



Consultation Report: Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy



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Aims of the consultation

Residents and community groups have been asked for their views on the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy, which has been developed by the council and local organisations that form Sandwell's Borough of Sanctuary Partnership. The draft strategy sets out the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Partnership's commitments to welcoming and integrating individuals and families who arrive in Sandwell. The strategy co-ordinates the approach of council officers and organisations, council-wide and borough-wide, delivering services to those arriving and settling in Sandwell.

The consultation also provided an opportunity to strengthen the partnership's understanding of 'what welcome means' to our residents and community groups and what respondents feel our priorities should be as a partnership, based on current barriers that are faced and what is already in place that we can build upon to make Sandwell more welcoming.

The strategy is for five years with a review built in after the second year to ensure our approach continues to align with our vision and objects and best enables us to support those arriving in Sandwell. This will enable services to develop with the stability of a medium-term strategic directive while allowing the strategy to be responsive to any changes and progress.

The following joint objectives have been developed and agreed by Sandwell Council and the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell local organisations:

- The partnership will work together as a network to make Sandwell a Borough of Sanctuary. We will strive to build a welcoming place for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, whilst also promoting integration and community cohesion.
- The partnership will promote a culture of inclusion between Sandwell residents and support a mutual understanding in which longer-standing communities feel able to understand and welcome migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- The partnership will enhance opportunities for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to utilise and develop their skills, to access opportunities to support themselves and their families which contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of the borough.
- The partnership will advocate the engagement of those seeking sanctuary in decision making processes at all levels and in all activities.
- The partnership will stand together against modern slavery and are committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking activities across the Borough. The partnership will stand together against modern slavery and are committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking activities across the Borough.

Approach to consultation

A six-week consultation period took place from Tuesday 20 June until Tuesday 1 August. An online public consultation was published on the Citizen Space platform. Alongside this, a collective response from individuals with lived experience of migrating to and seeking sanctuary in Sandwell was received from service users of Brushstrokes.

The Community Partnerships Team supported to increase the number of residents and community groups we heard from by promoting the consultation across their networks, providing paper copies where required and supporting individuals to complete the consultation online. The aim of the consultation was to include as many different voices and points of view as possible.

The consultation was promoted and shared with community groups and residents by:

- Presented to and shared across the Sandwell New Arrivals Partnership
- Newsletters shared to the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary partners
- Shared via housing forums and networks such as the Homelessness Forum, the West Midlands Housing Officer Group, and the Housing Partnership Forum
- Shared via wider networks that the council are engaged with such as the Health and Wellbeing Board, Faith Leaders Group, Community Safety Network, and the Sandwell Advice Providers Network
- Shared across an internal cross-directorate officer working group for officers to distribute across their networks and with the staff Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Networks
- Shared via internal communications- newsletters, Members updates
- Leaflets and posters distributed to Libraries, OCH Reception, West Bromwich Town Hall, to community groups via the Community Partnerships Team and to tenants at our first Tenant Conference
- Communications shared via social media and via Gov Directory mailing list
- Shared by wider organisations across their online platforms and networks (e.g. SCVO, Sandwell Churches Link)

In total, we received a total of **119** responses to the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy public consultation (online and through both workshops and focus group events).

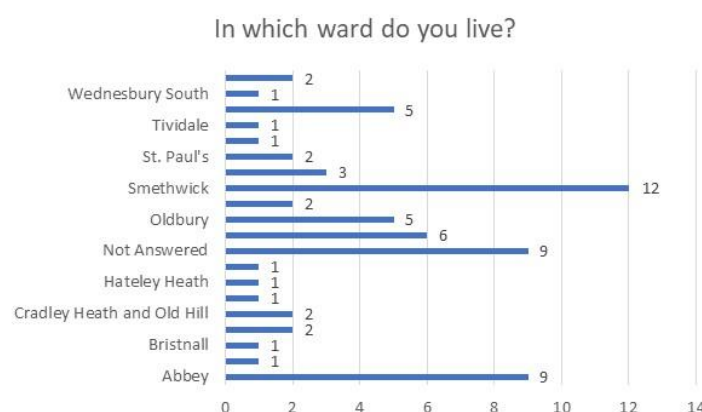
In addition, responses were also received from elected members when the strategy was presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny (SNAC) Board on 11th July 2023.

Demographics of respondents to the public consultation

Respondents to the consultation survey were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is an option and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

In total 67 responses were captured by the online public consultation, with a small handful of paper copies being completed that were later inputted into the online response. The views of a further 12 individuals with lived experience of migrating to or seeking sanctuary in the borough were captured as a collective response discussion from Brushstrokes' Service User Panel. These responses are captured separately, further on in this report.

59 of the 67 responses captured by the online public consultation were from people who currently reside in Sandwell. The remaining eight respondents who did not live in Sandwell were members of voluntary or community partner organisations, Sandwell Council employees or a person with lived experience of migrating to or seeking sanctuary in the UK who is not a resident of Sandwell. A breakdown of which wards respondents live in is shown below.

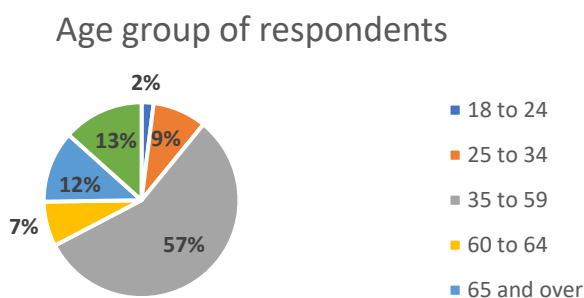


Respondents interests in the public consultation are shown in the chart below, with a good balance between each group of interest – particularly those with lived experience (26%) in proportion with longstanding residents already existing in the Borough (28%), and members of voluntary or community partner organisations (15%).

