

Cabinet

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| Report Title | Award of Consolidated Grant to Brushstrokes Community Project |
| Date of Meeting | Wednesday, 14 January 2026 |
| Report Author | Kathryn Hickman - Vulnerable Groups Programme Manager |
| Lead Officer | Director Public Health |
| Lead Cabinet Member(s) | Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health & Well-being |
| Why is this a key decision? | To be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough. |
| Wards Affected | (All Wards); |
| Identify exempt information and exemption category | Open |
| Is the report urgent? | No |
| Reasons for urgency (only where applicable) | N/A |
| Appendices (if any) | None. |

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks approval to consolidate funding from across the Council in a single grant funding award to Brushstrokes Community Project to support vulnerable migrant communities living in Sandwell, including asylum seekers, refugees and those at risk of destitution and homelessness. This programme contributes towards achieving all five strategic priorities of the Council Plan 2024-2027.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

2.1. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to grant fund Brushstrokes Community Project for 3 years from 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2029 to provide a consolidated arrangement of services spanning Public Health, Housing Management, Voluntary Sector Support, Family Hubs and Sandwell Children's Trust using a Direct Award process. The total value of the grant funded support across the 3 years will be £610,995 (excluding VAT).

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

3.1. Brushstrokes is a valued partner, the sole provider of joined up holistic support to asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants and people at risk of destitution and homelessness and lead provider of immigration advice since 2000. Brushstrokes offer a wide range of services, which focus on supporting these very vulnerable groups through key transition points in their lives. Services include advice and information services; resources (such as food and clothing); English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); social and community activities; inclusion health and wellbeing support; digital and employment support; and specific support for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and families. This crucial support aids the improvement of health outcomes and a reduction in the health inequalities that this vulnerable population experience.

3.2. The Council has consolidated the various individual grants awarded over the last 6 years to Brushstrokes by different Council Directorates to make efficiencies through the reduction of administration for Brushstrokes and the Council. We seek to do the same again for the next grant term starting from 1st April 2026 – 31st March 2029. However, the landscape has changed over the current grant term, and as such additional funding streams being awarded to Brushstrokes from other Directorates are now being brought into this grant to ensure greater efficiencies can be realised.”

3.3. The consolidated grant proposal contributes to the Council’s delivery of the Council Plan 2024-2027. It also contributes to other strategies including, but not limited to, Sandwell Better Mental Health Strategy 2024 – 2029, Sandwell Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2025 and Tackling Poverty Plan 2023.

Evidence-Base

3.4. The need to support improved health outcomes and reduce health inequalities amongst vulnerable migrant groups is widely evidenced through several key datasets, local reports, national strategies/policies and legislation:

- Sandwell Migrant Health Needs Assessment 2025
- Sandwell Migrant Health Literature Review
- Brushstrokes monthly and annual reports on their service provision including EDI data.
- [Family Hubs Perinatal Mental Health and Parent-infant Relationships Needs Assessment 2025](#)
- Sandwell Census 2021 data can be found [here](#)
- [NICE Guidance for black and minority ethnic communities](#)

- [Suicide Prevention Strategy for England: 2023 to 2028](#)
- [The mental health of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK](#)
- [NHS Fit for the future: 10 Year Health Plan for England](#)
- [Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On](#)
- [The Public Health Outcomes Framework \(PHOF\)](#)

3.5. As an Inclusion Health group, migrants are often marginalised from services, communities and society as a whole. We find ourselves working within the context of an increasingly challenging policy environment. Recent changes have been designed to make settlement more difficult for migrants, with the explicit intention of reducing immigration to the UK. However, these changes fail to adequately consider the health impact and the implications for migrants and service providers, raising serious concerns about the potential deterioration of health outcomes for migrant communities. The proposed changes are likely to exacerbate existing barriers to healthcare access by prolonging periods of immigration uncertainty, which is identified as a significant determinant of mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, a wraparound holistic service such as that offered by Brushstrokes is needed more now than ever.

