

# SWEDA SUCCESS STORIES

July 2025 - Sept 2025

YOUR PARAGRAPH TEXT

**SKILLS WORK & ENTERPRISE  
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**



CHARITY NO: 1158859

## Employment

Before coming to SWEDA, I was feeling quite stressed and overwhelmed. I'm currently studying BSc Mathematics with Economics at university, and as part of my course, I needed to secure a 30-week placement this year.

I had been trying for two months to find a suitable opportunity, but despite my efforts, I wasn't having any success.

The pressure was building, and I was starting to worry that I wouldn't be able to meet the course requirements.

One day, I saw a leaflet about SWEDA in the local library and decided to pop into the office. That decision changed everything.

I met with an Employment Advisor who took the time to understand my situation and offered 1-to-1 support. Together, we searched for suitable placement opportunities and worked on improving my applications.

SWEDA also helped me prepare for an interview at Aston University for a Project Officer placement.

The support I received was practical, encouraging, and tailored to my needs. I felt more confident and prepared going into the interview.

I'm absolutely delighted to say that I've secured the placement at Aston University, with a suspected start date of 1st October.

It feels like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I can now focus on developing my work experience and skills, knowing that I'm on track with my university requirements.

This opportunity means I'll be able to apply what I've learned in a real-world setting and build a stronger foundation for my future career.

I feel more confident, motivated, and excited about what's ahead.

SWEDA's support has made a real difference in my life. Without their help, I might still be struggling to find a placement.

Their personalised approach and genuine care helped me stay focused and positive. I'm grateful for their guidance and would definitely recommend their services to other students in similar situations.

**SWEDA's support has made a real difference in my life. Without their help, I might still be struggling to find a placement.**

**I feel more confident, motivated, and excited about what's ahead.**

**-Edlor Umbar**



**“The support I received from SWEDA was practical, personalised, and encouraging.”**



## Employment

When I first came to SWEDA, I had been unemployed since the end of April 2025.

I was determined to get back into work as soon as possible, but I wasn't sure how to present myself to employers, and my CV wasn't up to date.

I wanted a role in warehousing, picking, or packing, but I didn't know the best way to approach it.

Being out of work was stressful, and I felt stuck trying to do everything on my own. At the time, I was living in privately rented accommodation with my wife, and although I wasn't claiming any benefits, I wanted to secure a stable income to support us.

SWEDA helped me completely refresh my job search. Together, we created a brand-new CV that highlighted my skills, reliability, and experience in practical roles. We also wrote a covering letter tailored specifically for warehouse, picking, and packing positions.

I was shown how to upload both my CV and covering letter to job platforms, and we submitted applications for multiple roles, including a Packer role through Kenect Recruitment.

SWEDA guided me on tracking applications, setting up job alerts, and applying independently for more roles. They also gave practical advice on managing online assessments and preparing for interviews. Their support was personalised, practical, and encouraging, helping me stay motivated throughout the process.

With SWEDA's guidance, I applied for a Warehouse Operative position at IPS. I experienced some initial technical issues completing the online assessments, but with advice from SWEDA, I managed to resolve them and progress through the recruitment process successfully.

I am now employed at IPS as a Warehouse Operative. I'm currently working rotating shifts, including mornings and afternoons, and I am very happy in my new role. I am still learning the exact payment details and shift patterns, but I plan to monitor these closely and keep SWEDA updated.

The support I received from SWEDA was practical, personalised, and encouraging. They listened to my needs and helped me navigate the job search process from start to finish.

Their guidance has made a real difference in helping me achieve my goal of returning to employment, and I now feel prepared and confident to develop further in my warehouse career.

**“SWEDA’s support has been life-changing for me.”**

**“They didn’t just help me apply for jobs they gave me the tools, encouragement, and motivation to get back into work. They believed in me when I was struggling to believe in myself.”**

**-Abisola Salami**



## Employment

When I first came to SWEDA in June 2025, I had been out of work for a while and was finding it really difficult to get started again.

I knew I wanted to work in the driving and logistics sector, but I didn’t have a CV that showed my skills properly and I wasn’t sure how to connect with the right employers or agencies.

Every application I tried on my own felt like it was going nowhere. I felt stuck, frustrated, and worried that I wouldn’t be able to secure the kind of work I really wanted.

SWEDA helped me take control of my job search. At my first appointment, they worked with me to create a brand-new CV tailored specifically for driving roles. For the first time, I felt like my experience and abilities were being presented in the right way.

They also sat down with me to go through my Indeed account. Together, we applied for a number of suitable driving roles and registered my details with local recruitment agencies, including Ideal Employment, Masstemp, and The Best Connection. These were places I wouldn’t have thought to approach myself.

The team gave me guidance on what to expect, encouraged me to keep checking my phone and emails, and reassured me that I could come back for more support if I needed interview preparation or help with paperwork. Having that backing made me feel more confident and motivated.

Thanks to SWEDA’s support, I was offered a role with Masstemp as a Delivery Driver.

The hours vary each week, but I’ve been getting regular shifts and I’m really enjoying the work. I feel like I’m finally moving forward in the right direction and proving myself as reliable and committed.

Getting this job has lifted a huge weight off my shoulders. I feel proud of myself and much more positive about the future.

Instead of worrying about where opportunities will come from, I now feel like I’ve got a solid role and a chance to build something long-term. My confidence has grown, and I know I have the resilience and determination to keep moving forward.

Because of SWEDA, I’ve been able to secure a role I’m happy in and feel excited about what comes next. I’ll always be grateful for the help they gave me at such an important time in my life.

**“Life feels a lot less overwhelming.”**

**“SWEDA made me feel like I mattered”**

**- Gary Poulton**



## Employment

Before I came to SWEDA, I was really struggling with anything digital. I couldn't check my Universal Credit journal, book GP appointments online, or even help my daughter with her homework.

It made me feel useless at times. I'd been out of work since 2024 because of a health condition in my lower leg that affects my mobility, and that just added to my frustration.

