

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Services
March 2024 Report



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I am delighted to highlight in this report Solihull Council's progress towards meeting our **Equality Objectives for 2020 to 2024** in relation to our services to:

- Understand the changing nature of the borough and the impact these changes may have on the lives of people in the borough and the services we provide.
- Ensure that equality considerations are better built into and evidenced in the Council's business planning processes.
Promote inclusion and celebrate equality and diversity by engaging with local communities across the borough, Council employees and partners.

This report also sets out evidence of how we meet our obligations under the **Public Sector Equality Duty**.

Progress against Objective, 'Foster an accessible and inclusive working environment for our staff', is given in the Council's equality information on our website, which includes Gender Pay Gap information.

Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are at the core of what it means to live, work, study in or visit Solihull. EDI is at the heart of **The Council Plan** to ensure Solihull is a place **'where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all'**.

We operate on the basis that everyone should be treated fairly and with dignity. Our approach is to ensure that people and communities who face disadvantage or are vulnerable are well-supported. Promoting equity, being fair and celebrating diversity are central to our operations and day-to-day functions. All Council staff are responsible for implementing our EDI policy to ensure that everyone is valued and respected for who they are. We have a zero-tolerance policy on bullying, harassment and victimisation.

Going beyond the law

In July 2023, the Council made a formal decision to treat looked after children and those leaving our care, referred to as 'care experienced' as a protected characteristic in the same way that we give due regard to those groups covered under the Equality Act 2010 so that particular attention is taken towards our responsibilities as a corporate parent.

We are proud of going beyond the law by acknowledging our responsibility to consider vulnerabilities that often result in disadvantage and stigma that is also reflected in other Council strategies and plans.

We give attention to the impact of our decisions on carers, those with safeguarding needs, worklessness, homelessness, health inequalities and breaches of human rights.



Paul Johnson

Chief Executive of Solihull Council

Equality objective:

Understand the changing nature of the borough and the impact these changes may have on the lives of people in the borough and the services we provide

Solihull: Communities

Solihull lies at the heart of the West Midlands motorway network, has excellent public transport connections with the neighbouring Birmingham city conurbation and is linked to many overseas destinations through Birmingham International Airport. Solihull is at the heart of the new high-speed railway network, the HS2, which is expected to be a major gateway station for the West Midlands region. Other main neighbouring local authority areas include Warwick and Coventry.

The borough is home for 216,236 people across over 89,500 households. Solihull is recognised as one of the most prosperous towns in the West Midlands. Almost two-thirds of the borough are designated as green belt, including 1,500 acres of parks spread across the borough.

A diverse range of businesses offer 148,000 jobs in business services, transport and manufacturing, many at key economic assets such as Solihull town centre, the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Jaguar Land Rover and Birmingham Business Parks, as well as the Council and its partners.



Solihull is an affluent borough, characterised by above average levels of income and relatively limited levels of poverty and deprivation, demonstrated by:

- The median annual wage of Solihull residents in full-time employment is 11% higher than the England average and 18% higher than that for the West Midlands.
- 53% of the working population work in management and senior roles, professional occupations and association professional and technical occupations compared with just under 42% of residents in the West Midlands and 47% across England.
73% of Solihull households own their own home compared to 62% for England and 64% for the West Midlands. Over 39% of homes in Solihull are owned outright and without a mortgage compared with 34% in the West Midlands and 33% in England.
- 14% of households live in social housing and 13% live in privately rented homes, compared with 17% and 21% respectively across England.
- 7% of Solihull households are occupied by a lone parent family with dependent children, with the proportion rising to 16% in North Solihull.
- 13% of the Solihull working age population claim Universal Credit compared to 15% for England and 17% for the West Midlands. 95.1% of Solihull's residents report very good, good or fair health, compared with 94.9% residents in England and 94.3% in the West Midlands.
- 14% of Solihull children aged 0-15 years live in a low-income household compared to 20% for England and 27% for the West Midlands. The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows that Solihull is the least deprived local authority in the West Midlands with just 16% of the population living in one of the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods in England.

Overall profile of our residents:

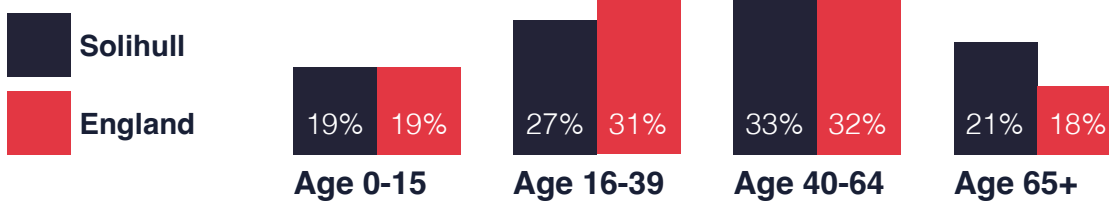
The results of the 2021 Census provide invaluable insights into the makeup of Solihull's residents. Overall statistics about Solihull's residents are presented [here](#). Information about Solihull's residents by protected characteristics are summarised as:

- In line with general population statistics for England, there are slightly more females (51.5%) compared with males (48.5%).
- Our population is slightly older than the England average. 21% of our residents are aged 65 years and over compared with 18% for England. 27% of the local population is aged 16-39 years compared with 31% in England. There is a marked difference in age structure within the borough, with the population of north Solihull being much younger than elsewhere in Solihull.
- 76% of the Solihull population have no long term physical or mental health conditions. Around 10% have long-term conditions that do not limit their day-to-day activities. More than 7% of people with disabilities say that their daily activities are limited a lot.
- Between 2011 and 2021, the number of people from different ethnic backgrounds increased by 16,000 people, rising from 12% of the population to 18%. This increase is proportionally bigger than those across England, the West Midlands and neighbouring metropolitan

boroughs. Population change in Solihull includes an increase of 10,300 people from an Asian/Asian British background living in our community partially offset by a reduction in the White population of 6,600 people. English is the main language of 96% of the Solihull population aged three years and over. Around 0.6% of residents cannot speak English well or at all.