Impact

3.6. The impact of the current grant is far reaching and proves value for money. Under the current grant arrangement between 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2026, a total of £369,720 of grant funding has been used to support 5446 vulnerable migrants to date (September 2025). This provides exceptional value for the extent of services that individuals and families can access based on £67.88 per head. Data demonstrates some of the impact that the holistic service has on vulnerable migrants residing in Sandwell during 2024/2025:

- 6420 advice cases empowering clients to take real control of their lives from stabilising their immigration or housing status, to claiming the appropriate benefits to which they are entitled, right through to employment.
- 35 new volunteers (27 with lived experience)
- 9 volunteers into employment
- 82 clients supported into employment
- 6049 hours of ESOL learning
- 1470 hours of digital skills learning
- £1,823,440 financial gains for clients through income maximisation /benefits advice
- 137 baby packs provided to families
- 3626 individuals supported with clothes and household resources
- At least 10 clients a week take part in weekly Wellbeing Walks
- 134 clients registered with primary care services: GP, dentist, optician.
- 323 Health Certificates completed for access to free prescriptions
- 160 clients registered for the Pharmacy 1st Scheme
- 163 clients engaging with wellbeing sessions such as music, art, 5 ways to wellbeing, counselling
- 297 clients engaging in screening awareness sessions such as TB, measles and cancer.
- 343 Housing applications completed
- 180 homelessness preventions

- Family Hubs engagement: Overall reach 1012, Engaged in Peer Support: 118, Registered to a Family Hub: 85, Fathers Supported: 66, Young Parents Supported: 36

3.7. The preventative nature of the support offered by Brushstrokes and the crisis reduction initiatives they offer helps to realise a reduction in longer-term Council and Trust expenditure. For example, a reduction in temporary accommodation costs through homelessness prevention, reduced expenditure for the Children's Trust in comparison to their current appropriate adult support arrangements, a reduction in longer-term adult social care and public health costs ensuring that migrant communities are engaging with health services, lifestyle services and reducing risk-taking behaviour.

Project Aims

3.8. The grant will enable Brushstrokes to continue to deliver responsive and flexible support to vulnerable migrant communities to address the inequalities faced by migrants who represent some of the most marginalised in society and face a range of risk factors for poor health and wellbeing.

3.9. This project aims to promote improved health outcomes and better mental health for vulnerable migrants in need of additional support due to language difficulties, social isolation, poverty and lack of confidence or low literacy levels. The project aims to support this vulnerable cohort to access and engage with local healthcare, public health and wider preventative services to tackle underlying inequalities.

Project Delivery

3.10. The grant will enable Brushstrokes to continue to deliver responsive and flexible support in the areas of:

- **Health and Wellbeing:**
 - **Improve Health Outcomes** – taking an inclusion health approach facilitating improved access to health care, public health preventative services and broader preventative work linked to poverty and inequalities, so participants are more able to look after their own and their family's health and wellbeing.
 - **Mental Health & Wellbeing** - Facilitate and deliver sessions that promote good mental health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation and tackle mental health stigma. Taking a preventative and health promotion approach, this could be facilitated through the Five Ways to Wellbeing, hobby-based activities or peer support/buddying schemes. Ensure mental health service pathways are in place for those who show signs of more acute mental health needs or distress.
 - **Early Years & Family Hubs** – Linking in with the Family Hubs and Best Start in Life services to promote services and signpost or handhold to this provision ensuring that expectant parents, families with newborns and young children are aware of the support pathways available and appropriate referrals made; and promote positive early relationships, attachment, and perinatal mental health support.

