

# Impact of Covid on the Community



# Sources of intelligence

- This chapter focuses on the impact on people and place to the end of July
- Captures the national evidence
- Led by the Community Impact Working Group
- Drawn on local service provider experience, insights and caseload
- Town member workshops
- Public data on infections/ fatalities
- Neighbourhood level impact and vulnerability



# National Context

- As well as the direct impacts of Covid, restrictive social distancing and lockdown measures have had major and unequal impacts on society
- Public Health England findings:
  - mental health and personal relationships have deteriorated
  - Disrupted delivery of NHS meaning long term conditions may worsen, delayed diagnoses
  - Unhealthy behaviours increasing – alcohol misuse, decreased physical activity
  - Exacerbating impact of poor quality housing – 12% had no access to a garden



# National Context continued

- Food insecurity and financial hardship
- Children and young people hit hardest – by social distancing/lockdown, closure of schools and concern about increasing abuse in the home
- Increased civic participation in response to Covid and positive impact on social cohesion
- Decrease in car journeys shortlived and may be lasting damage on public transport system. More people are cycling
- Covid has exposed and exacerbated long standing inequalities in society



# Sandwell evidence

- Evidence suggests Sandwell reflects the national picture

## Mental Health

- SCVO survey identifies mental health as a significant widespread issue – due to isolation, lack of daily provisions, employment worries and this is expected to grow
- CAMHS referrals halved in lockdown but have since recovered and further rise is expected as schools return
- Pandemic has galvanised safeguarding partnerships



# Sandwell evidence

## **Food insecurity, digital exclusion and financial hardship**

- food security has been exacerbated
- Demand for food vouchers up 188% (358% in Smethwick) by early June
- 3,451 food parcels delivered to vulnerable households
- 1,586 laptops distributed from DfE for children and young people (some lacked broadband as well)
- The effects of digital exclusion have been exacerbated with reliance on online during lockdown – e.g. hindering benefit take up
- Eligibility for free school meals up 90% on previous year
- Mounting household debt – which has direct impact on Council's ability to support people. Housing arrears up 26.6%, council tax collection down 2.1% and cost of CTRS increased by £3m



# Sandwell evidence

## Social Stress

- Signs of neighbourhood stress have arisen due to the increase in mental health, wellbeing and financial issues
- Homelessness successes in reducing numbers and engaging with rough sleepers but homelessness is expected to increase because
- Households facing eviction once ban on evictions lifted in August
- ASB incidents increased by 50% in March and April and crime is expected to increase as financial hardship deepens
- Reports of domestic abuse have increased by 22% compared with the same period last year
- Concern about level of hidden abuse exacerbated by social restrictions



# Sandwell evidence

## **Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups**

- Public Health survey of BAME groups underlined that communities that are heavily interconnected have been affected more than others
- “Epidemic of loneliness, isolation, health fears, anxiety due to family separation”
- Challenges of living with other family members of all ages for long periods
- Fear has been deepened by language barriers
- Highlights need to understand BAME needs better
- Intergenerational housing- normally a strength but one of the reasons for being more vulnerable to the pandemic
- A concern that Covid has widened inequality and community leaders are determined to address this



# Sandwell evidence

## Young People

- 509 young people surveyed
  - A third were worried
  - A fifth were lonely
  - A quarter were stressed
  - A small number were angry, sad and having trouble sleeping
- Most difficult aspect was not seeing family and friends
- Half welcomed more time spent with their family in lockdown
- 652 children shielding and half of these are in West Bromwich and Smethwick
- Service providers concerned about long term impact on learning in younger children, especially those in challenging home environments



# Sandwell evidence

## **Volunteering and the Voluntary/Community Sector**

- Huge increase in volunteering- 732 residents signed up to the SCVO database
- 400 actively deployed, supporting 1000 residents, voluntary organisations and telephone befriending
- Almost all said they would do it again
- Third sector faces widespread pressure – increased demand from users at the same time as closure/depletion of services in lockdown
- Most have maintained service delivery by changing how they work, forcing innovation
- Medium sized organisations most affected – a third had suspended services altogether



# Sandwell evidence

## **Town member workshops**

- Reinforced our findings on community impact
- Particular concerns about mental health, financial impact on households, ensuring effective communication and digital exclusion

