



March 2025



**Sandwell Community
Dementia Service**

SCDS News



Who we are:

SCDS NEWS is the newsletter of the Sandwell Community Dementia Service, offering free advice, information, and support to individuals concerned about their memory and those living with dementia in Sandwell.

Our service is a partnership of eight local voluntary sector organisations, working together to support individuals and families at every stage of the dementia journey. We provide training, raise awareness, and help create Dementia Friendly Communities across Sandwell.

Whether you are living with dementia, caring for someone, or seeking guidance, SCDS is here to support you every step of the way.

We are here for you:

📞 01902 826 655

🌐 murrayhall.co.uk/SCDS

Bringing Warmth and Connection: Winter Dementia Activities Package

At Murray Hall Community Trust, we know that winter can be a particularly tough time for people living with dementia and their carers. Cold weather, shorter days, and increased isolation can take a toll on both mental and physical well-being. That's why we've launched the Winter Dementia Activities Package, a specialised intervention designed to provide personalised support, stimulation, and companionship during the most challenging months, through funding received from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

Building on our established Sandwell Community Dementia Service, this initiative is more than just a support package—it's a lifeline. By providing carefully curated activity kits, we aim to:

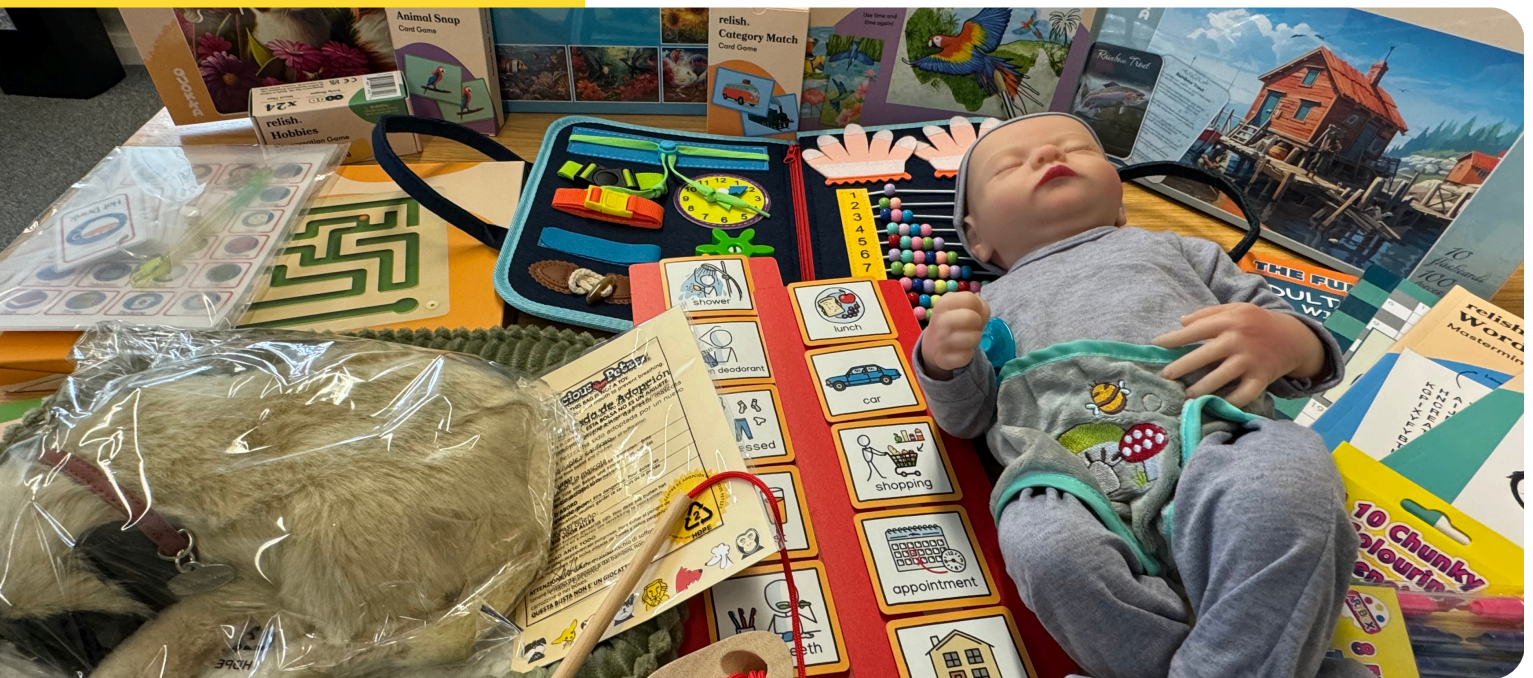
- ✅ Reduce isolation and loneliness
- ✅ Maintain cognitive function and engagement
- ✅ Prevent hospital admissions through meaningful occupation