- **Healthy Sandwell** - Brushstrokes will promote, signpost and support referrals to Public Health Healthy Sandwell Team to support migrant communities to access public health services, handholding families to the provision where necessary.
- **Tackling Wider Determinants of Health** - Promoting early intervention through advice and advocacy and referrals/signposting to services and organisations. Offering a bespoke "Welcome to Sandwell" orientation sessions to help Asylum Seekers and new migrants to settle well in Sandwell and build connections within their local community.
- **Service User Voice** - Ensure mechanisms for involvement of those with lived experience in the design, development, and delivery of public health services to better understand the needs and barriers of migrant families.
- **Support for residents at risk of destitution:**
 - **Providing dedicated staff** capacity to engage with and offer intensive and holistic support to residents at risk of destitution.
 - **Clients will be given immediate assistance** and supported through a range of services offered at Brushstrokes including benefits, immigration advice up to OISC level 3, housing, health, digital inclusion, employment support, budgeting support, access to language learning, food & other essentials.
- **Support for residents residing in Contingency Accommodation (CA), Dispersal Accommodation (DA) or Initial Accommodation (IA) in Sandwell**
 - **Dedicated Inclusion Health Worker capacity** to engage with and offer holistic support to Asylum Seekers residing in CA/TA/IA through:
 - **Provision of advice, language and health information**
 - **Increased advice capacity** for asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants in Sandwell to reduce health inequalities
 - **Greater coordination** with the local health sector on migrant health issues
- **Family Hubs Peer Support**
 - **Deliver a high-quality peer support service** to ethnic minority communities and migrant families offering a listening ear, help and support to these families living in Sandwell.
 - The service will play a crucial role in **increasing the confidence and wellbeing of parents from ethnic minority communities and migrant families** and reduce social isolation by helping them to self-advocate and engage with local services.
 - The service will aim to **enhance the quality of life for the parent and their children** by supporting the parent-infant relationship and encouraging positive parenting.
- **Appropriate Adult Support**
 - Using the expertise of existing trained staff members, act as the appropriate adult to support Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) through the age assessment process.

- Providing appropriate adult support during the age assessment process ensures we are operating within best practice guidance to deliver effective and safe age assessments for UASC.
- Build effective relationships with UASC to act as advocates for further support needs, especially in relation to their asylum and immigration journeys.

Grant Management Arrangements

- 3.11. Monitoring arrangements are already in place for the current grant term including quantitative and qualitative data (case studies). These will be adapted in collaboration with Brushstrokes to include measures of success for the additional elements of delivery for the new grant term.
- 3.12. Working collaboratively with Brushstrokes and the funding leads, reporting timescales will be agreed (currently on a monthly and annual basis) for the new grant term. Grant management meetings will also be arranged in line with reporting requirements.
- 3.13. Grant management will be facilitated by a Lead Commissioner within the Public Health team. The Lead Commissioner will represent all funding leads through this arrangement.

4. Alternative Options Considered

The following alternative options have been considered:-

- 4.1. **Option 1: Cease Grant-Funding.** An alternative option would be to not provide any funding to Brushstrokes Community Project to support their holistic service offer to vulnerable migrant communities. This is deemed not to be a viable option due to the vulnerability of this population and the risk of worsening health outcomes and exacerbating health inequalities. Offering this continued funding means that Brushstrokes can continue to offer essential wraparound support ensuring that vulnerable migrants feel welcomed, have better access to services, advice and guidance, begin to establish links with the local community, begin to learn conversational English and improve their health and wellbeing. Additionally, there are added risks for this cohort to experience exploitation and modern-day slavery, and therefore, having relationships with trusted professionals that they can turn to, would help to lower this risk.
- 4.2. **Option 2: Direct Awards vs Open-Competitive Grant-Making.** Officers involved in establishing this consolidated grant have discussed the distribution of the grant and believe it should be awarded via Direct Award for the following reasons:

Brushstrokes Community Project is the sole provider that offers the holistic and specialist support to this community in Sandwell, including the lead organisation for specialist immigration advice (up to Level 3). Where other local VCS organisations may offer similar services, it is often to a targeted community rather than being universal to all migrants regardless of ethnicity/country of birth. Additionally, we acknowledge that there are other local VCS organisations who deliver specific aspects of this work, but not in such a holistic way as Brushstrokes which promotes a more positive customer

journey with continuity of support and a reduction in how often customers must tell their story. Brushstrokes Community Project provides excellent value for money:

- They succeed in the delivery of services that the Council have grant funded over the years. They regularly overachieve their mutually agreed target engagement rates (an example includes the support offered in contingency accommodation between January 2024 – December 2024, 853 individuals were supported with a target of 600) and produce impactful monthly reports including the use of case studies that represent the holistic support offer.
- They add additionality to services users outside of expected grant/service outcomes through their holistic offer and leverage of external funds. For example, the charity has recently refurbished a housing site for vulnerable migrants to help with demand in the sector and those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).
- Their lived experienced staffing model allows them to provide universal holistic support as they have staff and volunteers with a broad range of language skills to meet community need.
- Brushstrokes work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders in this space including across all necessary Council Directorates.
- Utilising Brushstrokes for their existing trained staff as appropriate adults, saves the Children's Trust money. As Brushstrokes benefit from wider funding streams, they can offer this support at a competitive rate which is cheaper than the current arrangement the Trust has. In addition, it also provides better value for money than the current arrangement as UASC benefit from the full holistic service offer available at Brushstrokes offering additionality to Trust's financial commitment.