I wanted to get back on track, maybe even look for work again, but I didn't know where to start especially when it came to using a computer.

SWEDA really listened to what I needed. They helped me put together a CV, including how to explain why I left my last job due to my health. This was a big relief.

My employment advisor then referred me to a digital skills course with Craig, the IT tutor. We worked one-to-one, starting right from the basics, how to turn on a computer, use a mouse, and understand what the internet actually is.

Craig was patient and explained things in a way that made sense to me.

Now, I feel confident to take on things I never thought I'd be able to do.

I can go online by myself, check my emails, browse the internet, and even look up the football scores for my favourite team. When my daughter asks me questions for her homework, I can actually help her a bit now—and that feels amazing. I'm not just sitting on the sidelines anymore.

I feel more confident, more independent, and like I've got a bit of control back in my life.

Life feels a lot less overwhelming.

I'm not relying on others as much, and I'm starting to think about what else I might be able to do. Maybe even look for part-time work in the future. But more than anything, I feel proud of myself. I've come a long way.

SWEDA made me feel like I mattered. They didn't rush me or make me feel stupid. I think they've seen how important digital skills are for people like me, and I hope they keep offering this kind of support to others who are struggling. It really does change lives.

**“SWEDA’s support was a turning point for me. I hope others in similar situations can benefit from their services too.”**

**-Victoria Manu**



## Employment

Before coming to SWEDA, I had some experience in domestic cleaning but had never worked in a school setting.

I wanted to find part-time paid work close to home, but I didn’t know how to present my skills, complete applications properly, or prepare for interviews.

I felt unsure about where to start and lacked confidence in navigating the formal job application process.

SWEDA welcomed me and helped me identify my strengths and transferable skills.

They supported me in creating a professional CV tailored to school roles and helped me complete an application for a Lunchtime Supervisor position.

I also received one-to-one interview coaching, covering likely questions, communication skills, and ways to boost my confidence.

While we applied for other lunchtime roles, this particular school responded quickly, and the location was convenient for me.

I passed my interview and secured a role as a Lunchtime Supervisor. I now feel confident in my ability to apply for and succeed in school-based roles.

My skills in completing applications and handling interviews have improved, and I feel proud of what I’ve achieved.

I’ve gone from feeling unsure and inexperienced to being an employed member of a school team. I’ve gained confidence, practical skills, and independence.

This role gives me both financial stability and personal satisfaction, and it has set me on a path for future growth in education support roles.

SWEDA’s support was a turning point for me. Their guidance on CVs, applications, and interviews helped me take my first steps into employment in a new sector.

# SKILLS FOR SANDWELL 2

PROJECT

## Employment

Ritika joined the Skills for Sandwell 2 programme with the ambition of beginning her career in administration.

Having recently completed a degree in Business and Management, she wanted to gain practical office experience but felt she needed support with CV building, job applications, and developing her confidence for interviews.

In her first sessions, Ritika worked closely with an advisor to create a professional CV tailored for administrative and customer service roles. Together, they also developed a personal profile that could be adapted for different job applications.

With this in place, Ritika learned how to identify suitable vacancies and complete applications to a professional standard.

One of her early achievements was applying for a Receptionist role with YMCA. After being shortlisted, she received interview preparation support, including practice questions and confidence-building techniques.

This gave her valuable experience of the recruitment process, improving her ability to present herself effectively to employers. In parallel, Ritika was introduced to SCL, a local training provider, through SWEDA's referral network. Following this connection, she was offered the opportunity to progress onto an Admin Apprenticeship.

Before starting, Ritika is required to complete a preparatory course, which she has now enrolled on. This will provide her with additional skills and ensure she is fully ready to begin her apprenticeship placement.

Ritika's journey demonstrates the impact of tailored employability support and strong partnerships.

She has progressed from building her CV to securing an interview and now has a clear pathway into training and employment. With her upcoming course and apprenticeship, Ritika feels more confident, motivated, and optimistic about her future.

**Outcome:** Gained interview experience with YMCA for a Receptionist role and has been offered progression onto an Admin Apprenticeship with SCL (currently completing a preparatory course before start).

**"This support has made such a difference for me. I feel much more prepared to apply for jobs and interviews, and now I'm looking forward to starting my apprenticeship in administration." – Ritika**



Funded by  
UK Government



Sandwell  
Metropolitan Borough Council



West Midlands  
Combined Authority

# SKILLS FOR SANDWELL 2

PROJECT

## Employment

Conroy came to the Skills for Sandwell 2 programme after being out of work for some time.

He was keen to return to employment but lacked a current CV and felt overwhelmed by the modern job search process, particularly the digital aspects.

Conroy shared his interest in securing a cleaning or caretaking role, ideally in a school or community environment where he could work as part of a team and contribute to a positive space.

From the outset, Conroy demonstrated enthusiasm and a willingness to learn.

In the first session, he worked closely with an advisor to reflect on his past experiences, which included roles in security, youth and community volunteering, and practical maintenance tasks.

This information was used to create a brand-new CV tailored to cleaning and caretaking opportunities, with a strong focus on reliability, attention to detail, and health and safety awareness.

Once his CV was completed, Conroy received guided support with basic IT skills, including using email, job search platforms, and uploading documents.

Through regular 1-to-1 digital sessions, he developed more confidence using technology to independently find and apply for roles.

In one session, Conroy identified a cleaner vacancy at Ryders Green Primary School advertised through SIPS Education. Together with his advisor, he completed the online application form, uploaded his CV, and submitted it.

Following the successful submission of his application to Ryders Green Primary School via SIPS Education, Conroy was invited to attend an interview for the Cleaner position.

In preparation, we arranged a dedicated session to practice interview techniques and build his confidence around answering typical questions.



Funded by  
UK Government



West Midlands  
Combined Authority



# SKILLS FOR SANDWELL 2

PROJECT

**"This project gave me the tools I needed. I didn't know how to even start looking for jobs online before.**

**Now I've got a job I enjoy, and I feel proud to go to work each day. Thank you for believing in me."**

**– Conroy Williams**

## Employment - Cont

Conroy was keen to take on board feedback and rehearse how to present his strengths clearly. His preparation paid off! shortly after the interview, he was offered the role.