Each package will be personalised to meet individual needs and will include:

- 🎵 Music Therapy Tools – Personalised playlists to spark memories and emotions
- 📖 Memory Engagement Materials – Life story books and reminiscence cards to encourage conversation
- 🧩 Cognitive Activity Resources – Large-print puzzles and sorting activities to keep minds active
- 👐 Sensory Stimulation Items – Tactile cushions and fidget items for comfort and relaxation
- 🏃 Physical Activity Resources – Stress balls and resistance bands to promote movement
- 🕒 Day and Time Orientation Aids – LED timer lights and day clocks to support daily routines



In addition to these resources, carers will receive guidance on how to use the materials effectively, with demonstration sessions and regular well-being check-ins from our Dementia Advisors (DAs). This ensures that the support provided is not only meaningful but also tailored to individual needs.



Bringing Warmth and Connection: Winter Dementia Activities Package

We have prioritised 40 individuals with dementia and their carers, with a focus on those who are most vulnerable during winter—people living alone, those with limited access to day services, or individuals at risk of hospital admission due to isolation and cognitive decline. By offering personalised support, we aim to help people stay engaged and connected in their own homes.

The impact of this initiative is closely monitored, with an expected reduction in winter-related hospital admissions. Other anticipated outcomes include increased carer confidence, stronger relationships between carers and their loved ones, and a decrease in anxiety and distressed behaviours. Through meaningful engagement, we also aim to reduce reliance on anti-psychotic medication and improve daily orientation for people living with dementia.

Our Dementia Navigators and Dementia Advisors have delivered the activity packages to those living with dementia and their carers, showing them how to make the most of the activities to aid with cognition, increase stimulation, and help them live well with dementia.

Our Dementia Advisors (DAs) are also providing ongoing support through regular well-being calls, checking in to ensure that the activity packages are being used effectively and making adjustments as needed. This feedback will allow us to continuously refine our approach and maximise the benefits for each individual.

This project is not just about providing resources—it's about creating a lasting impact. By gathering carer feedback, and continuously evaluating outcomes, we will ensure that this initiative adapts to real needs and makes a meaningful difference. With the support of our dedicated dementia team, this initiative will bring warmth, connection, and engagement to those who need it most.

Want to support or learn more?

Get in touch with us today and be part of making a difference!

☎ 01902 826 655

🌐 murrayhall.co.uk/SCDS



Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to find out more about how you could volunteer with us to help provide dementia support, please contact Murray Hall Community Trust on:

Telephone: 01902 826 655

Email: info@murrayhall.co.uk

Have a story or an idea for the newsletter?

We'd love to hear it!

Email us on

bcicb.dementiasupport@nhs.net

Spreading Joy: The Impact of 'Be a Santa to a Senior'

The festive season can be a difficult time for many, especially for those living with dementia and their carers. Feelings of isolation and loneliness often intensify, making small gestures of kindness all the more meaningful. This is why we were incredibly grateful for the generosity of Home Instead and their heartwarming initiative, 'Be a Santa to a Senior'.

Through this campaign, Home Instead provided 20 beautifully curated gift baskets to Murray Hall, bringing festive cheer to members of our community who needed it most.

These gifts weren't just about the items inside; they were a powerful reminder that our service users are valued, remembered, and cared for. For many, receiving a thoughtfully prepared gift during the holidays rekindled a sense of connection.

At Sandwell Community Dementia Service, we see firsthand how vital these acts of kindness are. They don't just brighten someone's day—they help combat loneliness, lift spirits, and reinforce a sense of belonging. Home Instead dedication to going beyond traditional care truly shines through, empowering older adults to live independently while ensuring they feel supported and appreciated.

We extend our deepest thanks to Home Instead for their generosity and compassion. Their kindness made a real difference, reminding us all of the power of community, especially at Christmas.



Pictured left to right: Karen Bridgewater (Bridges Co-ordinator), Helen Kennedy (SCDS Service Manager) and a representative from Home Instead.



Making a Referral to SCDS

Who can access the service?

Sandwell Community Dementia Service is free to access for people living in Sandwell, or who are registered with a Sandwell GP practice and are: Diagnosed with Dementia or people who are seeking a diagnosis.