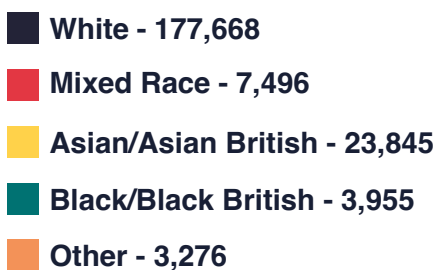
- Based on 92% of the local population choosing to provide information about their sexual orientation, over 90% describe their sexual orientation as heterosexual, 1% as Gay or Lesbian and 1% collectively as other categories, including Bisexual, Pansexual, Asexual, Queer and other.
- 53% of the Solihull population are Christians and 35% are Atheists. 11% of our residents are Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus.
- 10% of Solihull's population aged five years and over, around 20,000 people, provide at least some unpaid care for a family member or friend. Of these, 30% take care of someone for at least 50 hours per week.

Population 2021



ONS Census 2021

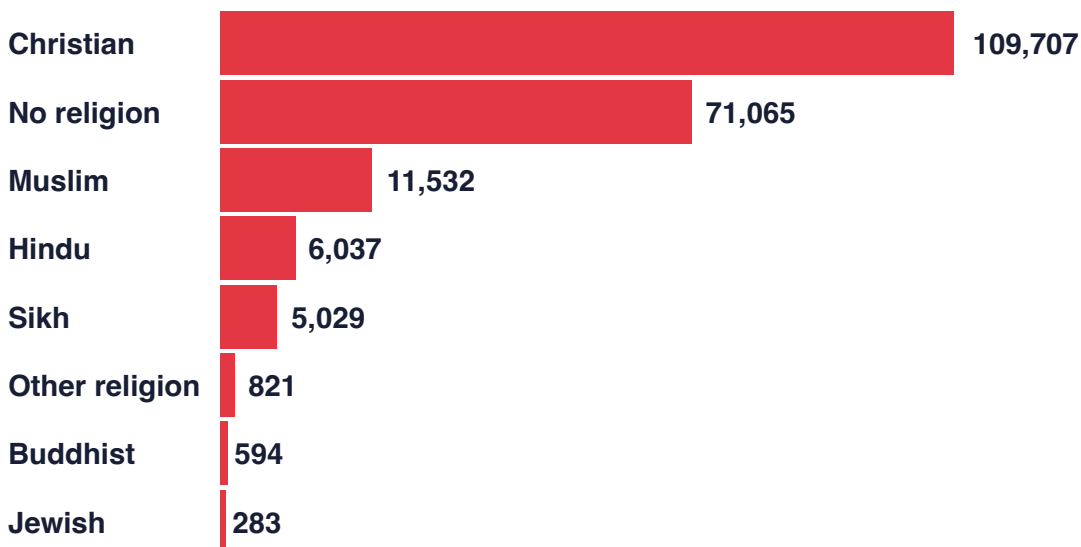
Solihull population by ethnicity 2021



ONS Census 2021

Religious faith in Solihull population

ONS Census 2021



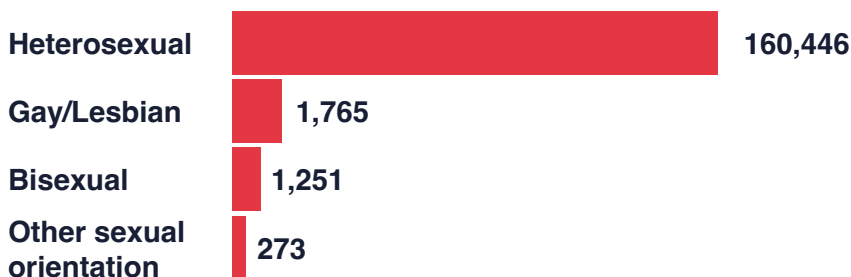
Health, disability and care in Solihull population

ONS Census 2021



Sexual orientation of Solihull population

ONS Census 2021



Impact of the changing profile of our residents

Overall, the borough's population will grow by around 20,000 by 2040 with significant growth in rural and semi-rural areas. Challenges will include how to enable people to work, interact with others and access services whilst also achieving the borough's target to be net zero carbon by 2041. We want the borough to be a tolerant, diverse place that celebrates our increasingly diverse, ageing and changing community. We recognise that our community has diverse needs and therefore we need to create opportunities for people, knowing that 'one size does not fit all'.

Insights from local and national data has helped us to develop high-level needs assessments which show that the key challenges include:

- **Rising demand on local services** due to increases in:
 - » The proportion of residents aged 65 years and over. This group is expected to be the fastest growing local group over the next 20 years with an increase of over 3,500 people aged 85 years and over.
 - » Adults aged 18+ who require social care support including mental health, housing and financial help.
 - » The number of children with special educational needs increased by 16% in the last five years and continuing to rise.
 - » The number of looked after children has risen from 412 in 2014 to 528 in 2022. This has significant implications for health and social care services.
 - » Health inequalities such as the proportion of babies born with low birth weight, low life expectancy for people living in deprived areas and lack of physical activity amongst 25% of adults.
 - » Levels of domestic abuse, especially those affecting children and the need for rehousing victims and their families.
- **The Cost of Living** circumstances that is likely to have a disproportionate impact on the population of north Solihull where deprivation levels are higher. Residents living in north Solihull are more likely to face poverty, unemployment and health issues. The youth claimant unemployment rate is higher in this area at 10% compared with 5.1% in England and 6.8% in the West Midlands.
- **Concerns about climate change** expressed by 75% of the borough's residents.

