

WE ARE
SANDWELL!



Sandwell's Child Friendly Discovery Phase Report and our Recommended Priority Themes.





A letter from the Leader of Sandwell Council

Our Discovery Stage report marks a significant milestone in Sandwell's Child Friendly journey, which is all about listening, learning, and exploring what it really means to create a place where every child feels safe, valued, and empowered to achieve their best. We are working together to understand what needs to change, what we can improve, and what we can celebrate in Sandwell to make it a truly child-friendly place for all.

To all the children and young people, we want to say a huge thank you for your energy, your ideas, and your incredible enthusiasm. You've shown us what it means to be creative, brave, and passionate about making a positive change in your communities.

To our partners, your commitment to building a better, safer, and more inclusive community for every child is at the heart of everything we do. We cannot achieve the vision of a Child Friendly Sandwell without you.

We have been supported by many colleagues, who have guided us on our journey so far. Their expertise and commitment to children's rights help ensure that we stay focused on what matters most: giving every child the opportunity to be included in decisions that affect them.

Throughout our Discovery Phase, we have collectively had the chance to share our thoughts, ideas, and dreams. Hear about what we think makes a place "child-friendly" whether it's about better places to play, better services, or simply being able to have your voice heard in the decisions that impact your lives.

So, let's keep the momentum going working together and challenging ourselves to take the ideas, inspiration, and connections from our discovery stage and help us turn them into actions. Whether it's in your schools, your local communities, or even in your own homes, you can make a difference.

This is our shared vision, and together, we can make Sandwell a place that reflects the needs, aspirations, and rights of all children and young people.

Yours faithfully Councillor Kerrie Carmichael

Sandwell Child Friendly Champion



Who have we spoken to and what methods have we used to understand how children's rights in Sandwell are currently realised ?

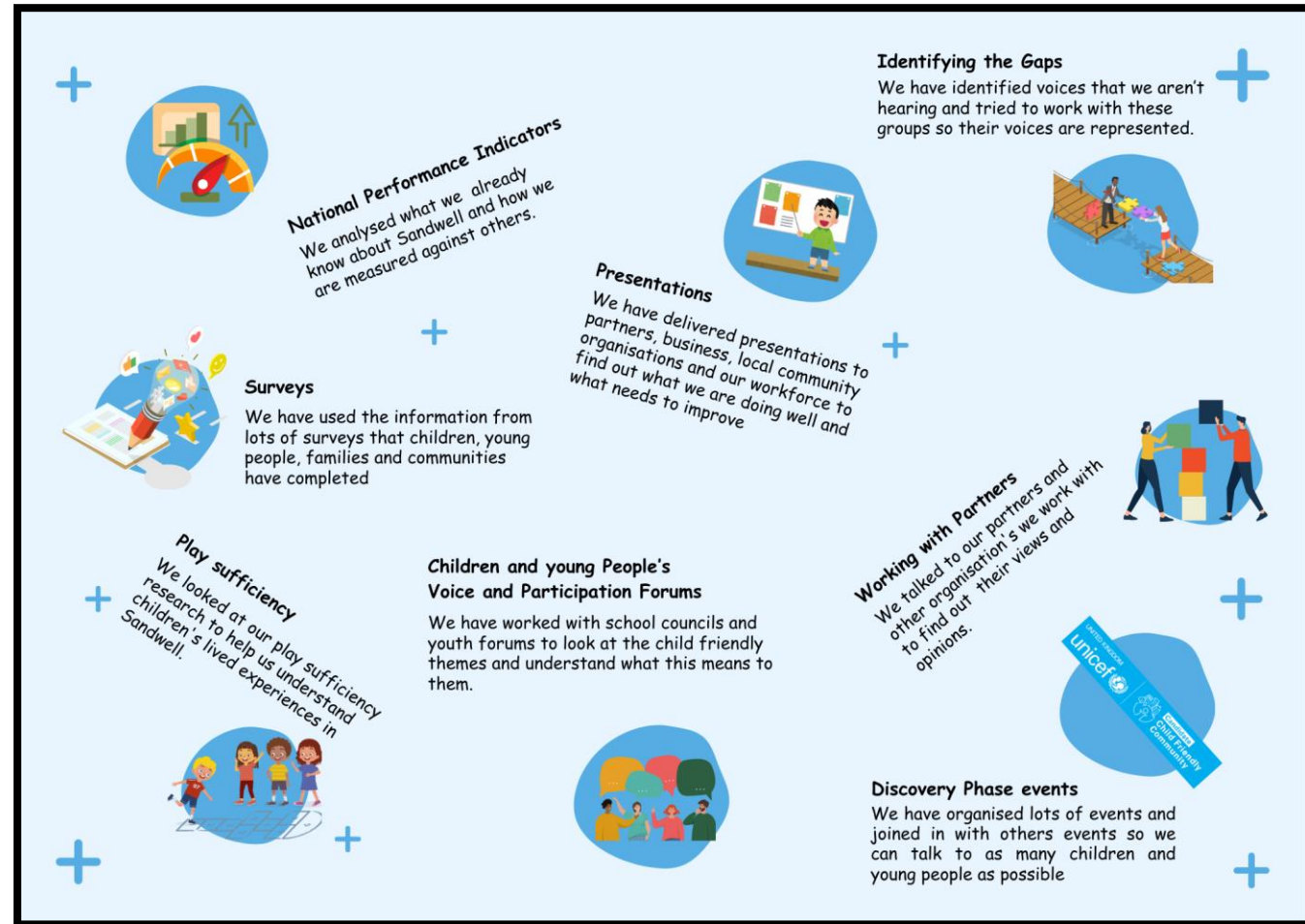
We have analysed 14,946 survey responses from children and young people.

