



# Brushstrokes

## Community Project

October 2022

### *Welcome to the team*



My Name is George Amadi, I am delighted to Join the Brushstrokes Community Project as an Immigration Adviser. Since my Joining this fantastic group, I am delighted to say i have observed the people are kind, Nice and welcoming. I feel like i have found a new family.

My Role here includes assisting everyone who may need immigration advice, advocacy and representation. I have over 15 years experience in immigration advice and Legal work.

While not at work, I enjoy community work with my Local Church. I also enjoy watching football and wrestling and at other times, I write books.

I look forward to leaving a Positive Mark in the minds of members of the Smethwick community through my assignment at Brushstrokes. Thank you for welcoming me to this most wonderful and beautiful family.

*Congratulations to 'Helen Netherway' who is our newly appointed "Volunteer Representative". Helen will be attending volunteer meetings and representing the volunteers on our Management Committee.*

" My name is Helen and I've been volunteering at Brushstrokes since 2020, and weekly since May 2020. I mostly volunteer with resources on a Thursday, where I help register everyone collecting food that day. I feel very passionate about the difference that Brushstrokes can make to service users and have seen some incredibly moving examples of this in my time as a volunteer. I also love helping out with family activities such as cooking in the summer and the Christmas party. During the rest of my week, I am completing a PhD at University of Birmingham, where I'm entering into my final year - my research looks at experiences of food in the daily lives of women in the asylum system."



I met Salman at a protest we talked about my community campaigning to set up girls' schools in Afghanistan and he recommended me to volunteer at Brushstrokes, I have not looked back since.

Poverty anywhere in the world is unacceptable to me and brushstrokes is a great place where we can work together to work towards a world which ends poverty

*A warm welcome from the whole team here at Brushstrokes. We're always working to build a strong, passionate and communicative team, and we believe that you'll fit right in with us."*

# JOBS FAIR

## Refugees & Migrants



On the 12 of October Brushstrokes Community Project along with the local Job Centre held a Jobs Fair for refugees and migrants in the area. The event's objective was to support new refugees and migrants regarding employment and give them a chance to meet with employers and get their first job in the UK. It was a challenge for some of the participants to communicate with employers and providers during the event due to the language barrier and lack of confidence. The companies' presenters and Brushstrokes' staff helped the people to overcome any barriers. For many participants this was their first meeting with an employer in the UK.

Most of the clients stated it had been a very useful experience, which increased their confidence and took them a step closer to paid employment. The participants found the event useful in terms of being able to speak with employers directly and being given a chance to attend inductions or a suitable course after the event.

Brushstrokes' staff express their appreciation to the Job Centre advisors and all the employers taking part in the Jobs Fair for such an opportunity for the participants. It would be great if such events happen on a regular basis

## ART WORKSHOP!



Men's & Women's Group were joined by Iranian artist, Amak Mahmoodian, at a highly inspirational art session. There was a great turnout with lots of desire to get creative and to contribute to Amak's project about exploring people's nocturnal dreams. The fruits of the workshop will be used at an art exhibition taking place in culture capital of the south-west, Bristol. Participants were encouraged to represent their dreams through different art forms – drawing, painting and polaroid photography, and Amak was amazed by the quality of the work produced. It was significant to see that many issues that affect our service users on a daily basis are played out during their dreams.

# FILM NIGHT!



With the nights drawing in across the country, it's a great time to join us for a film down at the Brushstrokes Cinema. We've partnered with the excellent organisation, Black Country Touring, who promote community cinema, and during the month of October, we showed two films that we were really well received by our diverse service users. First up was the family-friendly animation film, *Coco*, and we welcomed lots of Latin American families who live in the area. Alongside the film, which was in Spanish with English subtitles, we all enjoyed nachos with an array of dips to fit in with the Latin American film. The second film that we showed was the critically acclaimed film, *Limbo*, about a Syrian asylum seeker and musician who is sent to live in Scotland. In a sympathetic manner, the film highlighted issues that many of our service users face in the asylum system. This evening was even more special as it saw the debut performance of Brushstrokes Beat, our own music group that has blossomed out of our weekly Music Wellness sessions. Fronted by tutor, Arianna, we had great contributions from Jesus (Ecuador) and Salih (Sudan), both of whom serenaded us with songs from their homelands.