Our response to meet residents' needs

The **Council's Plan for 2023/24** reflects the above challenges and shows what we are doing to deliver the following over-arching priorities:

- Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull Council.
- Delivering good quality, responsive and dignified care and support for Solihull's adults when they need it.
- Taking action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.

In March 23 the Council launched a series of EDI commitments which included a Statement of Intent which is published on the Council's website and reinforces the Council's commitment to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and a number of internal documents that provides the framework in which we will work to on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We are currently developing an external EDI Strategy that will capture the work we are doing on EDI that will be consulted on and once finalised, will be published on the website.

A range of strategies have been refreshed or developed recently, including the following which are closely connected to EDI:

1. **Children's Services Communications Strategy** to ensure effective communication so that staff at every level understand the steps the Council is taking to improve services for children and the wider improvement picture.
2. **Dementia Strategy** that sets out how health and social care staff will work together to improve the lives of people with dementia and those who look

after them.

- 3. Early Help Strategy** which outlines Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership's approach to ensuring early help that can offer children and young people the support they need in a timely manner so that they can reach their full potential. The new strategy will enable a multi-agency approach to meet the threshold and guidance for offering Right Help at the Right Time and the Right Response both to children and their families and carers.
- 4. Inclusive Education Strategy** that has been developed in partnership with the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Partnership. It will enable us to remove potential barriers to education and learning, including those linked to protected characteristics, adverse childhood and adolescence experiences and special educational needs.
- 5. Public Health Funeral Policy** that provides guidance for service users and our staff to ensure a dignified, sensitive and flexible approach to deal with and support families with wide-ranging issues such as breaking news of death, registration processes and financial implications. In consultation with faith leaders, we have reviewed facilities at three cemeteries and two crematoriums to meet the needs of diverse faith groups and ethnically diverse communities. Changes include webcam video viewing of ceremonies for people who cannot personally attend a funeral, places for using appropriate religious symbols and artefacts and provision of improved information for diverse service users.
- 6. Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy** that recognises that sexual health and wellbeing impacts on and are affected by wider determinants of health and factors such as social, economic and environmental issues that affect and shape people's daily lives.
- 7. Solihull All Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy**, developed in partnership with Solihull Place Committee, the Safeguarding Adults Board, the Safeguarding Children Partnership, Safer Solihull and other partners. It will help to protect children, young people and adults from all types of exploitation, including modern slavery, human trafficking, sexual and criminal.
- 8. Solihull Economic Strategy** that is expected to deliver further and better economic growth in Solihull to ensure that all our communities can participate and benefit, achieve net-zero aspirations that will reduce health inequalities and create thriving places which become centres for our communities and support local people.
- 9. Suicide Prevention Strategy** that is closely aligned to other key areas of work, including approaches to health and wellbeing, safeguarding adults and our Mental Health Delivery Plan.
- 10. Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan** that reflects recent shifts in travel patterns and behaviours to ensure that we remain responsive to the needs of the borough now and in the future. The Transport Strategy is also aligned with the Cycling and Walking Strategy that is designed to improve the capability and confidence of our residents to cycle and walk more often.

Equality objective:

Promote inclusion and celebrate equality and diversity by engaging with local communities across the borough, Council employees and partners

Celebrating the diversity of our residents

Throughout 2023 we promoted inclusion and celebrated the rich diversity of our residents and employees. A sample of events we marked with our communities, partners and employees are outlined below. The Council make a digital calendar available to staff every year which sets out major cultural, religious and diversity-related events. Equalities Champions and EDI leads encourage Council teams to use the calendar to plan relevant activities. Where appropriate, our library service produces dedicated reading lists to mark events.

The following events are published on the Council's website:

January to March 2023

1. **Observing Holocaust Memorial Day.**
2. Arranging workshops for staff to explore and share their experiences of working with people from diverse faiths in collaboration with the Faith and Belief Forum, UK's leading interfaith organisation. The workshops covered opportunities and challenges of working with people from wide-ranging faiths and belief systems and explore how faith-based needs can be met through sensitive communication and understanding.
3. Connecting diverse faith communities through the **Solihull Faith Action Project** to develop a common agenda for greater collaboration across communities.
4. In partnership with the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System, we are **improving the opportunities** for people with learning disabilities and neurodiverse conditions and their carers to influence the vision for creating the healthiest places to live and work, drive equity in life chances and healthy outcomes for all
5. Holding the **Solihull Apprenticeship Show 2023** where over 1200 15 to 18 year olds and their parents and carers, were informed of apprenticeship opportunities available from wide-ranging sectors and employers who operate in Solihull. Companies who highlighted their offers include Jaguar Land Rover, Rolls-Royce, Taylor Wimpey, Royal Air Force and the West Midlands Police. Previous and current apprentices and staff from the Solihull College and University Centre shared their experiences and further education opportunities.
6. Marking the Dementia Action Week and launching the Birmingham and **Solihull Dementia Strategy** that sets out how health and social care professionals will work together to improve the lives of those affected by dementia.