Sandwell Councillors and members of a national organisation supporting migrants, refugees and/or asylum seekers were the most under-represented in this consultation survey with no responses at all. However, we received feedback from members at the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny (SNAC) Board on July 11th 2023. Also, at the workshop in April, a councillor and a representative from the national organisation Asylum Matters attended. In addition, we have received feedback from City of Sanctuary UK on the draft copy of the strategy.

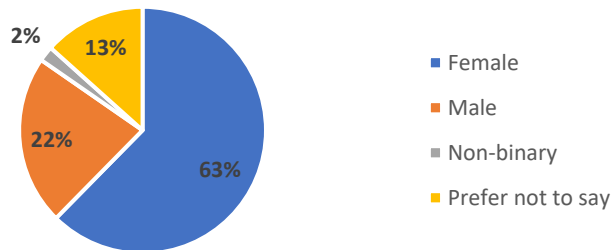
Respondents interest in the public consultation	Count of respondents	Percentage
A member of a voluntary or community partner organisation	10	15%
A resident of Sandwell who has lived experience of migrating to the borough (not for reasons of asylum or refuge)	13	20%
A resident of Sandwell who has lived experience seeking sanctuary in the borough (leaving your country of origin and you have formally applied for asylum or refuge)	2	3%
A resident of Sandwell who has lived experience of migrating to the borough (not for reasons of asylum or refuge) & a member of a voluntary or community partner organisation	2	3%
A Sandwell resident who has not experienced migrating to or seeking sanctuary in Sandwell	19	30%
A Sandwell Council employee	6	6%
A person with lived experience of seeking sanctuary/ migrating to the UK, who is not a resident of Sandwell	1	2%
A Sandwell Councillor	0	0%
A member of a national organisation supporting migrants, refugees and/or asylum seekers	0	0%
Prefer not to say	14	21%

The most significant age proportion of respondents was 35 to 59 year olds (57%), followed by an even distribution of older respondents within the age ranges of 60 to 64 (7%) and 65 and over (12%). Amongst younger age groups, whilst there was decent proportion of respondents aged 25 to 34 (9%), the least represent age groups was 18 to 24 year olds with only a 2% cohort - therefore, any future consultation work should aim to include greater representation of this demographic. The remaining respondents (13%), did not wish to disclose their age.



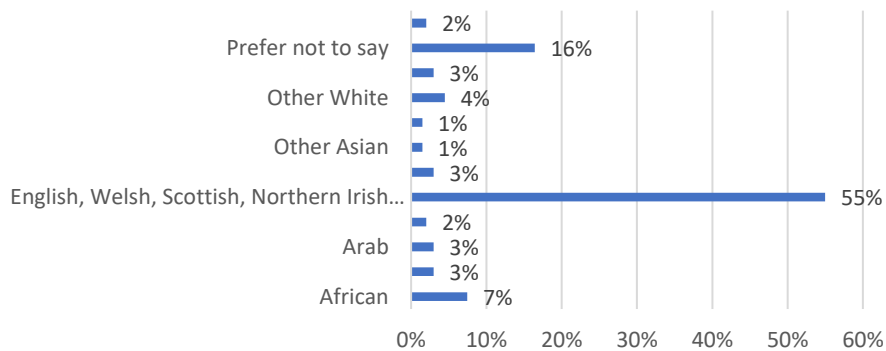
Overwhelmingly, female respondents had the largest say in this consultation, representing almost two thirds (63%) of respondents, in comparison to just 22% of respondents being male. In addition, 2% of respondents were non-binary. The remaining respondents (13%), did not wish to disclose their gender.

Gender of respondents



The largest ethnic group amongst respondents was white British (55%) – a similar proportional representation found in the wider Sandwell population. Ethnic minority groups represented 27% of the population – of these groups, the largest cohort included African (7%), other white (4%), followed by Pakistani, Indian, Arab and any other ethnic group - all with 3% each. Overall, it is important to see so many different backgrounds represented within this public consultation as this reflects the ethnically diverse population within the Borough.

What best describes your ethnicity?



Summary of Feedback

In various feedback formats, quantitative and qualitative data has been gathered to help shape and inform the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy, a full list of these responses can be found in the accompanying consultation spreadsheet.

Summary of key findings:

- The public consultation contained 10 multiple choice questions – 2 relating to how welcoming Sandwell is, 3 relating to both the document’s overall vision and strategic aims, and 5 questions in response to the main priorities set out for the Borough of Sanctuary partnership.
- Each question asked the respondent whether they agreed with a particular theme in the Borough of Sanctuary Strategy, with options of ‘strongly agree’, ‘somewhat agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘somewhat disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’.

- Support across all questions was fairly high, with respondents either tending to agree or strongly agree with the priorities of the partnership. The average agreement was 63%, demonstrating a reasonable level of support for the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy overall.
- Across all priorities for the partnership, the most well received amongst respondents was *'the partnership will enhance opportunities for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to utilise and develop their skills, to access opportunities to support themselves and their families which contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of the borough'*, which generated a 65% agreement overall.
- The response with the lowest level of support was when respondents were asked if they thought Sandwell is a welcoming place for those resettling.

