

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Employees
March 2024 Report



- 3 Introduction from Paul Johnson,
Chief Executive**
- 4 Public Sector Equality Duty**
- 5 Demonstrating commitment to EDI
from Leadership**
- 6 Embedding EDI in workforce policies**
- 7 Create, promote and sustain a culture of
fairness, inclusion and equity**
- 13 Hearing the voices of diverse employees**
- 16 Attracting and retaining diverse talent**
- 19 Workforce diversity data**
- 23 Employee Relations Data**
- 25 Priorities for 2024/25**

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This report highlights examples of Solihull Council's progress towards meeting our workforce equality objectives for 2020 to 2024 to 'Foster an accessible and inclusive working environment for our staff'.

Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

EDI is high on the Council's work agenda and a core business principle for the Council's workforce in recognising and valuing the diverse make-up of employees and making the workplace accessible and inclusive. We have made positive steps by involving and sharing with our workforce, the Council's key work programme on EDI including the Council's role as a large employer in the borough. We also work with organisations such as the Birmingham & Solihull (BSol) Integrated Care Board (ICB), of which the Council is a member, focusing on best practice on workforce inclusion and belonging, across a combined total of 80,000 staff.

From the Census information of 2021, we continue to see a more diverse community in the borough we serve. Being inclusive, welcoming and valuing differences encourages active participation from all and supports the Council in providing fair and inclusive services. To support this principle, we have published a **Statement of Intent**, which applies equally to our workforce as well as any potential job applicants, in how we will treat people with dignity and respect.

I recognise that EDI is important to organisational and team performance. Greater understanding, respect and value for the benefits that 'difference' can bring are becoming more and more relevant for organisations as a result of an increasingly diverse customer base and employees. In March 2024, we will be conducting an Employee Survey that will help inform the Council on its development of a People Strategy. The People Strategy will enable cultural changes for engaging and developing employees across the Council, while ensuring behaviours, values and standards are fully embedded. I look forward to the outcomes of the survey to bring about further understanding about our workforce and future actions we will need to take to advance EDI in the Council's EDI Workforce Strategy.



Paul Johnson

Chief Executive of Solihull Council

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful and provides the legal framework that protects people from discrimination based on a number of characteristics. These are referred to as 'protected characteristics' and are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Public bodies also must take account of specific guidance on equality considerations in employment.

Public authorities, including local councils, have a general duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation**
- **Advance equality of opportunity**
- **Foster good relations between communities**

Specific duties, 'due regard' and equality information

In order to meet the requirement of the 'general duty', the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to publish specific **equality information**:

- **Annually publish equalities information on Council services and employees in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty**
- Publish one or more equality objective(s) at least every four years
- Publish Gender Pay Gap (GPG) information

The GPG information is covered in a separate report which is published on the **Council's website**.

This report provides examples of how we have delivered against the Public Sector Equality Duty and the ongoing EDI Workforce Strategy. It also shows how we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Separate reports on equality, diversity and inclusion in our services are available **here**. They show what we have done to deliver our equality objectives 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.

Demonstrating commitment to EDI from leadership

Council Directors champion EDI in several ways, including ensuring that their directorate deliver against corporate and directorate EDI plans. EDI is also a regular item on directorate leadership agendas to share and monitor progress, provide challenge and discuss fresh ideas.

During 2022/23 we started an overall review of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work. The review resulted in a dedicated EDI Workforce Strategy that sets out how we will fully integrate and build on embedding fairness, diversity and inclusion in our working practices.

The strategy was produced in consultation with employees. It provides a clear framework that will deliver our overall ambition to create a transformed, modern and reflective organisation where all employees, including those we attract from outside and those we develop within Solihull Council, feel proud to be part of an inclusive and diverse organisation.

The EDI Workforce Strategy sets out the following priorities:

- Demonstrate commitment to EDI from leadership
- Create, promote and sustain a culture of fairness, inclusion and equity
- Deliver equality, diversity, equity and inclusion through employee engagement
- Attract and retain diverse talent
- Training and career development
- Assess and publish outcomes on workforce diversity
- Procurement and commissioning

The EDI Workforce Strategy emphasises the important role the Council has on workplace diversity and is focused on what EDI means in the workplace in areas such as appreciating the values of a diverse workforce, equality of opportunity, fairness and respect, recruitment and retention and career progression. Directorate EDI action plans complement the Council's corporate ambitions to ensure these priorities are also captured and delivered across the entire functions of the Council.