7. Embracing the principles of equity by celebrating the International Women's Day and Women's History Month. The theme of 'End the Digital Divide' for women and girls was **marked** by showcasing the hit comedy tour 'Ladies of Laughter' and encouraging children to create Mother's Day portraits.

April to June 2023

8. Acknowledging the enormous contribution of over 1.5 million Sikh volunteers who fought alongside the British Army in World Wars 1 and 2 and honouring the 83,000 soldiers who gave their lives during the **conflicts**.
9. Remembering the vital role and the invaluable contribution of unpaid and paid carers and families who assist people with disabilities or are vulnerable. **Events** included the annual Carers Charity Walk and information sessions on the importance of caring for carers.
10. Marking the Learning Disability Week by inspiring businesses to support residents with further needs into work.
11. Welcoming newer communities to Solihull and recognising the positive contribution made by communities who have made Solihull their home or come to the borough to work, study and visit. During Refugee week for example, The **Together in Solihull project** set up a range of collaborative events to celebrate partnership working between the Council and other organisations to support newly arrived communities to the borough and for them to be participating fully into society. The programme included workshops at four schools in Solihull where children joined in dance, music and visual arts. Our communities and staff experienced Ukrainian folk music, Hong Kong opera, Bhangra dance, a Hong Kong photography exhibition and a collection of artworks including a Migration Blanket created by asylum seekers and refugees from Hong Kong. We also held an employment and skills session at the week's event where adults were given information about employment, skills and services provided by other organisations.
12. Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the opening of the Marie Curie Hospice that does incredible work to support people living with cancer, needing respite and end-of-life care at home or in a hospice, companion service and advice and information for those recently diagnosed with cancer.

July to September 2023

13. Arranging wide-ranging fun and physical **activities** for children aged four to 16 years and their families during school holidays through the HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme designed for children eligible for free school meals.
14. Firming up the decision to set up four **Family Hubs** across the borough to give the best start in life to children aged up to 19 years and 25 years for children with disabilities. The Family Hubs will enable parents and carers to get a range of services from one place, including health, social care, money and debt advice, well-being and social activities. Ten focus groups were attended by 68 adults and 30 children and young people to help shape our Family Hub offer.

15. Encouraging those considering fostering to have wide-ranging information to support their decision-making and improve their experience.
16. Signing up to the **Orange Button Scheme**, which is a way of identifying people that have undertaken suicide prevention training. The button is worn by people in Solihull and Birmingham who have undergone specialised suicide prevention training, and while they are not able to counsel people, they can provide comprehensive signposting to relevant services.
17. Opening a new school for children aged seven to 16 with autism, in partnership with the Forward Education Trust which supports schools designated for children with varying special educational needs across the West Midlands.



18. Marking the 12th Anniversary of the World Alzheimer's Month and arranging a staff learning session to focus on 'Never too early, never too late' campaign to consider prevention, risks and responses to support patients and their carers. Information was shared about facilities and support available for Solihull residents who are at risk or have been diagnosed with the condition.

19. Celebrating **Black History Month** and paying homage to Black women who have shaped history and inspired change. The month-long 'Windrush 75' exhibition, organised by the Solihull and Birmingham Caribbean Family History Group, also acknowledged the contribution of the Windrush generation and the wider Caribbean community to British society. The Black British Ballet performance at the Core Theatre was based on the experience of a Windrush family reciting the story of a young soldier in the second World War and his journey to the UK.



20. Holding the **Apprenticeship Show** to publicise work opportunities for young people. Sectors showcasing work opportunities included construction, technology, financial, hospitality and healthcare. Over 2,000 people interacted with representatives from Virgin Media, O2, Make UK, the Council and NHS who gave information about the benefits of working with them and potential pathways to their workplaces.
21. Raising awareness of **Diwali**, where the Festival of Lights, was celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs, and Bandi Chhorr Divas specifically celebrated by the Sikh community. The wide-ranging events across Solihull included making Rangoli patterns, Bhangra dancing, puppet making, community artworks, a lantern parade through Solihull town centre and a play at The Core Theatre.
22. Holding the annual '**16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**' campaign to raise awareness of different forms of domestic abuse. The theme to 'end violence against women now' was marked by the Council working with other local authorities to recognise that violence can happen to anyone regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, religion or disability.
23. Celebrating the **International Day for People with Disabilities** working with our partner, AccessAble in holding a drop-in session in Solihull town centre to share information about the variety of accessible venues in Solihull, including shops, restaurants and public buildings.

24. Making available health check equipment at our libraries for people to measure their blood pressure and Body Mass Index (BMI) to raise awareness of and prevent risks of conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.
25. Launching our Solihull Catering Services website to share information with parents and schools about the award-winning meals provided to children at 70 primary schools in Solihull and the surrounding areas.
26. Publishing our 'Here to Help' guide to enable people to prepare for winter 2023 through guidance and information for people to keep warm, stay safe and well, deal with finances and where to get more information and support.
27. Marking the Interfaith Week in partnership with the Solihull Faith Forum where people from 16 different religions and beliefs came together to support the 'Planting Our Future' campaign and planted flowers and seeds in a local area.
28. Contributing to our Net Zero Action Plan by planting 400 trees across Solihull during the 75th anniversary of National Tree Week and holding our annual Greener Schools Awards where primary school children showcased their positive contribution to the environment and civic matters, for example by litter picking, recycling pens and selling pre-owned uniforms.

Offering choices when accessing services and information

We offer customers choices about how they would like to contact us and access our services. We know that a large proportion of our customers deal with us digitally for non-urgent matters. We acknowledge that many people, especially those who are older, vulnerable or do not have easy access to digital technology, prefer face-to-face and telephone contact.