Within the public consultation, respondents were given the opportunity at the end of every priority, and for the strategy as a whole, to feedback anything they felt was missing or any point they particularly wanted to emphasise. This produced a range of responses, with a number of key words and phrases emerging repeatedly.

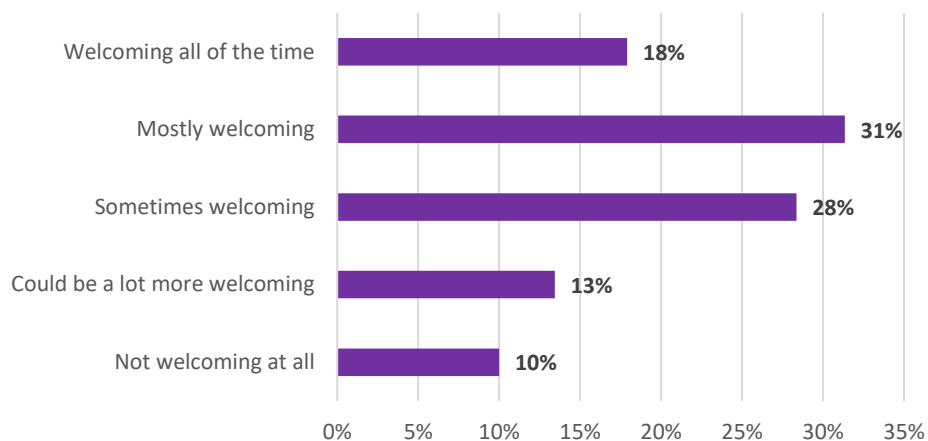
The top 5 phrases were:

- 1. Community** – respondents stressed the importance of ensuring there are opportunities for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers to integrate within their local communities.
- 2. Support/Services** – respondents emphasised that there needs to be a provision of adequate resources to ensure Sandwell is able to support migrants, refugees and asylum seekers across all areas of the Borough.
- 3. Language** – concerns were raised regarding the language barriers those resettling face in accessing services across Sandwell.
- 4. Housing** – many respondents were supportive of housing as a means of ensuring those resettling are able to do so safely.
- 5. Work/Employment** – respondents wished to see individuals resettling engaging in employment and volunteering opportunities that utilise their experience, qualifications, and transferrable skills.

Consultation Questions and Responses

Below is a percentage breakdown of the responses to each of the multiple-choice questions presented to the consultation respondents and a summary of the reasons for their responses.

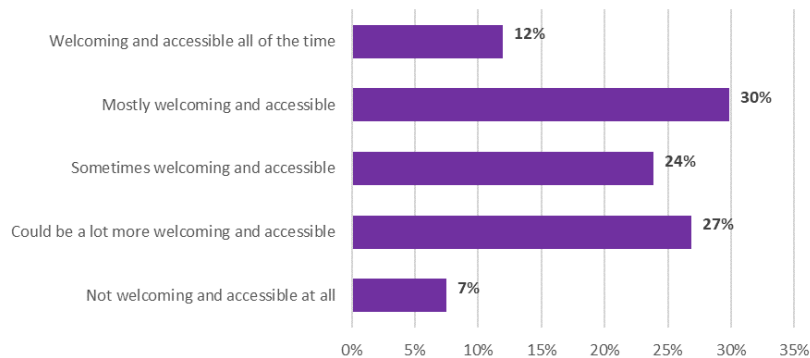
1) How welcoming is Sandwell for individuals and families arriving as migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers across the borough?



Response Analysis

- Overall, there was a mixed response when asked whether Sandwell is welcoming to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- 49% of respondents believed Sandwell is a welcoming place for those resettling (18% saying strongly all the time and 31% saying mostly welcoming). Different individuals with lived experience stated the following:
 - *“I feel incredibly welcome here as a migrant, have a very supportive community around me and definitely have all the support I need”.*
 - *“There are incredible organisations that enrich our community and should be strategically supported to deliver their work. They are a massive asset and have been essential for many migrants and asylum seekers. Both organisations need more capacity and need to be acknowledged as core delivery organisations for the strategy”.*
- 28% of respondents believe Sandwell is sometimes welcoming.
 - *“There are pockets of good practice but overall, the Borough lacks a clear and coherent approach, and this can impact the welcome received”.*
- However, 22% of respondents think it isn’t welcoming. Notably, one respondent provided some very significant feedback about who this document was aimed at.
 - *“Already after reading the Sandwell statement I feel unwelcome in your Borough. I do not see or read anywhere about trafficking victims, modern slavery victims, domestic violence and sex exploitation, forced labour and servitude victims. As one of the victims of the above I feel rejected as I'm not considered to be part of the community, I am not included in the Sandwell Borough planning strategies. Not every migrant is seeking Asylum or a refugee or has come to work on a skilled visa some have been trafficked and forced to work and abused”.*

2) How welcoming and accessible are the services provided by Sandwell Council for individuals and families who have arrived in the borough as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers?