He is now awaiting his start date at Ryders Green Primary School, as a Cleaner, position that aligns with his skills, interests, and preferred working environment.

He reports feeling more confident, productive, and positive about the future.

His involvement in the Skills for Sandwell 2 programme has not only helped him move back into paid employment but has also empowered him to take control of his job search journey going forward.



Funded by  
UK Government



Sandwell  
Metropolitan Borough Council



West Midlands  
Combined Authority

**“SWEDA offers a great service. I have learned new skills and tasks that gave me new knowledge. In addition to this I have met some new people.”**

## Digital Skills Support

I had been unemployed long-term and was on sick leave due to stress and other health concerns.

These challenges significantly impacted my confidence, particularly in using a computer for anything beyond managing her Universal Credit account.

I meet with the IT advisor who conducted an evaluation of my existing IT skills and enrolled me in the Good Things Foundation “Learn My Way” program to build my basic digital skills competencies.

This structured support helped me gradually develop confidence and familiarity with using a PC.

As my confidence grew, I expressed a desire to continue practicing at home in addition to attending sessions at the SWEDA IT Suite.

This led me to acquire my own laptop, marking a significant step in my digital independence.

My confidence has dramatically improved.

I have developed new IT skills and i am now actively seeking employment while continuing my digital skills learning journey. My engagement with technology has become a positive and empowering part of my routine.

I will continue my training with a focus on Microsoft Excel and Microsoft PowerPoint, further enhancing my employability and digital literacy.

“SWEDA offers a great service. I have learned new skills and tasks that gave me new knowledge. In addition to this I have met some new people.”



**“Thanks for all the help and support SWEDA has provided me with knowledge and the confidence I needed.”**

**-MH**

## Digital Skills Support

MH had recently left Sixth Form while awaiting her A-Level results. She was uncertain about her future direction but recognised the need to improve her IT skills to be better prepared for the workplace.

Although she had some experience with Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, she had never used Excel or Publisher, which limited her confidence and employability.

A SWEDA advisor conducted an initial assessment of MH's IT knowledge to identify areas for development. Tailored training exercises were provided in Microsoft Word and Publisher, which revealed and addressed gaps in her understanding.

The next phase of her training focused on building proficiency in Microsoft Excel.

Through targeted support, MH gained confidence in her ability to use a computer effectively.

She also received guidance on applying for a wide range of jobs and apprenticeships, expanding her career prospects.

MH is now participating in a four-day-a-week voluntary training programme with City Year, where she is working towards a Level 3 qualification.

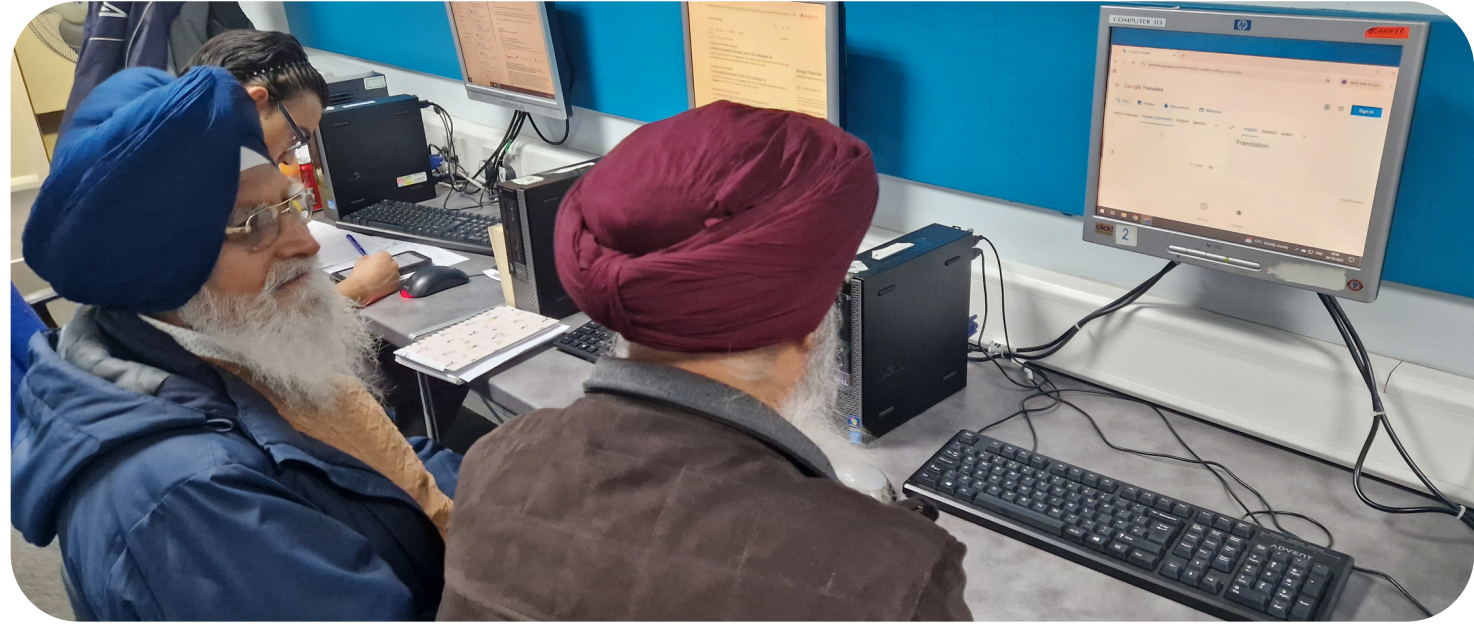
This experience is helping her progress along her chosen career path of becoming a teacher.

MH will continue her training and development with the aim of securing a formal teaching qualification and employment in the education sector.

“Thanks for all the help and support SWEDA has provided me with knowledge and the confidence I needed.”