## Brushstrokes Theatre



The Head Gardener hit the Brushstrokes theatre stage this month. Brothers Jake and Warren Oldershaw from Untied Artists put on a highly entertaining show to tell us why a bit more horticulture in our lives can give us all a boost! Through the well-attended show, the thespian siblings designed a beautiful garden, telling us why spending time in your garden contributes so positively to people's mental health. They made lots of references to local Black Country gardens and gardeners, and the show was adorned with songs and lots of opportunities for audience interaction. The play dovetailed nicely into the work that has been done with our men's and women's groups that have embraced the themes of gardening and discussions to promote people's mental health. The thoroughly enjoyable evening didn't just include samosas and spring rolls, but everyone was given a bulb to take home and grow. Some bulbs also found their way into the planters in the Brushstrokes garden so we look forward to them sprouting through in upcoming months. The performance has certainly convinced us to spend more times getting our green fingers dirty in our gardens!



# Brushstrokes appreciations



**A Better Place For All**  
After 21 long years, the community working together gets another person to stay! Visa application can be complicated and daunting. Salman Juliet and her friends worked together to apply for leave to remain. Juliet will be partying with her church and friends but also continue to help others who are struggling with immigration rules which mean people like Juliet have to be in the UK for over 30 years before they can get permanent settlement. "Juliet is a lovely warm person who makes everyone around her smile, we are lucky to have her now staying in the UK, helping her has brought out the best of us"



KAUSAR PERVEEN

Brushstrokes has always been our second home, and they have always been there for me and my children any time we needed support. Brushstrokes helped to extend our visa application as they have always done for us since, but for some reasons or another, the decision for our application was delayed for almost a year and my teenage sons weren't allowed to continue working or attending colleges etc, and this delay made us worried sick. During these challenging moments of uncertainty, I was almost losing hope, but Brushstrokes kept on continuing to reassure us that everything would okay. With further delay of a decision from the Home Office of our visa application, Brushstrokes had other ideas by making representations on our behalf to the local MP to chase the Home Office for the delay of our visa application, and within a week or so, our application was considered and we received our BRP cards, and what else can we say about Brushstrokes Community Project but thank them wholeheartedly for changing our lives for good.



ZAINAB BIBI

I have gone through a lot in my entire life here in the UK and I can't begin to quantify the problems that I have faced since I came here in Smethwick, but Brushstrokes Community Project helped me at the right moment during my hour of need. They assisted me with my visa Family application and my application was approved, and I can confidently say that both my daughter and I are now able to access public benefits and lead a meaningful dignified life, and I would like to thank Brushstrokes for making a difference in our lives.



FARID AZIZI

Farid recently arrived in Smethwick from Iran. He contacted us to find out how he could find peace and security. Chra our Early Action Advice Worker assisted him in accessing support. Following this he has now been granted refugee status.

Now as a black country resident not only has he given us a lovely cake, he now volunteers with us helping others. He said Chra pictured not only gave him hope but inspired him to get involved in the local community.

# Women's Group!



In our usual friendly and warm environment, our women's group had a coffee morning this week sharing a recipe for cupcakes along with sharing their migration journey.

Women comfortably shared their experience of migration and the impact on their overall social and mental well-being. The trauma and resilience that refugee women experience was discussed.

Having a reflective discussion, and sharing stories was the highlight of our women's group session, but we must not forget the delicious cupcakes the women baked and had with their coffee. Women's groups will continue to have more interesting sessions in the future.



## Service User Group Update - by Funky Ehinola



Brushstrokes Service User Group at Brushstrokes has recently welcomed new members to the group, which is great to see, as we are excited to work together to make a positive difference to Brushstrokes. The service user panel group is made up of people from Nigeria, Malawi, Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Namibia. We meet with the coordinators, Bryan and Chra, once a month, to discuss issues that affect us as asylum seekers and refugees. For example, we've recently talked a lot about the problems we've had with our housing provider, SERCO. We also discuss the challenges that people face accessing education and access to internet and data in their homes.