We have actively engaged with 2650 children and young people face to face.

We have talked to over 80 partners to gather their views.

We have upskilled 117 people in a Child's Rights Based Approach and an Introduction to Child Friendly Practice

Look out for the yellow stars that tell you how many participated in each activity.





Youth Justice

What our Children Say

38

Main things our children are worried about

- Their Future – All children ticked this
- Money
- Mental Health / Education, Training & Employment

All Children (bar two) felt that Youth violence was getting worse. They felt this was driven by fear and money, but also noted influence of peers and social media.

Towns where children felt unsafe

- There were nominations for all town and none stood out. The majority of the children chose not to answer this question.

Children's view on how we can better engage them

- Sports offer
- Music
- More 1-2-1 sessions



sandwellchildrenstrust.org



MAKE
YOUR
MARK
2024

Results Report

10632

11-18 population at time of survey 38,644 responses rate 27.5 %

Top 4 responses

- **Crime and Safety**
2,506
- **Rights, Equality and Democracy** 1,525
- **Education and Learning**
1,504
- **Health and Wellbeing**
1,463

Between 2022 - 2024 Our children and young people told us the top things that worried them about growing up in Sandwell were:

- 



Protect existing
times and spaces for
play





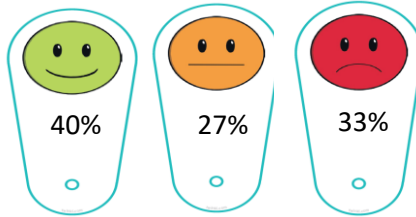
UNICEF/Andrew Fox – children and young people in the council chambers involved in activities with elected members and partners at Sandwell UNICEF UK Schools Discovery Day

Community Scoreboards - In a Child Friendly Community all Children....

186



Have a say about decisions that affect them and are supported to do that

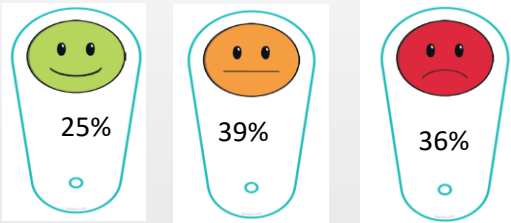


Our voices are not heard

We don't know where to have our voices heard

We don't have the chance or the platform to say what we think

Can access child friendly information about the council, their rights and entitlements



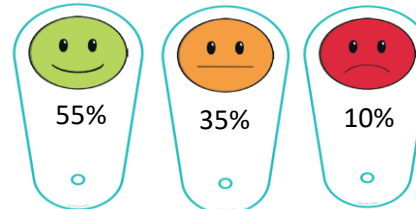
Information is not timely

Where do we go if we want to know about our rights ?