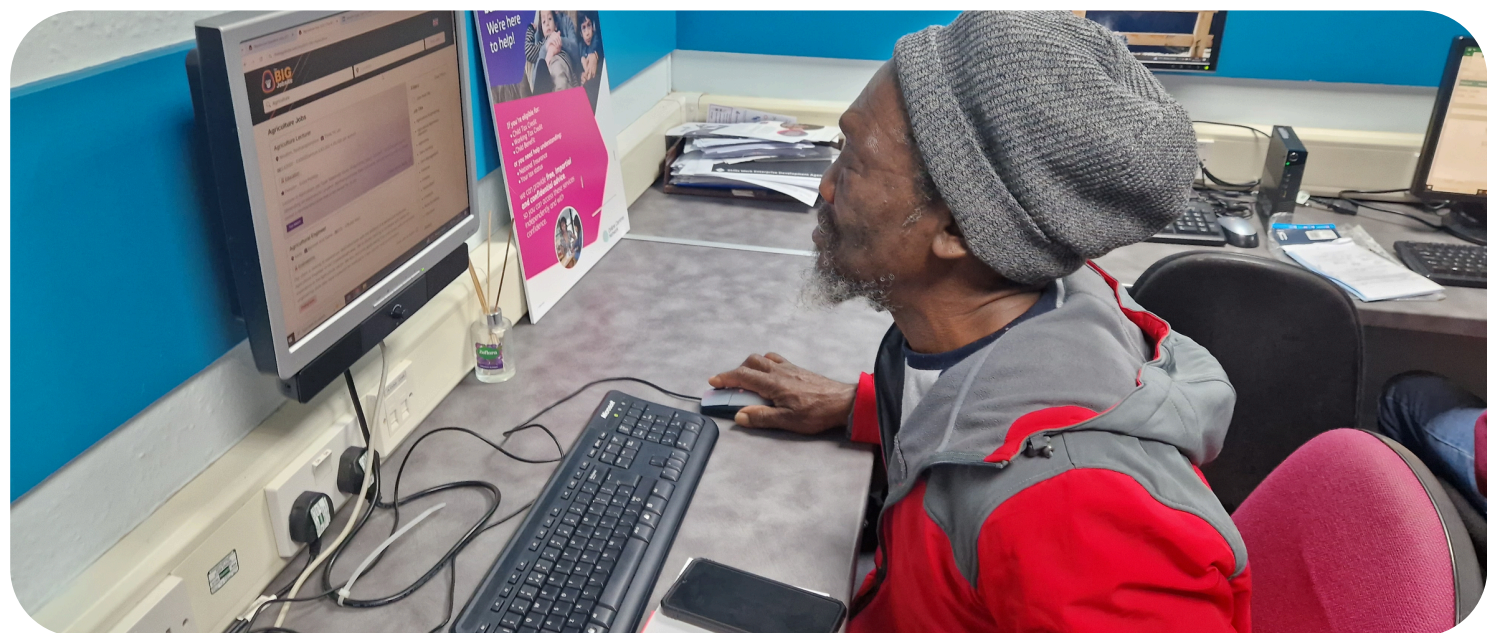
The IT suite empowers clients by providing access to computers, software, and training, helping them build essential digital skills for job applications, online services, and everyday tasks.



**Sujit & Lakhjeet learning about translation applications**



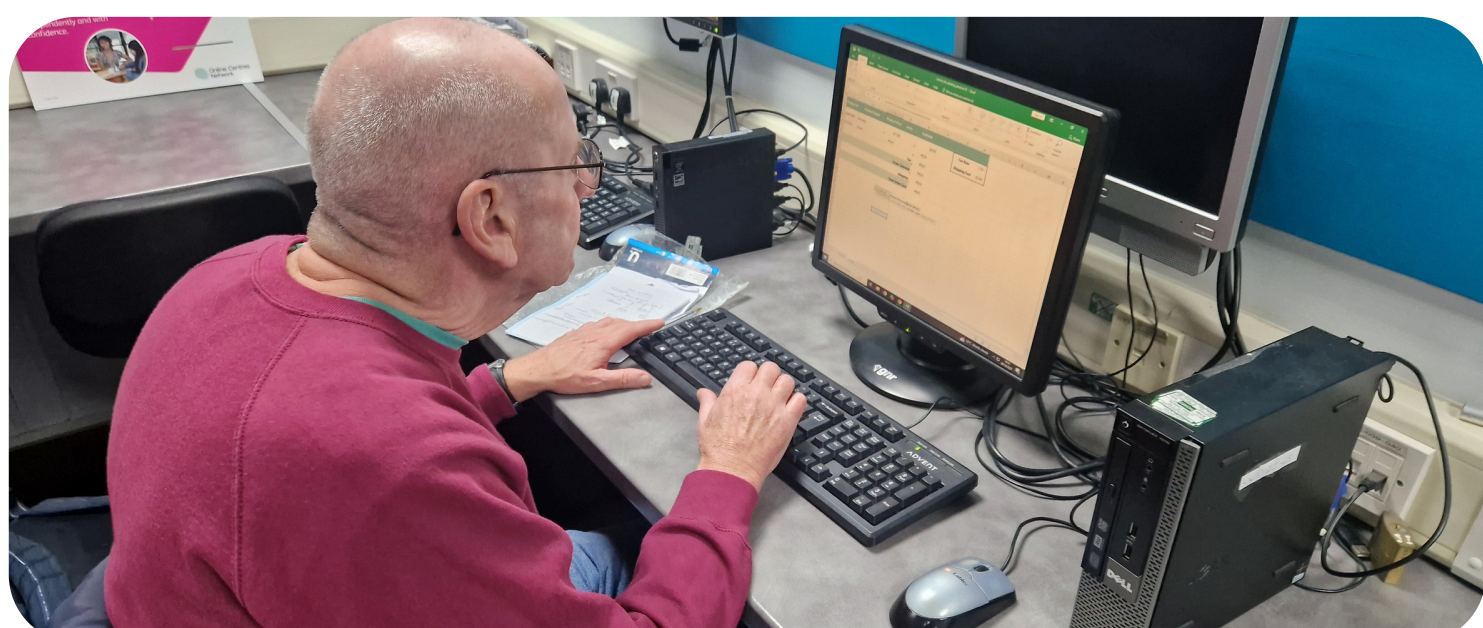
**Shida mortgage switch & Family Fund application**



**Lawrence Murrain doing a Job Search**



**John Connolly applying for Blue Badge**



**Ian doing an advanced MS Excel course**

Learn  
My Way

## Business

I had been having one to one support with Claire since June 2024, and she had supported me with various aspects of setting up my business including whether to register as a limited company or a sole trader and also helped me with my struggles around my mental health through supporting me into the self-employment route, which I felt was my best option.