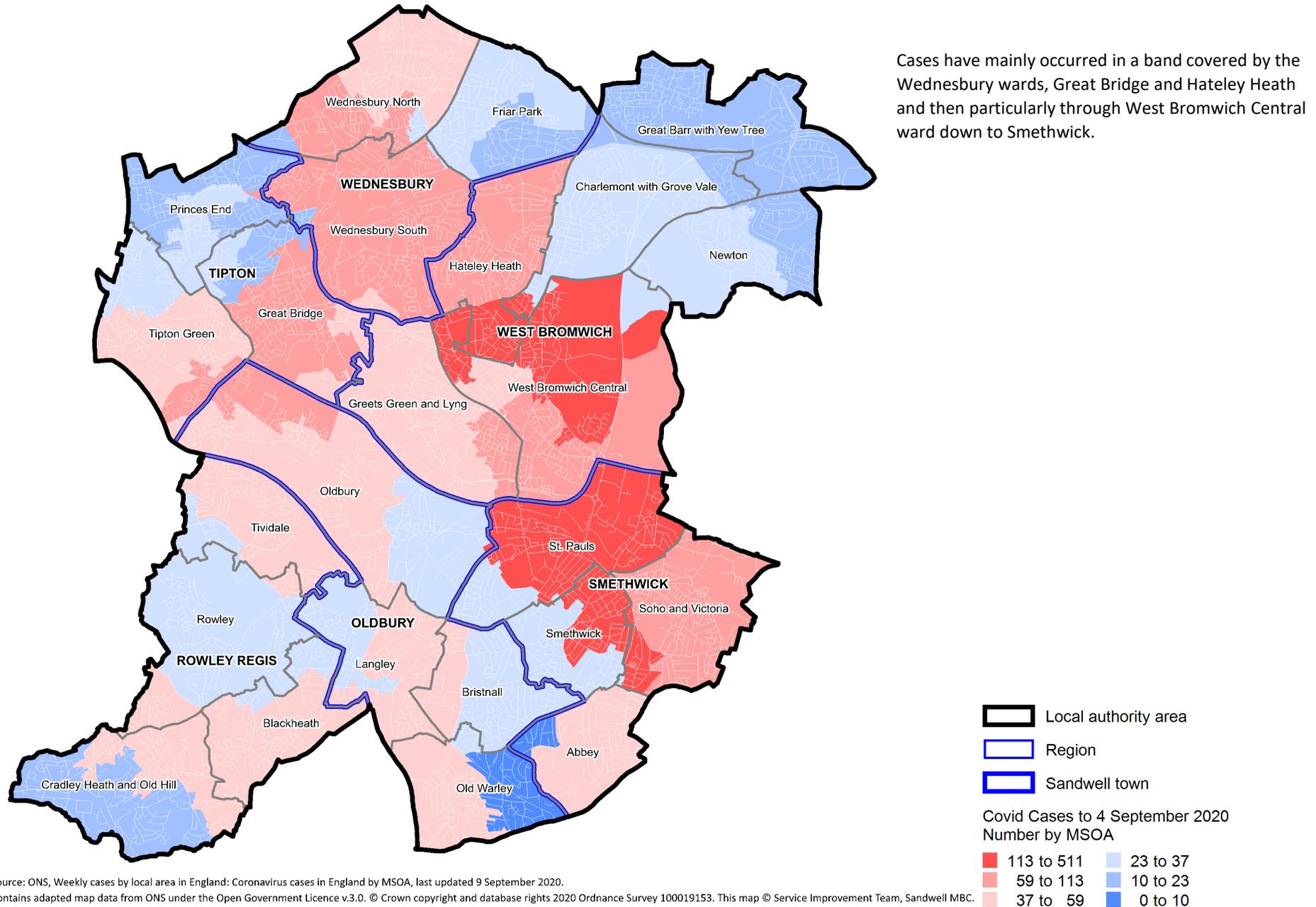


# Direct Impact of Covid in Sandwell

- The following maps illustrate the impact of Covid across the wards in Sandwell
- These maps represent a snapshot in time
- Note that the concentration of Covid infection and deaths is in the central band of Sandwell that reflects our areas of greatest deprivation