We do not have enough information about what the council does

Adults are seen as more important

Have fair access to health, education, transport and other services and have a good experience of these, whatever their needs



We need more reliable buses

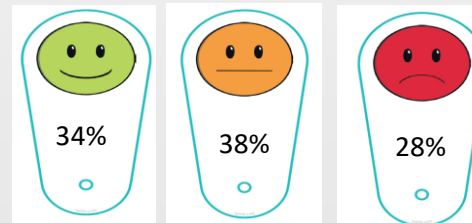
Happy with school

Waiting list for healthcare is very long

Are included and protected from discrimination

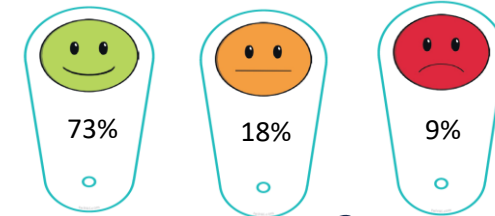
Law is not enforced very well

Things that we don't want to see happening are happening



Needs of children are not prioritised

Feel able to approach trusted adults and benefit from having a supportive relationship with friends, family and people within the community



Things reported to adults are ignored

Don't know where to go to get help or support

We have great trusted adults at school

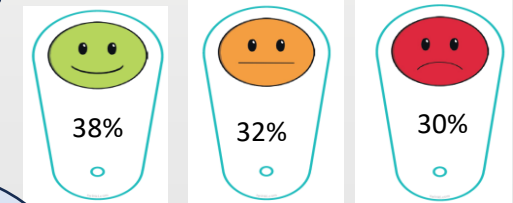
Are free and supported to enjoy playing, developing their talents and exploring the world around them