Embedding EDI in workforce policies

A main priority for the Council is to reduce inequalities in employee experiences and embrace a diverse workforce. Our aim is for staff to feel valued and respected regardless of who they are and what background they come from. Employees joined a webinar presenting the results of how the population of the borough is changing through a 'Lunch & Learn' session. Utilising data from the 2021 Census, the session looked at headlines and key trends for Solihull and what this means for the borough, for example, we have an ageing and increasingly diverse population. The session also looked at how staff could explore the census findings in more detail using online tools. Directorate EDI champions considered the demographic changes to help contribute to team plans for 2024/25.

Key HR policies are routinely reviewed to ensure they meet changes in legislation, national guidance and reflect good practice. Reviews are 'equality checked' and, where appropriate, we conduct Fair Treatment Assessments (FTAs). Our FTA principles are to 'go beyond the law' so that the assessment process covers the impact on people who share protected characteristics but also other factors such as employees who have care and family responsibilities and their health and wellbeing.

The following policies were reviewed with key stakeholders to ensure they incorporated hybrid and agile working and strengthened our commitment to employee flexibility at work and their health and wellbeing:

Capability, disciplinary; fixed term contracts; Carers Policy; drugs, alcohol and substance abuse; Resolution Policy; no Smoking; leave of absence; management of change; flexible retirement; travel, subsistence and expenses; secondment; acting Up and honorarium payments; Code of Employee Conduct; probation, social media; domestic abuse; maternity, paternity, adoption and flexible working.

New guidance documents were also created including:

- Pregnancy loss guidance
- Foster carers guidance
- Career break guidance
- Disability and reasonable adjustments

Examples of FTAs completed in 2023 include:

1. Hybrid/smarter working
2. Maternity Policy
3. Career break guidance
4. Domestic abuse faced by staff
5. Adoption Scheme
6. Paternity Leave Policy
7. Travel and Personal Expenses Policy

Create, promote and sustain a culture of fairness, equality and inclusion

The Council aims to foster a culture where individual identities, backgrounds and experiences of staff are recognised and valued. Raising the awareness of national EDI events and religious observances is an excellent way of understanding the diversity of our workforce and how we make people feel valued and recognised. In addition to the work we are doing internally, we have worked with partners such as the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System (BSol ICS) and other external organisations to continually review the Council's approach to workforce diversity. All Council employees have access to a digital calendar of religious, cultural and international festivals through their Outlook diaries. This enables automatic reminders to pop-up when staff open their emails and calendar. The calendar helps teams to plan ahead events and advertise them internally to staff.

Below are just a few examples of events that we marked in 2023 through raising awareness, communications and events. A more detailed list can be found in our **Fairness, Inclusion and Equality About your Services Report 2024**.

- Arranged 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 explored how faith-based needs can be met through sensitive communications and understanding.
- Shared with employees information about supporting colleagues observing **Ramadan** and may be fasting, such as working more flexibly and being considerate about when best to arrange meetings and informing Muslim colleagues that they can access the Multifaith Room in the Council House and at Touchwood Shopping Centre for prayer or contemplation.
- Solihull Council has joined with other local authorities in the West Midlands to raise awareness of the **Global 16 Days Campaign** highlighting the different forms that abuse can take and that it can happen to anyone regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or disability. This campaign also encourages perpetrators to think about their behaviour and importantly to remember those who have lost their lives to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

- Solihull Library displayed a wide collection of LGBTQ+ books and information; a history of **Pride Month** was shared on employee communication channels and the Pride flag was displayed at the Council House at the beginning of the month.
- The Solihull and Birmingham Caribbean History Group meet regularly at the Core Library in Solihull and have made it their mission to record stories of those who travelled to the UK so that future generations can learn from their experiences. There were also several events being held across the West Midlands to mark **Black History Month** and **National Windrush Day** including a thanksgiving and celebration service held at the New Testament Church of God
- Thursday 21 September marked the 12th anniversary of **World Alzheimer's Day**, the international campaign to raise awareness and challenge stigma. Over 45 staff joined a lunch-time session hosted by the Alzheimer's Society. The focus of this year's campaign, 'Never too early, never too late', centred on risk factors and risk reduction, aiming to emphasise their crucial role in delaying and potentially preventing the onset of dementia.

