

Scrutiny Board :	Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Report Title	Consultation on Sandwell refreshed Dementia strategy
Date of Meeting	Monday 19 January 2026
Report Author	Maxine Groves
Lead Officer	Rashpal Bishop
Wards Affected	All Wards
Identify exempt information and exemption category	
Appendices (if any)	1. Draft Sandwell "Better Lives" Strategy 2026 - 2031

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report has been brought to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee in response to a specific request from the Board to be involved in the development of the refreshed Dementia Strategy. Scrutiny has asked to review the current strategy, consider its impact to date, and support the identification of lessons and priorities that should inform the new strategy for 2025–2030. The intention is that Scrutiny's views and recommendations will directly shape the final version of the strategy prior to its submission for formal approval.
- 1.2 The current Sandwell "Better Lives" Dementia Strategy concludes in 2025. The refreshed strategy aims to foster a stigma-free society where individuals with dementia feel safe and supported by responsive, needs-based services. The vision is to empower people with dementia and their families to access timely information, advice, and support

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Board is invited to review the draft refreshed Dementia Strategy, provide feedback and recommendations to inform its further development, and support its progression through the Council's governance arrangements.

3. Background and Context

3.1 Since 2019, Sandwell has consistently engaged with those affected by dementia to inform commissioning and evaluate the effectiveness of the "Better Lives" strategy, including the impact of the Sandwell Community Dementia Service (SCDS). The refreshed strategy seeks to further raise the profile of dementia care, building on progress made and addressing areas for improvement. With an ageing population and a projected increase in dementia diagnoses, including early-onset cases, a shared vision across our residents, Local Authority, NHS, and provider partners for future dementia care is essential.

3.2 In June 2025, the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee formally requested early and meaningful involvement in the refresh of the Dementia Strategy. The Board expressed a desire to review the current 2019–2025 strategy, reflect on its effectiveness, and contribute to the development of the new strategy by considering evidence, performance data, lived experience and emerging national and local priorities. This report responds directly to that request and marks the start of Scrutiny's role in shaping the refreshed Dementia Strategy.

3.3 Up to 40% of dementia cases are considered preventable. The strategy will therefore include actions to address modifiable risk factors such as high blood pressure, inactivity, alcohol use, and obesity, and will promote healthy lifestyles.

4. Strategic Priorities

4.1 The strategy aligns with NHS England's transformational pathway and the Black Country Integrated Care System's Dementia Strategy. The five priorities are:

- **Preventing Well:** Adopt a public health life-course approach to reduce modifiable dementia risks through awareness and support.
- **Diagnosing Well:** Improve timely, accessible, and culturally appropriate assessment and diagnosis, especially for younger people and those with learning disabilities.

- **Supporting Well:** Ensure access to appropriate care and support, enabling confidence in dementia-friendly environments and services.
- **Living Well:** Promote a dementia-friendly borough, ensuring that all council activities consider the needs of people with dementia.
- **Dying Well:** Enhance understanding and access to end-of-life care, supporting individuals and carers to make informed decisions.

5. Consultation

5.1 The strategy refresh has been informed by a comprehensive engagement process, including:

- Contract monitoring and service satisfaction data
- Case studies and lived experience feedback
- Collaborative commissioning meetings
- Independent evaluation of SCDS
- Engagement with the Black Country ICB and NHSE expert groups
- Research partnerships and provider consultations
- Public consultation and feedback from training and awareness events.

5.2 Engagement with the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee forms a key element of the strategy development process. Scrutiny has requested to act as a critical friend in the refresh of the Dementia Strategy, providing challenge, assurance and recommendations based on its statutory role and understanding of local need. Feedback and recommendations from this Board will be considered alongside wider engagement activity and will inform the final draft of the strategy prior to submission through the Council's formal governance and approval processes.

5.3 The final strategy will be completed by March 2026, incorporating all feedback for ratification and publication in April 2026.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Funding from the Better Care Fund for recommissioning SCDS is pending a decision by the Joint Partnership Board.

