

# Changing Times

SUMMER EDITION



## Big Local in Bloom Lock Down Competition

A lock down gardening competition is taking place in absence of our usual 'Big Local in Bloom' contest this year.

GM2LF Big Local will be running it's special lock down gardening competition for people who live in the Big Local area. **The competition is in four categories – 'best garden', 'best hanging basket/window box', 'best vegetable' and 'best houseplant'.**

For our budding artists we also have a **'best work of art'** competition. Draw or paint your garden, a green open space or park, a landscape or search the internet and find an area to paint or draw. (The competition is split in two age categories – 11 and under and 12 and over)



**Food vouchers of £50 and £100 will be awarded to the best entries for each category.**

The categories are open to everyone of all ages, whether you have a large garden or small, or even no garden at all, please do enter and have some fun!

**To enter the Competition**  
**Send a photo of your entry to:**



Helen Trueman email: [helen.gm2lf@outlook.com](mailto:helen.gm2lf@outlook.com)  
Or post to Lion Farm Action Centre, Shelsley Avenue, Oldbury. B69 1BG. (Please state which category you would like to enter in the email and your age if entering the 11 and under competition). If you would prefer the photo not to be posted on our Facebook page, please also let us know.

**Closing date for entries - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.**



**From staff and carers on the frontline, to the people who remove our rubbish and keep the power on, from food suppliers keeping shelves stocked and deliveries coming, to volunteers looking out for the more vulnerable people in the area, we would like to say a Big Thank You to you all!**

JULY  
2020

Gm2Lf  
*a formula for change*

BIG  
LOCAL  
WORKING  
FOR YOU.

INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE:

Big Local News 2/3

Health & Wellbeing 4/5

Sandwell Libraries 6

Money Management 7

Sandwell Council Updates 8



# Big Local News

This newsletter has been produced during very challenging times for individuals, families, organisations and businesses during the Covid-19 lockdown. We are letting you know that GM2LF Big Local is still here and although many activities have been paused groups, volunteers and ourselves are still here and actively supporting the community anyway that they can during this lockdown.



## Big Local Plan Gets Approval

**We are pleased to announce that our final Big Local plan has recently been approved by the Local Trust, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund**

The GM2LF Big Local is one of 150 community-led groups throughout England and Wales who have been granted £1million to be spent over 10 years.

The grant was awarded in 2014 and our plan for 2020- 2025 covers the remaining period of funding.

It focuses on the post GM2LF legacy and the final steps to achieve this. In our final plan our focus will be on bringing the community together, strengthening the community, investing in future generations and supporting people and groups affected by COVID-19.

**To read the full plan or a summary please visit:** <https://www.biglocalmillionshare.org/about/our-big-local-plan/>

We have been working hard in the background to develop a plan of what, how and when we can start delivering our activities again.

## The Shelters Still Go On at Oakham Primary

**Funded by the GM2LF Big Local we are delighted to see that the shelter project at Oakham Primary School has still continued.**

We are really excited to see this project taking shape and the shelters which will provide an invaluable safe and fun space outside for children and parents.

Well done to Oakham Primary School with the continuation of this amazing project



## Big Local Little Voices - Personalised Gifts

If you would like that special personalised gift for a birthday, anniversary, or just a keepsake memory, check out the items these young people have to offer,

If you can't get out and don't want to miss a special occasion, BLLV surely have a gift you can purchase including personalised mugs, coasters, sequin pillows, plain pillows, picture slates, hearts, rectangle, purses, wallets, bibs, vests, t shirts, hoodies and vinyl signing

**Look at their Facebook page** <https://www.facebook.com/biglocallittlevoices>  
Biglocal Little Voices Printing & Merchandise



**Sandwell**

## CASSIE

**Coming Soon from CAB Sandwell a new service that goes by the name of CASSIE ( Citizens Advice Sandwell Supporting Inclusion & Equality)**

CASSIE is a mobile Advice Unit that will be travelling and parking up at locations across the 6 towns of Sandwell. One of these locations will be on St James Church car park, Shelsley Avenue, Oldbury.