Response Analysis

- Overall, there was a mixed response to this question. However, most feel that Sandwell is welcoming and accessible to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- 42% of respondents believed Sandwell is a welcoming place for those resettling (12% saying it is welcoming all the time and 30% saying it is mostly welcoming).
 - *“As far as I can tell the services are in visible and accessible buildings with welcoming staff and volunteers”.*
 - However, for the majority, whilst the majority think Sandwell is welcoming, it could potentially be doing more as a Borough. One community organisation stated, *“whilst it is mostly welcoming, due to language barriers and some attitudes towards migrants etc it can be difficult to help them navigate through council systems”.*
- 28% of respondents believe Sandwell is sometimes welcoming.
 - One individual with lived experience stated *“some of the services like ordering bins, tax and anything that requires a website login are hard to navigate for people without the language and some IT skills. Therefore, believing it could be more accessible to those resettling.*
- 22% of respondents don't think Sandwell is welcoming.
 - Another individual with lived experience stated *“I don't remember being welcomed when I arrived in Oldbury. I had to manage by my own where the supermarket is located. Also, I registered my son to school or to the GP on my own. People need more information about all the public services they can access”.*

3) What does a welcoming borough look like to you?

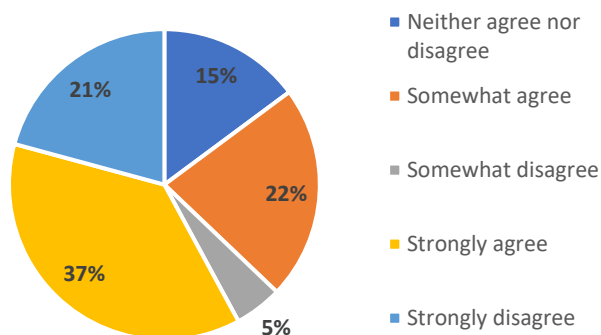
- *“Where local authorities and third sector organisations work in a coordinated and strategic way to make newly arrived people feel safe and supported.”*
- *“A place where everyone belongs. A community that is ready to help refugees integrate into the community, not segregate them”.*
- *“Accepting. Clear information and advice available at places where people feel safe”.*
- *“More open and inclusive - offering hospitality and opportunities targeted at refugees and asylum seekers but including other groups and local people. This will help refugees integrate and promote acceptance”.*
- *“A place where individuals feel safe , can access the services they need on the same basis as local residents , feel a sense of belonging and have the opportunity to participate in the life of the community as valued members”.*

- *“Unintimidating and obvious services and resources, diverse and friendly public spaces, a multiplicity of languages and cultures being celebrated”.*
- *“No post code lottery or disproportionality issues”.*

4) What stops Sandwell being a welcoming place for all?

- *“Levels of deprivation, lack of clear strategy. Also government policy and the Borough has to be realistic that being a Borough of sanctuary will necessarily involve pushing back on anti-refugee policy”.*
- *“Poverty, language barriers, impact of the media and govt policy on migration/immigration, limited access to housing and the knock on effects on access to employment and ability for individuals / families to feel settled”.*
- *“Negative public perception, racism, national government attitude, and lack of sufficiently resourced community organisations to support people”.*
- *“Lack of ESOL classes”.*
- *“I think what would help in schools in particular is more emphasis on supporting schools to become schools of sanctuary - how this would be helped would be to appoint/recruit somebody to coordinate this in the LA”.*

5) "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the overall vision of the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary strategy?"



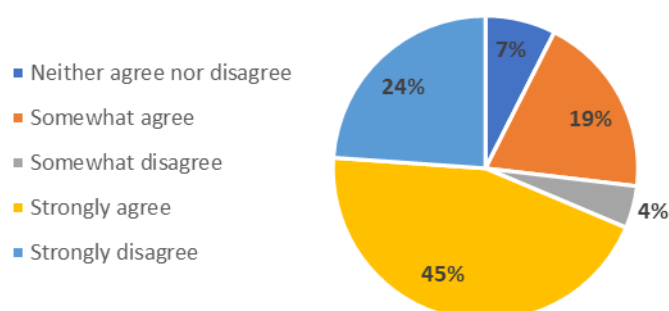
Response Analysis

- Support for the overall vision of the strategy was reasonably high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 59% of respondents agreed with the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy’s overall vision (37% strongly agreeing and 22% somewhat agreeing).
 - One individual with lived experience stated the document has *“clear priorities and realistic outcomes”*, whereas a Sandwell resident said it *“recognises current challenges and opportunities to improve”*.
 - The overall vision is also supported by community partners, who believe *“there is a strong focus on welcome and safety that recognises the specific challenges refugees and other migrants may have experienced”*.
- 15% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the strategy’s overall vision.
 - Another individual with lived experience felt that whilst it was a good document, it needs to redefine its scope, stating *“it’s not a bad Sanctuary strategy but the fact that I’m not part of the plan as trafficking victim is frustrating”*.

- 21% of respondents strongly disagreed with the overall vision, whilst 4% of respondents somewhat disagreed.
 - *“Strategies look great on shelves. What is important is that it actually does what it says it will do”.*

6) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the overall aims of the partnership which are listed below?