Customers can have home visits and office appointments with staff in Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

Face-to-face contact is via our walk-in Connect Centres and libraries that are fully wheelchair accessible. Arrangements are made for customers who need private interview facilities. Common enquiries include requests for general information, paying charges and obtaining Blue Badge parking permits.

We work with Age UK who run Community Advice Hubs at the Chelmsley Wood Library and Solihull Connect in the town centre where people aged 18 years and over can get advice and information from a wide range of community and voluntary organisations on benefits, debt management, disability, health and social care needs, energy efficiency and vulnerability.

We continue to improve the quality, extent of information and access to services via the Council website. Published information is written in plain English and unavoidable jargon is explained. The website includes the English Dictionary that instantly provides definitions of uncommon words. It contains links to other organisations who are commissioned by the Council to deliver specific services and connect people with other relevant organisations as well as other community, voluntary and faith communities. The range of information also includes hire of community halls, sports clubs, healthy living and supporting vulnerable people. We saw a 7% increase in the number of people using our website in the last year.

Our library service offers free training for people who wish to learn how to use digital technology for shopping, banking and video calling such as Skype and Facetime. This is likely to increase service access via our website.

The 'MySolihull' Facebook page provides an instance link to publicise and share important information. It is available to regular followers and casual users.

Our Employment and Skills Team have enhanced the **page on employment support under Local Offer** to cover all the schemes we have for residents with further needs. The page has been promoted via a SEND e-newsletter and social posts.

All communication and engagement plans are updated annually, and it is an expectation that consultation activity will have carefully considered the methods and media to be used to reach different groups.

Removing communication barriers

Translation and interpreting services for people who have communication barriers are freely available. Free lessons for learning English as a second language are provided via Solihull College and University Centre where people can improve their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Our library service offers self-guided learning through books and audio tools for people wanting to learn different languages.

The **ReadEasy Charity** offers help with reading skills for people who cannot write.

The Council's website is accessible and offers tools and software for readers to change font and text size to suit their needs. The Recite Me tool, featured on the homepage, offers an innovative suite of on-demand accessibility tools that make websites accessible and inclusive for a diverse range of people.

- Over the course of 2022/23 over 2000 visitors used the Recite Me software and viewed 5614 pages.
- 60% of users use the screen software through which written information is read aloud for the user.
- 6% of users adjusted the text size or screen colours. 34% of users accessed the language translation facility through which readers can access each page in their preferred language.

Our library service actively offers a wide range of printed, spoken and digital material for borrowers. Dedicated reading lists are developed to mark special events. Information and reading materials can also be provided in alternative languages and large print on request. Books and audio information for the recently arrived Ukrainian communities has been sourced to ensure inclusivity. Events held at the Core Library include workshops, school visits and family days. Sessions are held for hearing impaired children and their families to join our 'Rhyme Times'. Job seekers can use IT facilities provided in our libraries for up to three hours in a single session.

Ensuring that every child and young person matters equally

Every child and young person matters equally is the premise of our **Additional Needs Strategy** for those with a special educational need, disability and/or additional need. This was co-produced with children and young people looking at the things that matter to them.

Celebrating diversity by numbers

Through **Our Voices Heard!** campaign we listened to the voices of over 450 children and young people with special educational needs, disabilities and/or additional need. 133 members and 12 ambassadors helped to get the opinions of service users and their carers to help shape and improve services. Whilst it was pleasing to get feedback from children, young people and their families who reported improved experiences, we continue to work with internal teams and external partners to ensure that children and young people get the right support, in the right place and at the right time. For the year ending March 2023, 469 safeguarding concerns were responded to by Adult Social Care, with 336 incidents requiring a safeguarding enquiry.

Improving services for children, young adults and their families and carers

As part of our Solihull Carers' Strategy, we have improved the way we support over 28,000 Solihull residents who deliver care. We recognise the enormous role carers play in our communities. Our **Carers' Strategy** is designed to consider the needs of diverse carers.

There are over 28,000 carers in Solihull, equating to 12% of the total population. In addition:

- 58% are female and 42% are male
- 63% have a disability or long-term condition, with 6% of carers describing their health is either 'bad' or 'very bad'.
- Fewer people from ethnic minorities report themselves as carers (8%) than the general population of Solihull (12%), however this could be due to people under-reporting their caring role and is something we need to understand further.
- A disproportionate number of people providing 50 hours or more of care per week live in the most deprived areas of Solihull. In 2016, 8,400 carers were known to be in full time employment and 4,700 in part time employment in Solihull.

Our improved offer includes appointing a lead officer to work closely with carers to assess and arrange support such as respite care. Free holiday club places are offered to young carers and a 24/7 online support service is available via Mobilise along with access to health and well-being services.

Supporting people with dementia and their carers

Our recently developed Dementia Strategy will support joint working between health and social care professionals. The strategic priorities were shaped by service users and carers and those who work to support them. The focus of the strategy is to prevent dementia, ensure early intervention and support to ensure timely diagnosis coupled with pre and post diagnosis help and improving the quality of personalised care throughout the rest of a patient's life. Work currently underway includes developing information for service

users and carers, piloting of the Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activities (RITA) system that has shown promising results and supporting people to live in their homes safely and as independently as possible. The Memory Assessment Service is available face to face and digitally. It is especially positive that The Alzheimer's Society has seconded a Dementia Advisor to work with the North Solihull Primary Care Network to help with service delivery.