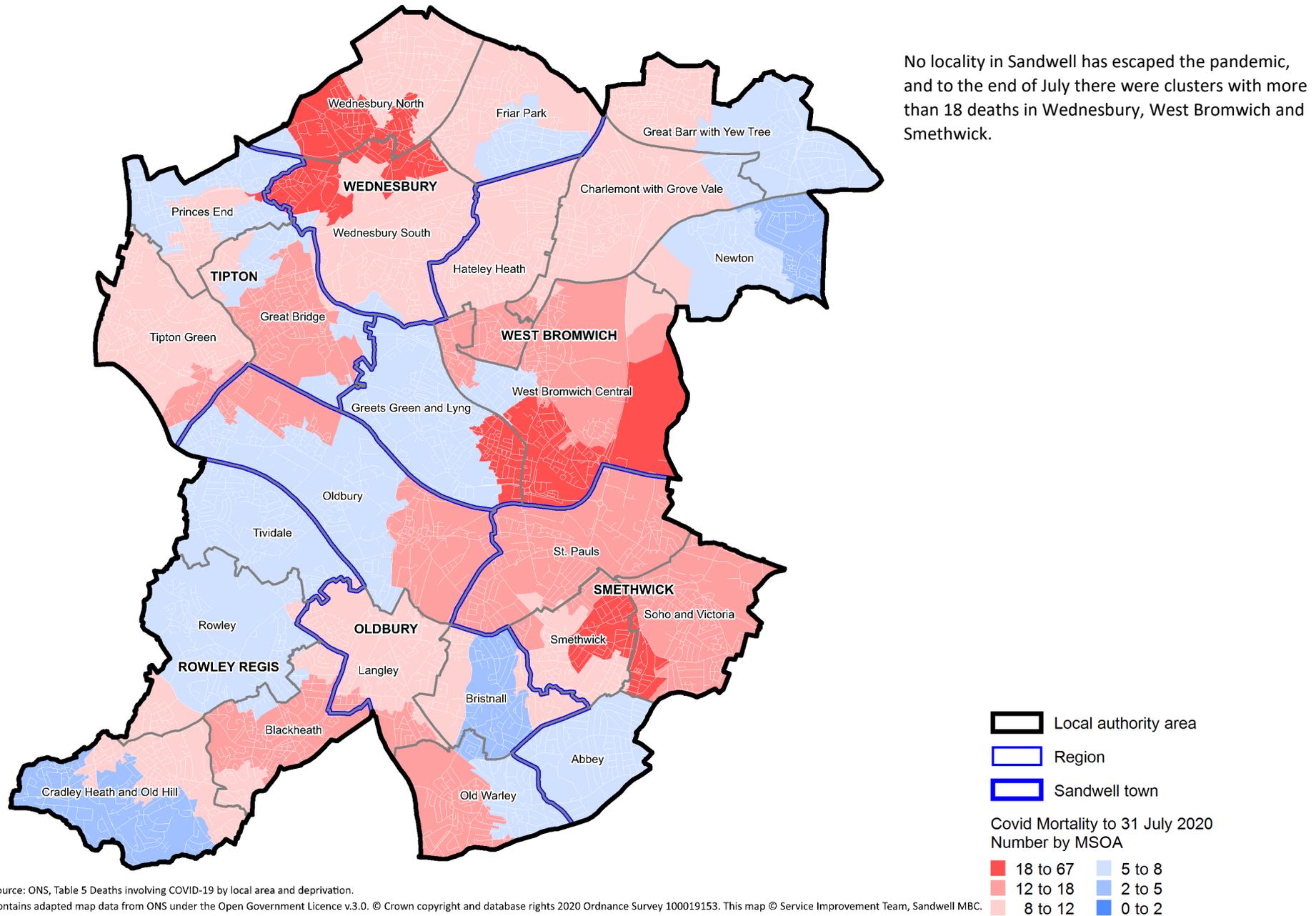


# Direct Impact - Number of Covid-19 cases to 4 September 2020



Source: ONS, Weekly cases by local area in England: Coronavirus cases in England by MSAO, last updated 9 September 2020.  
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# Direct Impact - Number of Covid-19 deaths to 31 July 2020



Source: ONS, Table 5 Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and deprivation.