The members of the service user panel contribute to other aspects of Brushstrokes' life. Some are volunteers. I, for example, started as a student placement and I have continued to volunteer with Brushstrokes for the past five months. I like volunteering at Brushstrokes because it provides me the opportunity to work with people of different nationalities and because it helps me develop my self-confidence. I am currently working with Chra, and we go out on Outreach to visit service users in the community.

In addition, I work with the Café team and in the Resources department to provide food and clothing to members of the local community who are in need. Staff members and other volunteers are incredibly friendly and always willing to lend a helping hand. My children and I also participate in activities such as cycling classes and other activities that take place in Brushstrokes.

Other members of the Service User Panel, such as Nader, have been on recent interview panels, and the spokespeople of the group (Sarbaz and Esther) contribute to the Management Committee.

Our Service User Group's Bring and Share event will take place on the 21st December, when we celebrate Christmas, and will allow service users to bring food from their home country and share it with other members of the Brushstrokes community. Also, there will be displays of people's culture through music and dance at this event. We can't wait!

Our next plan is to hold a drop-in session where service users who are not members of the group can speak with us about issues that concern them.

# BRUSHSTROKES BIKE PROJECT



It has been a wheely busy month for the Brushspokes Bike Project. Learn to Ride classes continued, and the take up of both adults and children has been really great to see. Many participants didn't have any cycling experience whatsoever, and instructor, Dave Palmer, has guided them through to now being confident and competent cyclists. Many also turned up who had some cycling knowledge but were very shaky on two wheels, so the friendly atmosphere was conducive to get them pedalling confidently. We will be providing as many participants as we can with a bike and safety equipment to ensure that they carry on developing their newly acquired skills. One of the participants, said: 'I like to see people having fun on their bikes. I think everyone should try to learn here, and you should keep going until you succeed.' We ended the final session in typical Brushstrokes style with samosas and tea, and everyone had a chance to reflect on the new skills they'd acquired, but also the friendships that they had formed during the session.

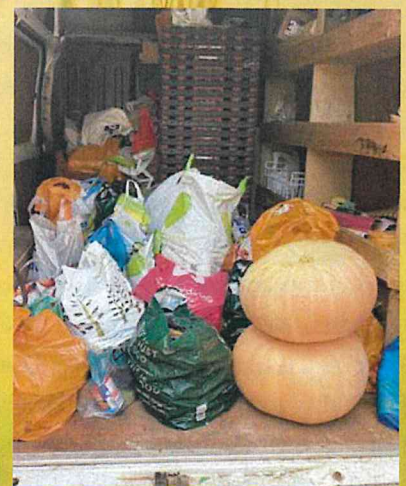
There was also no let-up in providing service users with good-quality second hand bikes. These will provide several benefits to our community and we're delighted that next month we'll be running a four-week course alongside Cycle Confident to provide bike maintenance skills. This is open to anyone, so get in touch with Bryan on 07827 258 680 if you're fancy learning new and valuable skills.

# HARVEST 2022

WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE WONDERFUL HARVEST DONATIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM LOCAL SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES THIS YEAR, MANY OF WHOM SUPPORT US EVERY YEAR. WITH INCREASED NUMBERS OF PEOPLE COMING EVERY WEEK FOR OUR FOOD PARCELS, EVERY ITEM THAT HAS BEEN RECEIVED MAKES A DIRECT DIFFERENCE TO THE MANY HOUSEHOLDS WE SERVE. THE CULMINATION OF ALL DONATIONS HAS KEPT US STOCKED UP FOR THE LAST 4 WEEKS. WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

**WE ACCEPT FOOD DONATIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, NOT JUST AT HARVEST.**

**ST JOHN BOSCO, WEST BROMWICH  
OUR LADY OF THE WAYSIDE, SHIRLEY  
ST PHILLIP'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, SMETHWICK  
ST MATTHEW'S COFE PRIMARY SCHOOL, CAPE HILL  
VICTORIA HOUSE DAY NURSERY, SMETHWICK  
A GROUP OF CHURCHES IN EDGBASTON - I WILL UPDATE**



## The women of 10 Downing Street

Brushstrokes in conjunction with black country touring celebrated the 30th year anniversary of a local strike that made national news, by screening the channel 4 documentary about the Burnsall strikers

It began in June 1992 when nineteen black workers most of them Asian women walked out demanding union recognition, equal pay and basic health and safety. The health and safety at the factory was so bad that the Health and Safety Executive upheld the workers' right to strike. The company at the time was making healthy profits, where the owners at the time were earning over £78,000 in 1990!

