

Sandwell Health Determinants Research Collaboration - Better Research for Better Health

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The National Institute for Health Research is the largest funder of health research in the UK. It is providing up to £5 million to councils to develop partnerships. These partnerships will improve how councils carry out research, how they use it to make decisions and how they communicate findings to others.

These partnerships will focus on the wide range of factors, outside of health care, that influence people's physical and mental health. These factors include how polluted the air is on your street, the quality of your accommodation, if you own a car, how good the schools are and whether you have a job.

Councils use their money to improve the health of their residents. They must pay special attention to the most vulnerable in society to make sure they are protected. Through research there will be a better understanding how the factors listed above influence health. This will enable councils to spend their money to improve the health of all their residents.

WHAT SANDWELL PLANS TO DO

Sandwell Council is working with the University of Birmingham to develop a research partnership. This will build on the 'Stronger Sandwell' approach where we:

1. Build on Sandwell's Strengths – its communities – we do our work with local people, not to them.
2. Focus on projects run by local people, for local people.
3. Ensure nobody is left behind – focusing on those facing the biggest life challenges, for example the oldest and youngest members of our community and those living with disabilities or in financial hardship.

The key aim of this partnership will be to change how we do research in Sandwell Council on the factors that can affect our health (such as housing and education). We will use this learning to help the council make a decisions that will improve our residents' health.

HOW SANDWELL PLAN TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

The council will develop four areas of work:

1. Improving the skills of the staff at Sandwell Council and improving how we carry out research. This includes training on how to carry out new research, identify existing research and establish how good the research is. We will design systems to ensure that any research we do is good quality and meets the guidelines set out by national government.
2. Turning research into action so it makes real change to people's lives. Planning and delivering services in a way that is informed by the latest research.

3. Working with other organisations to carry out and use research, and creating one system to hold all the information that we collect. This will allow us to see how one area (e.g. crime) can influence another area (e.g. mental health).
4. Ensuring the research undertaken is informed by our residents and community groups. This will be shaped by existing meetings such as the monthly meetings Sandwell Council hold with a variety of organisations and members of the public. It will also help us to choose the research we focus on so it creates the biggest benefit to Sandwell.

HOW WILL WE TELL PEOPLE WHAT WE ARE DOING?

The council has a website called Sandwell Trends where all the research we are doing will be described. This website will include information on the four areas outlined above so residents can see what progress we are making. We will also compile reports and scientific publications to communicate our work.