

13 September 2023

Subject:	Sandwell Language Network (SLN)
Presenting Officer and organisation	<p>Diane Millichamp and Louise Kilbride Sandwell Public Health & Sandwell Consortium CIC Diane_millichamp@sandwell.gov.uk and louise@sandwellconsortium.co.uk</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><small>We find the support you need</small></p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Black Country Integrated Care Board</p> </div> </div>
Purpose of Report	For Information

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 To comment and note the Sandwell Language Network Programme 2023-2025.
- 1.2 To showcase the work going on within our communities to tackle health inequalities and make sure that no one is left behind and contributes to achieving the Board's priorities 1- 4 below.

2 Links to the following Board

Priority 1	<p>We will help keep people healthier for longer SLN works with local people to improve health and wellbeing and make sure that everyone who lives and works in Sandwell is treated fairly, with the same chances in life as everyone else.</p> <p>In a 2021 survey of 239 people who used the SLN programme, approximately 9 out of 10 said that it had helped them make NHS appointments and better explain their health</p>
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	<p>concerns to their healthcare professional. In the same survey, over 90% also said that SLN had helped them get to know people in their local area, which in turn reduces social isolation and promotes better mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>SLN contributes to achieving the council's strategic outcomes, building resilient communities in which people live well and children have the best start to life.</p>
<p>Priority 2</p>	<p>We will help keep people safe and support communities Sandwell Language Network (SLN) aims to tackle health and economic inequalities, reduce isolation, and promote community cohesion through language learning.</p> <p>Sandwell has always offered a place of welcome to new migrants. SLN supports new migrants to settle well in Sandwell by offering language learning across the borough, making them feel safer in their new surroundings and providing the confidence and skills to seek support within our communities.</p> <p>Providing language learning to established ethnic communities with little English ensures that they are better connected to the support available in Sandwell.</p>
<p>Priority 3</p>	<p>We will work together to join up services SLN is a partnership of community organisation operating in a 'hub & spoke' model. Sandwell Consortium coordinate the programme with 16 local community organisations delivering language learning right across the borough. This means that language services in Sandwell are joined up ensuring that service users have a seamless journey through their language learning.</p> <p>Furthermore, the SLN programme works collaboratively with other services, including the additional services that the community organisations provide themselves, to ensure that pathways into services that support the wider determinants of health are established.</p>
<p>Priority 4</p>	<p>We will work closely with local people, partners and providers of services SLN works in partnership with our community and wider health system to build resilience in our ethnic minority communities and deliver a positive impact on health outcomes.</p>

	At its beginning in 2019, the SLN service model was co-produced with feedback from local people, local community organisations and existing language learning providers. SLN continues to gather feedback from its service users, delivery partners and wider partnership to ensure it continues to meet the language needs in Sandwell.
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3 Context and Key Issues

- 3.1 Sandwell is home to vibrant, diverse communities and offers a place of welcome for new migrants. In the 2021 Census, almost 1 in 4 (23.6%) Sandwell residents were born outside the UK, compared with 1 in 6 nationally.
- 3.2 The 2021 Census identified the challenges facing our new migrant communities and established ethnic communities with 88% of Sandwell residents who speak English as their main language compared to 92.3% nationally. Of those residents who do not have English as their main language, 24.8% cannot speak English well and 5.5% cannot speak English at all. In 5 wards of Sandwell less than 80% of residents speak English as their main language.
- 3.3 Sandwell has the lowest literacy levels compared to other Local Authorities in the West Midlands with 25.7% requiring essential skills support. It is important to improve health literacy within our ethnic minority communities to tackle and reduce health inequalities.
- 3.4 To achieve a reduction in health inequalities within our communities we recognise learning English as a priority for migrants and ethnic communities in Sandwell. The 2011 Census asked people to rate their general health as 'very good', 'good', 'fair', 'bad' or 'very bad'. Only 65% of people who could not speak English well or at all ('non-proficient') rated in good health, compared with 88% who could speak English very well or well ('proficient'). There was also a more rapid decline of good health by age among people who were less proficient in English.
- 3.5 Sandwell Council was a finalist in this year's Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards for SLN as an outstanding Public Health and community project.

4 Engagement

- 4.1** In 2019, Sandwell's Strategic New Arrivals Partnership (SNAP) hosted a community stakeholder event to identify priorities for the strategic partnership to reduce inequalities for ethnic minority communities. A wide range of community voluntary sector and statutory partners and residents identified language barriers and communication as a priority for action. In response to this the council secured Government Controlling Migration Fund to deliver a bespoke community language programme.
- 4.2** Since this initial consultation, SLN has continued to be a fantastic example of co-production with partners designing, delivering, and evaluating the programme. The programme collates quantitative and qualitative feedback from participants, wider community, and community delivery partners on an ongoing basis to inform the project deliverables to ensure it continually meets the changing needs of its service users.
- 4.3** Additionally, in 2022 a comprehensive evaluation of the programme was conducted by Wolverhampton University which included the voice of service users. The findings from this evaluation has been shared with Sandwell's Health and Care Partnership Board.
- 4.4** The SLN programme continues to gather information from stakeholders and SLN participants to review performance and better understand the impact of the programme through case studies and testimonials, health impact surveys and these are presented in the quarterly performance reports.