Other events marked include:

Religion and Belief

- Eid al-Fitr
- Easter
- Vaisakhi
- Diwali and Bandi Chhor
- Anniversary of the Crowning of Haile Selassie
- Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji
- Hanukkah

LGBTQ+

- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHoBiT)

Age

- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Ethnicity and culture and newly arrived communities

- Refugee Week
- Southeast Asian Heritage Month

Disability

- Dementia Awareness
- International Day for Persons with Disabilities

Equality and diversity training

Our on-line training platform, Learning Pool, offers extensive mandatory and other training to new and existing colleagues. Staff can learn at their own pace and can refresh their learning easily. Courses include an introduction to equality and diversity, unconscious bias, Fair Treatment Assessments and dedicated training for managers on areas such as recruitment and selection and performance management. During 2023, individual e-learning and group training courses were covered that included mandatory training on Equality and Diversity, and other courses delivered such as Unconscious Bias and Marginalisation, Autism, Mental Health, Dementia, LGBTQ+, Trans Awareness and Domestic Abuse.

We also tailor our EDI Learning and Development offer to meet the needs of Council employees across all levels using 'lived experiences' and specifically designed learning paths. EDI training aims to create an inclusive workplace culture, appropriate working relationships and keep managers and employees up to date about EDI.

Employee safety

Employees have a clear process to report incidents that affect their personal health and safety, such as accidents like slips and trips and other accidents and issues that have or could cause injury. All incidents are recorded on the SHE ASSURE system, a recording and monitoring tool, to help prevent issues, monitor support and analyse the data so that our employees are kept safe, including those who are lone workers.

Recognising the needs of armed forces personnel

Our **Armed Forces Covenant** promises to do all we can to assist those who serve the nation and keep us safe. We offer support to injured service members and bereaved families with extra help when appropriate.

Our commitment and work was recognised by the Ministry of Defence who awarded the Council a Silver Award (2020) as part of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. We met the requirements of the scheme by demonstrating that members of the armed forces are not disadvantaged:

- **Members of the forces community are not disadvantaged in our recruitment and selection process**
- **All positive policies relating to defence personnel are internally publicised**
- **We employ at least one individual from the armed forces category**
- **If required, we have demonstrated support to reservist mobilisations**
- **We align our values with the Armed Forces Covenant**

Solihull Council's Cabinet Member for Stronger and Safer Communities and Armed Forces Champion for Solihull. Staff at Solihull Council worked hard to ensure that members of the armed forces are not disadvantaged. We will continue to develop our interventions and positive support for the armed forces community.

As a Silver award holder, we must demonstrate a number of positive measures and policies in the organisation which actively support members of the armed forces community. This includes veterans, reservists, Cadet Force adult volunteers and their families.

Disability and reasonable adjustments guidance

Solihull Council is accredited by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) as a Disability Confident Employer recognising our commitment to attracting applicants and supporting and retaining workers with physical and mental disabilities. The Disabled Confident Scheme logo is placed on our website and the WM Jobs website where Council jobs are advertised, to signal our commitment to employing people with disabilities and meeting disability-related needs including providing reasonable adjustments.

During Disability History Month 2023, we launched revised information to support managers and employees with requesting and making reasonable adjustments in the workplace. The disability and reasonable adjustments guidance provides practical advice for employees who have disabilities covered under the Equality Act 2010. The guide focuses on the Council's reasonable responsibilities for supporting current employees. It was informed by current legislation and the contributions from our employee networks.

The revised guidance promotes the use of a reasonable adjustments agreement form, designed as a live document to record individual needs and reasonable adjustments made. It provides flexibility and support for managers and employees to recognise changes in needs and make further reasonable adjustments. The records can be used by the employee if they change jobs within the Council or if their manager changes.

The new arrangements complement our Smarter Ways of Working principles which include the facilitation of specialist equipment to support employee's personal requirements.

Disability Confident

The Disability Confident scheme was set up by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to encourage employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain, and develop people with disabilities. The Council has maintained the status of a **Disability Confident Employer** by the DWP which recognises the organisation's steps to ensure disabled people get fair and sustainable opportunities in employment. Actions and recommendations from the self-assessment process have informed an action plan, led by a small working group, to continue the Council's ambition to move towards '**Leader**' level and to make continual improvements in the Council's role as a large employer.



Smarter Ways of Working

To support hybrid and agile working, the Council has made changes to furniture in most office spaces and provided ICT equipment through the Smarter Ways of Working programme. They have also installed audio visual equipment which supports hybrid meetings.