Upgrade the facilities we do have

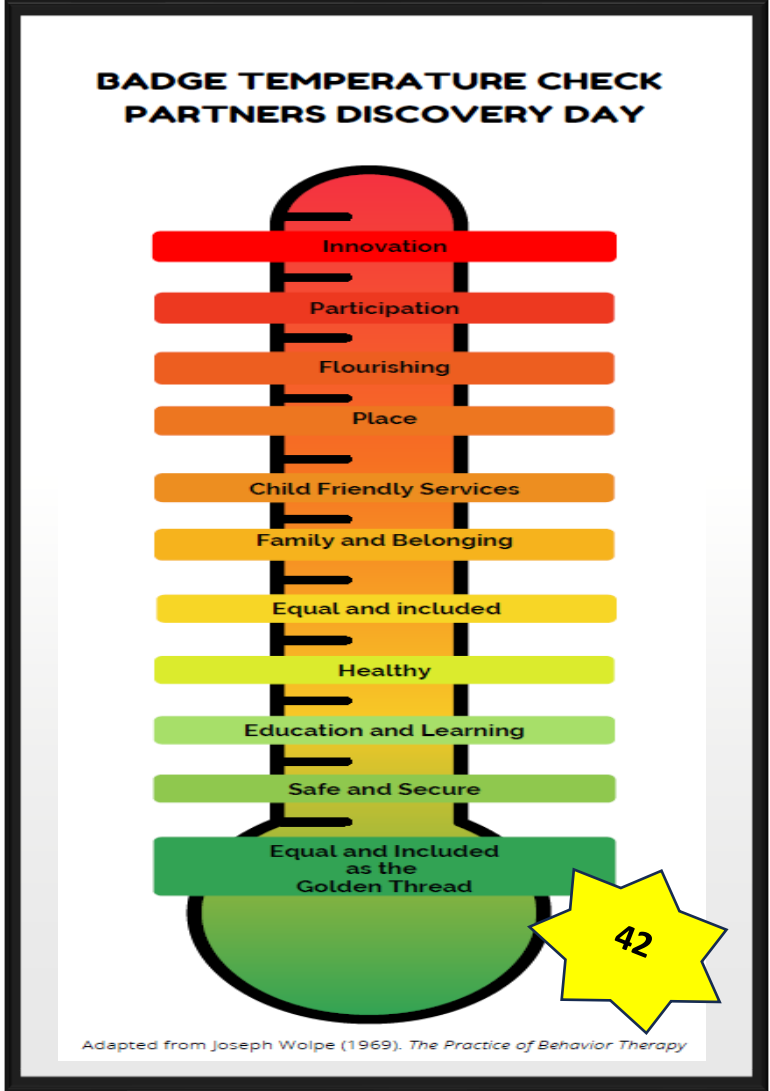
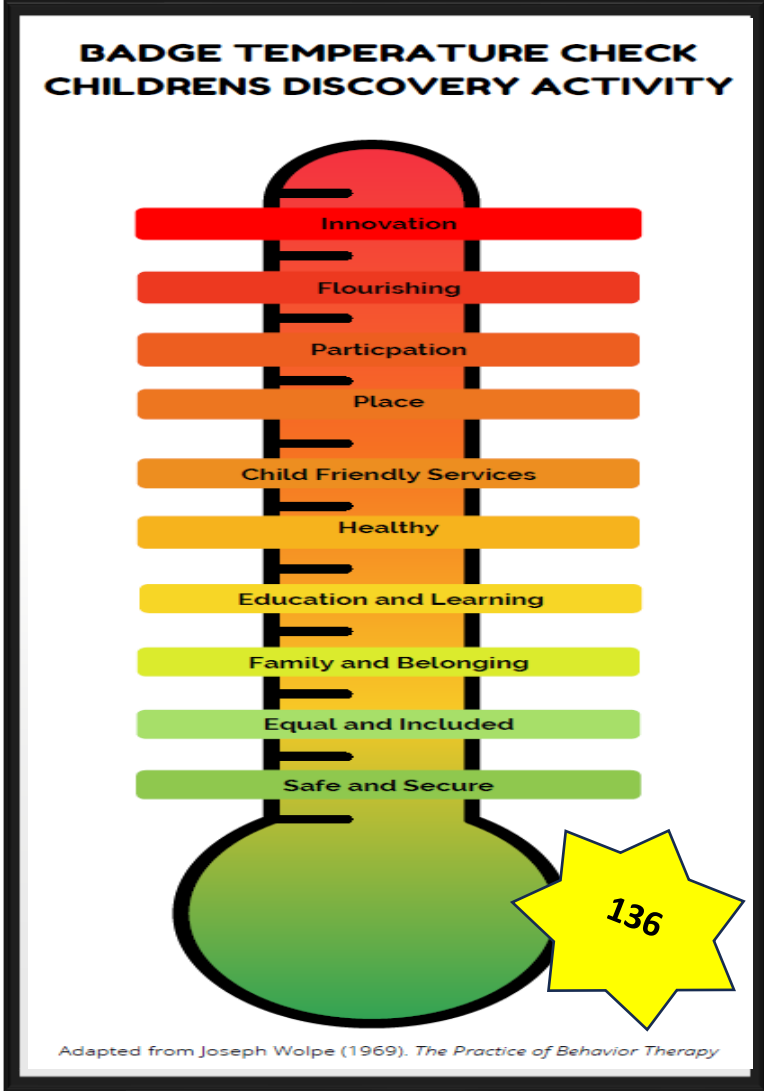
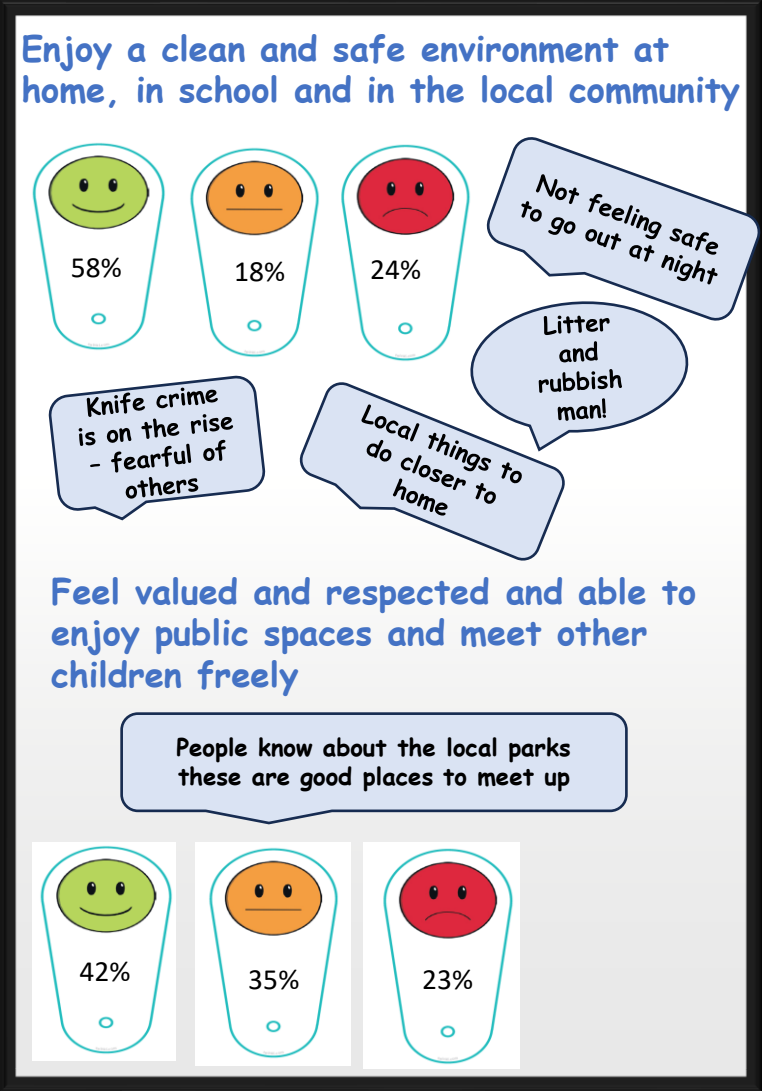
Improve safety of parks we do have