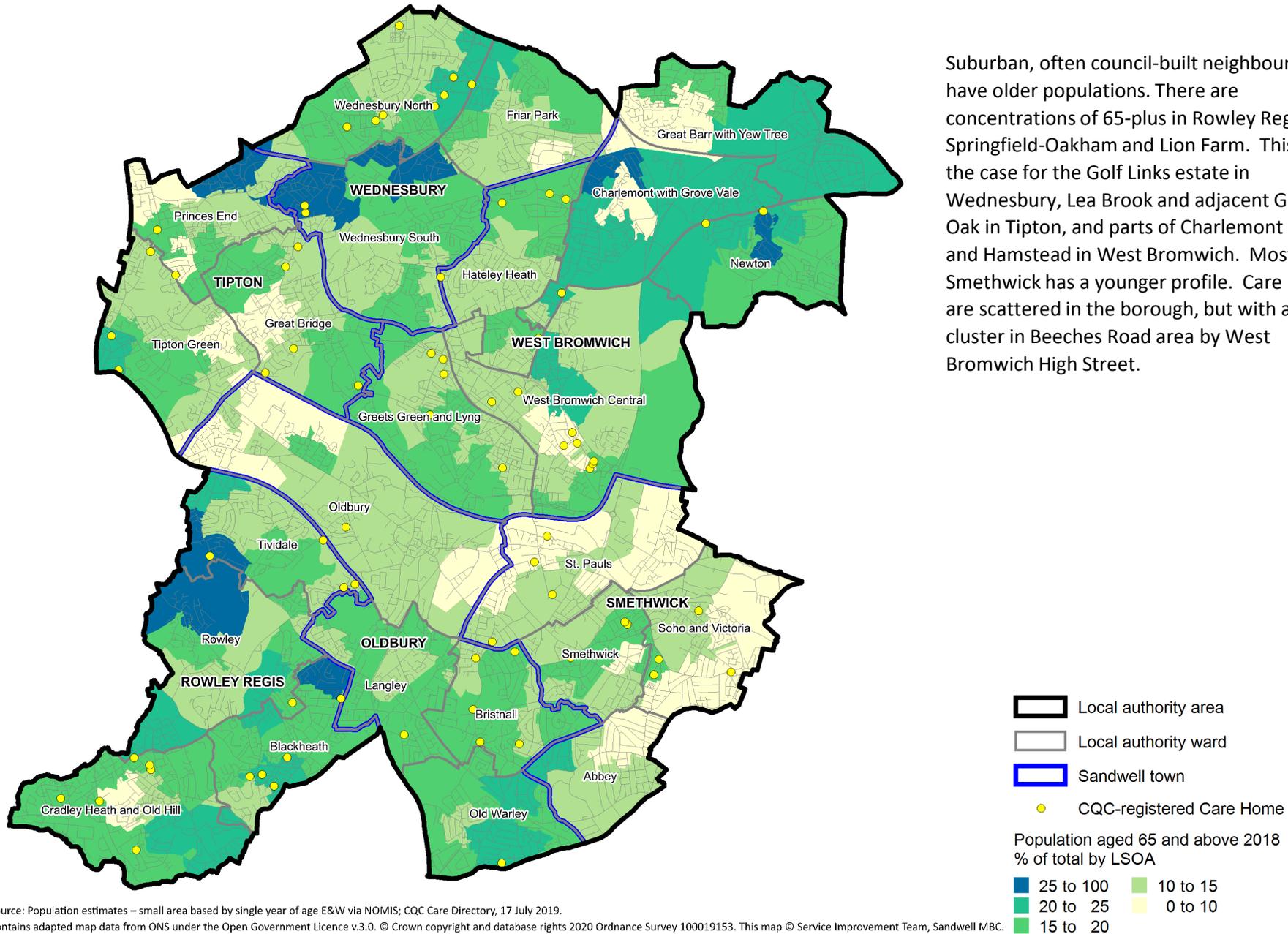
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# Community Vulnerability to Covid

- Studies have shown that in addition to personal long term health issues, Covid risk factors also include gender, older age, deprivation, overcrowding and ethnicity
- Sandwell is a densely-populated inner-urban area
- Deprivation is widespread but concentrated in the central part of the borough
- Spatial impact in the Borough is highly uneven
- The following maps illustrate some of the known risk factors and therefore indicate where future vulnerability to Covid may lie – there is not necessarily a causal link
- Parts of Tipton, Central Wednesbury, Central West Bromwich and Smethwick emerge as areas vulnerable to Covid