A Fair Treatment Assessment for smarter/hybrid ways of working was completed. This showed some specific benefits arising from flexible working practices, for those in protected characteristics groups. These included:

- Enabling the retention of older workers and being an appealing aspect for younger workers.
- Supporting those with disabilities to work in the setting that they felt more confident and capable in, whether that was at home or in the workplace.
- Assisting those who had caring responsibilities.
- Providing the safety of a physical workplace for those whose home circumstances are not suitable for working from home for a variety of reasons including size, use by other occupants or domestic abuse.
- Flexibility to fulfil religious or belief requirements and to attend appointments more easily during pregnancy.
- Reducing the cost of commuting.

Our arrangements for flexible and smarter ways of working were revised in 2023 to provide a stronger position for the Council to:

- Become an employer of choice
- Attract and retain staff by appealing to a wider pool of talent, reduce time spent on journeys to meetings and commuting and providing a better work/life balance for staff
- Become more efficient and productive by fulfilling customers' expectations, reducing overheads on property, bringing down levels of absenteeism, saving on the costs of fuel and parking and emitting less carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases

For employees, there are powerful attractions to hybrid working, as it can:

- Improve work/life balance
- Reduce stress
- Reduce long hours

The review has informed our draft People Strategy 2024-2027.

Employee health and wellbeing

Our aim is to have a healthy, happy engaged and thriving workforce. The Council continues to prioritise employee mental health and wellbeing. Data suggests that one-third of sickness absence is attributed due to poor mental health.

Our employee wellbeing offer is designed to promote employee wellbeing and help manage work related stress. We work to deliver the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards and meet diverse the needs of employees. Managers and employees are encouraged to develop individual Wellbeing Action Plans that support good wellbeing at work, identify

triggers that could contribute to poor health and effective management of issues. Wellbeing Leads are volunteers who help to disseminate information about relevant topics to their directorates and support individual staff as appropriate. Wide-ranging information, training and events for employees were arranged in 2023, such as stress management, menopause, cancer, mental health, domestic abuse, financial wellbeing, sleep management and carer support.

Wide-ranging resources and support for mental health includes mandatory Mental Health Awareness training for Managers. Between April and December 2023, 120 people attended this training which is supplemented by other relevant online courses.

We encourage employees to prevent poor mental health by having regular short breaks in work time, ensuring good work-life balance. and other self-management techniques such as mindfulness, breathing and somatic exercises.

Pregnancy loss awareness

The 'supporting pregnancy loss' guidance was launched in January 2023 to support our **Miscarriage Association's Pregnancy Loss Pledge**. This was accompanied with a briefing session for employees, delivered by The Lily Mae Foundation, a local charity.

The session raised awareness of the impact of pregnancy loss and how to support employees.



Career break guidance

Launched in June 2023, the purpose of the new Career Break Scheme is to give employees an opportunity to leave their employment on a short to long term basis and to return to work at a later date. In giving this opportunity, the Council recognises the importance of employees' work-life balance and personal development, whether that be via life-long learning, charity work, leisure activities, travel, religious events or other interests.

Being a family friendly employer

The family friendly policies were reviewed which involved key stakeholders along with benchmarking against other local authorities and best practice examples in other organisations. We had to consider the financial pressures and constraints the Council is under, so we couldn't enhance the pay elements for these family leave policies to match the generous ones offered by some private sector employers, but we could introduce the new legislation on family leave ahead of its launch date (in some cases up to 12 months earlier) and enhance time off where possible.

We have introduced neo-natal care leave and pay before it becomes a statutory requirement. The Council also opted to allow paid time off for up to 12 weeks, with no service qualifying period, in the event of an employee's baby being born prematurely before 37 weeks and requiring neo-natal specialist care in hospital.

The **Maternity Policy** includes a new toolkit for managers to support the pre and post maternity process to clarify the role of the manager and employee throughout the pregnancy journey, and also includes a new returning to work booklet for employees to help them plan their return to work. This ensures a more consistent, positive experience for employees during such an important time in their lives.

The **Paternity Leave Policy** has been enhanced to allow two weeks at full pay to allow more partners to take more time off within the first year of their child's life. The two weeks can be taken in separate blocks of one week or taken together at any point in the first year after the birth or adoption of the child.

The **Adoption Policy** now allows both partners to take up to five appointments at full pay and an additional three days if adopting siblings or a child with complex needs.

The **Flexible Working Policy** was updated to include changes in legislation ahead of its implementation date to allow up to two requests per year to be made. We could see that flexible working was a subject that was of interest to staff as the notification of the policy update on latest news on the intranet received 677 views. HR monitor requests for flexible working and in the year to March 2023 there were 34 requests, of which 26 were approved (76%).