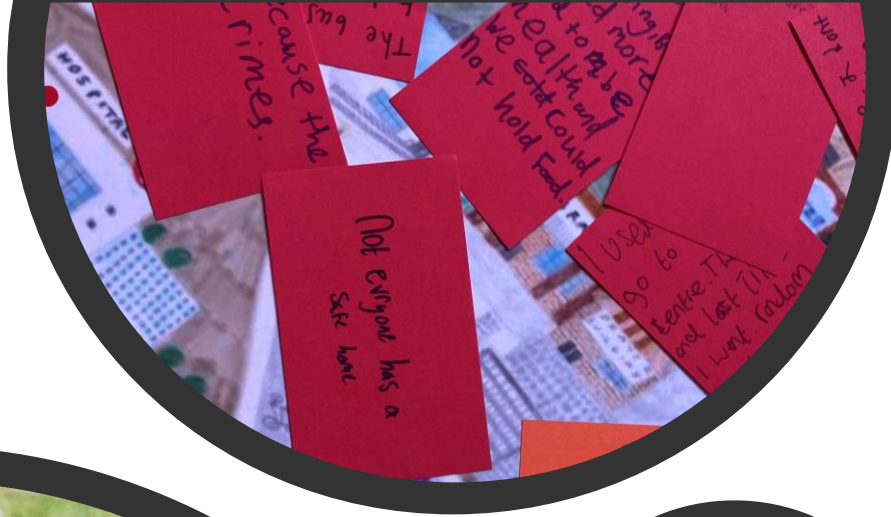
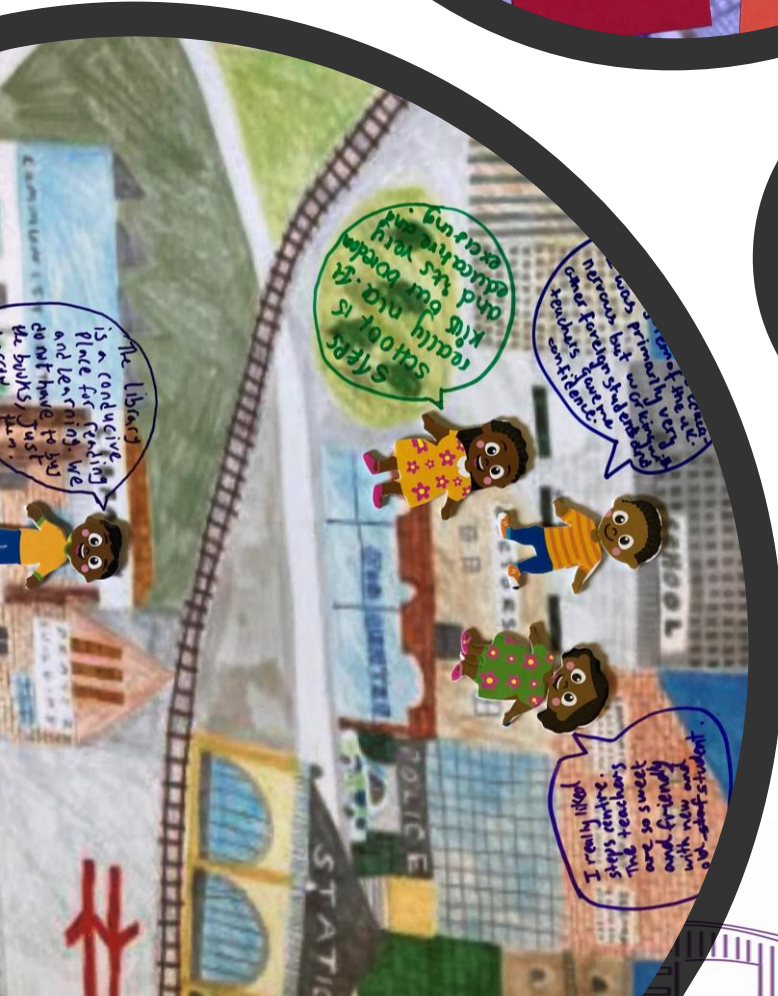
Not enough places to support talents and play.

