

**SANDWELL**  
**LANGUAGE**  
**N E T W O R K**

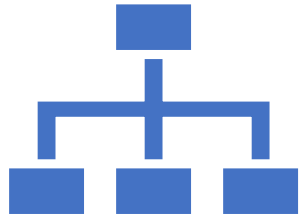


- Language learning in informal but structured community settings
- Supports residents to realise potential
- Builds capacity in the voluntary sector
- Supports 2030 Vision of Sandwell as a thriving, optimistic and resilient borough

## Partnership Group

- ❖ Sandwell MBC and Black Country ICB
- ❖ Sandwell Consortium CIC
- ❖ Sandwell College
- ❖ Sandwell Family & Adult Learning
- ❖ Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations
- ❖ Reps from two VCOs



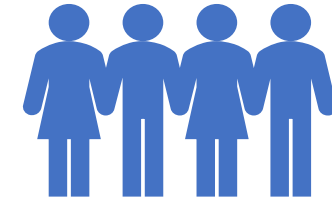


**Coordinated and managed  
by Sandwell Consortium CIC**

P/t SLN Coordinator



**Delivered by 15  
community partners**



**Supported by local tutors  
and volunteers**

# SLN delivery partners



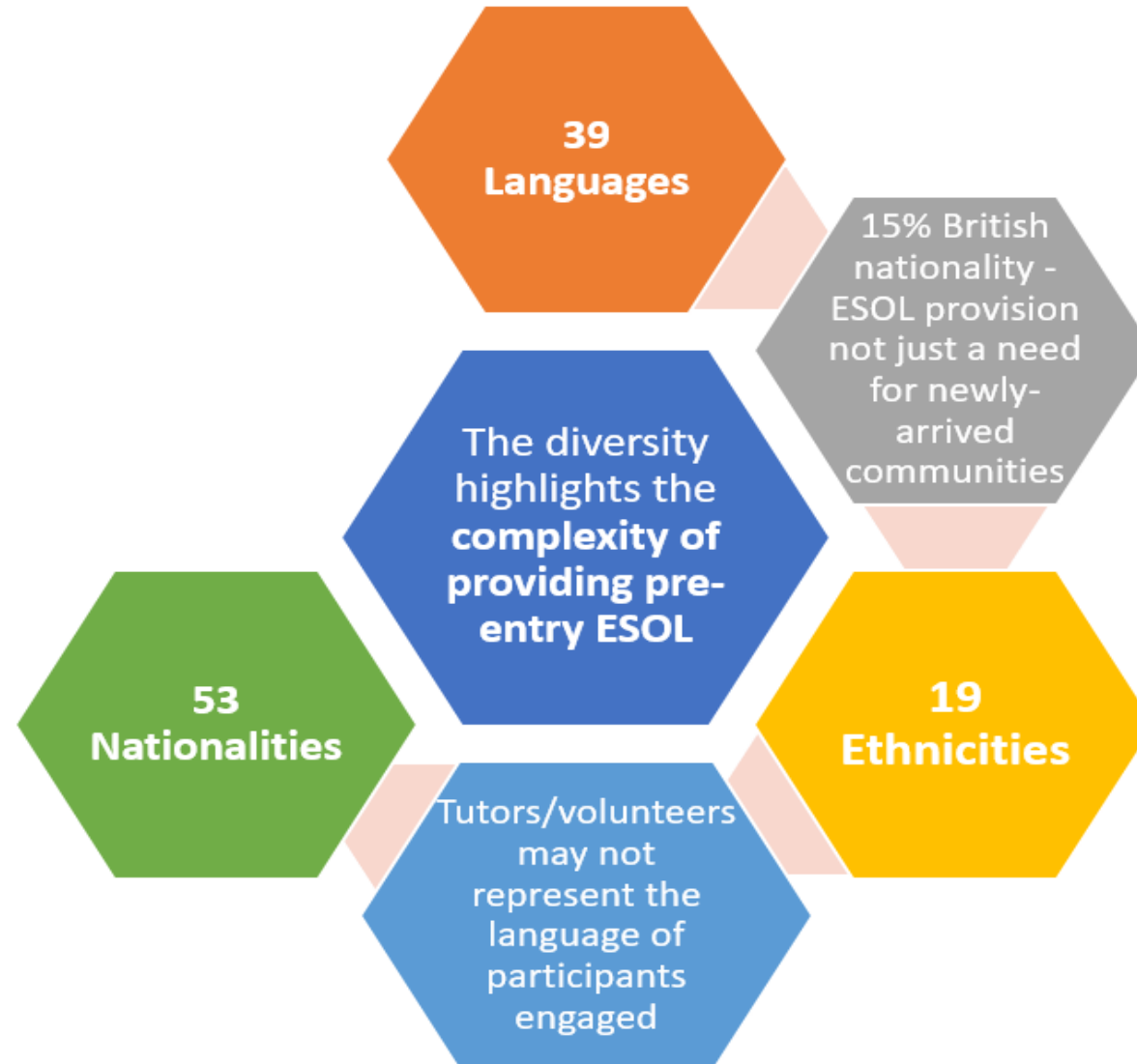


- ESOL and IELTS (International English Language Testing System)
- 350+ learners per year
- 20+ courses per year + progression routes
- *English for health* modules
- Employability and IT skills booster sessions
- 2023-24 – ‘health literacy’ sessions



# Sandwell Language Network

## Diversity and reach





# Sandwell Language Network





# Sandwell Language Network

Learner outcomes, health outcomes

**68% progressed** to education, training or employment

**88.5% accessed additional services** through SLN

2022 Survey of 239 learners

**90% said SLN had helped them make NHS appointments and better explain their health concerns** to healthcare professionals.