# Risk Factor: Population Aged 65-plus 2018 and Care Homes 2019

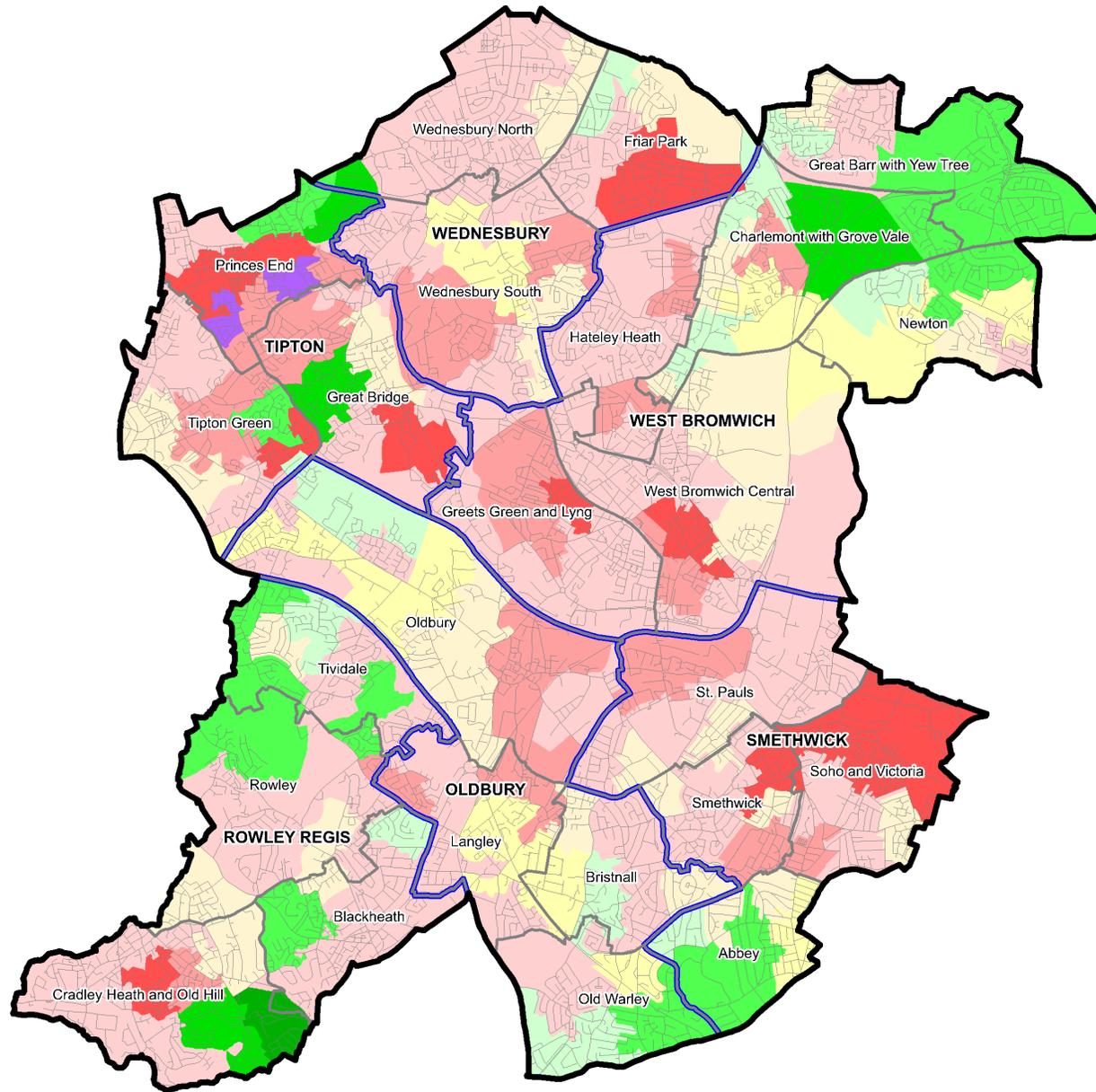


Suburban, often council-built neighbourhoods have older populations. There are concentrations of 65-plus in Rowley Regis, in Springfield-Oakham and Lion Farm. This is also the case for the Golf Links estate in Wednesbury, Lea Brook and adjacent Gospel Oak in Tipton, and parts of Charlemont Farm and Hamstead in West Bromwich. Most of Smethwick has a younger profile. Care homes are scattered in the borough, but with a cluster in Beeches Road area by West Bromwich High Street.