Some play areas are not suitable for children with disabilities



Community Scoreboards - In a Child Friendly Community all Children....








Pride and Challenge Community Mapping

Understanding where in our community children feel services are working and where they could be improved






Pride and Challenge Community Mapping

323

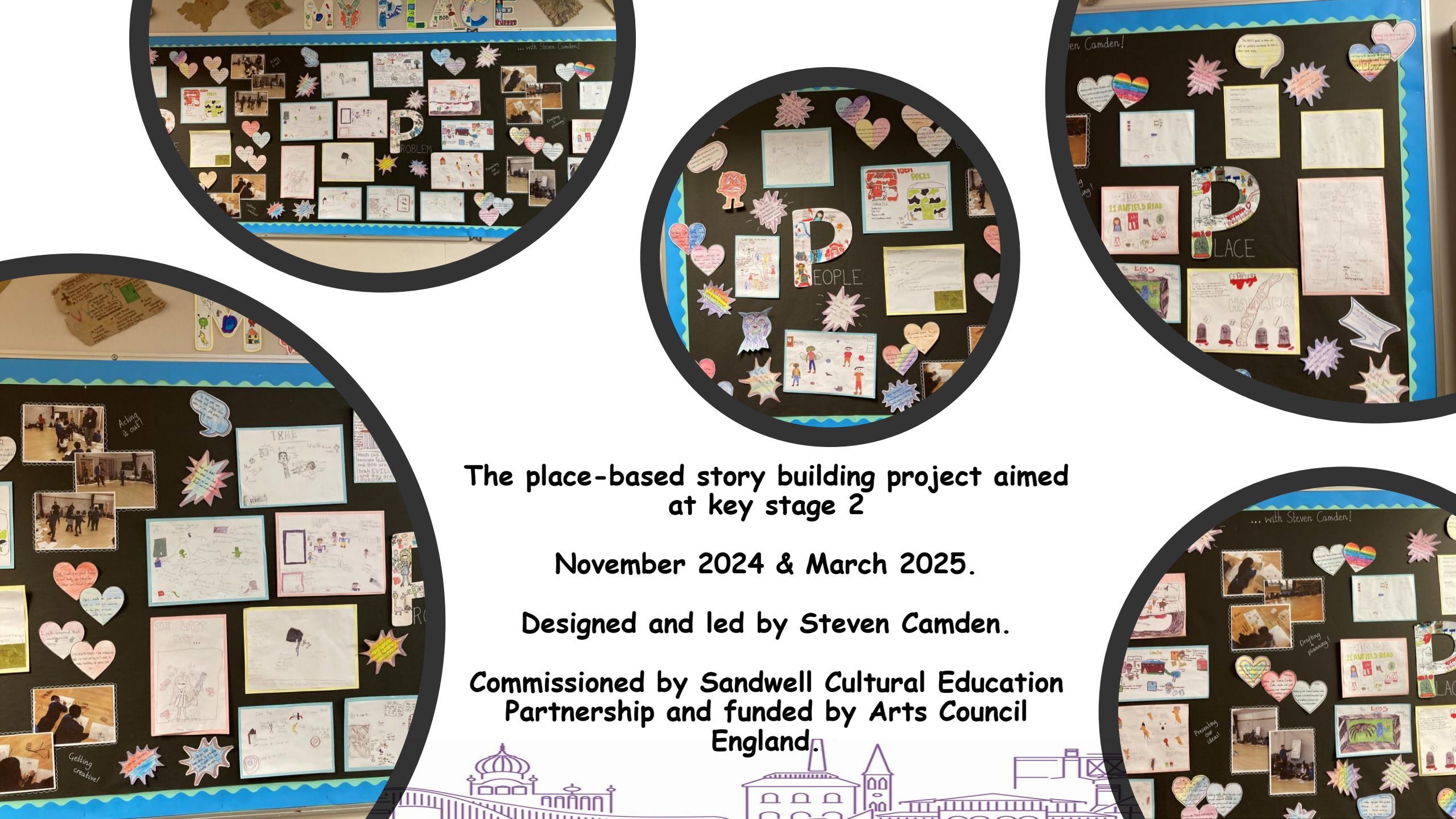
| Service or space | Pride | Challenge |
|---|---|--|
| Education Spaces  | <p>On the whole schools are talked about in a positive manner where children feel their rights are upheld.</p> <p>Schools are safe spaces and there is an overwhelming sense of pride for the school communities.</p> | <p>Children in alternative provision, home educated or in specialist provision shared the biggest challenges where they had faced bullying and lack of understanding and support, but this is based on past experiences not current.</p> |
| Police and Crime  | <p>Police officers are seen as trusted adults by children, but they did not talk about them but more about feelings of safety.</p> | <p>Children didn't identify the police station as a challenge but more lack of police officers but throughout the community mapping in most other areas crime or safety were talked about.</p> |
| Trains and Buses  | <p>Public transport and particularly buses and trams were seen as good to have</p> | <p>Children do not feel safe using public transport and this was the area with the most comments with the spotlight on safety and security.</p> |