The **Management of Change Policy** has been updated to include additional protection for employees on family friendly leave such as maternity, adoption or shared parental leave in a redundancy situation. The new legislation on the additional protections will not be launched until spring 2024 but the Council chose to introduce this earlier to offer further protection to our employees. The changes mean employees will have additional protection for up to six months after their return to work and should be given priority access to alternative available roles over other employees who are also at risk of redundancy.

Hearing the voices of diverse employees

Acknowledging and valuing the different skills and viewpoints that a diverse workforce can bring to the Council is vital for a happy workforce and good customer service as well as providing a workplace where we are treated fairly, with dignity and respect. We want employees to have a say in influencing and shaping our role as an employer and how we create a sense of belonging in the workplace. By hearing the voices of our diverse workforce, we can have an open, transparent and better understanding of the many different perspectives from employees.

We know that every voice counts, and we want to create greater opportunities for employees to feel that they are represented, seen and heard. Staff have developed and established three employee networks for disability, ethnicity and LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning or Queer +) to provide opportunities for employees with similar identities or experiences to meet up and discuss particular issues that affect them in the workplace. Walatta is a member of our Diverse Minority Ethnic Network and Josie is a member of our Disability Employee Network and both have a passion and drive to make positive change.



“I wanted to be a part of the change, to champion and embrace the diversity of our workforce.” (Walatta, Internal Auditor)

We appreciate that some employees may find issues relating to identities and backgrounds to be sensitive topics so we will work with employees to build a culture of trust to make sure that the networks are a safe environment.

“It has been eye-opening to hear and understand the experiences of others.” (Josie, Occupational Therapist)

Carers Network

The employee Carers Network continues to meet each quarter to provide a safe and confidential space for staff to share their experiences. The network contributed to the review of the Carers Policy, which was informed by people’s lived experience of being carers. Their invaluable support helped us to win Employer of the Year 2022 at the Carer Friendly Awards. We continue our commitment to support carers.

For example, by working with Solihull College and University Centre to connect local care providers with people looking to pursue a career in adult social care through our ‘Great Care, Great Careers’ initiative. The initiative recognises our role in supporting the Council and other organisations to fill around 600 local vacancies in the care sector.

Menopause Network

The Council makes reasonable adjustments for women going through the menopause which includes a Menopause Support Agreement designed to identify any reasonable workplace adjustments. Our aim is to embed support for female colleagues going through the menopause into the culture of the Council. To support this, in 2023 we held drop-in information sessions at the Council House and Bluebell Centre and employee and manager online briefing sessions. Over 50 managers attended our menopause manager briefings. We also held an event 'move more in menopause' ran by Think Active in October 2023, to encourage more physical activity during perimenopause and menopause.

A Menopause Network for employees was set up in January 2024 with employees meeting at the both the Council House and Bluebell Centre on a regular basis. A review of the Menopause Policy is due in 2024 which will involve key stakeholders including staff attending the network, line managers and wellbeing professionals. We will also make sure that the policy and guidance on reasonable adjustments takes account of the Council's duty when considering reasonable adjustments on disability to protect staff going through the menopause so that women are treated fairly and can work in a supportive environment.

Engagement with staff and trade unions

The Council values the role that unions play in looking after the interests and safeguarding of their members employment rights, pay and reward, wellbeing and safe working conditions. The Council meets regularly with trade unions through a number of groups that include the Corporate Consultation and Negotiating Committee (CCNC) and Directorate Consultation and Negotiating Committees (DCNCs). Membership of the groups includes trade union representatives, HR representatives and senior managers. As well as consultation, unions are also involved in sickness absence management; mental health and wellbeing in the workplace; and equality issues.

We recognise that conflict in the workplace may occur between people. When it does, we support colleagues and managers to work together to resolve any disagreements and conflicts constructively and speedily and where appropriate through our Resolution Policy. This approach is supported through a volunteer network of Resolution Contacts, made up of employees from across different grades and diversity of the workforce. The network complements the support available through a line manager, HR and the trade unions. Data is gathered regarding formal issues on disciplinaries, grievances, etc. Where complaints of harassment or bullying are made, the Council take these very seriously and investigates. The tables on pages 30/31 provides data on HR caseloads in relation to a number of employee relation issues in the Council for the year to 31 March 2023.