5 Implications

Resources:	<p>5.1 The Sandwell Language Network (SLN) provides a programme of free, community-based English language learning support across the borough for migrant and our ethnic minority communities.</p> <p>5.2 The current programme builds on the success and legacy of the previous SLN programme and aims to tackle health inequalities.</p> <p>5.3 SLN was designed to fill a gap of limited provision of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for people who cannot speak English or cannot speak English well. SLN delivers informal pre-entry level and community-based English classes using a hub and spoke model co-ordinated by Sandwell Consortium CIC (hub) and 16 local delivery partners (spokes).</p>
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	<p>5.4 Sandwell Consortium is a reputable voluntary sector consortium of established ethnic minority community organisations, based at the heart of the neighbourhoods they serve. Sandwell Consortium has a proven track record in successfully delivering the SLN programme. They have increased the reach into marginalised communities with an increase from 9 to 16 community delivery partners.</p> <p>5.5 Sandwell Consortium are currently funded to deliver the SLN Programme from 1st September 2023 to 31st August 2025. This programme is funded from the ‘Health Inequalities Funding’ from the Sandwell Health and Care Partnership Board and the Public Health ring-fenced budget.</p>
Legal and Governance:	5.6 In September 2023 the Council entered into a two-year grant funding agreement with Sandwell Consortium CIC to support its SLN programme to reduce health inequalities in Sandwell. The SLN programme contributes to achieving the Council’s 2030 vision and the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board’s priorities.
Risk:	5.7 A risk assessment has approved in accordance with the council’s governance requirements. The SLN Partnership review the SLN programme’s Risk Assessment, including any mitigating measures planned/taken, in the quarterly partnership meetings.
Equality:	5.8 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and only neutral and positive impacts on protected groups have been identified. SLN aims to engage within communities to reduce the health inequalities experienced by our ethnic minority communities in Sandwell.
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>5.9 This is a health and wellbeing service that contributes to a wide range of outcomes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve health literacy and access to healthcare services • Reduce social isolation and promote better mental health • Reduce health inequalities for migrant and ethnic minority communities • Improve access, experiences and outcomes of NHS, local government and integrated care systems commissioned services by ethnic minority communities • Accelerate culturally competent health promotion and disease prevention programmes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase availability and quality of ESOL provision in Sandwell • Improve social connectedness and integration • Build self-reliance and resilient communities • Embed early help, preventing people from needing services, helping residents to help themselves • Improve employability • Increase volunteering opportunities • Builds capacity and sustainability of language learning within the Community voluntary sector <p>5.10 In addition, SLN community delivery partners offer advice and advocacy supporting people to early intervention and prevention by reducing escalation of the wider determinants of health, such as housing issues/homelessness, Welfare Rights and tackling poverty and other issues such as immigration support.</p> <p>5.11 SLN contributes to whole population wellbeing by improving peoples' health awareness and giving them the skills to be more self-reliant and confidence to maintain healthier lifestyles across the whole life course.</p>
Social Value:	<p>5.12 SLN has demonstratable social value with a growing network of SLN peer mentors and volunteers. It continues to build capacity within our local community organisations and voluntary sector. It creates opportunities for employment with learners training to become ESOL tutors and access to employment opportunities working closely with the council's employment and skills team and the Department for Work and Pensions.</p> <p>5.13 SLN also offers social value by educating and raising awareness of health and wellbeing linking to our Sandwell Health Improvement Programme (SHIP) and Sandwell's Consortium's Reach and Reconnect Programme for health literacy and digital inclusion, supporting our ambition to create a healthier Sandwell and make sure that no one is left out.</p>
Climate Change:	<p>5.14 The climate change guidance screening assessment has been completed and there are no implications for climate change outcomes and any potential impact on the environment.</p>
Corporate Parenting:	<p>5.15 The SLN programme is an adult provision and there are no negative impacts on Corporate Parenting. SLN will</p>

have a positive impact on emotional and physical health for parents and carers as SLN offers social value by educating and raising awareness of health and wellbeing. Parents and carers will have increased awareness of how to access and understand health systems creating self-reliance to look after their own and their family's health and wellbeing.

5.16 Language barriers stop people from entering in to and progressing in employment. By addressing this SLN positively supports families with low incomes to access free community language learning, progression into vocational courses and improved employability.

5.17 SLN is delivered in local community organisations within some of our most deprived neighbourhoods. In the previous programme 64% of participants were in receipt of benefits, unemployed, or from low socio-economic backgrounds. This evidences that SLN has a positive impact on education, employment and training opportunities for parents and carers which indirectly has a positive impact on children and young people.

5.18 By providing free community language support parents will be able to better support their children through education and engage in their child's education leading to improved future financial outcomes supporting children to gain better qualifications and employability.

5.19 SLN has a proven positive impact on families as parents and carers have improved social connectedness and sense of belonging within their communities.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sandwell Language Network Presentation

7 Background Papers

- Sandwell Trends – [2021 Census data](#)
- SLN External Evaluation Report 2022 – Wolverhampton University



- SLN video  Sandwell Council -
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