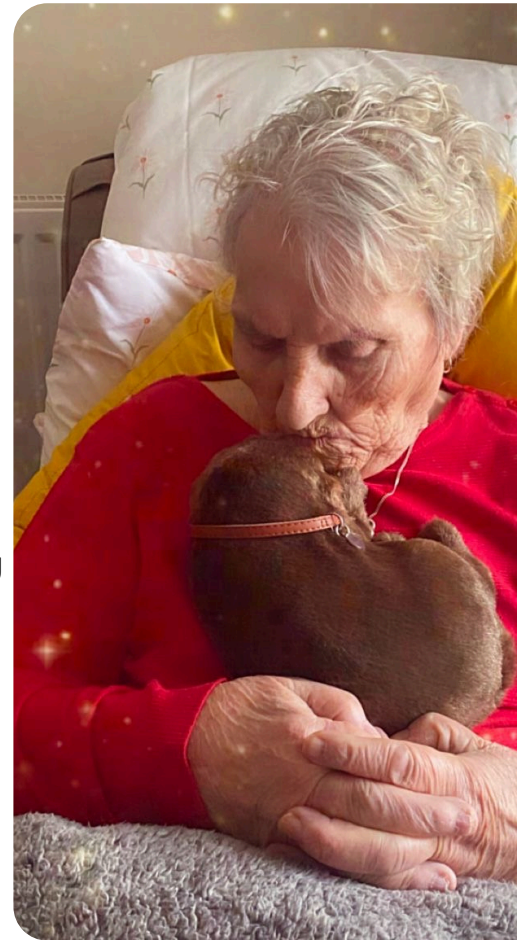
Referring people to SCDS promises a range of benefits for both caregivers and people affected by dementia. Our service offers comprehensive support, offering tailored interventions that help ensure people live well with dementia. With a multidisciplinary team of support workers, including Dementia Navigators and Advisors, we ensure a holistic approach to address the complex needs of individuals living with dementia and their carers. By engaging with our service, SCDS professionals can seamlessly integrate their clients into a supportive community, fostering a continuum of care that significantly contributes to improved client outcomes and overall wellbeing.

How do I make a referral?

To make a referral, please contact the Single Point of Access by telephone or email. Our Dementia Navigators will triage new referrals and provide coordinated support alongside our Dementia Advisors to ensure the best possible care.

Recognising Individual Needs at Every Stage

Recognising each individual's needs at every stage of dementia is key to providing appropriate support and care. By focusing on the person, SCDS tailor their approach to meet the unique needs, preferences, and abilities of each person. Through meaningful engagement and therapeutic intervention SCDS promotes dignity, autonomy, and quality of life for those living with dementia. Supporting families right up until the end of a person's life is so very important to the team at SCDS. Those final experiences generate feelings that family carers carry with them; a bad experience can overshadow years of dedicated caring.



Marion Wallis

Marion was referred to SCDS through Tame Valley Medical Centre following a dementia review in November 2024.

During the final stages of Marion's life, she took great comfort in connecting with Millie the dog, provided by a Dementia Navigator within SCDS.

Marion Wallis sadly passed away on 15th February 2025. We would like to thank her family for sharing the photo of Marion.





WE SUPPORT!



**WE OFFER PRACTICAL
ADVICE**



**WE HELP PLAN
FOR THE FUTURE!**



WE LISTEN!



WE RAISE AWARENESS!



WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!


Dementia Awareness and Dementia Friends sessions 2025

If you would like us to deliver a Dementia Friends session or Dementia Awareness to your medical practice, school, organisation or workplace,

Please contact:

Helen Kennedy

helen.kennedy@murrayhall.co.uk



Supporting Primary Care: SCDS Delivers Dementia Friends Session to Citrus Group PCN

On Friday, 7th March, SCDS had the pleasure of delivering a Dementia Friends session at Haden Vale Medical Practice for members of the Citrus Group PCN team. The session was both informative and engaging, providing valuable insights into dementia and equipping attendees with practical knowledge to support individuals in their daily roles. The attendees found the experience highly beneficial, gaining a deeper understanding of the condition and the small yet meaningful ways they can make a difference.

The Dementia Friends programme, led by Alzheimer's Society, is the largest-ever initiative aimed at reshaping public perceptions of dementia. It seeks to transform the way we think, act, and talk about dementia, fostering a more compassionate and inclusive society.