Brushstrokes are well positioned regionally and nationally to advocate for this vulnerable population and demonstrate best practice. For example, they are engaged with Black Country ICB strategic forums to drive system and service change to support health improvement. Recently their work with migrants with no recourse to public funds has been recognised nationally as best practice.

4.3. **Option 3: Contract vs Grant.** This option has been discussed with funding leads and members of the Voluntary Sector Grants Board, and it has been agreed that maintaining this funding via grant making is the most suitable option at this time for the following reasons:

- The proposal meets the definition of grant funding in that it achieves Brushstrokes organisational objectives and contributes to the delivery of their core service offer. It also supports the Council in achieving its ambitions outside of its core business.
- The proposal and monitoring arrangements have been established collaboratively with Brushstrokes.
- A grant allows greater flexibility in delivery to adapt to the complex needs of different migrant individuals and families. Contracting could stifle some of this flexibility through the added formality of contract variation, when the service does not form part of the Council's own business.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. Consultation and co-production was undertaken with migrant communities, partners and Brushstrokes with their specialist knowledge was essential. In addition, funding leads who are contributing to the consolidated grant use their own evidence from service use voice to inform their contributions.
- 5.2. The recent Sandwell Migrant Health Needs Assessment 2025 was fundamentally shaped by a co-production approach that positioned migrant communities and stakeholders at the centre of the process. The methodology employed multiple evidence sources:
 - **Professional stakeholder engagement** through 14 in-depth interviews with representatives from health, social care, voluntary sector, and providers of services
 - **Community engagement** including 7 stakeholder reports, 12 focus groups with 105 migrant community members and surveys with 68 recent migrants
 - **Stakeholder event** bringing together service users, community representatives, and professionals to collectively agree priorities
- 5.3. The key findings from the Health Needs Assessment included healthcare access, trust and communication, capacity building and community development, understanding migrant health needs (acknowledging migrants are not a homogeneous group) and addressing the wider determinants of health.
- 5.4. The findings and recommendations from the Health Needs Assessment have informed this proposal.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. Grant funding of £610,995 for the next 3 years will enable Brushstrokes to continue to deliver responsive and flexible support to this vulnerable cohort. This will be funded by the following budgets (the increasing budgets include 3% inflation year on year):

| Budget/funding source | 2026/27 £ | 2027/28 £ | 2028/29 £ | Total £ |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Public Health Grant | 71,800 | 73,654 | 75,564 | 221,018 |
| Housing Solutions (Home Office Asylum Dispersal Grant)* | 55,990.80 | 57,671 | 59,341 | 173,003 |
| Voluntary Sector Support Budget (General Fund) | 27,000 | 27,000 | 27,000 | 81,000 |
| Family Hubs Grant** | 35,000 | 35,000 | 35,000 | 105,000 |
| Appropriate Adult Support (Sandwell Children's Trust) | 10,021 | 10,322 | 10,631 | 30,974 |
| Total | 199,812 | 203,647 | 207,536 | 610,995 |

*The funding from the Asylum Dispersal Grant will be dependent on the continuation of the use of Contingency Accommodation (CA), Dispersal Accommodation (DA), Initial Accommodation (IA) by the Home Office. There will be flexibility in the grant agreement to remove or change this element of support and funding should the situation change during the grant term.

**The funding for Family Hubs will be dependent on the confirmed grant amount from Central Government. There will be flexibility in the grant agreement to remove or change this element of support and funding should the situation change during the grant term.