More recently I have had issues finding a place to operate my business from, insurance requirements and setting up as self-employed with HMRC.

With Claire's ongoing support in one-to-one sessions and support through SWEDA's workshops I have been able to move further forward in my business.

I decided in November now was the right time to register as self-employed and Claire supported through this process by dedicating a one-to-one session to complete the form

There was also a workshop being held at SWEDA which covered the topic of turning your website visitors into customers. Claire told me about it as she knew I was looking at creating a website, I attended and learnt so many useful hints and tips.

Another hurdle I was supported on was trying to find a space to operate from on a part time basis, as the one I had spoken to Claire about before never materialised.

At every point Claire was there offering support and guidance with spaces I had viewed and offered a referral to a contact to speak about insurance I may need.

When I finally found a space, I could work from one day a week, I was so excited to tell Claire and invite her to the opening.

Claire has supported me in registering my business by dedicating a one-to-one session in completing the form and



**“My life has improved immensely. I have more confidence and am proud of what I have achieved.”**

## Business - Cont

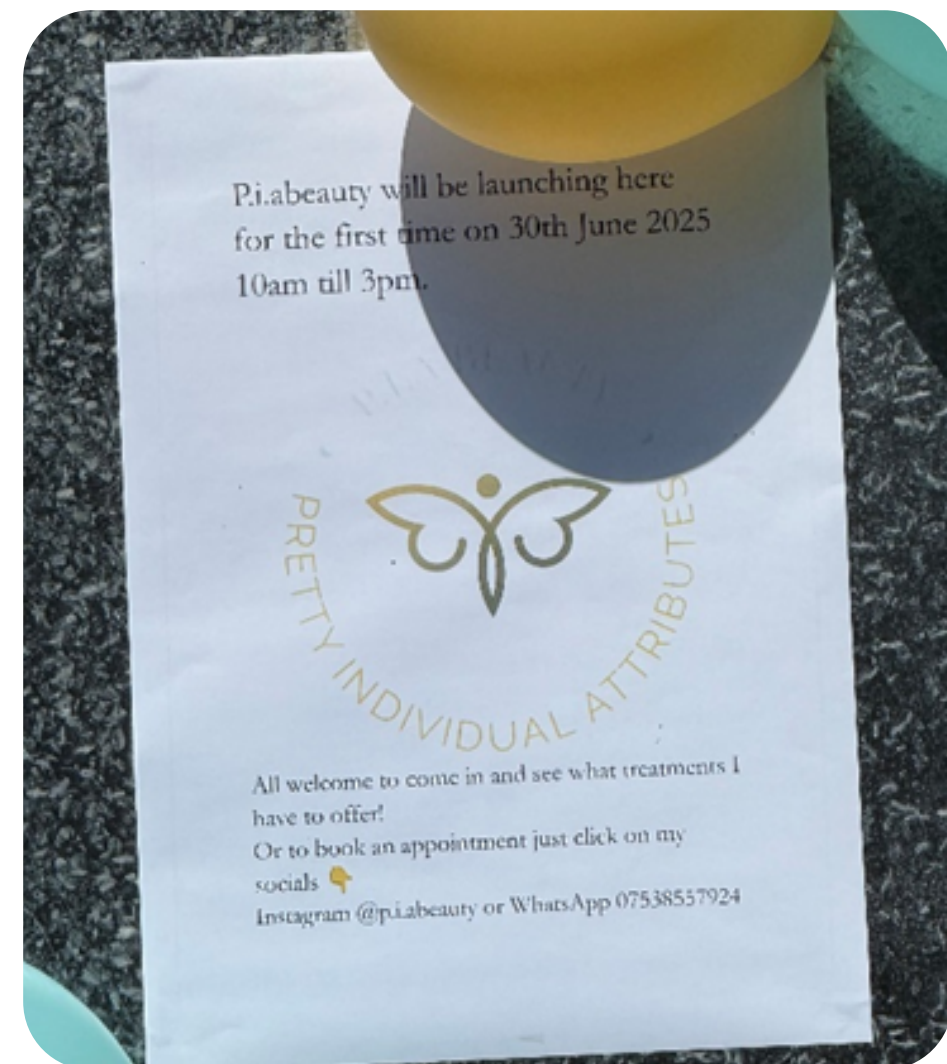
I am so excited that I now have somewhere I can operate my business from. Although it is only part time I can arrange for people to come and see me there, rather than inviting them to my home, which I was always hesitant about.

I also feel like I run a real business and can proudly say to my family and friends, this is what I do.

I am forever thankful for the support I have received from SWEDA and my business advisor, Claire.

I have learnt so much and feel so much more confident both as a person and as a business owner.

Even though I have reached a really good place in my business I will still reach out to Claire and the team for any additional support needs I may have.



## Business

### Sri Lankan Café - CLB

Chaminda is the owner of The Sri Lankan Café that opened in 2020 in the heart of Sandwell high street. The café has become popular for its authentic Sri Lankan curries, hoppers, kottu roti and Ceylon tea, offering customers a genuine taste of Sri Lanka in a warm, homely setting.