The overall aim of the partnership is to make Sandwell a welcoming place for individuals and families seeking sanctuary in the Borough, by working to:

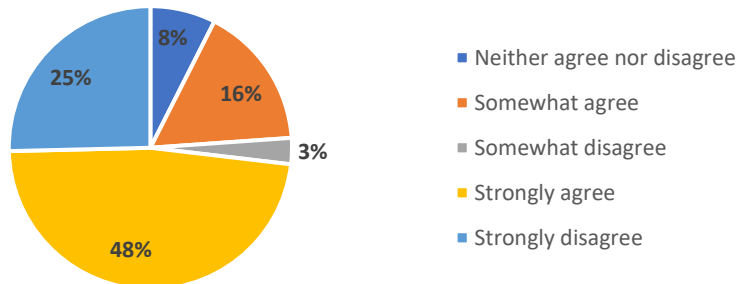


Response Analysis

- Support for the overall vision of the partnership was reasonably high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 64% of respondents agreed with the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy’s overall vision (45% strongly agreeing and 19% somewhat agreeing).
 - Community partners supported the overall aims of the partnership, stating *“this is the right combination of factors to focus on. If done through a two-way approach to integration this could be really effective”.*
 - One resident said, *“the aims are clear and will ensure wider understanding of organisations, frontline staff and communities of the experience of refugees and migrants, promote access and uptake of health care and ensure greater coordination of services”.*
- 7% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the partnership’s overall vision.
 - One community partner stated *“greater coordination and networking between local authorities and local community groups needed”.*
- 28% of respondents disagreed (24% strongly disagreed of respondents disagreed, and 4% somewhat disagreed).
 - One resident stated the strategy is a *“total idealistic pipedream - we can’t afford these policies”.*

7) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed objective of the partnership?

The partnership will work together as a network to make Sandwell a Borough of Sanctuary. We will strive to build a welcoming place for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, whilst also promoting integration and community cohesion.

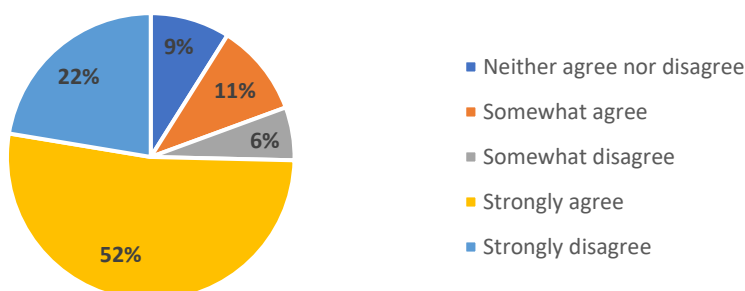


Response Analysis

- Support for this proposed objective was reasonably high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 64% of respondents agreed with the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy’s overall vision (48% strongly agreeing and 16% somewhat agreeing).
 - One individual with lived experience said *“as someone seeking sanctuary, I want to contribute to my community, make a difference and earn respect and trust”*.
 - Community partners were also supportive of this objective, adding *“it’s really important that the partnership strives to help communities work together. Without community networks, newly arrived families have very little to help them navigate our systems”*.
- 8% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the strategy’s overall vision.
 - One resident stated the partnership *“need to do more to make sure its cohesive”*.
- 28% of respondents disagreed (25% strongly disagreed of respondents disagreed, and 3% somewhat disagreed).
 - Another resident stated *“without funding, this objective will be very difficult to achieve”*.

8) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed objective of the partnership?

The partnership will promote a culture of inclusion between Sandwell residents and support a mutual understanding in which longer-standing communities feel able to understand and welcome migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

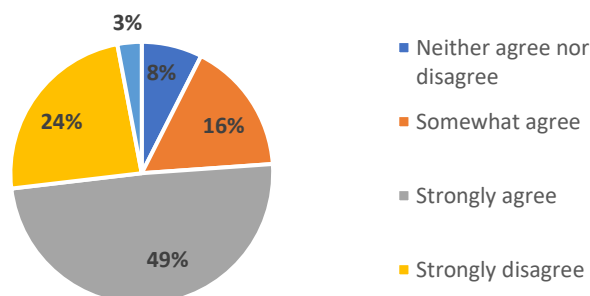


Response Analysis

- Support for this proposed objective was reasonably high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 63% of respondents agreed with the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy’s proposed objective (52% strongly agreeing and 11% somewhat agreeing).
 - One resident stated *“this is absolutely necessary to achieving positive welcome, but you do also need to acknowledge that anti-migrant and racist attitudes are often exacerbated by deprivation which is high in the Borough”*.
 - A community partner stated *“absolutely essential in order to counteract national and local media messages and the government's 'hostile environment' policy”*.
- 9% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the strategy’s overall vision.
 - One resident was less supportive, stating *“I agree totally with the commitments but doubt that the partnership will make significant changes at even borough level”*.
- 28% of respondents disagreed (22% strongly disagreed of respondents disagreed, and 6% somewhat disagreed).
 - Not all community partners were as supportive, commenting the objective is *“not clear how this would work in practice both in terms of tackling hostile environment and challenging policy. We can say we will not tolerate hostility but what real options are available to put a stop to this quickly?”*.

9) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed objective of the partnership?

The partnership will enhance opportunities for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to utilise and develop their skills, to access opportunities to support themselves and their families which contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of the borough.



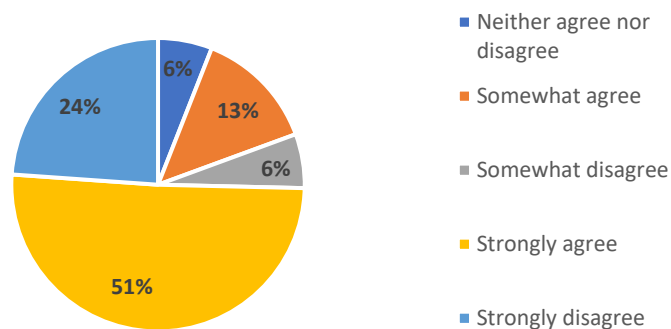
Response Analysis

- Support for this proposed objective was reasonably high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 65% of respondents agreed with the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy’s proposed objective (49% strongly agreeing and 16% somewhat agreeing).
 - One community organisation stated *“newcomers to our communities have a wide breadth and depth of skills to offer our employment market”*.
 - One individual with lived experience commented *“helping people work and thrive in the community is key to this”*.
- 8% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the strategy’s overall vision.