6.2. This is an increase in the total amount of funding in the current grant term as we have consolidated more areas of work. From 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2026 the funding breakdown included:

| Budget/Funding Source | 2023/24 £ | 2024/25 £ | 2025/26 £ | Total £ |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Health and wellbeing – Public Health Grant | 60,000 | 60,000 | 60,000 | 180,000 |
| Support to residents at risk of destitution – General Fund | 27,000 | 27,000 | 27,000 | 81,000 |
| Additional Capacity to support contingency hotels (Public Health Grant) | 27,180 | 54,360 | 13,590 | 95,130 |
| Additional Capacity to support contingency hotels (Home Office Asylum Dispersal Grant) | | | 40,770 | 40,770 |
| Total | 114,180 | 141,360 | 141,360 | 396,900 |

7. Legal and Governance Implications

7.1. The statutory power to provide grant funding is contained in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (general power of competence). Grant funding is not subject to the requirements for competition under the Procurement Act 2023. The grantee will be required at all times to comply with all relevant primary and secondary legislative requirements, regulatory policies, guidelines or industry codes which apply to:

- the activities funded by the Grant
- public funds as defined by s.115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and at paragraph 6 of the Immigration Rules.

7.2. The proposed grant award does not fall under the remit of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 as the grants are to be awarded to organisations that do not meet the definition of enterprises under s.7(1) of the 2022 Act.

8. Risks

8.1. A full risk assessment has been conducted in line with Council policy to identify and assess the risks associated with the decision being sought. For the risks identified, suitable measures will be in place to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level. A summary of the risks identified include:

- Risk to health of migrant communities: The highest risk relates to doing nothing – which is likely to lead to adverse impact on the long-term health and wellbeing of this vulnerable cohort.
- Uncertainty about the future of the ringfenced Public Health grant and externally funded schemes such as Family Hubs and Home Office Asylum Dispersal. There will be flexibility in the grant agreement to remove or change elements of support and funding should the situation change during the grant term.

- Participant uptake issues – Brushstrokes Community Project are highly specialised and experienced in engaging with this vulnerable cohort so it is unlikely that there will be participant uptake issues for this proposal.
- Staffing at Brushstrokes Community Project – Staffing will be discussed as part of grant management meetings with Brushstrokes Community Project throughout the grant duration to monitor impact. Brushstrokes volunteer and lived experience led workforce also helps to mitigate this risk.

8.2. The risk assessment will be reviewed as part of grant management meetings to identify any changes and agree mitigations as required in a timely and appropriate manner throughout the grant term.

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

9.1. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to understand the impact of this service on residents from protected characteristic groups. The assessment found that the service has a positive impact on all protected characteristic groups and data captured during the current grant term demonstrates that the service is universal supporting a diverse range of vulnerable migrants.

9.2. To ensure the service continues in this way, the Council will work with Brushstrokes to monitor the demographic attributes of service users and any reasonable adjustments made through agreed monitoring arrangements.

9.3. If the recommendations are not approved, there will be a risk of widening the health inequalities experienced by migrant communities from protected characteristic groups in Sandwell.

10. Other Relevant Implications

10.1. **Health & Wellbeing.** The holistic service offers that Brushstrokes provides has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of vulnerable migrants. The support contributes to many health outcomes as they advocate for and encourage vulnerable migrants to participate in screening programmes (TB, cancer, sexual health etc), physical activity opportunities, healthy eating initiatives, mental health and wellbeing initiatives, addictive behaviour support as required, and Best Start in Life services. Removing this grant-funding could put Brushstrokes in a vulnerable financial position which would impact on the health and wellbeing of this vulnerable population.

10.2. **Corporate Parenting.** Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are supported by Sandwell Children's Trust as children we care for care experienced children. The appropriate adult support during the age assessment process for UASC will provide the necessary impartial relational support needed through this emotive process ensuring that their wellbeing is maintained. Furthermore, the relationship built through this process means that UASC will have the added benefit of accessing the wider holistic support that Brushstrokes offer, including for their asylum and immigration journeys and social activities to aid integration. This also provides the opportunity for

UASC to identify role models amongst staff, volunteers and other service users which all supports their ability to thrive.

- 10.3. **Social Value.** Brushstrokes operate a business model that upskills lived experience volunteers who often then get paid work at Brushstrokes and other local organisations supporting ambitions of a thriving Borough economy and contributing to social value principles. The wider services that Brushstrokes Community Project offer will also support this vulnerable cohort as added value. Brushstrokes Community Project's approach is to make very good use of local resources such as donated food, clothing and household items.
- 10.4. **Climate Change.** Much of the support offered by Brushstrokes is done at their centre in Smethwick reducing the impact on emissions by reducing travel distance and enabling low carbon methods of travel. Brushstrokes Community Project actively encourages service users to make use of bicycles that have been provided to them as their mode of transport and offer Dr Bike sessions to help upskill and recycle. Migrant communities are connected to local services where active travel options can be used. Brushstrokes actively seek out active travel schemes i.e. recently engaging in a WMCA free bus travel scheme. Brushstrokes Community Project pass on donated clothes and household items to their service users, helping to reduce waste.
- 10.5. **Crime & Disorder Act 1998.** Brushstrokes is an active member of Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary helping to create and maintain community cohesion in Sandwell and ensuring that vulnerable migrants and wider community members feel safe.

