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REPORT

To Councillor Ritchie Massey, Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

From: Nuria Antonio

Date 14 October 2026

Subject: Proposals to address the shortage of residential care homes in Sandwell

Introduction

The main purpose of this record is to examine the shortage of residential care homes here in Sandwell and suggest practical ways we can address it keeping the care Act 2014. Section 1 sets out the council duty to support the wellbeing of people who need care. Section 2 explains that we should act early to prevent people needs getting worse. Section 5 says the council should encourage a good range of local services. Sections 18 to 20 outline our responsibility to make sure people receive the right care in a suitable location. The supporting statutory guidance also highlights the importance of maintaining enough provision close to where people live. Right now, Sandwell is finding it difficult to fully meet these important responsibilities. There are around 81 registered care homes in the borough, but nearly 30 percent are rated Requires Improvement or Inadequate according to the Care Quality Commission. This is higher than the national average of 17 percent. We can see this in local examples. Allerton Court on Hydes Road in West Bromwich has 48 beds and is rated below expected standards. Leabrook House on Leabrook Road in Tipton offers 40 beds and also does not meet required standards. By July 2025, 285 out of 1261 long term placements were outside our area. People from across Sandwell were being placed in Dudley, Brierley Hill and Stourbridge, far from their families. Local population forecasts show that our older community is growing and the demand for care will rise significantly over the next decade. Right now, we simply do not have enough good local places to keep up.

Impact of the issue on the community

When people have to move away from their local area, it creates real difficulties for them and their families. When people live far away, family visits naturally become harder to arrange, and this really does have an impact on how they feel. Being separated from familiar surroundings and loved ones often makes people feel lonely and may even speed up health decline. Research suggests that staying close to family and friends plays an important part in how well older people recover and maintain their quality of life. Sandwell does have some good services. Caldene Rest Home in West Bromwich, Bridgewood Mews and Abberley House in Tipton all have positive ratings. However, capacity in these homes is limited and waiting lists are long. Respite care is particularly difficult to find, which means family carers rarely get a proper break. Without short term support, many carers reach a point where they cannot continue, leading to permanent care admissions happening earlier than necessary. Workforce issues add to these problems. Around 81 percent of local providers report difficulties recruiting and keeping enough permanent staff. Staff shortages directly affect consistency of care. Placing people outside the borough also costs more, so resources that could improve local services are spent elsewhere instead.

Recommended response to address the issue

Drawing on what the law requires and what we know locally, there are clear steps we can take. First, we need more good quality local provision as encouraged by section 5 of the Care Act 2014. We already have successful models. Willow Gardens in Rowley Regis provides 90 apartments with 24 hour support, helping people keep independence while having help nearby. The development at Oxford Road in West Bromwich offers 35 bungalows and 58 apartments with on site care. This should be completed on time and similar schemes considered in Tipton, Oldbury and Wednesbury. We should also support homes that are struggling rather than just replacing them. Allerton Court and Leabrook House could benefit from targeted funding and practical help to raise their standards. This would increase good rated beds without the cost of building from scratch. Second, we must improve the care workforce situation. Better pay, clearer training paths and proper career opportunities will help attract and keep good staff. A shared staff bank across several trusted providers would also reduce reliance on expensive agency cover. Third, we need better long term planning. Our own needs assessment tells us exactly where demand is growing fastest across the six towns. We should use this information to plan services over the next 10 years. We should also set a clear target to reduce out of borough placements by at least 25% within 2 years. That way more people stay in the community they know.

Conclusion

The shortage of good residential care is a real challenge across Sandwell, and it affects people in every one of our towns. The Care Act 2014 gives us both the power and the duty to act. We have strong foundations already. We have good homes, successful housing projects and dedicated people working in care. If we build on what works, invest in our staff and plan ahead properly, we can make real progress. Nobody should have to leave their home and community just to get the care they need. Making sure every resident can access good care close to where they live is what the law expects and what our community deserves.

Dentistry services

Dental services care have come a long way over centuries, and looking at that journey helps us understand just how important this service really is. In Roman times people living here had very basic treatments such as tooth extraction and simple fillings, but knowledge was limited and there was nothing to manage pain effectively. After the Romans left Britain, there was no formal dental profession. Most people with dental problems sought help from barber surgeons, people who performed a range of minor procedures but had little specific training in oral health. As sugar became more widely available from the Tudor period onwards, tooth decay became much more common particularly among wealthier households, yet care remained basic and unregulated. Significant improvements began in the 19th century. The first dedicated dental hospital opened in London in 1858 and the Dentists Act 1878 established an official register so only qualified practitioners could use the title dentist. Before this, anyone could offer dental treatment and standards varied greatly. The British Dental Association was formed in 1880 to promote professional standards and education. When the National Health Service began in 1948, dental services were included and available to everyone at no immediate cost. The principle was that no one should go without care due to cost, but financial constraints led to the introduction of patient charges in 1952 and the service has faced ongoing funding and access challenges ever since.

The current situation in Sandwell reflects many of these national difficulties. Most dental practices are independent businesses holding contracts with the NHS rather than being directly operated by it. Dentists are paid set fees for treatments, but most adults contribute towards the cost. Only children, pregnant people and those on certain benefits receive free treatment. Services are organised into 3 bands covering routine check ups, basic work and complex procedures such as crowns and dentures. Unfortunately, finding an NHS dentist has become a real struggle for people living across Sandwell. A local survey found that only 7 practices across the whole borough were accepting new NHS patients. Three of these were in Smethwick, one in Oldbury, one in Cradley Heath, one in Wednesbury and one in Tipton. West Bromwich had no

practice accepting new adult NHS patients at all. The same research identified around 14 practices operating privately only, meaning they did not offer NHS appointments. Waiting times varied from 2 weeks up to 6 months or longer for routine visits. Even emergency appointments were hard to access with 20 percent of practices unable to see people who were not already registered with them. One practice in Bearwood has publicly stated that demand exceeds their capacity and they are seeking permission to expand their premises simply to keep up with local need. For many people in West Bromwich and surrounding areas, there is simply no NHS dentist they can join.

The impact of these gaps goes far beyond just oral health. When a regular dentist dental care is not easy to get, small issues that could have been fixed quickly often turn into painful problems that cost much more later. Across Sandwell, dental conditions remain one of the most common reasons why children miss school or are admitted to hospital for day case procedures. For adults, persistent pain affects eating, sleeping and daily work. Many people avoid social situations or job opportunities because they feel self conscious about their teeth. Research in local care homes has also highlighted that older residents face difficulties, with transport and appointment availability creating real barriers to regular care. People living in more deprived neighbourhoods are affected most. There are also clear links between oral health and general physical health. Untreated infection can worsen other conditions and difficulty chewing often means people eat less nutritious food. Regular dental visits prevent problems becoming serious and provide useful advice on hygiene and diet. When people in areas like Rowley Regis, Cradley Heath or parts of Oldbury cannot get to a dentist, it affects their confidence, their nutrition and their overall quality of life. Good local dentistry is not just about teeth. It is an essential part of community wellbeing.

Dentistry has developed from unregulated and painful practices into a respected professional service. The creation of the NHS brought the vision of universal access, but that vision is currently under strain locally. In Sandwell today, people face different levels of access depending on which town they live in. Waiting lists are long and the gap between NHS and private availability continues to widen. Addressing these issues matters because oral health is central to overall health and dignity. I believe everyone should be able to access appropriate care without travelling across the borough or waiting months for an appointment. That is what a properly supported dental service should provide, and it is what residents across Sandwell have every right to expect.

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