Pride and Challenge Community Mapping - Top 6

| Service or space | Pride | Challenge |
|---|---|---|
| Roads and Traffic  | <p>There were no positive comments about traffic and roads.</p> | <p>Children identified cars speeding and going too fast making where they lived and around their schools unsafe. They linked cars to pollution and that parked cars stopped people from walking and using the footpaths.</p> |
| Local Communities  | <p>There were no pride comments about the local community.</p> | <p>Children talked about more things being available locally and particularly for disabled people and those that don't get included. They wanted to feel safe to go out without their parents or adults so they could play and meet up with friends and talked about having better communities with less crime.</p> |
| Green Spaces  | <p>These are important spaces for children and young people across the age ranges and are viewed as places where children can play, socialise and be active with the most comments overall (too many comments to mention)</p> | <p>They need to be safer, and a large number of responses related to safety and feeling safe. A consensus that there should be more green spaces or greenery and wildlife spaces</p> |





**The place-based story building project aimed
at key stage 2**

November 2024 & March 2025.

Designed and led by Steven Camden.

**Commissioned by Sandwell Cultural Education
Partnership and funded by Arts Council
England.**

What was it ?

4 creative story exploring sessions and a sharing assembly for each school

Intentions

We wanted the children involved to use their own lives and the places around them to be creative. By thinking about their everyday surroundings and writing stories, drawing pictures and acting out plays that celebrates who they are and where they come from.

Key Themes woven into the stories.

- Friendship and relationships and characters with artistic dreams
- families and smaller family dramas
- Gangs, deception and double crossing and police
- Murder and blood, serial killers and abduction
- Squid Game and football
- Nuclear weapons and political power struggles
- Movie references and nods to Marvel and DC comics and talking animals
- Sports teams and superstars
- Secret ninjas and under cover FBI agents
- Fast food- Lots of use of local food spots and restaurants

Outputs

6 schools – one in each town.