### Challenges faced by Sri Lankan Cafe

The café has limited seating and Chaminda would like to revamp the site, new espresso machine, fridge and extraction equipment.

Being an active participant in the Community Led Business support project Chaminda has attended a number of business workshops hoisted by SWEDA and also was referred to the Sandwell Business Growth Team.

### Opportunity

A larger space had become available in the brand-new West Bromwich indoor market, offering greater seating capacity and a high footfall of potential clients.

Chaminda has now safely installed herself in the new West Bromwich indoor market site.

She plans to over the next few months to revamp and develop the existing site during the day, at 5.00pm when the market closes she will open up the café for her regular nighttime trade.



SRI  
LANKA



## Business

I went to the Sandwell Council in May 2024, and I was advised to contact Rickie, a business advisor from SWEDA.

An appointment was booked for me to see Rickie at the job centre. When I attended, she informed me about SWEDA and what they offer in terms of support. During the discussion I advised what I was looking to do, in terms of setting up a children's play centre, and Rickie mentioned that one of the projects SWEDA was delivering may be suitable for me to register for. There was also a grant attached to this project and as funding was one of the obstacles I was facing to get the business off the ground thought this may be a good avenue to explore.

The project was connected to supporting people who were looking to start a Social Enterprise and although I was a little unsure of what a Social Enterprise was, Rickie felt that what I was looking to achieve fitted with the business having an educational and social purpose.

The first workshop of the new cohort was due to start the following day, and as my diary was clear I decided to attend to learn more about what a Social Enterprise was and see if my business would fit into that model, so Rickie booked me into the session.

When I attended the workshop I met Claire, another business advisor at SWEDA, and I was also introduced to Sue, who was from iSe and running the workshop.

Everyone at SWEDA was helpful and supportive, and Sue answered many of my questions around what structure would be best for me.

I attended all the workshops and found the sessions allowed me to gain a better insight into what a Social Enterprise was, and how that model could fit into my business.

Unfortunately, due to circumstances outside SWEDA's control, I was unable to apply for the grant but found attending the workshops very useful.

As I was now connected to SWEDA I was able to gain access to the various workshops for business support they had available and attended others, including a workshop on completing your self-assessment and how to sell your brand on Facebook.



## Business - Cont

The support I have received from SWEDA has given me a better insight into various aspects of running a business and whether being a Social Enterprise is the right option for me.

Attending SWEDA has also helped me to get a clear picture of how my business will run. I have learnt a lot through the workshops and the support that has been received from Rickie and Claire



**“I genuinely appreciated all the support and assistance Simon provided.”**

**-Adele Cartwright**

## Welfare Support

Navigating PIP Support with the Cost of Living Team (COLT)

I live in the Wednesbury area and recently attended a drop-in session hosted by the new Cost Of Living Team (COLT) at Wednesbury Library. As the appointee for my niece, I was feeling quite overwhelmed about completing her Personal Independence Payment (PIP) review form and needed guidance.

At the drop-in, I met Simon, who is part of COLT and also works with SWEDA.

I approached him to ask for advice on how to fill out the form correctly.

To my relief, Simon didn't just offer advice—he sat down with me and my niece and helped us complete the entire form right there in the library.

He spent nearly three hours with us, making sure every section was filled out thoroughly and accurately.

Simon's support didn't end there. After the appointment, he continued to provide guidance, helping me gather and include all the necessary supporting documents.

Thanks to his help, I've now submitted the PIP form. He also made sure I understood the relevant time limits for challenging any decisions, should the outcome not be favourable.

I genuinely appreciated all the support and assistance Simon provided.

His dedication and patience made a stressful process much more manageable, and I left feeling reassured and informed.



## Welfare - New outreach site

SWEDA through our Welfare Advice, Health and Wellbeing Services team is continually engaging in community development and outreach work in our local community.

In July, we commenced a new outreach surgery at the West Bromwich Community Centre in Gayton Road. This venue was chosen due to the amount of footfall and activities that are available at the centre.

The surgery commenced on Wednesday 23 July and is a drop in between 10am and 12 midday and will assist clients who need:

- Benefits and debt advice
- Employment support
- Energy Advice
- Help with budgeting
- Housing
- Health and Wellbeing
- Help to get online



The new surgery will be staffed between Simon Hackett our Community Development Officer and Neil Clenton who leads on our WorkWell programme. WorkWell is a service designed to support anyone with a health condition or disability to either:

- Return/Remain in work
- Find and Access work
- Refer or signpost into various services available in their area

The drop in has already got off to a flying start with both Simon and Neil talking to groups that use the centre which has resulted in referrals to the drop in. Simon, as part of his Silver Linings project (this project help clients 65 and over), has also been invited to meet an Older Persons group which meets monthly on Mondays. Simon will be attending in September.

In the coming weeks we will be putting up posters in key focal points in the surrounding area as well as a leaflet drop to the houses and flats that covers the geographic area that the community centre is situated in.

**“Since the first time I went to SWEDA the staff and Simon have been amazing, polite and friendly”**

**Derek Harrison**

## Welfare

At the time I reached out to SWEDA for support, I was 69 years old and had been receiving my State Pension for a few years. My wife, then 65, was approaching State Pension age herself.

She was receiving both Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment, and we were both feeling very anxious about the months ahead. We knew her transition to State Pension would affect her current benefits, but we didn't know where to begin.

We needed someone to guide us through what felt like a complex and overwhelming process.

In April of this year, we met Simon Hackett, the Welfare Rights Adviser at SWEDA, and shared our concerns with him.

At our first meeting, Simon carried out a full benefits check to ensure we were receiving the correct entitlements and also calculated what our benefits would look like once my wife retired. He reassured us that he would support us every step of the way.

Over the following weeks leading up to my wife's retirement, Simon helped us complete the necessary forms for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.

He also ensured that Sandwell Council processed these applications correctly and awarded the right amounts.

Additionally, Simon submitted an application for help with NHS costs, as we had been refused Pension Credit and he even double-checked that the Pension Credit decision was accurate. He also referred us to LEAP, an organisation that provides energy advice, which we found extremely helpful.