Source: Population estimates – small area based by single year of age E&W via NOMIS; CQC Care Directory, 17 July 2019.

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# Risk Factor: Multiple Deprivation 2019



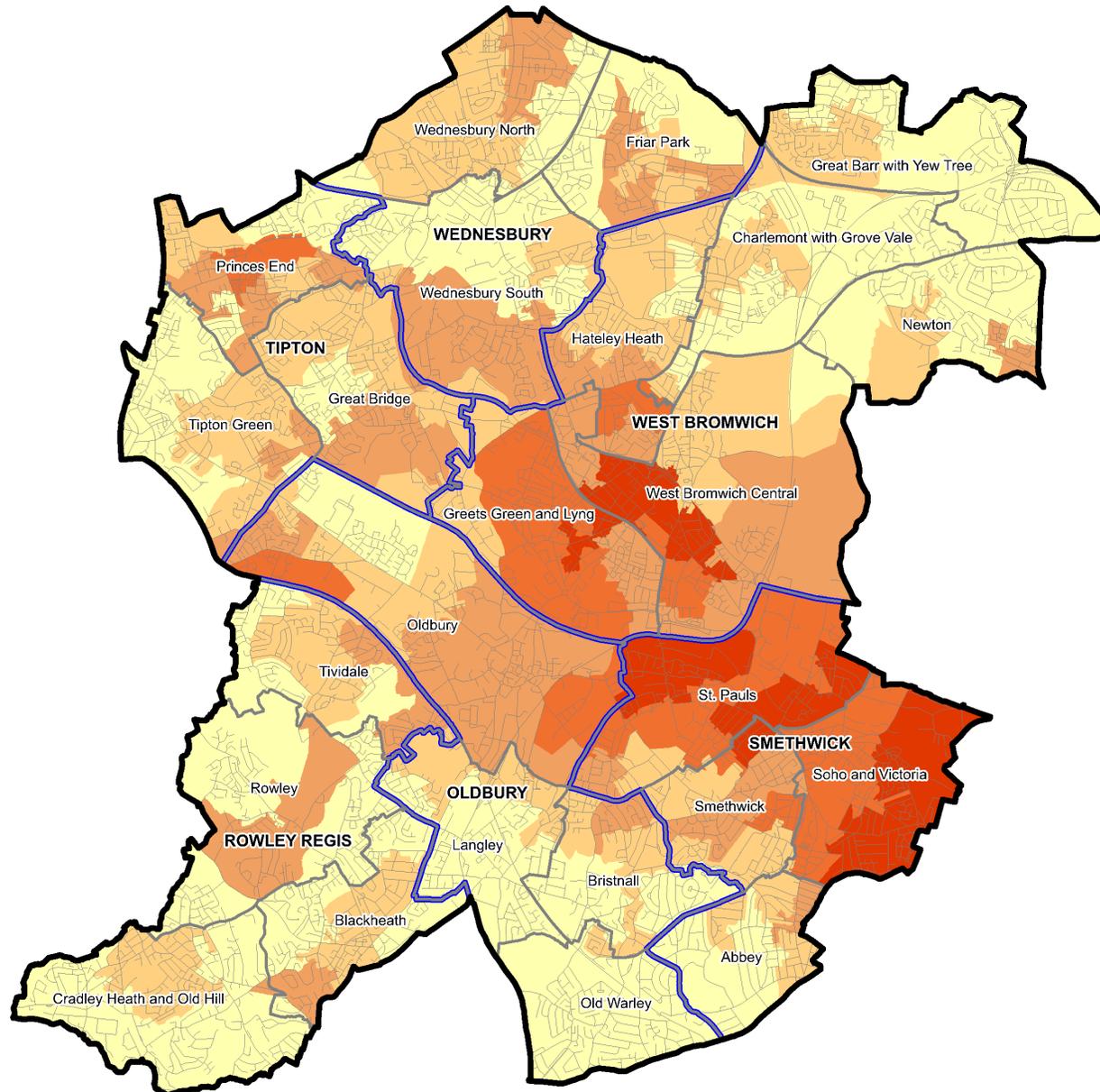
Although deprivation is widespread in Sandwell, a corridor of severe deprivation from Tipton to Smethwick and in major council estates was evident by 1981. Successive indices of relative English deprivation at locality level (IMD) show improvement between 2004 and 2019. Only parts of Tibbington in Tipton now fall in the 1% most deprived locality. However, Windmill Lane and Uplands in Smethwick; parts of Cradley Heath in Rowley Regis; Beeches Road and Hamblett's South in West Bromwich; and the large Friar Park estate in Wednesbury all fall in the worst 5%. So do further parts of Tipton, next to increasingly affluent Toll End, which has benefited from significant new housing. Otherwise the least deprived areas are all on the fringe of the borough, notably the North-East; Old Warley, Bearwood and Old Hill in the south and Oakham and Gospel Oak in the east. The map shows that although its severity is diluted, much of Tipton, Wednesbury, central West Bromwich and Smethwick fall in the most deprived 10% neighbourhoods in England and are therefore at risk from Covid.