The local MP at the time Andrew Faulds raised the strike in parliament

"They were denied the use of the safety-protective clothing and equipment when it was needed. They worked with acids and phosphates, but gloves were not replaced when they gave no further protection. Goggles were not provided for workers who were exposed to fumes and splashing from acids. The necessary masks were not provided in the paint-spraying areas.

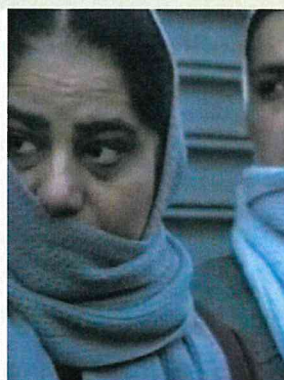
When the workers justifiably sought information about the chemicals and materials that they were working with, such information was, unbelievably, withheld. It is well known that chemicals used in electroplating are highly toxic.

The majority of the workers were Punjabi women. It was they who did most of the hard physical labour, yet they were paid £20 to £30 less per week than the men for a normal working week of 40 hours. In practice the work force frequently had to work imposed overtime of up to 56 hours. When the factory was operating seven days a week the workers were required to do 65 hours. The overtime hours, long and enforced, were paid not at any overtime or premium rate but at the same miserable rate as the normal 40 hours. Workers who declined to comply were given warnings and someone who did not turn up would be denied access to the toilets the following week..."

Sadly due to the union not including the local community for fear of "bad publicity" the women did not win their dispute, but what they did do is inspire others to stand up for justice and break the myth that migrant workers should keep quiet and accept their lot.

'We have all learnt a lot from this strike, I'm much stronger now.' Darshan Kaur strike leader

read more here <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/punjabi-poor-and-mad-as-hell-a-group-of-asian-women-took-on-their-bosses-they-lost-their-strike-but-won-a-human-rights-award-melanie-mcfadyean-reports-1466532.html>







## 'She wants wants to turn people against me' - Brummie migrants react to Home Secretary's migration 'dream'

Migrant-led organisation Migrant Voice said the new Home Secretary words will incite 'tension' and 'division'.

BY ANISAH VASTA  
10 OCTOBER 2022 AT 17:12 • 4 -MIN READ



Shantel Murray, 29, a NHS care worker from Yardley feels Braverman's policies are trying to 'turn people against' her.

# Making the headlines



Akbar Didar is now living in Birmingham after escaping the Taliban and works as a charity worker

Staff and service users spoke out against the new Home Secretary Suella Braverman who said her 'dream' was to see migrants transported to Rwanda.

Sandwell prides itself for having a rich history of migration. Where people from all over the world have made it their home.

Care worker Shantel Murray worked throughout the pandemic on the frontline and who is still struggling with immigration rules, felt Braverman's policies are turning 'people against' her. Shantal told BirminghamLive : "They encouraged people to clap for us during COVID-19 and while we risked our lives, now we are 'low skilled' and unwanted, how do you think that makes us feel?"

"I came here as a child and a commonwealth citizen, now the new home secretary wants to turn people against me," she said.

Akbar Didar who works at brushstrokes originally from Afghanistan told BirminghamLive : "My son recently obtained a first in his degree in engineering. We are so proud of him, if the home office minister has her way people like my son who are much needed in the UK would never be here.

"To add insult to the injury she now dreams about people like me to be flown to Rwanda" he added.

Brushstrokes has built itself on the ethos of welcoming the stranger, we will continue to do so and will challenge any concepts that do not.