- Other community organisations were less supportive, *“on the final point, supporting those without the right to work to volunteer is a second order issue. These people are often being forced to live in a state of near or actual destitution, deeply traumatised yet disbelieved by state authorities and facing the constant fear of detention and deportation. Things like volunteering and even language learning can come later, once people feel safe and have the basics that they need to live with dignity”*.
- 27% of respondents disagreed (24% strongly disagreed of respondents disagreed, and 3% somewhat disagreed).
 - *“Appreciate that the partnership need to take some responsibility but so much to do elsewhere”*.

10) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed objective of the partnership?

The partnership will advocate the engagement of those seeking sanctuary in decision making processes at all levels and in all activities.



Response Analysis

- Support for this proposed objective was reasonably high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 64% of respondents agreed with the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy’s proposed objective (51% strongly agreeing and 13% somewhat agreeing).
 - One community organisation stated *“All members of society must be part of the decision-making process to truly reflect our communities needs and the problems they face”*
 - One resident commented this proposed objective is *“absolutely essential in order to counteract national and local media messages and the government’s ‘hostile environment’ policy”*.
- 6% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the strategy’s overall vision.
 - One individual with lived experience wasn’t totally convinced - *“I agree totally with the commitments but doubt that the partnership will have teeth to make changes at even borough level and less so at regional and national level, especially in the face of hostile government policy and hostile uninformed media”*.
- 30% of respondents disagreed (24% strongly disagreed of respondents disagreed, and 6% somewhat disagreed).
 - The scepticism from those with lived experience was demonstrated again as one commented *“all good aims and objectives. However, the council does not behave in such*

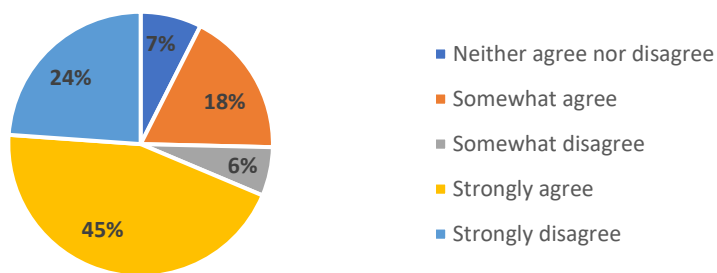
a positive empowering way with any of its residents at present. Empowering stakeholders is not very evident in council practices and behaviours”.

11) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposed outcomes of the partnership strategy?



- We will support families to be able to engage with relevant providers of services such as childcare, family support, schools and activities for children and young people.
- We will enable individuals and families to settle in Sandwell by sharing information and signposting to wellbeing activities, healthcare, and welfare provisions.
- We will work with communities to build relationships, support each other, and celebrate communities and culture.
- We will take a holistic approach and support individuals throughout their housing journey.
- We will advocate for and promote services that offer opportunities for individuals to use their skills and access employment and language support.
- We will work to ensure there is a cohesive transport model across the six towns that helps to promote social connectedness

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposed outcomes of the partnership strategy?

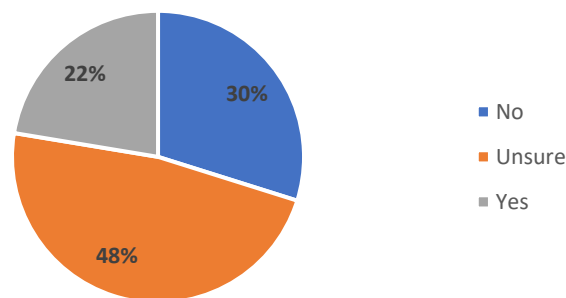


Response Analysis

- Support for these proposed outcomes was reasonably high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 63% of respondents agreed with the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy’s proposed objective (45% strongly agreeing and 18% somewhat agreeing).
 - One individual with lived experience said “you will meet every sanctuary seeker’s expectation of a welcoming Borough and safe place to call home”.
 - Members of community organisations were supportive of these objectives, stating “all of the above are needed. Having supported a family to resettle through community sponsorship, we have provided and continue to provide, support in all of the above”.

- 7% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the strategy’s overall vision.
 - Other respondents from community organisations were a bit more cautious, stating *“excellent aims but again just to be mindful that affordability is a central issue for people seeking asylum who may not really be able to move beyond the second objective.”*
- 30% of respondents disagreed (24% strongly disagreed of respondents disagreed, and 6% somewhat disagreed).
 - One resident did not support these proposed objectives, saying *“the partnership is a good idea but how will it impact on local residents? E.g. focussing on facilities”*.

12) Are there any things you think are missing from the strategy?



Response Analysis

- Overall, almost a half of responses (48%) were unsure whether the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy needed anything adding.
- However, there was a fairly even split amongst those who believe there are things missing from the strategy (22%), and those who do not (30%).

13) If you have selected yes, what do you think is missing from the strategy?