-  Local authority area
-  Local authority ward
-  Sandwell town

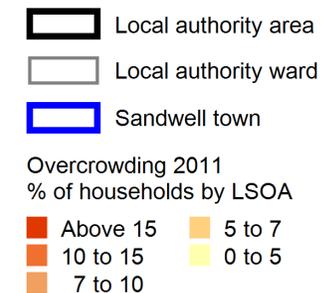
Indices of Deprivation 2019 - Overall IMD  
Position in percentile ranking of 32,844 LSOA

- |   |                  |   |           |
|---|------------------|---|-----------|
|  | 1% most deprived |  | 40 to 50  |
|  | 1 to 5           |  | 50 to 60  |
|  | 5 to 10          |  | 60 to 70  |
|  | 10 to 20         |  | 70 to 80  |
|  | 20 to 30         |  | 80 to 90  |
|  | 30 to 40         |   | 90 to 100 |

# Risk Factor: Overcrowding 2011

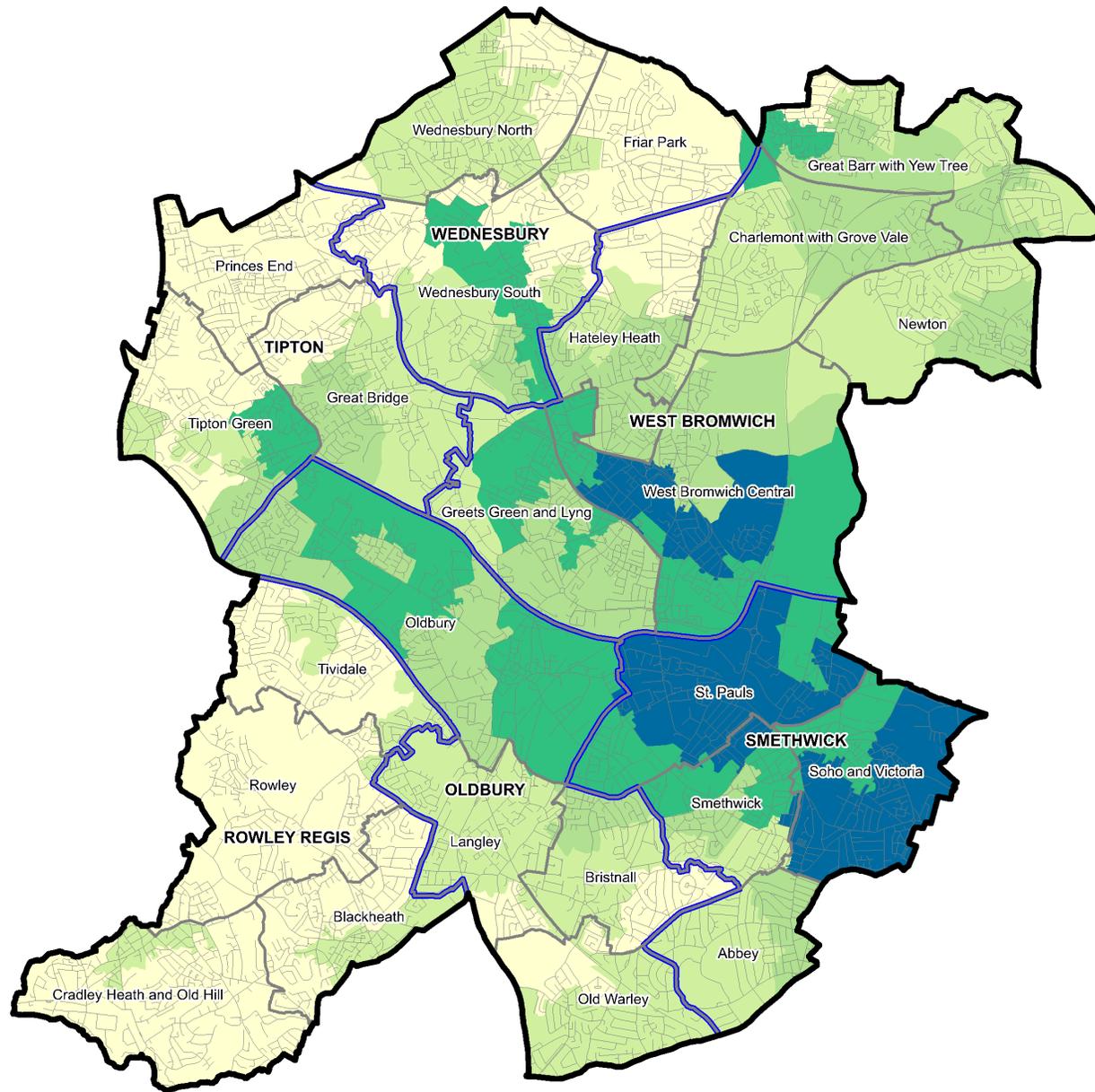


Housing density is about proximity and where it results in overcrowding it is especially problematic. In Sandwell it is concentrated in areas of pre-1919 housing and localities of mainly flats. This map examines overcrowding in 2011, affecting more than 15% of households in Lodge Road and Beeches Road in central West Bromwich; in Galton Village, the West Smethwick and North Smethwick neighbourhoods as well as Cape Hill and Windmill Lane. Analysis of localised population and dwelling change in areas overcrowded in 2011 suggests the problem has since worsened, especially in Cape Hill and Beeches Road. Overcrowding is particularly a Smethwick issue.



Note: A household with at least one bedroom too few for the number and composition of people living in the household is considered overcrowded by the bedroom standard.  
 Source: Census 2011 Table QS412EW via NOMIS.  
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# Risk Factor: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity 2011