**90% said SLN had helped them get to know people in their area** – which in turn reduces social isolation and improves health and wellbeing

# Case study: Rifa, Pre-Entry level Learner

## **Background**

Rifa, now aged 41, came to the UK from Bangladesh, at the age of 20. Her first language is Bengali.

Rifa couldn't speak English and for many years relied on family members to access health services - GP/Nurse appointments, explaining symptoms, outpatient appointments, and understanding health conditions; and other services, such as liaising with her son's school.

Once her son was in secondary school, and family circumstances changed, she joined the local ESOL course at SWEDA in West Bromwich. She needed to improve her English to claim Universal Credit, look for work and support her son.

Rifa was happy to find a beginner's ESOL class, in a local, culturally sensitive setting.

# Rifa's class at SWEDA



# Rifa...

## Interventions

- Learner needs assessment, identified Rifa's wider support needs
- Referred to employment support & IT training at SWEDA, now a trusted place.
- Working from Pre-Entry to Entry level the tutor identified barriers to her progress –confidence and feeling judged when speaking English.
- The tutor asked Rifa to volunteer in a class to support new Pre-entry level learners.

# Rifa...

## Outcomes for Rifa

- Overcame shyness. Built confidence in English and IT.
- Achieved Entry Level 2. Able to apply for a course at Sandwell College and able to look for/apply for jobs
- Built good relationships with peers, made lasting friends and a local support network.
- Can attend health appointments independently
- Attends parent's evening at school

Rifa:

*“Thank you so much for helping me. I can do so much more for myself and have more chances now. My son has seen me learn too – this is good!”.*

# Case study, Funom: IELTS Learner





# Case study, Funom

## Learner background

Funom, aged 37, came to the UK from Nigeria with his wife and children. He was a qualified doctor in Nigeria and wanted to continue as a doctor in the UK. He needed to achieve a score of 7.5 in IELTS before working towards General Medical Council (GMC) registration.

## Interventions

Funom started SLN online IELTS course in September 2020, with a weekly tutorial and guided self-study. We helped him register for the IELTS test and provided identity verification for the test centre.

## Outcomes/Achievement

In 2021, Funom passed IELTS and achieved 7.5, the standard required by GMC. He volunteered and became a Champion with the Sandwell Covid vaccination programme throughout 2021. He registered with the HOP (Healthcare Overseas Professionals) programme and in 2022 went on to complete his PLAB (Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board) tests.

## Next Steps

During 2022-23 Funom has been studying for his medical exams and once completed will be able to practice as a doctor in the UK.

*“SLN IELTS was amazing. The tutor guided me and others, not just on improving our spoken and written English but also on strategies to apply when writing this exam. I had interesting tasks that helped me coordinate and harness my mental ability to maintain that complex relationship between my brain and hands while writing the examination.*

*It has been an amazing journey for me, and I can now confidently move to the next level of the main medical examinations so that I get my license to practice as a medical doctor in the UK.”*

# Funom:

*SLN IELTS was amazing. The tutor was able to guide me and others, not just on improving our English but also on good strategies to apply when writing this exam. I had interesting tasks that helped me coordinate and harness my mental ability to maintain that complex relationship between my brain and hands while writing the examination.*

*It has been an amazing journey for me, and I can now confidently move to the next level of writing the main medical examinations so that I get my license to practice as a medical doctor in the UK.*

# Volunteer progression



Building local capacity



Award in Education and Training: 15 volunteers are qualified tutors in Sandwell



Further Education



Employment



Support local community organisations



# Showcase Video

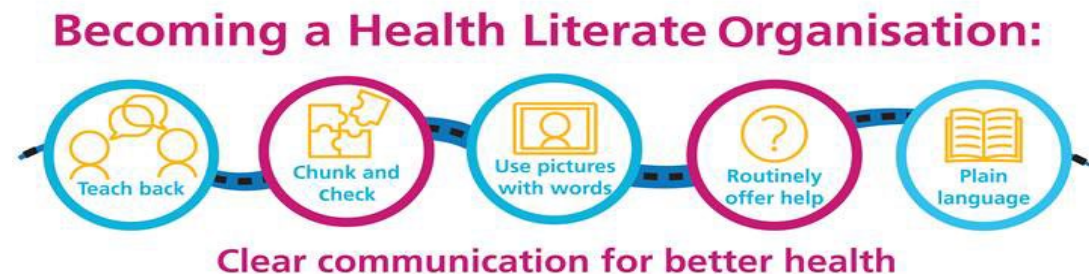
[671 Sandwell Language Network.mp4 on Vimeo](#)



**“Innovative scheme with very strong community engagement. Have worked with ICS to create strong language skills support for most deprived communities in Sandwell. Some good outcomes achieved including improved confidence with booking health appointments and discussing health issues. Have found sustainable funding sources through ICS. Good case studies of people achieving qualifications as a jumping off point to education and employment!”**

## 2023-2025

- New sites to meet need e.g. Rowley Children's Centre
- Enhanced health literacy sessions linked to NHS partners
- Capacity building for community partners
- Learning and progression
- Connection and cohesion



**SANDWELL**  
**LANGUAGE**  
**N E T W O R K**