Improving access to public places for people with disabilities

We continue to work with AccessAble who assess the suitability of facilities and buildings for people with disabilities when they visit the town centre in Solihull. Visitors can check a variety of places on the AccessAble website before visiting venues such as shops and restaurants to ensure that their access needs will be met. People can also check other venues for accessibility and facilities suitable for families at health centres, GP surgeries and Birmingham International Airport. AccessAble reported a 30% increase, from 23,999 to 30,000 website visitors in 2023. The most common venues checked for accessibility in Solihull include the Robin Hood and Woodlands Cemetery and Crematorium, Tudor Grange Leisure Centre, Tudor Grange Park and Solihull Connect at the Core Library.



AccessAble

Click for Accessibility Information

All libraries across Solihull have been assessed for physical access for people with disabilities. Useful information for visitors is available, such as ramps, number of steps at the venue, height of reception counters, the level of lighting, nearest car parking facilities, bus routes and nearest bus stops. Customers with disabilities who visit our flagship Touchwood Shopping Centre can use the Shopmobility Service available at the shopping centre. Equipment such as mobility scooters and power or manual wheelchairs can be hired by people aged 16 years and over.

Encouraging employers to be Disability Confident

Supporting residents into employment is one of the Council's key priorities. The Council held its first Disability Confident event in Solihull in March 2023 at Cranmore Park to drive inclusive recruitment among local businesses. At the event, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) colleagues shared an overview of the Disability Confident scheme, which supports businesses to recruit candidates who they may not have considered through traditional recruitment routes. Businesses with an inclusive workforce also shared their experiences of the benefits of recruiting people with additional needs.

One of them was the Arden Hotel & Leisure Club. They have recruited several residents with learning disabilities with our support and the event enabled them to connect with like-minded local employers. The hotel manager, Roy Nash, shared his thoughts on recruiting inclusively and the event, *"The beauty of the hospitality industry is that you don't need a qualification to succeed. You only need to be passionate for your work and a good team player. It has been amazing for us as a business to literally change someone's life simply by inviting them to join our team. The event has enriched my network. It has also inspired us to join the Disability Confident scheme and be part of the force in driving workplace inclusion."*



Deputy Leader, Councillor Karen Grinsell and Roy Nash, Manager of the Arden Hotel & Leisure Club

Welcoming new communities

We worked with national and local organisations to provide immediate support for people being repatriated from Afghanistan to enable a smooth journey for them to settle to other parts of the UK. We are proud of the local communities that came together and generously provided essential and everyday items as well as practical support to refugees and newly arrived communities.

Our residents who are Hong Kong British National Overseas (BNO) status holders are settling in well. Information on our website provides wide-ranging information through the West Midlands Welcome Hub, such as accessing public and health services, employment and starting new businesses, and English language support. A newly established culturally sensitive hatchery has 45 members, including those from Hong Kong and Ukraine.

Blossomfield Rose Care Home offered young Hong Kong resident, Sally, the opportunity to volunteer with them, which she has done for over eight months. She teaches the residents Origami during craft sessions and also works in the café.

Sally said: *'Thank you to Kerrie Grandison (community development worker). I appreciate her helping me to volunteer at Blossomfield Rose Care Home, where I can help those in need and contribute to the community.'*

Another Hong Kong resident, Emily, wanted to volunteer and support others with reading. She was successful in her application, completed the challenge and received her certificate for her services to support others and volunteering.



Emily said: *“I am so glad to have taken part in this reading programme. Through the encouragement and support from Kerrie Grandison (Solihull Council) I successfully finished this volunteering task for my community!*

I worked for a library at a secondary school in Hong Kong so this was a great opportunity for me to integrate and use my transferrable skills to support customers at Dickens Heath Library.”

The Homes for Ukraine scheme allowed individuals, charities, community groups and businesses across the UK to offer a room or home to Ukrainians escaping the war, regardless of whether they have ties to the country. Our **Homes for Ukraine factsheet** provides information on eligibility, financial considerations, safeguarding and housing checks and the matching process.

Monthly Portuguese language story time sessions at the Core Library support the Portuguese/Brazilian communities in maintaining their language, cultural identity and sense of community. The first session in November attracted 18 people.

Supporting the community, faith and voluntary sector

We recognise the invaluable part that volunteers play in making Solihull the place it is and supporting our communities. Our own community development team work closely with third sector organisations to help sustain volunteers and the organisations. The Solihull Voluntary Sector Resilience Fund of over £50,000 is designed to help sustain organisations to stay open and respond to the cost-of-living issues faced by people, especially during the winter months. Grants of up to £5,000 can be awarded for specific projects. Organisations can get information and advice on how to support volunteers from Warwickshire and Solihull Community and Voluntary Action.

Using community leadership to promote visitor tourism

The Council's vision to promote Solihull as an inclusive place to live, work, study or visit was developed with the local community and the Culture Tourism Group that promoted wide-ranging initiatives such as enabling the Hong Kong community free stalls at local events. Christmas markets where European and other food, gifts, clothes and other merchandise attracts people to buy from small traders from diverse groups.

Making homes more energy efficient

We work with the Midlands Net Zero Hub which has received £138.5m to provide energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating to homes occupied by low-income households. Work is underway to progress this initiative.

The Council is also working with the West Midlands Combined Authority to retrofit 300 homes in Solihull and Coventry, a grant of £2.86m for this has been secured from the Sustainable Warmth Competition.

Working with external partners

The Council is a key partner for three public body partnerships in the West Midlands which together are pursuing regional agendas that will result in improving race and other areas of equality, diversity and inclusion in service provision, communities and roles as employers.

We are guided by the partnerships pledges and opportunities and where possible and appropriate, actions will be incorporated into the Council's EDI Strategy that is currently under development.

The three partnerships are:

- **The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Race Equality Taskforce**
Launched in 2022, the taskforce was created by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board to take action that will improve equality of opportunity for all of our communities. The taskforce sets out that race, ethnicity and heritage should never be obstacles to having a fair start in life or the opportunity to reach your full potential and flourish. The strategy sets out the steps the taskforce will take to 2027 to help make that vision a reality and is set around a number of 'priorities for action.' These are the key changes that we want to enable, influence and mobilise to help tackle race inequality across the region.
- **The Birmingham and Solihull (BSol) ICB/ICS Race and Health Pledges**
The Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (the ICB) was established on 1st July 2022, and forms part of the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System (the ICS). The ICS is a collaboration of all health and social care organisations for the area that includes the NHS, Birmingham City Council and Solihull Council.

The ICB has been established as the organisation responsible for NHS function and budgets within the ICS.

Together, Birmingham and Solihull ICS have a workforce of over 60,000 and a population of circa 1.3 million, with the health and social care challenges faced by different neighbourhoods and communities across our localities varying dramatically.

17 pledges have been made by NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) to improve health and race equality in health and social care in Birmingham and Solihull. The pledges, include a commitment to improve the diversity of the ICB supporting Birmingham to become the first anti-racist city in the UK and a commitment to a ten-year race equality delivery plan for the health sector with annual targets over the next decade.

- **The BLACHIR (Birmingham and Lewisham African Caribbean Health inequalities Review)**

The commitment to the BLACHIR review is one of the BSol ICB Pledges. The review is the first step in a longer journey of transformation and resolution. It shines a light on the unfairness of Black African and Black Caribbean citizens lives every day which damages their health and wellbeing. The review sets out clear opportunities for action driven by evidence.

Supporting rough sleepers and preventing homelessness

Change into Action is a partnership initiative with the Mayor of West Midlands and the West Midlands Combined Authority aimed at eliminating homelessness across the region. Grants of up to £3,000 are available to organisations working with rough sleepers and those at risk of becoming homeless. Two local organisations have received grants under this programme to reach out to homeless people.



Although the incidence of rough sleeping is relatively uncommon in Solihull, with between two and six people sleeping rough over the last three years, we ensure that we work with individuals in these circumstances to find suitable accommodation, have food and essential provisions, access medical treatment and other health and wellbeing services and are helped towards settled living. Since January 2022, we have supported 14 people who were rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping into secure accommodation and prevented or relieved from homelessness for 76% of young people without dependents.

Supporting families with young children during school holidays

Our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, funded via the Department of Education, enables children from low-income families to experience enriching activities and healthy meals. The project supports children to eat more healthily, be more active and be with other children so that they are safe and not isolated.



Keeping people safe

The **Solihull All Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy** outlines the partnership approach we are taking in the borough to prevent exploitation; identify and protect those at risk of exploitation and strengthen resilience of victims and communities. Strategic leadership for adult safety is overseen by the Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB). The SSAB aims to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults from abuse and exploitation and to enable individuals to maintain control over their lives and make informed choices.

The Solihull Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB) provides the strategic governance by strengthening and coordinating the local response to domestic abuse. Our focus is to identify those at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse and put in place long-term support and services to support victims. In 2022/23, 4782 incidents were reported to the Police, of which 449 were identified as high risk. 1104 victims were provided with specialist community or accommodation-based support and 68 people were granted homelessness priority need. The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner fund Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) posts for the West Midlands and covers support to LGBTQ+ victims of domestic abuse and enforced marriage so that victims can discuss issues in a safe and supportive environment for crisis intervention, advocacy, safety planning, emotional support and practical guidance. We work with victims of other crimes such as forced marriage, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and stalking. Reducing and dealing with race and hate crime remains a key priority.

For the year ending March 2023, 469 safeguarding concerns were responded to by Adult Social Care, with 336 incidents requiring a safeguarding enquiry.

Reducing alcohol and drug dependency

SIAS (Solihull Integrated Addiction Services) aims to provide a high-quality, person-centred prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery service addressing the needs of adults, young people, families and organisations affected by problematic gambling or drug and alcohol misuse in Solihull. It is commissioned by the Council to work closely with a range of organisations to ensure individuals in Solihull who struggle with alcohol and drug use get the support they need.

In 2023, SIAS has continued to support approximately 1,140 adults reduce the harms of substance misuse, in addition to around 120 young people and 90 children effected by familial substance use and 100 family members.

Tackling health inequalities

The Health and Wellbeing Board contributes to Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS) priorities, alongside developing Solihull's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The health and social care system continues to make improvements to best meet local needs and improve outcomes taking these considerations into account. Current work underway is to consider learning from the Birmingham and Lewisham African & Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR) which gives insights into health inequalities experienced by Black African and Caribbean communities during the time of the COVID 19 outbreak. We are working with the ICS to understand, address and reduce health inequalities for minority ethnic groups.

As part of our community Winter Wellbeing Event 2023, 53 wellbeing sessions were delivered between 12 presenters. The event attracted 719 attendees, increasing from 476 in 2022.

Equality objective:

Ensure that equality considerations are better built into and evidenced in the Council's business processes

Effective use of information and insights

We are improving our internal arrangements to improve the way we analyse information and share it to help improve services and identify gaps in service provision and delivery arrangements. This is being done via the Solihull Insight and Intelligence Group (SIIG). Led by senior staff, SIIG includes members from the Council's diverse teams, partners from the Integrated Care Board and a Police Partnership analyst. SIIG has produced key documents, including The Story of Solihull that provides analysis of Solihull's population, strengths and future challenges. Topic based needs assessments have been completed for special educational needs, substance misuse and homelessness.

Equality in decision-making and Fair Treatment Assessments

Formal reports presented to elected members, include a section in equality implications for report authors to complete. This helps to ensure that decision makers can give due consideration to equality as part of their deliberations.

The process of assessing the impact of our key policies, strategies and processes is internally known as Fair Treatment Assessments (FTAs). This is because we consider people's vulnerability and circumstances beyond the protection characteristics covered by legislation.

We refreshed our approach to FTAs to ensure that managers have the right guidance, information and tools to enable a consistent approach to the methodology and record-keeping. Each directorate is responsible for firstly assessing the need for FTAs, conducting them and delivering agreed actions where there are negative impacts.

FTAs have been completed on wide-ranging areas, including:

1. All Age Exploitation Strategy
2. Appointee and deputyship services relating to the Care Act and the Mental Capacity Act
3. Care at home commissioned services
4. Care at home – hospital discharge and re-admission avoidance
5. Extra care housing commissioned services
6. Hospital services
7. Ways of working arrangements for staff
8. Leisure services and Solihull Active programmes
9. Regeneration of Chelmsley Wood
10. Smoking cessation
11. Solihull Connected services
12. Specialist employment support commissioned services

The Economy and Infrastructure Directorate is planning to have service-wide FTAs in place by March 2025. The FTA process is a key mechanism to build available statistics and insights and reflect expected changes in demographics over time. The directorate is piloting a self-assessment approach to identify areas of strengths and good practice. The initiative is expected to help embed the FTA as a routine aspect of service planning and delivery.

Project approval processes

Prior to procuring new or recommissioning major contracts, a project approval document is completed by the relevant service team. The process encourages the relevant team to work with the Corporate Procurement Team to consider reasons for the spend, budget implications, procurement options and impact on wide-ranging aspects such as social value and equalities. The Corporate Equalities Team participates in the process to ensure fairness and inclusion.

The pre-procurement process considers how the economic, social and environmental well-being of the borough may be improved through procuring services from external parties.

Tender processes

The Corporate Procurement Team coordinates all aspects of work that is procured via competitive tendering processes. Tender documents for completion by tenderers include a range of questions about the suppliers' equality and diversity policies, their assurance processes for ensuring fairness and inclusion by sub-contractors and their overall record on equalities. The Corporate Equalities Team assess information supplied by tenderers and gives advice to the Procurement Team.

Delivering social value through procurement

Our Social Value Policy was revised in October 2023 to ensure that our procurement process considers how the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the borough may be improved through services procured from third parties. We measure and evaluate the social value created on our contracts using the National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) Framework that cover the following:

- Promoting local skills and employment (Jobs)
- Supporting growth of responsible regional business (Business)
- Creating healthier, safer and more resilient communities (Social)
- Protecting and improving our environment (Environment)
- Promoting social innovation (Innovation)

Championing EDI across the Council

All of the Corporate Leadership Team champion EDI. All directorates have a designated EDI lead who are mainly heads of service with a voluntary leadership role in championing EDI within their respective directorates. On behalf of the directorates, the EDI Leads monitor progress against the directorate EDI actions and report back to the Directorate Leadership Team. The majority of directorates have set up either an EDI Champions Group or an EDI Forum.

The EDI Champions Group meet regularly to oversee equality activities for their workstreams, share relevant information and help to better connect strategies with operational practices and service delivery. Directorate EDI leads work closely with key managers within their directorate and oversee the coordination of relevant tasks.

Priorities for the future

Having published our **Statement of Intent**, and produced an internal EDI Roadmap and **EDI Workforce Strategy**, we are now developing an external Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to inform the public on the high level EDI work the Council will focus on that will take us into 2026 and beyond.

Local partnership working with the community, faith and the voluntary sector will continue to contribute to our successes and deal with our challenges ahead. Part of this will include a revised Faith Covenant for the borough.

Partnership working will continue to be a theme in our future plans to develop regional and local responses to health inequalities and other common concerns such as accessibility to services, a greater understanding of the diverse communities we serve and their needs.

Solihull Council Plan 2020-25

Updated June 2023



Children are central to our work as a Council

A Strong Economy

- People, business and the environment benefit from UKC and HS2, including increased access to good work
- More environmentally sustainable affordable and social housing is built
- Safe, welcoming town and local centres where businesses can thrive
- More visitors to the borough
- The local economy is more resilient to economic shocks
- Improve transport across the borough

Actioning our Climate Change Declaration

- Community, environment and business benefiting from actions on climate change and more resilient to its impacts
- The council is net zero carbon by 2030
- The borough is net zero carbon by 2041
- An enhanced, well connected natural environment
- More people using public transport, walking and cycling
- Air quality has improved by 2025

People and Communities

- Improvements in early childhood development and school readiness, particularly in disadvantaged communities
- Effective early help prevents issues from escalating
- Children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded
- The Council is a good corporate parent to children in care and care experienced young people
- Improvements in skills and access to good work
- Connected, resourceful communities where people find solutions to local issues

Supporting residents with cost of living pressures through coordinated and accessible information, advice and help

Driving inclusive growth through the Council's roles as employer, procurer, service provider and system influencer

Strong Foundations:
 Promote employee wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion | Enabling communities to thrive | Strong effective regional and local partnerships
 Sound finance and management of assets | Digital Empowerment | Analysis and Insight