

Case Study

Sandwell Community Alarm Service
– Better Care Fund (DFG)



Through strong values alignment, multiple funding routes, and leadership at all levels, Sandwell Council has secured over £1 million to digitally transform its Community Alarm Service. The result is improved health outcomes, faster hospital discharges, and a scalable, future-ready Technology Enabled Care (TEC) model with clear plans for expansion and long-term sustainability.

Securing the Funding

National guidance from Foundations, the body for Home Improvement Agencies, encourages local authorities to simplify Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) processes to better align with the Better Care Fund (BCF). The Foundations report 'The Disabled Facilities Grant: Before and After the Introduction of the Better Care Fund' (2016) highlights the importance of agile, person-centred services that focus on strengths and outcomes rather than bureaucracy.

In response, Sandwell Council reviewed its Housing Assistance Policy (2012) and developed a new version in June 2023. This refresh created a framework for stronger collaboration between housing, health, and social care, enabling the service to align with wider BCF priorities and digital transformation goals.



“Being open to learning and engaging with colleagues across the housing service who manage the Disabled Facilities Grant for Sandwell was crucial. Understanding the intricacies of the DFG process and the new policy allowed us to strategically align our funding”

Louise Butler

**Operational Head, Direct Services for Adult Social Care
Sandwell Council**

This initiative directly supports Sandwell Council's "One Council, One Team" ethos, fostering internal collaboration, operational efficiency, and a unified commitment to serving residents. Sandwell went on to secure over £1 million in total funding. The initial award, just under £1 million from the Better Care Fund via the DFG, was followed by a successful case for an additional £100,000 to invest in standalone digital platforms with sensor capabilities. The success of the funding bid was rooted in three key factors: strategic alignment, collaboration, and leadership. The service was framed as a key enabler of safe hospital discharge, ageing well at home, and preventative care—core themes of both local and national health strategies.

The case was also directly tied to the Sandwell Corporate Plan, Joint Health & Social Care priorities, and the 2027 national digital switchover mandate.

A collaborative business case was co-designed by teams across Adult Social Care, Health, Housing, and Digital Services, with multiple funding options and fallback plans developed. This ensured a shared sense of ownership and resilience in the proposal. The approach gained strong buy-in from the Joint Partnership Board (Adults & Health), underpinned by clear political and strategic leadership. Above all, the initiative was positioned not as a housing upgrade, but as a whole-system solution—one that enhances independence, strengthens community support, and contributes directly to integrated care objectives.



Outcomes Achieved

Sandwell Council has used the health and social care pooled Better Care Fund (via the Disabled Facilities Grant) to deliver one of the most ambitious Technology Enabled Care transformations in the region. Over £1 million of BCF investment is now improving outcomes, preventing hospital admission, and speeding up discharges - future proofing support for thousands of residents.

Service Impact

To date, the service has upgraded **2,800 of 3,800 analogue alarms to digital, with the remaining 1,000 on track for completion by 2027**. All new installations now use digital connections, ensuring future resilience and compatibility with modern TEC systems. Performance data for the past year demonstrates the impact of this transformation.



The service handled over **118,945 calls**, with an average response time of **30 seconds**. **98.5%** of calls were answered within **one minute** and **99%** within **three minutes**, reflecting excellent reliability and responsiveness. Mobile response officers attended over **3,500 incidents** between January and December 2024, with **95.6%** attended within **45 minutes**. The service also responded to **1,499 falls**, with **95%** attended within **45 minutes** and the remainder within **60 minutes**. Over **1,050 installations** of equipment were completed in the same period, **600 urgent** and **450 non-urgent**, ensuring that individuals received timely support suited to their needs.

Health and Social Care Benefits

Technology Enabled Care is now fully embedded within Urgent Community Response (UCR) pathways, having progressed from a pilot to a business-as-usual service. TEC is also integrated into the Integrated Discharge Hub, where it is now offered as standard for Pathway 1 patients returning home from hospital.

The service has expanded its workforce by 50% to meet growing demand and maintain a 24/7 rapid response model, providing reassurance to both users and health partners that help is always available when needed

User and Community Value

Sandwell's digital transformation has delivered real benefits for local people. Customers are now supported with autonomy-focused digital platforms, including fall detectors, door sensors, and epilepsy sensors, which help individuals maintain independence and safety at home. Feedback from users highlights improvements in confidence, dignity, and peace of mind.

The service conducts both an eight-week follow-up review and an annual review after installation. These show a **20% year-on-year improvement in service quality** and a **10% increase in customer satisfaction** since the introduction of digital systems. **Overall satisfaction currently stands at 85%, with 90% positive feedback**, demonstrating the high regard in which the service is held by its users.

Future Plans

Looking ahead, Sandwell Council aims to complete its digital switchover by 2027, with the remaining 1,000 analogue customers scheduled for migration. The process will prioritise high-risk individuals and those being discharged from hospital to ensure continuity of care and safety.

The Council is also exploring opportunities to extend the use of the Disabled Facilities Grant to further embed Technology Enabled Care across housing and health. Future investment areas include TEC-enabled falls prevention, smart home monitoring for early detection of health deterioration, and the wider use of technology in non-traditional housing settings.

To sustain and grow the service, Sandwell is moving toward outcomes-based monitoring. Work is underway to develop a TEC outcomes dashboard that will link interventions to key indicators such as hospital admission avoidance and reduced emergency service usage. This data-led approach will help ensure ongoing funding assurance and continuous service improvement.

Finally, as a TSA member, Sandwell is committed to sharing its learning across the sector. The team contributes actively to regional TEC forums and national good-practice networks, supporting other local authorities on their digital transformation journeys. By embedding person-centred care, strong partnership working, and a clear digital vision, Sandwell is establishing itself as a leader in Technology Enabled Care and a model for how local authorities can achieve sustainable, person-centred digital transformation.



The voice of technology
enabled care

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