Thanks to Simon's support, we successfully navigated my wife's transition from Universal Credit to State Pension, and all our claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction have been processed. We're incredibly grateful for his guidance and expertise.

It has been a worrying time over the last few weeks for me and my wife, with all the financial changes that are happening, but Simon has guided me through it. I would recommend Simon and SWEDA to anyone who needs help and support”

## Health & Wellbeing



### Knitting & Crochet for Mindful Connection



Our Health and Wellbeing Program is designed to support the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of our community through inclusive, engaging activities.

One of the highlights of the program is our Knitting and Crochet Class, which brings people together in a warm, creative space to learn, share, and unwind.

Knitting and crochet are more than just crafts—they're proven to reduce stress, improve focus, and promote mindfulness.

Whether you're a beginner or an experienced maker, the class offers a welcoming environment to explore your creativity while connecting with others.

Participants often describe the sessions as calming and therapeutic, with the rhythmic motion of stitching helping to ease anxiety and helps develop a sense of accomplishment.

The social aspect is just as valuable: sharing stories, exchanging tips, and celebrating each other's progress builds a strong sense of community and belonging.

This initiative is part of our broader commitment to holistic wellbeing, encouraging activities that nurture both mental and emotional health. By offering accessible, low-pressure opportunities like this, we aim to create a culture where wellbeing is woven into everyday life.

## Health & Wellbeing

*Bikeability for Residents : A Path to Better Health and Well-being*



Sweda has introduced as part of its health & well being sessions, a bikeability course for a safe, accessible, and inclusive cycling infrastructure that offers significant health and well-being benefits.

Cycling is a low-impact physical activity that supports cardiovascular health, strengthens muscles, and improves joint mobility, making it ideal for older adults who may struggle with high-intensity exercise.

Regular cycling can reduce the risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, while also enhancing balance and coordination, which helps prevent falls.



## Health & Wellbeing - Cont



For minority groups, bikeability can address health disparities by providing affordable and convenient transportation that encourages active lifestyles.

Many communities face barriers to accessing recreational spaces or fitness facilities; cycling creates equitable opportunities for physical activity in everyday routines, such as commuting or running errands.

This accessibility forges inclusivity and helps reduce gaps in health outcomes.

Beyond physical health, cycling contributes to mental well-being. Outdoor activity and movement are linked to reduced stress, improved mood, and greater social interaction.

Bike-friendly neighborhoods encourage community engagement, reducing isolation among older adults and creating safer, more connected environments for minority populations.



**“I feel like I have a purpose again.”**

## Health & Wellbeing

My name is Mrs B and I am 67 years old. For many years, I lived in the shadows of my mind, battling multiple mental health conditions bipolar disorder, chronic stress, and Alzheimer's.

I felt isolated, forgotten, and hopeless. Life had lost its colour, and I had stopped believing that things could ever get better. That all changed the day I joined Rashpal's health and wellbeing group at SWEDA.

From the very first session, I felt something shift. Rashpal welcomed me with warmth and kindness that I hadn't felt in years. She didn't just see my illness she saw me.

She encouraged me to take part in physical and mental health exercise classes, and for the first time in a long time, I felt alive. I started knitting again, joined the crafting group, Health and wellbeing sessions at the Hill Top library and made new friends who truly understand and support me.

I can honestly say I have never felt this relaxed and happy in my entire life. The laughter, the shared stories, the sense of belonging—it's all been healing in ways I never imagined possible. I look forward to every session now.

I feel like I have a purpose again.

I am deeply grateful to Rashpal and the entire SWEDA team. Their compassion, dedication, and belief in people like me have given me a second chance at life.

The WDH Project is not just a programme it's a lifeline. It has changed my life, and I truly believe it should continue so that others like me can find hope and healing too.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.





# HEALTH & WELLBEING

## Activities



### Cook and Eat for Diabetes & Prediabetes: 6-Week Health and Wellbeing Program



Our Cook and Eat for Diabetes & Prediabetes program is a six-week series of engaging, hands-on cooking sessions designed to support better blood sugar control through nutritious, delicious meals.

Each 2-hour session combines practical cooking experience with expert-led guidance on nutrition, meal planning, and portion control. Participants have learnt how to prepare balanced meals using fresh, affordable ingredients that help manage blood glucose levels while still tasting great.

The program covers essential topics such as understanding carbohydrates, reading food labels, choosing healthier alternatives, and building sustainable eating habits.

Whether you're newly diagnosed or looking to improve your current routine, these sessions offered a supportive environment to build confidence in the kitchen and make informed food choices.

By the end of the six weeks, participants have a toolkit of recipes, tips, and strategies to maintain a healthier lifestyle and feel more in control of their wellbeing.

**“I would love to continue learning. This was my first experience in education, and I’ve really enjoyed it.**

**I want to keep going and improve even more.”**

**-Nazma**

## Education

My name is Nazma, I’m 38 years old and originally from Bangladesh. Bengali is my first language, and although I’ve lived in the UK for 22 years, I still feel most comfortable communicating in Bengali. I’m married and have children. I sometimes need support with understanding and expressing myself in English, especially when dealing with official matters or services. Having access to language support makes a big difference for me.

This was my first time ever being in an education setting, so everything felt new and a bit overwhelming at first. I had to learn the Latin alphabet, which is very different from Bengali, my first language. One of the hardest parts for me was speaking English, especially because the local accent is difficult to understand.

I also struggled with travelling to class and using digital devices, which I’m not very confident with. Thankfully, my children and friends have supported me outside of lessons, helping me practise and understand things better. Over time, I’ve started to feel more confident using English, especially in class where I felt safe to make mistakes and learn.

Since joining the course, my writing and listening have improved a lot. I’ve attended regularly and being in a supportive environment has helped me feel more comfortable with reading and writing English. This has also made me more confident in speaking, and I now feel more able to have conversations outside of class.