Our experienced Advisers will be on hand to offer you up to date advice and guidance around issues affecting you especially in light of Covid 19 and the added difficulties that this has created. Alongside generalist advice and debt, we will have our project staff on board including, Help to Claim, Click Start and Settling Well.

**Further information about these services can be found on our website:**

[www.citizensadvicesandwell.co.uk](http://www.citizensadvicesandwell.co.uk)

We look forward to welcoming you on board.

## LFAC Working Through Lockdown



**Lion Farm Action Centre has been closed to the public since 23<sup>rd</sup> March due to the coronavirus outbreak. Although the doors to the centre have been closed, staff have been working hard from their homes.**

The After School Club have sent activity packs out to children and have moved their sessions online to continue to support the children and their families, they have also been providing additional support by working with St James' Church arranging to deliver FareShare donations to some families that have had issues with food shopping. Other staff from the Centre have been keeping in touch with Centre users by telephone and text messages and are currently looking at measures that need to be put in place before the Centre can re-open. Lion Farm Action Centre is following government guidelines at all times and will only open its doors to the public when it is safe to do so, whenever that may be.

In the meantime, Lion Farm Action Centre is receiving regular updates from Sandwell Council and other organisations and have information on various subjects such as mental health, domestic violence, NHS among others. Staff are available to pass on this information.

**If you need support or have any questions you can speak to a member of staff on 0121 544 3095 or 07795 630706 or email [lionfarmactioncentre@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lionfarmactioncentre@yahoo.co.uk)**



## Thank You GM2LF

**The GM2LF Big Local has supported churches to develop as Community Hubs by providing grant support in a number of ways. Holy Cross has benefited from this by way of a number of grants. Part of one grant enabled us to install Wi-Fi in the building and extend coverage throughout.**

A revenue grant has helped towards the annual cost of providing Wi-Fi for the benefit of all users of the Church Centre. Last year's grant enabled us to provide USB charging at many of the power sockets in the Centre.

All of this has meant that during the current "lockdown" where churches and Church Halls have been closed by the government to the public, we have been able to livestream a Sunday Mass from Holy Cross for the last few weeks.

This has benefited our church congregation and local community as well as our Parish of Tividale and people who moved away from the area a few years ago! None of that would have been possible without the grant support from GM2LF. Thank you! *(Fr Martin, Holy Cross Church)*



# Health & Wellbeing



We find the support you need

Sandwell's Public Health team have adopted a new approach to improving the health of everyone and YOU have a big role to play. Called Stronger Sandwell the approach is founded on three key principles

**Build on Sandwell's strengths:** Everything we do will be based on local people's ideas and skills. In this way, we'll do our work WITH local people not TO them.

**Local Focus and Investment:** We'll invest time and resources locally. This means focusing on health improvement projects run BY local people FOR local people, not by large companies from outside the area.

**Nobody is left behind:** We'll make sure that we never forget those facing the biggest life challenges. This may include the oldest and youngest members of our community, as well as those living with disabilities or financial hardship. Our Stronger Sandwell is for everyone.

We need **YOU!**

**Our 'Big Ideas' Initiative is a simple one.** We are inviting people across Sandwell to tell us their ideas for how we can help people improve their physical or mental health. Then we work with them to make their ideas a reality.



**Don't keep your ideas to yourself, let us know what you think at** <https://www.healthysandwell.co.uk/big-ideas/>

## Black Country Mental Health Helpline

Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has set up a new phone helpline (0345 6460827), which is open to residents of all ages across the Black Country, is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Particularly suited to those who feel like they need urgent help, the helpline is manned by specialist mental health staff, who will provide advice, support and signposting over the phone.

Alongside the phone line, the trust is encouraging people to get support through the Healthy Minds / Talking Therapy services which offer psychological therapy services for people experiencing common problems such as low mood, depression, anxiety and stress.

