shrubs.

Costs of additional health services such as dental treatment, ear syringing, quality hearing aids.

The local authority and housing associations don't communicate particularly around accessibility to community services, and support.

**Healthier Communities (in the presentation) highlighted targeting key areas of proactive and preventative measures to support citizens relating to: Obesity, Alcohol Reduction, Mental Health, Smoking Cessation, Child Education**  
**Do you feel these are the priorities for local people and the communities around Rowley Regis, Blackheath and the surrounding wards?**

*“These [above] are the priorities, and we have an increasing issue with young people’s lifestyles. Too much time on social media and online games and not enough physical activity but also more reliance on cheap foods and sugary drinks.”*

*“Some young people are not learning from each other and understanding life skills and communication skills.”*

Great Parks in Sandwell but not enough children using them.

Child education, children’s transition to adulthood is so important. Also there needs to be more emphasis on physical activity and a more away from social media activity.

Yes, however mental health is a priority and a lot of times this is linked to poverty, lifestyle choices and poor access. People need to know all the ways in which they can access mental health services. More awareness on accessing low level mental health support such as Talking Therapies.

**What do you feel are the other main challenges for residents of Rowley Regis, Blackheath, and the surrounding area? / What needs to change?**

**Communication**

Lack of information and communication from Sandwell Health Authority, Sandwell Council and Social Services. Communication is vital between all areas (holistic approach), and we hope that Sandwell Health and Care Partnership addresses this.

Need to filter down to the residents. We feel we are in the dark.

Accessing Council services and talking to someone within the Council since COVID has become a problem.

*“I have learned more today about help than in the last 20 years. This is through talking and listening.”*

**Community Services**

More paid roles for local Community Champions.

We need more investment in community centres. Child education, respect and manners needs to be reaffirmed at all school levels and that children need to learn life skills and resilience.

Need for more community workers on the ground to find out the real facts on what is happening to local people.

More promotion of day centres for people with dementia.

Too many fast-food outlets, need to give incentives for people to buy healthier foods.

More local clubs for kids.

Enforcement of tenancy rules for consistent untidy gardens that are in a consistent state of disrepair.



## What do you feel are the top 3 priorities for change / investment in Rowley Regis / Blackheath and the surrounding wards?

### Health and Social Care

Better communication on what's available in the local area regarding health and wellbeing.

Better access to healthcare records for people in different boundary areas, as it makes it confusing and complicated.

More culturally specific health information and group sessions for various ages and to be community led.

More support for the elderly improving access to services.

Full communication through the same technology for GP's, Hospitals, community nursing and social care.

To share best practice between all Sandwell surgeries as some areas are better than others.

***"More investment in Dementia care services. We have an increase in people with dementia and the impact and support for carers. Walker Grange had a great day service, but it has closed."***

***"There needs to be more dementia support for carers too."***

***"My Mom has severe dementia but is still waiting for an assessment for 3 months, Dementia support locally for people in Tipton is poor there is just too much demand for services."***

***More Police presence and Community Officers will make people feel more secure and reduce crime.***

***"Consistent education for children and more support for those not in education or employment."***

### Community

People to be made aware of what facilities are available in the local area.

More Park Wardens needed in our green spaces.

Better transport links makes it easier for people to get out and reduces isolation.

Invest in people and local infrastructure. We have lots to offer as shown today.

Education for parents, basic life skills training for parents (like the old Sure Start programme).

For carers in crisis need to know how to access better emergency respite care.

## Key Findings from the Guided by You Workshops

### **Many of the services are here.**

From the group discussions several comments were made that many of the services that people need are available in relation to things such as low-level mental health, advice and guidance, wellbeing, support through the community and voluntary sector, and substance misuse. However, there were concerns that many people within the local communities do not know how to access the services.

### **Directory of Access**

Several participants indicated a need for a clearer directory of how to access these services in both digital and paper form. There are already directories from Sandwell Council, SCVO, Public Health, Black Country Foundation Mental Health Trust etc however it is not clear for many on what services are available and how to get the relevant contact details. Although there is currently the Route2Wellbeing directory - [Route2Wellbeing](#)

### **Community and Voluntary Sector**

More support for organisations such as Tipton Muslim Community Centre, that provide a lifeline for many local people. Better communication around what is happening locally, simple, clear, and accessible and in other languages. Sandwell Council website has become inaccessible for both the public and organisations. You can't just talk to someone, and we cannot use COVID as an excuse.

More funding and sustainability of community and voluntary sector organisations. Not everything has to be clinical, and the community of voluntary sector organisations play a vital role and need to invest.



*"We need to promote our Single Point of Access service to the 6 towns of Sandwell. Can partners share a clear and trusted list of people and places we should be promoting? This would lessen the burden in trying to share good services to our communities. Sandwell MBC Operations Lead.*

*On top of these really valuable workshops, we need engagement in some of the peripheral areas such as Great Barr, Hamstead, Stone Cross, Warley, Cape Hill, Darlaston.*



## Volunteering

We need to look at the positive work done by volunteers and staff in community settings. The pandemic has shown us how we can work together and support each other.