# Asylum Guides



## BECOME AN ASYLUM GUIDES VOLUNTEER

### BECOME AN ASYLUM GUIDES VOLUNTEER

#### WHAT IS THE ROLE?

YOU'LL VOLUNTEER AS PART OF A TEAM OF ASYLUM GUIDES AND LEARN ABOUT VOLUNTEERING. ASYLUM GUIDE VOLUNTEERS PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF ENSURING ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE FULLY INFORMED AS THEY BEGIN THEIR ASYLUM JOURNEY IN THE UK.

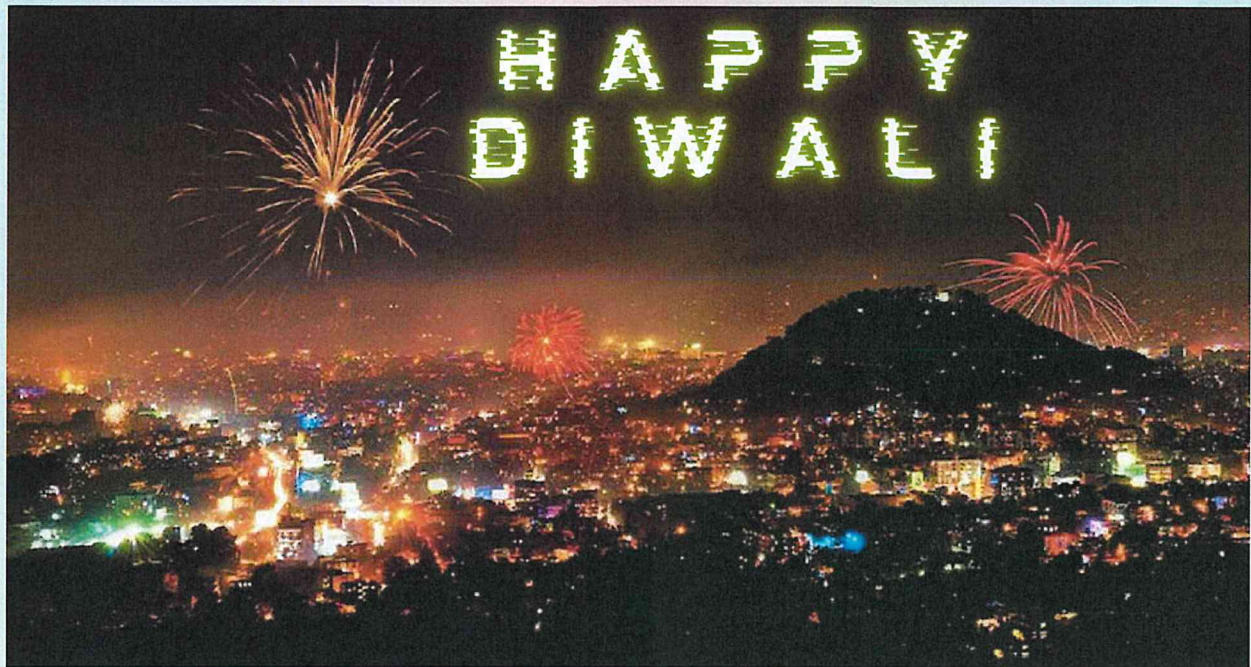
#### HOW DOES IT WORK?

WE MATCH UP ASYLUM GUIDE VOLUNTEERS WITH PEOPLE AND FAMILIES CLAIMING ASYLUM. YOU WILL MEET THEM AT KEY STAGES OF THE ASYLUM PROCESS AND OFFER GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION.

#### HOW DO I APPLY?

GO ONLINE AND LEARN MORE AT  
[WWW.BRUSHSTROKESSANDWELL.ORG.UK](http://WWW.BRUSHSTROKESSANDWELL.ORG.UK)  
OR CONTACT US AT [ABQA@BRUSHSTROKESSANDWELL.ORG.UK](mailto:ABQA@BRUSHSTROKESSANDWELL.ORG.UK)  
07570346848

October 24, 2022 Diwali is one of the biggest festivals in the Hindu, Sikh and Jain calendar. The festival originated in the Indian subcontinent and symbolises the spiritual “victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance”.



Happy Diwali Wishes. May this festival of joy brings more happiness in your life. Happy Diwali!  
From all the staff here at Brushstrokes Community Project. Enjoy the festive to the fullest!