### For Healthy Minds

Sandwell Healthy Minds visit: <https://www.sandwellhealthyminds.nhs.uk/>  
or call 0303 033 9903

Together with you to achieve  
**healthier, happier lives**



**Black Country Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust



## Domestic Abuse Support

**Black Country Women's Aid provides support to women, men and children.**

Call the 24-hour helpline on 0121 552 6448, text or WhatsApp on 07384 466 181 (9am-9pm weekdays), or email [idva@blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk](mailto:idva@blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk)

You can report domestic abuse to [www.west-midlands.police.uk](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk) if it is safer than calling or use the online Live Chat facility.

Call 999 if you are in immediate danger. If you can't speak and are calling from a mobile, listen to the operator and, when prompted, dial 55 to connect to the police.

Go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/domesticabuse) for advice on local support.

If you are concerned about your own behaviour towards others, call the anonymous Respect helpline on 0808 802 4040.

For details go to [www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)



# Mindfulness with Sandwell Adult and Family Learning



**Sandwell Adult and Family Learning (SAFL) is the adult education service for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. We offer a variety of both accredited and non-accredited courses to 19+ adults. These courses range from Functional Skills qualifications in English and Maths to art classes and support for families with courses like Paediatric First Aid and baby massage.**

Sandwell Adult and Family Learning Service (SAFL) is committed to providing the best possible opportunities for all learners. We want everyone to achieve his or her full potential and to enjoy what the Service has to offer. Our shared vision being to:

- Challenge, champion and celebrate the importance of learning for the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities.
- To provide flexible pathways towards a skilled workforce and enable people to reach their full potential.

As with so many organisations during this period of lockdown we are having to find new ways to engage with our learners and Sandwell residents. We are also very aware of how isolating it can be when you are unable to visit friends and family, and this can take a toll on us all. That is why we have created a short video reminding you of Sandwell's 'Healthy 6' campaign which ran a couple of years ago, it encouraged people to be more mindful and focus on the positives in life. Lisa Espinosa, a member of our senior leadership team, was a healthy champion during the campaign and in our video, she reminds us of the 6 areas of our lives we can focus on for our wellbeing. They are Connect, Notice, Give, Move, Talk and Learn. You can access the video by clicking on the link <https://youtu.be/b2cq51E4sKU>

**Please subscribe to our YouTube channel and visit our website [www.learnsafl.ac.uk](http://www.learnsafl.ac.uk). You can also follow us on Facebook: @SandwellAdultEd Twitter: @learnsafl**

## Please Look After Our Environment

### Fly Tipping is a Criminal Offence

**Over the last few months there has been a dramatic increase in fly tipping. There really is no excuse to dump rubbish illegally and Sandwell Council will issue you a fine of £400.**

The tip is open daily, 8am – 4pm and you can book a slot to visit at: [http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200160/bins\\_and\\_recycling/4504/book\\_a\\_slot\\_at\\_sandwells\\_tip](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200160/bins_and_recycling/4504/book_a_slot_at_sandwells_tip)



**Report Fly Tipping** via the council website [www.sandwell.gov.uk](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk) or if you are worried that the fly-tipping is a danger to the public, for example if it is blocking a road or there are dumped chemicals, please call the council immediately on 0121 368 1177.

### Grace Mary to Lion Farm Big Local

**Visit our website:** [www.gm2lf.org](http://www.gm2lf.org) **Like us on Facebook:** Grace Mary to Lion Farm Big Local (GM2LF)  
**Follow us on Twitter:** @GM2LF\_Official

#### General Enquiries

**Helen Trueman, Email:** [helen.gm2lf@outlook.com](mailto:helen.gm2lf@outlook.com) **Tel:** 07724 584241

# Read On - Sandwell Libraries

When our doors closed in March, the library didn't disappear altogether. Staff have been working behind the scenes to bring a service online to customers via Twitter and Facebook.

There have been stories and entertainment for children and our digital library has a great selection of books to read or listen to for free – check out BorrowBox for details or [www.sandwell.gov.uk/librariesonline](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/librariesonline)

At the moment we're not sure when we will be back in person but plans for a programme of summer activities online is going to be available for people to enjoy at home.

## SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

This year, with the disruption caused by Covid-19 the all-new digital aspect of the Summer Reading Challenge is launching earlier than usual to keep children reading over the summer and support parents and carers with children already at home.

The Summer Reading Challenge is an annual FREE event aimed at 4 –11 year olds. Children are encouraged to read books of their choice during the holidays. We're asking families to get silly and have fun with reading for pleasure this year. The theme for the Challenge is "Silly Squad" – a celebration of funny books, happiness and laughter, featuring bespoke artwork from award-winning children's author and illustrator, Laura Ellen Anderson.



In addition to the Reading Challenge we'll be hosting a range of children's events and activities on our social media platforms. Don't forget, children's eBooks and eAudio books can be downloaded free from our BorrowBox service visit the Virtual Library section of [www.sandwell.gov.uk/librariesonline](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/librariesonline) and follow the link to BorrowBox website.

We're always open  
with BorrowBox.

Download eBooks &  
eAudiobooks straight to  
your device today!



Children's reading can 'dip' during the long summer holidays if they don't have regular access to books and encouragement to read for pleasure. This can be a problem for schools to put right in the new term. There's no other free reading activity that involves so many children, introduces families to their local library, encourages children to choose books freely and independently, and is endorsed by parents, teachers and the Department for Education.

**So, we want to encourage families to read together throughout the summer and have fun with it!**

Have you met the Silly Squad yet? You can join them by signing up for the #SummerReadingChallenge - just head over to [sillysquad.org.uk](http://sillysquad.org.uk)

**Libraries are also asking residents what they miss about their libraries. How has not being able to visit your library affected you and your family?**

From a place of learning, free internet access, employment support, live music events to code clubs and story times. Let us know what you miss most. We would love to hear your stories. Share them with us by commenting on our Facebook or Twitter page.

[www.facebook.com/sandwelllibraries](http://www.facebook.com/sandwelllibraries)

[www.twitter.com/sandwelllibs](http://www.twitter.com/sandwelllibs)

# Money Management Survival Guide

Do you remember the song, 'Survivor' by Destiny's Child from about 2001? It is a song that I can't get out of my head as I am writing this article because if you are reading this 'you are a survivor!'

With everything that we have had to cope with over the last few months with Coronavirus I am encouraging you to write your own GM2LF Money Management Survival Guide because I am a firm believer that there is a book in each and every one of us – and your story is important. Don't get me wrong, I have no doubt that you may have faced significant challenges over the last few months – you may have suffered bereavements among those who are close to you, you may have been ill from Covid-19, you may have really struggled financially and you may still struggle. However, the fact that you are reading this tells me that you have probably learned some things that have helped you to survive, and these are things that may well help your children in the future.



If you are unsure about how to start writing can I give you a few pointers. First, think back to the time pre-Coronavirus, and knowing what you know now write a letter to your younger self with some money management advice.

## This is how I would start my survival guide –

- **Talk to people about money** – everyone is struggling in one way or another at the moment and there are lots of people around who can help [www.sandwell.betteroff.org.uk](http://www.sandwell.betteroff.org.uk)
- **Try to avoid getting into too much debt**, but if you do need to borrow get good free advice. And remember – do not trust that loan shark! You can report them without having to give your name or details [www.stoploansharks.co.uk](http://www.stoploansharks.co.uk) or call 0300 555 2222 to safely report them
- Even if it is only 10p a week, **get into the habit of saving and encourage the kids to do the same.**
- I hated maths at school and that made me worry about **learning to budget** (balancing the money in and the money out), but I found this website and that guy Martin Lewis quite good [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com)
- Remember that if you are reading this that **you are a survivor**

*Article written by Revd Cassius Francis, the Just Finance Development Worker for the Black Country (with Transforming Communities Together in the Diocese of Lichfield) and he is a minister with the Wesleyan Holiness Church. For further information please see [www.tctogether.org.uk/areas-of-work/tct-coronavirus-response](http://www.tctogether.org.uk/areas-of-work/tct-coronavirus-response)*

## Citizens Advice Sandwell

citizens  
advice Sandwell

**Citizens Advice Sandwell provides free confidential, impartial advice on a wide range of issues including debt, benefits, housing, work, healthcare and education.**

They have dedicated teams all across the Borough waiting to help you with any of your problems!

You can call their Adviceline on 0300 330 9017 or web chat with us at [www.citizensadviceandwell.org.uk](http://www.citizensadviceandwell.org.uk)

For help with Universal Credit claims, call 0800 144 8444.

Remember, they are here to help!



# Council Update

The coronavirus pandemic has understandably had an impact on council services. We've had to close council buildings to staff and customers - so we're delivering many of our services in a different way with staff working from home where they can. Some services have had to be suspended. Here's an update on how you can access council services while our buildings remain closed to the public.

## Report a problem or request a service

Please help us during the coming weeks and months by requesting council services and reporting problems online whenever you can.

This will help free up our phone lines for people who don't have access to the internet.

And if you haven't already, go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk/mysandwell](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/mysandwell) and create an account.



 Report a street light	 Book a bulky collection	 Report fly-tipping	 Report a pothole
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## To contact the council by phone – here are our main numbers:

- Adult social care or urgent help for someone vulnerable – 0121 569 2266
- Council tax and benefits – 0121 368 1155
- Council house repairs – 0121 569 6000
- All other housing enquiries – 0121 368 1166
- Highways, bins, recycling, environmental health and other environmental services – 0121 368 1177
- General enquiries – 0121 569 2200
- Children's services – 0121 569 3100
- Births, marriages, deaths and the Register Office – 0121 368 1188
- Foster with Sandwell Children's Trust – 0800 358 0899



## Paying your bills

Some people like to pay their bills in person at our offices. While our offices remain closed, you can pay your bills:

By direct debit – go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk/paybills](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/paybills) for details on how to set one up

Online – make a payment online, go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk/paybills](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/paybills) for details

By phone – make a payment by debit or credit card on 0300 456 0514.



## Emergency repairs for council tenants

If you live in a council property, we are carrying out emergency repairs and appointments such as gas servicing.

To get in touch about an emergency repair call 0121 569 6000 or go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/repairs)



## Our cemeteries and crematoria are open for people to visit

Any restrictions on mourners at funerals will be explained to families and loved ones. If you need further information go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk/bereavement](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/bereavement) or email [bereavement\\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:bereavement_services@sandwell.gov.uk) or call 0121 569 6700.



## Advice for Residents in Flats

Tenants who live in our high and low-rise blocks can play their part in helping to reduce the risk of coronavirus (Covid-19). See key advice tips in the infographic to help prevent the spread of infection.

Estate Services are making every effort to continue to deliver essential services but there may be some changes.

Tenants are asked to help by not leaving waste or bulky items in communal areas at any time.

We're also providing an out-of-hours caretaking team to carry out emergency cleaning and caretaking services from 6pm-6am Monday to Friday, and 2pm-6am Saturday and Sunday.

The team will deal with items in and around blocks which could be a threat to health and safety.

[www.sandwell.gov.uk/coronavirusadviceforflats](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/coronavirusadviceforflats)

## Help us stop the spread of infection



Only use lifts when no-one else is using them



Avoid congregating in communal areas



Keep in touch with vulnerable neighbours – by phone or internet



Keep at a safe distance of at least 2m (6ft 6 inches) from others



Please wash your hands regularly – especially after using doors, lifts and handrails