Learning English has made a big difference in my life. I feel more confident when I need to speak to doctors or access services, and I’m less nervous about going out and talking to people. I feel less isolated and more connected to my community. I know I still have a lot to learn, but I’m proud of how far I’ve come.

### Tutor Comment:

Nazma has been a committed and enthusiastic student. She’s made great progress and clearly enjoyed the course. If she continues learning and using her English regularly, she will do very well. However, there is a risk that without continued support and opportunities to practise, she may lose confidence and become isolated again.



**“I enjoyed the course very much and believed it really helped me gain confidence in English.”**

**- Simona**

## Education - Cont

My name is Simona, I'm 55 years old and originally from Romania. I moved to the UK six years ago with my family. English is not my first language, and although I've picked up quite a bit over the years, I still find pronunciation, grammar, and the large vocabulary challenging. I don't receive much support outside of my English classes, but I do watch English television, which helps me learn passively.

### **My Experience in the Course:**

I joined the English course to improve my skills and build confidence. I was already one of the more advanced learners in the group, but I still had areas I wanted to work on. The course helped me understand how to write a CV and where to look for jobs, which I found very useful. I didn't access other services during the course, but I felt supported by my tutor and classmates.

### **What I've Achieved:**

Before the course, I had a decent level of English, but I lacked confidence in using it. Over time, I've become much more confident. I enjoyed helping others in my class, and it felt good to be able to support them. I haven't joined any community groups or found a job yet, but I now feel more prepared to take those steps. I understand more about how to access services and opportunities, and I feel less isolated.

### **Next Steps:**

I would like to find work. Thanks to the course, I know where to look and how to apply. I feel ready to take the next step and start engaging with the job market.

### **Tutor's Comment:**

Simona has been a fantastic student. Although her attendance was affected by family responsibilities that required travel to Romania, she was always focused and ahead of most students when present. She even took on a mentoring role with some of her peers. I wish her all the best in the future.



# ESOL PROJECT

English for speakers of other languages.

## ESOL-Employability Pilot Project



# EVENTS

To **#celebrate** our first **#FacebookFriday** post we'd like to acknowledge our fantastic **#advisors** who have all recently completed their **#IAG** Level 3 qualification through **#City&Guilds**.

It's been a pleasure to support them in getting their **#qualification** and thank you to Jo for being their tutor and giving them the materials & guidance needed.

**#Congratulations** to Simon, Claire, Rashpal, Craig & Kanwal.

**#SWEDAServices #qualifiedemployees #alwayslearning #Information #Advice #Guidance**



Interactions: 1 heart, 1 comment, 1 share, 1 bookmark

**Commerce.**  
18 Aug · 🌐

Our business team had a productive meeting with Alison and Rob from the Black Country Chamber of Commerce last week to discuss how we can work together and support **#businesses** in **#Sandwell** and the rest of the Black Country.

Great to be back as part of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

Looking forward to seeing what the future holds 😊

**#BlackCountry #businesssupport #business #smallbusiness #startupbusiness**



Interactions: 1 heart, 1 comment, 1 share, 1 bookmark

**SWEDA is always active in the community whether through business, employment, or Community engagement initiatives.**

**We're committed to delivering our services and connecting with as many people as possible, wherever they are.**

**SWEDA is at Stone Cross Library.**  
30 Sept · 🌐

Our Community Development Officer Simon Hackett is at Stone Cross library this afternoon celebrating the libraries 50 year anniversary. The Mayor of ... See more



Interactions: 1 heart, 1 comment, 1 share, 1 bookmark

SWEDA was really proud to be at last weeks event at West Bromwich Albion Football Club celebrating the end of the amazing work done by everyone for the Hateley Cross Big Local. This was a 10 year plan led by local residents to agree where 1 million pound would be spent over this period. SWEDA was funded to provide navigator support in the Hateley Cross area. Working with our partner Ideal For All we assisted over 400 local residents to access services which included employment support, welfare benefits advice, digital / IT skills and health and well being activities. We were really pleased to discuss our work last week with Hateley Heath Councillor and Deputy Leader of Sandwell Council Paul Moore and Hateley Heath Councillor Amardeep Singh.

**#swedaservices**



Interactions: 1 heart, 1 comment, 1 share, 1 bookmark

# TESTIMONIALS

**"Their personalised approach and genuine care helped me stay focused and positive. I'm grateful for their guidance and would definitely recommend their services to other students in similar situations."**

**-Edlor Umbar (SMBC)**

**I am thrilled to have secured a Job in Housekeeping and I couldn't have done it without your help and support. Thank you Rashpal.**

**-Asha (WDH)**

**"Thank you, from the bottom of my heart"**

**"I am grateful for your patience and expertise, your dedication to taching is truly appreciated. Thank you."**

**-Mrs Kaur ( WDH)**

**"Because of SWEDA, I've been able to secure a role I'm happy in and feel excited about what comes next. I'll always be grateful for the help they gave me at such an important time in my life."**

***"My experience has been good, I am now able to speak and write in english"***

***-Nazma ( ESOL)***

**"Thanks Neil for all your help and support in helping me find a P/T job, I am sp grateful for all that you have done for me, since ive been coming to jobclub.**

**- Angela Williams**

**"Thank you SWEDA for all your support and understanding"**

**"SWEDA made me feel like I mattered. They didn't rush me or make me feel stupid. I think they've seen how important digital skills are for people like me, and I hope they keep offering this kind of support to others who are struggling. It really does change lives."**

**- Gary Poulton (MADE)**

**"I would recommend Simon and SWEDA to anyone who needs help and support"**

**Derek Harrison**

# APPRECIATION

We at SWEDA extend our deepest gratitude to all our funders for their unwavering dedication and support.

Your funding contributions are the backbone of our organization, enabling us to maintain and elevate the quality of services we provide.

Without your support, achieving the level of excellence we strive for would simply not be possible.

Your commitment not only empowers us but also makes a significant difference in the lives of our clients.

Thank you for being an integral part of our mission.



Funded by UK Government