11. **Background Documents**

- Brushstrokes monthly and annual reports during the grant period 2023 – 2026
- Application to Voluntary Sector Grants Board for Approval to Proceed
- Current Grant Agreement with Brushstrokes Community Project 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2026.

12. **How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?**

The proposals in this report support delivery against the following strategic objectives:-

- 12.1. **Growing up in Sandwell.** During the current grant agreement term (Apr 2023 – present day), over a third of service users that Brushstrokes supported were children or families. Holistic support from Brushstrokes helps these families to settle permanently, access services, learn English and connect with their community. Brushstrokes also have a strong working relationship with the STEPS centre and Shireland Collegiate Academy's International New Arrivals Centre to support successful community integration. The peer support services will encourage and support families to access the integrated support they need to care for their children from conception, and throughout the early years. This enables parents to establish a firm foundation for their children, from which to meet their full potential in life. The ambition is for all families to have access to the information and tools they need to care for and interact positively with their babies and children, and to look after their own wellbeing.

12.2. **Living in Sandwell.** We know that a large portion of Brushstrokes' service users are those who are prohibited to work as they are seeking asylum or on low incomes. The holistic support offer provided by Brushstrokes means that vulnerable migrants can receive the correct advice and guidance and access to all the entitlements that are available to them. Additionally, wraparound support such as the food and clothes bank and wider support offered to those at risk of destitution all have a positive impact on low-income groups. Brushstrokes also support digital inclusion as part of their holistic offer, regularly supporting vulnerable migrants to access services digitally, upskilling them to do so for themselves and linking to initiatives that improve digital access such as data banks, free sim cards, refurbished equipment etc.

12.3. **Healthy in Sandwell.** The holistic services Brushstrokes offer play a crucial role identifying poor health outcome at the earliest opportunity reducing risk factors that can impact on living well and aging well. Brushstrokes' work contributes to many health outcomes in the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) including:

- A01 Healthy Life Expectancy
- B15a Homelessness: households owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act
- B15c Homelessness: households in temporary accommodation
- B19 Loneliness
- C28 Self-reported wellbeing
- D03 – Population vaccination coverage
- D08b – TB incidence
- E10 Suicide Rate

Without listing further, Brushstrokes contribute indirectly to many more of the PHOF as they advocate for and encourage vulnerable migrants to participate in screening programmes (TB, cancer, sexual health etc), physical activity opportunities, healthy eating initiatives, addictive behaviour support as required, and Best Start in Life services. This support will ultimately improve the overall quality of life of this vulnerable population in Sandwell.

12.4. **Thriving Economy in Sandwell.** This grant will support ambitions under this strategic theme by supporting our local VCS organisations to grow.

Investment in Brushstrokes means:

- more volunteers can access training and development which often results in locally paid work.
- improved levels of English language and community integration supports the growth of Sandwell's workforce and reduces numbers of unemployment.
- improved cultural and heritage opportunities through the diversity that this vulnerable community bring. Brushstrokes regularly celebrate Sandwell's diversity through cultural events and leverage external funding to deliver culture and heritage projects.
- Brushstrokes also offer a service that support qualified health professionals from other countries to gain the appropriate training and qualification to work in the NHS. This grant funding helps Brushstrokes to sustain this as part of their holistic service.

12.5. **One Council One Team Approach.** As part of their holistic service, Brushstrokes facilitate a service user panel which helps to shape local

services. The panel members are regularly encouraged to participate in Council consultation and co-production activities. This grant funding helps Brushstrokes to sustain this as part of their holistic service. The very nature of the consolidated arrangement of this grant has demonstrated a true One Council One Team ethos, working collaboratively to ensure value for money, make efficiencies and ensure services are inclusive. All with a shared goal in mind to improve the outcomes for this vulnerable cohort within our Borough.