



Proposed Ron Davis Centre Expansion

Funding – Sandwell Towns Fund

Amount - £338,000.00

Aims and Objectives

The aim is to expand the SAFL Ron Davis site by providing two additional specialised digital classrooms to be built by end of 2023. Subject to feasibility studies and planning the build is expected to take 12 - 18 months to complete.

Objectives are to

1. Deliver transformational change in the Smethwick area which for residents might see it just as levelling up and not getting left behind.
2. Expand targeted education and skills support which has been so successful to help unlock the human capital of Smethwick residents. This is also one of the Smethwick TIP priorities.
3. Regenerate and upgrade local assets so the residents have access to modern learning facilities.

Needs addressed

Due to known high levels of digital poverty in the Smethwick area, having access to a well-resourced digital and careers hub to support the wider community will greatly address the local needs. The pandemic and resulting lock downs have shown that education centres need to have a strong digital learning infrastructure based on the latest technology to keep learners engaged and supported.

Students access to remote learning has been uneven leading widening learning gaps between students by social geography. For example, overall Smethwick is more deprived than England and Sandwell and its deprivation score would put it in the 20% most deprived areas in England. 55.9% of Smethwick's population are from ethnic minorities. This is higher than both Sandwell (30.1%) and England (14.6%).

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Resources should be aligned with needs and reflect and better the social and economic conditions:

20% of earners in Smethwick are classed as low earning (Below £360 per week) (£18K) – The median gross weekly pay for full-time workers = £478.50 per week. (£24K). 50% working age population qualified at NVQ Level 2 and above (Sandwell research Smethwick town profile 2020) . Smethwick has 20% less higher and intermediate managerial, administrative or professional households than the national average. The population of Smethwick is also older than the average, making Smethwick an older person's location For those in jobs 18.75% are in retail, 17.75% advanced manufacturing & 16.39% in health related.

Demand

Currently, the Ron Davis Centre works with adults over the age of 19 and families. Rather than its current focussed provision and to help with lowering the waiting lists of popular courses, the expansion of the Ron Davis Centre will increase capacity, provide a wider range of services and activities, often into the evenings and weekends, to help meet the needs of Smethwick families and the wider community.

In creating a vibrant community hub through the provision of additional multipurpose spaces, the Ron Davis Centre will be able to work more closely with partner organisations to access the facilities and enable work with a wider and more inclusive age range. **SAFL will provide:**

- Adult Learning activities.
- Family learning inter-generational activities.
- Access to the site for school pupils at all ages and levels.
- Access to the site for Youth Services.
- Comprehensive Information, Advice and Guidance to all ages.
- Active targeting of careers advice to groups at risk / less represented in opportunities; those in alternative provision; BAME; care leavers; offenders; home educated; at risk of becoming NEET and those made redundant due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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