Citrus Group, Operational Lead, Natalie, shared her thoughts: **"The training was very informative. It gave me insight into the daily lives of people living with dementia—how they see the world and navigate everyday challenges."**

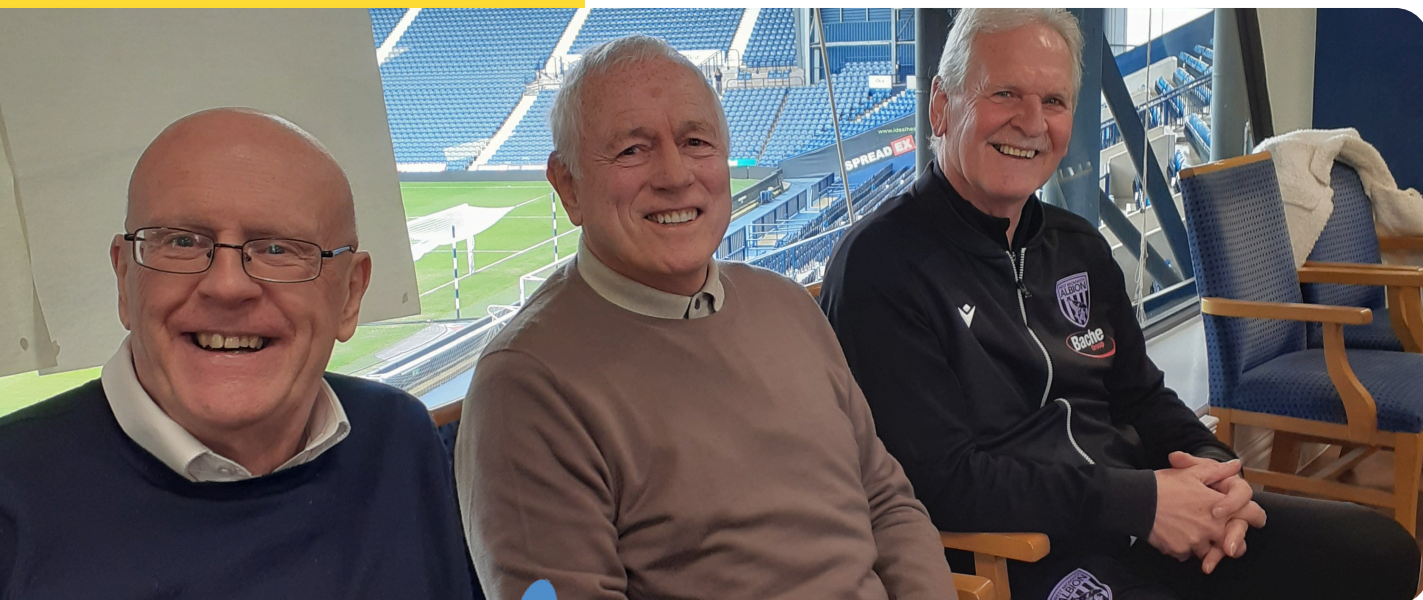
Understanding dementia from this perspective helps us to be more compassionate and patient, making a real difference to those who need support.

For professionals in public-facing roles, such as healthcare workers, retail staff, and public service employees, having an understanding of dementia is essential. A little knowledge and patience can go a long way in supporting individuals who may struggle with everyday tasks.

Becoming a Dementia Friend is about more than just awareness—it's about taking action. Whether it's sharing knowledge with others, offering a helping hand, or simply spending time with someone living with dementia, every effort counts.

If you or your medical centre, school or workplace would like us to deliver a Dementia Friends session, we'd love to hear from you! Please contact SCDS to find out more and make a positive impact today.





Pictured left to right: John Homer (Group Host), Ray Wilson (Former WBA Player), and Ally Robertson (Former WBA Player).

Kicking Off Support: SCDS Joins Albion Foundation Memories Group

On Tuesday, 12th March, Helen Kennedy (SCDS Service Manager) and Lee Allen (Local Services Manager for Alzheimer's Society) had the pleasure of representing SCDS at the Albion Foundation Memories Group.

This fantastic group meets every Wednesday from 10 AM to 12 PM in the Regis Suite at The Hawthorns, bringing together individuals living with dementia who share a passion for football. Led by the wonderful John Homer, the sessions are filled with conversation, memories, and laughter.

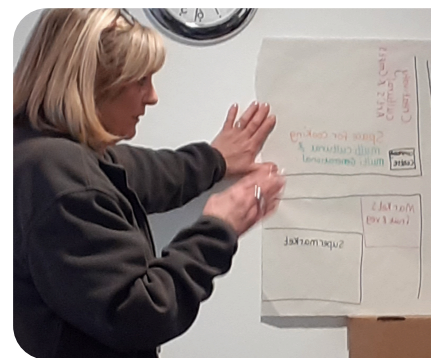
At this special gathering, John was joined by two former West Bromwich Albion and Scotland players, Ray Wilson and Ally Robertson, who took the group on a nostalgic journey through their "alphabet of football". Their stories sparked wonderful conversations, with members reminiscing and actively engaging in discussions about the game they love.