6.2 There may be financial implications for other directorates within the Council when supporting the delivery of the Strategy and dementia friendly communities.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

4.2 The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to support vulnerable people, and the Sandwell Community Dementia Service is central to fulfilling these duties. All data handling will comply with relevant legislation and council policies. Strategy delivery will be managed through established governance structures, which are the Joint Partnership Board and Health and Wellbeing Board.

5. Risks

5.1 The refreshed strategy will continue to strengthen links with local communities and work collaboratively with the Police, NHS, and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations. It will also ensure that the priorities and practice standards of the Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board are consistently promoted and embedded.

5.2 The Corporate Risk Management Strategy has been applied throughout the development of the refreshed strategy to identify and assess associated risks. An initial risk register has been completed, which identifies no strategic risks and only minimal project-level risks.

5.3 The refreshed strategy will continue to support the mitigation of the directorate risk relating to delayed hospital discharges, which is currently rated green (performance within acceptable parameters) and was previously recorded on the strategic risk register.

6. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has been completed for the refreshed strategy. A full EIA was not considered necessary, as the co-production approach and extensive research undertaken during development have resulted in a strategy that is fair and inclusive and seeks to address potential disadvantages experienced by specific groups.

6.2 The strategy places particular emphasis on timely diagnosis, carer support, accessible information, and workforce training, and has considered the diverse needs of people affected by dementia, including age, ethnicity, and disability, in order to promote equitable outcomes for individuals and their families.

6.3 In designing, developing and delivering activities arising from the strategy, due regard will continue to be given to the Public Sector Equality Duty, including the requirement to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010

10. Other Relevant Implications

10.1 **Workforce:** As one of the largest employers in Sandwell, the Council has appointed a Dementia Ambassador within Human Resources. The

Ambassador will lead on identifying and recommending changes to Council policies to better support employees who have concerns about their memory, are seeking a diagnosis of dementia, or who are carers for someone living with dementia.

10.2 **Dementia Friendly Commitment:** In March 2025, Senior Leadership Team endorsement was secured to support the ambition to make Sandwell a Dementia Friendly borough. A programme to establish Dementia Champions and Dementia Ambassadors was launched, with each Directorate and the Police asked to nominate an Ambassador. Senior leaders and nominated Ambassadors attended dementia virtual reality bus events and dementia-friendly workshops during May and July 2025, in preparation for the next phase and the planned launch of the strategy in 2026

10.3 **Built Environment:** The University of Stirling Built Environment Toolkit was procured to support Dementia Ambassadors following their participation in the May and July 2025 events and workshops. The toolkit will assist Directorates in assessing and embedding dementia-friendly principles within their areas of responsibility

10.4 **One Council Approach:** A One Council approach will support people to live well in their communities for as long as possible, in homes and neighbourhoods designed to reduce the impact of dementia. This includes enabling people to navigate their communities safely, even during periods of regeneration, and improving access to green spaces, leisure and recreation facilities, and cleaner air to help reduce future dementia risk among Sandwell residents.

11. Improved Health and Wellbeing for communities:

10.1 The strategy will contribute to improved community health and wellbeing through:

- Reduced social isolation and increased community connectedness
- Preventing or delaying the need for admission into hospital
- Supporting people to return home to live as independently as possible
- Flexible person-centered services enabling people to have choice and control while continuing to live full and active lives within their communities for longer
- Improved mental health and well-being
- Income maximisation
- Increased carer support
- Community cohesion
- Supporting community resilience
- Improved mental health and well-being services

11. Background Documents

11.1 There are no other background documents to be noted.

12. How does this deliver the Outcomes in the Council Plan?

- Growing up in Sandwell
- Living in Sandwell
- Healthy in Sandwell
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell
- One Council One Team Approach.

13.1 The strategy supports the Council Plan's objectives for growing up, living, and being healthy in Sandwell, fostering a thriving economy, and promoting a unified approach across the council.