Older, cheap, private housing areas historically act as reception areas for immigration. Smethwick, which gained the UK's first Sikh temple as well as notoriety for race politics in the 1960s, is now strongly BAME as well as being ethnically diverse. This is also true of the neighbourhoods off West Bromwich High Street. BAME communities expanded strongly across Sandwell in the 2000s, and community cohesion activity is a continuing council focus. This is otherwise a risk factor for social stress and economic pressure after Covid. More immediately, areas mapped at above 75% BAME are at risk from Covid, especially given their pattern of deprivation and overcrowding. Fresh inflows have since generated 'super-diversity' in many of these BAME areas, often via the private rented sector. Net international migration in Sandwell in 2013-18 was 10,301 people and 37.3% of live births were to non-UK born mothers in 2018.

-  Local authority area
-  Local authority ward
-  Sandwell town

Black Asian and Minority Ethnicity 2011  
% of population by LSOA

-  75 to 100
-  20 to 35
-  50 to 75
-  0 to 20
-  35 to 50

# Key findings/recommendations

- Covid has exacerbated existing weaknesses in Sandwell's community, related to underlying poverty and deprivation
- We need to do something different to address these underlying vulnerabilities
- To do this well, we need to ensure:
  - Engagement is done in the right way and is culturally sensitive
  - Changes in our own organisation to do things more corporately
  - Focus more resources in areas of most need
  - Clear measures of success