237 children directly engaged with the artists.

1000 children reached within school across other year groups by teaching staff using lesson plans.

6 whole school assemblies with parent and care givers attending.

960 pieces of work including maps of the local area, full scene artwork, character profiles and stories.

1237



Urban Rooms Collaboration - Early Years and Family Engagement.

Our very young children talked about being outside and playing with friends.

They like exploring with their families and loved trying new things.

Their families valued spending time together and having local activities that were fun and free.



WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THEM?

Holiday Activity and Food Programme

3 year Impact Report

Launched as a pilot in 2018 by the Department for Education, HAF was established to 'provide healthy meals, enriching activities and free places to children from low-income families, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning.

This evaluation report highlights the real impact of the Sandwell HAF programme on children, families, and providers and the key themes were:

- Friendship, Fun and Family were the things children and young people valued most.
- Barriers to services and a sense of belonging still exist for some children and young people and families.
- Caregivers valued HAF for offering safe and accessible holiday activities in the community with providers they trusted.

Family day out with my children meant the world to us (PC)



1187



We went knowing we were going into a safe welcoming environment where our son can be himself, which was just massively important. (PC)



There was no precious circle. No exclusion. No one was marginalised. (YP)



We wanted to:

- Build relationships with schools and school councils so we can hear from more children and young people.
- Have conversations with children and young people to help them understand about democracy and children's rights.
- Introduce our children and young people to senior leaders and politicians working in Sandwell.

What activities did we organise ?

- Budget Consultation and Meet the Council Event.
- Democracy Summit.
- An Audience with the Mayor.
- Presentation at the Business Growth and Employment Summit.
- Wood Green Academy's Turn Sandwell UNICEF Blue Campaign for World Children's Day.
- Sandwell Council Leaders Takeover Challenge.

Who attended ?

- 112 children and young people took part in activities across the week.
- 31 senior leaders from across the council and other partners.
- Our UK Youth Parliament members and our UK Youth Crime Commissioner.
- Cabinet Members and the Worshipful Mayor of Sandwell.
- MP for West Bromwich.





What have we learnt ?

Communication

- We need to get better at presenting information to children and young people in a child friendly way.
- Our partners have told us we need to improve how we talk about the child friendly programme and help them get involved.
- We need to be better at letting our children and young people know what action we have taken after asking for their opinions and ideas.

Culture

- We want everyone to have a better understanding of children's rights, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- We need to help services consider children's rights and the impact their actions might have from a child's experiences of growing up.
- We need to change the language we use when we talk about participation. We often focus on older young people instead of all children and young people.

Cooperation and Leadership

- We need to understand how we can do things differently and support leaders to champion a child friendly approach.
- We need a commitment to work harder on developing a plan that supports more children and young people to have a say in what happens in Sandwell.
- We need to develop a shared action plan that supports us to make real changes with leaders across Sandwell.



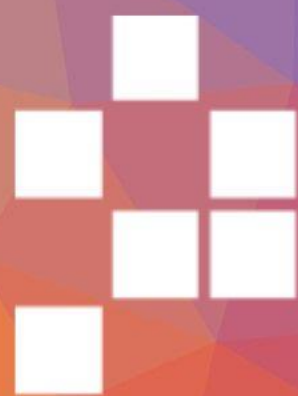
Our Badge Recommendations

Feeling **Safe and Secure** is important for everyone children, young people, families, and all the people who help us. It's the number one thing we care about. We want to feel safe when we go to places we love, like the park, shopping centres, and local community spaces. It's also important to feel safe when we travel around Sandwell on buses and trains by ourselves and with our friends.

Making sure all children feel **Equal and Included** was also very important and particularly for those experiencing difficulties. Unlike the adult's, children and young people felt this should be a focus priority because people talk about it a lot, but nothing changes, and they want to be included in decision making and be part of the solution.

During the discovery phase **Family and Belonging** was talked about a lot and feeling like part of a family was important. This was clear in the storytelling project, with our early years children and for those we care for who shared how much family and belonging means to them.

Education and Learning and **Healthy** are high scorers with secondary aged young people.



Sandwell

Metropolitan Borough Council