This generated the following responses, including:

- One individual with lived experience stated *“please mention trafficking and modern slavery victims too, we need to educate the community on this”*.
- One resident suggested the need for *“a clear statement of support for people seeking asylum who simply cannot afford to live”*.
- Another resident stated *“it's a dense document that few will read. However, it's useful to have it and to point to”*.

14) What more would you like Sandwell Council to do as an organisation to deliver support for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the borough?

This generated the following responses, including:

- One community organisation member said *“have a wider variety of community language information or the option to translate, on their website. Provide a greater presence of council representatives visiting local community organisations to talk with the constituents about the issues that matter most to them”*.

- One resident suggested to *“Enable travel that is free or supplemented so those in the poorest families and lowest incomes can access facilities outside of walking distance”*.
- One individual with lived experience suggested *“Positively challenge disinformation. And provide opportunities for communities to learn and work together as well as celebrating. Employing people from diverse backgrounds who may have an understanding of what these groups have been through and may experience when they first settle in the Borough”*.

15) What more would you like community groups to do as local organisation to support migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the borough?

- One community organisation stated *“more integrated spaces where migrants mix with UK citizens to break down barriers”*.
- One resident stated *“I’m not sure because I imagine they are already doing more than enough in the absence of effective national state support for newly arrived people. The bigger issue is what more the local authority can do to vocally push back against hostile policies”*.
- One individual with lived experience said *“I would like to see more kindness and tolerance towards the people who are sceptical about immigration, because most of them aren't too bad. Some way to undo these attitudes so they don't have after affects for migrants years later”*.

Collective response from Brushstrokes service users

A meeting was held by Brushstrokes with 12 of their service user panel, who have experience of migrating to or seeking sanctuary within Sandwell primarily as asylum seekers or refugees. The group consisted of both male and female respondents, from a range of nationalities including Syria, Kuwait, Pakistan, Nigeria, India, Malawi and Iran.

The group responded that Sandwell is welcoming all of the time for individuals and families arriving as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. Sandwell is where people want to live and have fought to remain here. The group highlighted the positives of living here as a migrant such as there being many facilities nearby, transport services, green spaces and the area being relatively free of violence compared to other parts of the West Midlands. Service users are pleased with how schools have supported their children and families, such as through the provision of holiday vouchers, free school meal vouchers and schools responding well to any issues that have arisen. Community organisations and education providers have played a significant role in welcoming them and providing them with information and support to establish themselves. These include Sandwell Adult and Family Learning and Brushstrokes, who have provided resources, immigration advice and employment support.

The group feel that services provided by Sandwell Council are mostly welcoming and accessible, with service users reporting limited interactions with the council. Service users reported limited interactions with the council. One member mentioned the council acted quickly and efficiently regarding registering their children at schools, whilst another mentioned that the council acted quickly when finding temporary accommodation after being given leave to remain. Interactions with council’s Complex Case Officer for Asylum Seekers and Refugees have been positive.

Sandwell could be more welcoming if: housing stock could accommodate larger families, roads were safer, streets were cleaner and if a wider range of apprenticeships are made available. It was felt that the following stops Sandwell being a welcoming place for all: untidy and unsightly streets, poor access to GPs, unsafe drivers and a lack of female only secondary schools which is important in some

cultures. When thinking about making Sandwell a welcoming place for all, the group felt worry for individuals suffering from alcoholism and drug abuse on the street.

The group either somewhat agreed or neither agreed nor disagreed to the objectives of the partnership for the following reasons:

- The strategy recognises recent changes to the nationalities that have moved into the area, which is a positive.
- There are some particularly vulnerable people living in Sandwell who go under the radar (people being trafficked, working illegally, living in very poor conditions) and need to be considered in the strategy as well.
- Important to realise that certain services (due to their geographic location within the borough) are a lot more accessible to some people than others)- you can live in parts of Sandwell and be far away from immigration advice.
- An even greater emphasis on the importance of providing suitable housing should be taken.
- The importance of cultural sensitivity when accommodating asylum seekers was raised (e.g. food requirements, religious needs).
- It is important to not treat asylum seekers as a homogenous group- individuals have different experiences and faced different forms of trauma which sees a need for a range of support services.
- Reaching out to organisations, rather than individuals/neighbours, for support is preferred by people who are new to the area. Even reaching out to those from the same nationality does not necessarily happen due to the insecurities that people feel.

The group were unsure as to whether anything is missing from the strategy. The group felt that Sandwell Council could deliver more of the following to support migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the borough: improve quantity and quality of housing, increase accessibility of immigration advice and increase the support offered to particularly vulnerable migrants (e.g. victims of exploitation, human trafficking). It was felt that community groups could deliver more outreach and promotion of services, more support regarding resource provision (especially food) and have information available in a range of language.

Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy – partnership workshop

In April 2023, the partnership undertook a consultation exercise with over 40 attendees to understand what a 'welcoming Sandwell' looks like and to establish the approach we need to take to become a borough of sanctuary for all. The consultation workshop included representation from local and national groups, residents, the council, and people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary in Sandwell to understand what issues meant the most to them.

During the workshop we aimed to gather thoughts and feedback on the proposed content of the Partnership Sanctuary Strategy and work together to build on suggested actions for the Council and local network organisations that will form the action plan that sits within the strategy. The consultation highlighted a need to further explore issues related to accessing healthcare, housing conditions, and communication with services and local authorities, as well as access to ESOL classes.

Summary of workshop feedback:

- Overall, support across the strategy document and action plan was relatively high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing with the strategy's overarching objectives. Please note we are still in the process of documenting all the feedback from the workshop session.