**LEARN TO RIDE A BICYCLE AT BRUSHSTROKES**








**Brushstrokes Community Project**

**SESSIONS TAKING PLACE IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER**

**OPEN TO EVERYONE!**

**CONTACT BRYAN ON 07827 258 680 FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO REGISTER**

**Brushstrokes Community Project**

ARE YOU NEW TO THE UK? IF SO, COME TO OUR:

**INFORMATION SESSION**

**WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER**

**10AM - 12PM**



**INVITED CONTRIBUTORS:**

MIGRANT HELP • SERCO • EDUCATION & TRAINING - ENGLISH CLASSES, DIGITAL SKILLS & CODE YOUR FUTURE

NHS - HOSPITALS, GPs & DENTAL CLINICS, MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

FIRE SERVICE • POLICE

COMMUNITY CENTRES • CITIZENS ADVICE • FRIENDS & NEIGHBOURS

**ACCESSING BRUSHSTROKES' SUPPORT:**

RESOURCES - FOOD, CLOTHES, HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, BIKES, COMMUNITY CAFÉ, ADVICE - ASYLUM & IMMIGRATION, HOUSING, BENEFITS, EMPLOYMENT

VOLUNTEERING • SOCIAL ACTIVITIES • FAMILY SUPPORT



**Asylum Guides**

FURTHER INFO - BRYAN - 07827 258 680

BRUSHSTROKES COMMUNITY PROJECT, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ

**YES I WHEEL**

**Brushstrokes**  
Community Project

**Cycle maintenance course**  
**Brushstrokes Smethwick**  
Mondays 7<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> November  
4pm to 6pm

cycling for everyone

BIRMINGHAM 2022 West Midlands Cycle & Walk

CONTACT BRYAN ON 07927 258 680 FOR MORE INFORMATION  
CLASS DATES – 7<sup>TH</sup>, 14<sup>TH</sup>, 21<sup>ST</sup>, 28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER - 4-6PM

EVERYONE WELCOME  
THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER  
3-5pm

**Craft Session**  
Thurs 17 Nov at 3pm  
at Brushstrokes  
High St, Smethwick B66 3NJ

Drop in and take part in  
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre's  
latest Community Panto Project!

Join us for a fun, easy Craft Session  
and make your part of a dazzling display!

Beginners welcome!

Miss it,  
miss a lot!

LEARN PAPER CRAFT TECHNIQUES

LEARN PAPER CRAFT TECHNIQUES

CRAFT WORKSHOP  
DECORATION MAKING

Starting next Monday 4-6pm, Brushstrokes will be teaming up with the organisation, Cycle Confident to offer four cycle maintenance classes for our service users and staff. Through the Brushspokes Bike Project, we've encountered several people who have been forced to stop cycling due to issues that can be remedied with basic knowledge of cycle maintenance - repairing a puncture, checking correct tyre pressure, brakes that need tightening etc. For those with slightly more advanced bike maintenance skills, the mechanic, Gavin, will be able to tailor the course content accordingly.

GameZone Wednesdays from 5pm B663NJ

Broken 😞

FIXED!! 😊

If it goes round We will attempt to fix it  
Brushspokes we don't do lists. But what we do do is crisps (sometimes)

**Brushstrokes**  
Community Project

**BLACK COUNTRY TOURING**

**Film screening The Women of 10 Downing Street**  
Friday 11 November 6pm  
Brushstrokes Smethwick High Street B663NJ

This is the third film that we are showing in partnership with Black Country Touring as part of their programme to encourage the showing of films in community spaces. The inspirational film, The Women of 10 Downing Street, touches on many issues that are unfortunately still very much affecting working life in Smethwick, and the country as a whole.

**Brushstrokes**  
Community Project

**Immigration & Asylum**  
Drop In Advice  
Mondays 9.30 till 12.30  
Benson Hub Benson Road  
B18 5TD



**Contact us:**

**Brushstrokes Community Project**

253 High Street,

Smethwick,

B66 3NJ

Phone: 0121 565 2234

E-mail: [info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](mailto:info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk)

Website: [www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](http://www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk)

Brushstrokes receives support from:



