



# SANDWELL FAITH SECTOR NETWORK

*"A voice for communities"*



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# WELCOME MESSAGE

*From the Faith Sector & Inclusion Development Officer*

**Shahin Akhtar**

**Faith Sector & Inclusion  
Development Officer**



Welcome to the world where we endeavour to bring faith leaders and partners from across the Sandwell borough to discuss issues and concerns affecting their communities. In unity, we will decide how as a collective we can work together to resolve some of these issues.

The Network aims to give you a voice in consultations and policy making within the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

Continue reading to learn about our core members and the history of the Sandwell Faith Sector Network (SFSN).

# WELCOME MESSAGE

*From Core Members who shape this network*

It is a great privilege to represent the grassroots voices and communities I serve. As a public servant I am in contact with schools, the youth sector, policing and various community organisations. I hope to use this learning and experience to shape conversations and decisions in our borough that are more representative of its people.

**Imam. Nasir Akhtar, Chair**



I have worked to engage faith leaders and Public Health to maximise engagement with health messages. "I have been humbled to be able to hand out food to the most needy throughout the pandemic" I have had the privilege to be part of the interfaith team visits to Israel/Palestine and Scandinavia. I am keen to explore the prophetic potential of the Church of England in wider society.

**Rev. David Gould, Vice Chair**

# WELCOME MESSAGE

*From some of our core members who shape this network. . .*

Grateful for the privilege to represent the vibrant communities of Sandwell. Our gurdwara stands as a vital community hub, fostering understanding and unity. Through numerous weekly school tours, we strive to enlighten children about Sikhism and impart the timeless values of humanity and equality. Guru Nanak Gurdwara Smethwick continues to stand as a beacon of unity, resilience, and service, embodying the spirit of community for over six decades. **Kuldeep Singh, President, Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Smethwick**



I have been a minister in Wednesbury for over 20 years and have a passion for youth and children's ministry, working in schools and I am also a school governor. I have lead bereavement groups in schools for children and i am passionate about helping people with mental health challenges. before becoming an ordained minister i was a research scientist working in both clinical and academic settings. **Rev Nicola Woodcock, Open Haven Church, Wednesbury**



Namaste, I am honoured to be a member of the Sandwell Faith Sector Network. Working collectively, especially with people from diverse faiths, beliefs and practices, enriches my own journey to the sacred. Importantly I believe, by combining our collective strengths, resources and experiences – our capacity to serve and meet the needs of all Sandwell citizens, businesses and others makes the impossible – possible. **Deepak Naik, MBE, Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple UK, Manager**



# OUR HISTORY



The faith sector in Sandwell played an instrumental role during the pandemic from community engagement to changing perceptions. The faith sector was able to mobilise its communities to fill the gap whilst public services were under immense pressure.

## The Pandemic

Our Churches, Mosques, Gurdwaras and Temples stepped up and were at the forefront of delivering food parcels and serving hot meals. They tackled isolation and loneliness by swiftly moving online. Many places of worship became vaccination centres and as such we were able to rapidly vaccinate the vulnerable in our communities.



# OUR HISTORY

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## Formation of SFSN

Public Health Sandwell realised the asset of having strong communities in Sandwell in particular its ability to engage large parts of the populations. Public Health Sandwell were able to see the trust faith leaders and places of worship held in there communities. building on this trust and strong network Public Health Sandwell decided to strengthen this asset by creating SFSN.



## VISION

Our vision is to be a critical friend to the civic leadership of our borough. We aim to strengthen and engage faith communities to widen the participation in decision making. Our areas of focus will be health and wellbeing, community policing, council services, ethics and the conduct and integrity of public practice. We present a trusted voice and engage on behalf of community leadership.

## MISSION

- Provide a platform for the faith sector to have a voice in guiding decision making.
- An opportunity for faith representatives to share updates and concerns and where required devise solutions.
- Provide support and training to the voluntary education and youth services connected to the faith sector.
- In partnership with Public Health Sandwell, we will engage our communities to tackle health inequalities through supporting public awareness campaigns, facilitating community workshops, training and offering advice





# IMPORTANT CONTACTS



| Name           | Position/organisation                        | Email/phone  |
|----------------|--|--|
| Shahin Akhtar  | Faith Sector & Inclusion Development Officer | shahin_akhtar@sandwell.gov.uk                              |
| Exploitation   | Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline       | 08000 121 700  |
| Kayte Cronin   | Community Engagement Safeguarding Officer    | kayte_cronin@sandwellchildrenstrust.org                    |
| Safeguarding   | Adult Safeguarding                           | 0121 569 2266 (9:00-17:00)<br>0121 569 2355 (out of hours) |
| Safeguarding   | Child Safeguarding                           | 0121 569 3100 (9:00-17:00)<br>0121 569 2355 (out of hours) |
| Domestic Abuse | Black Country Women's Aid                    | 0121 553 0090<br>0121 552 6448 (24hrs Helpline)            |
| Mental Health  | Black Country Mental Health 24hr Helpline    | 0800 008 6516  |