- A large cohort of attendees were from organisations operating in either Smethwick, West Bromwich, Wednesbury or Oldbury – there were no attendees from Rowley Regis or Tipton. Therefore, we intend to run additional workshops to involve partner organisations from these towns.
- Partners felt asylum resettlement across wards in Sandwell needs to be more even, as there is currently a high concentration in particular areas, such as Smethwick and St. Pauls, but less so in areas such as Newton and Blackheath. It is important to acknowledge the different identities and needs of the 6 towns in the strategy’s overarching vision and also to recognise where the current infrastructure is that supports asylum-seekers and refugees including key voluntary sector groups and faith based organisations.
- Within the narrative in the strategy about Sandwell’s history of resettlement and inward migration, partners felt we need to ensure we acknowledge that international migration has helped to shape Sandwell’s population, communities and identity for decades.
- Partners felt anything proposed needs to be actionable and realistic.
- The Borough of Sanctuary Strategy should include more content that celebrates the partnership work that goes on in the area.
- Partners wanted Sandwell Council to play a greater role in national campaigns around migration and resettlement and the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees.

Action taken in response to consultation feedback

Response Received	Action Taken
Victims of violence, exploitation and modern slavey and our offer to them as a partnership needs to be included within the strategy.	Included an additional objective for the partnership in relation to modern slavery. Also, we have now expanded our definitions section (Appendix 1) in order to include Modern Slavery and Trafficking victims, setting out the scope for who the strategic document and who it is aimed at.
Acknowledgement of Windrush Generation needs to be included into this strategic document.	Included an additional section in the strategy to acknowledge the Windrush Generations in Sandwell.
Strategy needs to acknowledge that there are pockets in Sandwell where new arrivals aren't made to feel part of the community.	Further information added into Appendix 2 to accompany the resettlement map in order to show how Sandwell Council will help to ensure a holistic approach is adopted so that all those resettling can integrate into their community, no matter what part of the Borough they live in.
All resettling individuals must be part of the political decision-making process to truly reflect our community needs and the problems they face.	Under the objectives for the partnership on page 11, we have added that ‘The partnership will challenge and question policy changes at a local, regional, and national level that support the rights and needs of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. We will assist and educate those seeking sanctuary as to what rights and entitlements they do have’.
Language support must be integrated into the strategic aims of this document.	In our strategic objectives (p.13), we have added a strategic commitment of providing Language learning for adults (ESOL) and

	committing to this. We have also added a strategic commitment of providing language learning for children and young people.
I think accessibility is the key challenge. Transport is expensive for people resettling in Sandwell.	We have added the following onto our strategic outcomes 'We will work to ensure there is a cohesive transport model across the six towns that helps to promote social connectedness. -Social connectedness and accessibility to services -Access to and affordability of public transport -Clear information about public transport and how to get around the borough -Signposting to wider support services and community activities'.
The strategy should acknowledge that systems are complex. Even with language support it is difficult to explain and navigate the systems for schools, housing and other council services.	Under the objectives for the partnership on page 13, we will add 'We will enable individuals and families to settle in Sandwell by sharing information and signposting to wider support services and community activities'.
Greater emphasis needed on community cohesion within the strategic objectives of the document.	In our strategic objectives (p.13), we have added in that 'we will work with communities to build relationships, support each other, and celebrate communities and culture. -Building welcoming communities -Taking part in community activities -Create more opportunities for community enterprise -Sharing and celebrating communities and cultures'.
Housing support needs to be mentioned within the strategy.	We have expanded on our commitment where 'We will take a holistic approach and support individuals throughout their housing journey'. Adding... '-Wrap around support for transition from temporary accommodation -Support individuals and families to feel safe and at home -Provision of affordable and quality homes -Provision of move-on accommodation'.

In addition, recommendations were also received from elected members when the strategy was presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny (SNAC) Board on 11th July 2023.

Recommendation	Action Taken
That the Director of Housing considers the feasibility of embedding ESOL tuition for asylum seekers and refugees into the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy.	An action planning workshop is taking place with partners to look at how this can be incorporated in the partnership's action plan that will sit beneath the strategy

<p>That the Director of Housing considers the inclusion of the educational needs of asylum seekers and refugees under eighteen years old within the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy including SEND, transport and language needs.</p>	<p>An action planning workshop is taking place with partners to look at how this can be incorporated in the partnership's action plan that will sit beneath the strategy</p>
<p>That the Director of Housing explores the cascading of consultations via town based community teams to increase response rates and to all Members.</p>	<p>There has been good cross-borough engagement in the consultation, but we do recognise that we need to support asylum-seekers, migrants and refugees across the whole borough, including in neighbourhoods where people have been less likely to settle.</p>
<p>That the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy is publicised as part of the Windrush and 50 years of Sandwell celebrations.</p>	<p>Currently working with Sandwell's Communications team on how we can publish and promote this strategic document once it is finalised.</p>
<p>That the Director of Housing explores the inclusion of female health care, including access to sexual health and period products within the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy.</p>	<p>An action planning workshop is taking place with partners to look at how this can be incorporated in the partnership's action plan that will sit beneath the strategy.</p>
<p>That training is provided to Members to increase awareness and better inform decision making in relation to the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy.</p>	<p>This will be addressed at the All Member Briefing once the strategy has been finalised.</p>
<p>That the Director of Housing explores the adoption of a holistic approach when progressing the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>