## Communities in Sync

It was highlighted at the workshop that Communities in Sync partnership can offer a wide range of support, help and advice services in the community. However, many people in attendance did not know that the service existed.

[CISTESTINTERACTIVENEWJan2021 Final \(communitiesinsync.info\)](#)



There needs to be more recognition of volunteers but also further partnership financial support for community projects that have a positive impact on local people's health and wellbeing.



## Social Prescribing

Table discussions took place around access and varying services provided through social prescribing. It was clear that there are a wide range of organisations including PCN's (primary care networks) delivering social prescribing, Communities in Sync, and community, and voluntary sector organisations. It was however felt that there is disparity in what is delivered, the detail, quality and levels of support, and that social prescribing needs to be mapped in relation to resources, delivery, and geographical gaps.

## Obesity in Children and Young People

It was recognised that there are high levels of childhood, teenage and adult obesity in Sandwell and that the pandemic has exacerbated this locally. It was felt that we have too many available options for fast food – and with food prices increasing due to the cost of living some people are turning to cheaper food options.

We were informed that there is not enough uptake in healthy living services in Sandwell but there are also high levels of inactivity. It was highlighted that initiatives such as Cook Well, Eat Well, Live Well.

Change for life vouchers could improve access to these services. "Look at health impact zones like there is with alcohol and planning".

## Early Intervention and Support

Essential support such as money management, healthy eating and physical activity are key. There have been several views to bring in a programme such as the previous SureStart programme, or Family Hubs.



Supporting families with young children to build resilience, supporting early intervention, and helping children and families on low incomes has been identified as a key priority.

## GP Access

Although this has been highlighted through many partners and the promotion of extended hours has been promoted it is still of concern. Some people also noted that they have been told to call 111 to get advice.

This has been seen to be having an impact on increasing numbers of people using the 111 service and accessing local urgent treatment centres.



GP access has also been highlighted as a continuing issue for many people in West Bromwich.

## Support for People with Disabilities



A number of people with visual and hearing impairments attended the workshop and gave us valuable information on the experiences of accessing health and social care services.

General access to services can be very hard and there can be issues of system inflexibility, for example: needing to call at 8am but the Support Worker does not start until 9am.

Lack of support walking around a hospital when you are blind or visually impaired. Hospital volunteers are very helpful but sometimes you have to wait a long time for them to be available.

It is felt that many organisations and in particular GP's are not applying accessible information standards. There needs to be more awareness around this.

An example given was phoning a deaf patient even though records show communication needs. There have also been instances when the patient has been discharged for not answering the phone.

Voluntary and community sector organisations are having to focus extra time on basic support as services are not working well, which is taking resources away from core support services.

## Affordable and Quality Housing

One key priority identified in the workshop has been the need for more affordable and social housing. Along with this is investing in the existing Council housing stock and improvements. We were also informed that there are many houses of multiple occupation in Sandwell due to the lack of affordable and social housing and many of these houses require vast improvements.

The monitoring of private landlords using homes for HMO's (House in Multiple Occupation) and the poor quality of many private rented homes with landlords not undertaking essential repairs. Is there a robust strategy by the Council to deal with this issue?



**More affordable housing,  
Council house improvements,  
monitoring of private landlords.**



## Employment

Better opportunities for better employment for local communities particular within the local ethnic minority communities. Apprenticeships, better promotion of opportunities in big local employers i.e., Midland Metro, Sandwell Council, NHS. Better transport links to health services particular for those who have a long-term health condition and attend health services on a regular basis.

## Fuel, Food Poverty and Access to Nutritional Food

The impact on mental health and wellbeing has been highlighted as a concern for people in Sandwell in particularly the cost of fuel and heating over the winter period. It is recognised that there is support available for many (see: [www.sandwell.gov.uk/supportingsandwell](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/supportingsandwell)) but there were views that people may not be aware about all the support that they can access. Also noted was the wider impact of lack of access to information particularly on the digitally excluded, older people and those who are vulnerable.

## Green Spaces

Green spaces needed to be protected and there needs to be an initiative to not just protect our green spaces but to encourage more people to use green spaces to support peoples mental, physical health and wellbeing.

## Next Steps

## Acknowledgments

Healthwatch Sandwell would like to thank all the participants who attended the workshops and played a valuable part in contributing their ideas and views on health, social care and the wider determinants for change.

We would like to say a big thank you to all community venue staff and organisers who helped to make these events a success. We would also like to thank local network organisations for helping to promote the events and encouraging people to participate.

If you would like to comment or contribute to the views within this report, please contact Healthwatch Sandwell on:

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