As part of an ongoing partnership, SCDS has committed to supporting the group with all things dementia-related. Our team will be attending regularly to provide information, guidance, and encouragement, ensuring that every member feels valued and supported.

If you or someone you know would benefit from this fantastic group, why not come along and be part of the conversation?

Pictured left to right: Helen Kennedy (SCDS Service Manager) and Lee Allen (Local Services Manager for Alzheimer's Society)



InvolveD: Engaging South Asian, Black Caribbean, and African Caribbean Communities in Designing Better Dementia Support

Research Project Aim

This project aims to explore and evaluate a collaborative approach to working with ethnic minority communities to develop a place-based model for improving dementia support.

Currently, around 25,000 people from ethnic minority communities in the UK are living with dementia, and this number is expected to double by 2026. Despite the growing need for skilled dementia support, many existing services are not prepared to meet this demand.

Research shows that people from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to access dementia services, and those who do often find them inaccessible or ineffective due to cultural and language barriers. A significant gap in communication between these communities and service providers/commissioners means that needs, expectations, and available support do not align.

To provide effective, person-centred dementia support, it is essential to understand how people experience their environment ("sense of place"), as well as their individual and collective priorities. Establishing meaningful dialogue between communities and service providers is crucial for building trust and improving care.

The Project in Sandwell and Wolverhampton

Sandwell and Wolverhampton are diverse communities with significant South Asian, Black African, and African Caribbean populations. This project will engage these communities, bringing them together with service providers and commissioners to co-design an improved dementia support model through:

- Establishing an advisory group to guide the research team, including representatives from community organisations, health and social care services, local charities, and members of the target communities.
- Hosting participatory workshops with a diverse range of people (those living with dementia, carers, community members, and service providers) to explore their sense of place and identify ways to improve dementia support.
- Analysing insights from the workshops to develop a comprehensive, community-led support model. Participants will be invited to a follow-up session to ensure that their needs and perspectives are accurately reflected.
- Conducting interviews with advisory group and workshop participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the participatory approach and assess how these methods can inform future research.

SCDS Participation

As part of the research project, the SCDS team took part in a pilot workshop in early February, led by Dr Karan Jutla and Dr Michael Clark (London School of Political Science and Economics). The session was thought-provoking, prompting discussions about:

- ✓ What a happy life means to different people
- ✓ What elements contribute to an ideal community
- ✓ What a week in a happy community would look like

This exciting and essential research will contribute to creating more inclusive, culturally responsive dementia support for ethnic minority communities.



New Young Onset Dementia Group for Sandwell

When a person develops dementia before the age of 65, this is known as 'Young Onset Dementia'. Over 70,800 people in the UK are living with Young Onset Dementia.

Despite the high numbers, for those diagnosed with Young Onset Dementia finding suitable meeting groups to attend proves extremely difficult, particularly in Sandwell where no groups existed.

The Alzheimer's Society piloted a Young Onset Meeting Group in Edgbaston for those living in Birmingham for 6 sessions in September 2024. Following its success 2 additional sessions were added in January 2025. They kindly invited the Sandwell Young Onset and Rare Dementias Advisor to join them along with 8 of their Young Onset members living in Sandwell.

The group ran once a fortnight and was made up of people living with young onset dementia and carers. This proved very popular with some excellent feedback and all wanted the group to continue after the pilot sessions ended. The group was engaging and friendships were made over lively conversations which were not only fun but informative and people felt heard and listened to.

The group were involved in what they wanted to do and how they wanted to spend the time with lots of fun and laughter topping the list but to also include a mix of elements from a range of guest speakers from Admiral Nurses to Psychologists, information regarding research, advance care planning and tools available to help. More light-hearted group fun included music, games, quizzes, activities and visits to local places of interest.



New Young Onset Dementia Group for Sandwell

The Dementia Advisor said 'It was great to see the positive effect on the members and how valuable and beneficial it was to all. All members were involved and consulted about what they would like to see happening to the group in the future.'

The connections formed remained and the friendships and peer support continues. The Birmingham trial was a success, and our members from Sandwell thanked our Birmingham friends for sharing their time, sessions and friendships.

We need more young onset groups and more young onset individuals getting together and feeling heard, valued, stronger together and connected.

Let's move onto 25th February 2025 and the start of the first Sandwell Young Onset Group organised by the members with the support of the Sandwell Young Onset Dementia and Advisor and the Alzheimer's Society. The group meets at The West Bromwich Bus Station Community Hub fortnightly on a Tuesday between 10.30am – 1.30pm. It is early days but the group is proving to be very popular.

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