Attracting and retaining diverse talent

The Council has a Supported Employment scheme to promote people with learning disabilities into work. We employed a dedicated Supported Employment Adviser in the HR division to provide wrap around support for potential recruiting managers and applicants in offering more sustainable supported employment opportunities to local people. The scheme is going strong, we have successfully recruited 12 local people with learning disabilities into permanent roles across the Council and six local people with learning disabilities participating in a Supported Internship Programme in partnership with Mencap and Solihull College. More information is provided on page 17.

When a team expresses an interest in offering a role, we work with partners to identify a potential candidate that would be a good match based on their interests, education, experience, skills and abilities. We also work with managers and teams to develop an awareness and understanding of the candidate's needs and how to support them appropriately day to day in the workplace; this will include any recommendations for adjustments that address an employee's needs.

This scheme is also supported by the Council's **Employment and Skills Team** by funding the roles and overseeing recruitment and partnerships. Together, they liaise with external partners to help teams identify local candidates who are work ready. It is a concerted effort to support this scheme. It leads to workplace inclusion, which is a key priority within our inclusive growth aim in the Council Plan.

Gwyn had been volunteering for many years but struggled to find paid work. He was offered a 12-month placement under this scheme with the Honeycomb Café at Park View Centre.

Sasha, Gwyn's supervisor, recounted their first meeting, *"Gwyn was very nervous and guarded. Over time, we notice that he has become more confident and started to take initiative. The scheme is a great chance for us to support individuals with learning disabilities with inclusive and welcoming work opportunities. Hopefully, this can empower them with the skills and confidence that would help them secure long term paid employment."*

To help with team integration, Odette was appointed as the Catering Support Assistant to provide hands-on training in the kitchen. Odette shared, *"It was a challenge, but I really enjoyed it. Gwyn has a great sense of humour, and we always have a laugh whenever he is in!"*

Gwyn shared, *"After losing my parents, I needed to get on with life the best I could. This opportunity has given me a sense of purpose and the motivation to get up every day. It makes me feel good."*

When asked about the future, Gwyn shared, *“I feel more confident and independent now. Having this work experience on my CV will show employers that I’m capable of paid jobs. I am completing a Level 1 Food Hygiene course soon and I may progress with Level 2 courses. I am also looking into finding a catering role at a school after this role.”*

Gwyn has now completed his placement and has moved on and secured paid employment.



Supported Internship Programme

The Supported Internship Programme offers structured learning for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to build their employability skills. Supported internships give participants the opportunity to experience working in an area of interest alongside a work coach who offers support and instruction to gain the necessary skills to carry out the role unsupervised.

The aim of these internships is to provide a foundation to clear progression routes into paid employment.

Salmaan is one of the residents who has received our additional support. After completing his supported internship, he was interested in getting more experience in the workplace while looking for long-term employment.

The Employment and Skills Team took Salmaan on in the team to help with an ICT project. This practical work experience has helped solidify the new skills he learnt from the internship. A job coach was assigned to suggest adjustments to support Salmaan.

Salmaan enjoyed his work and conversation with his teammates. He shared: "Getting to the office is already an achievement for me, and becoming more independent at work is another achievement that I had never even imagined!"

His manager, Tom Dixon, recalled that Salmaan was quite shy at first but came out of his shell gradually. He shared: *"Making adjustments for team members with additional needs is just about learning and adapting. Salmaan always brightens up the office with a big smile on his face. He is a loyal and valued member of our team."*

"The team get to develop people and our team spirit has become stronger. It is a win-win for everyone!" Salmaan is now taking part in a work trial with another team and it is hoped he will be appointed as a paid Supported Employment Assistant within that team upon its successful completion.



Employment support for residents with additional needs

The Council is always working to ensure that the most vulnerable residents are supported so that everyone has an equal chance to be healthier and happier. An array of **employment support** for residents with learning disabilities is on offer from the **Employment and Skills Team**.

One of the success stories is Vicki Reynolds who has recently secured her first permanent job role. She has been providing admin support at the Council since September 2023. This role has enabled Vicki to develop skills for work, as well as skills for her personal life. She makes day to day choices and experiences having control of her life.

Vicki shared: *"I love my job! I really enjoy working with the team and making friends here. Having this job is like my dream come true. It feels good to be more independent. I hope my mum is proud of me."*

Michele Nolan, Supported Living Lead at Social Life Opportunities (SOLO), has been supporting Vicki. She shared: *“Vicki has felt more included and valued in the community. She has become a huge role-model in our supported living and day centres. Vicki has inspired others and proved that anything is possible by seizing an opportunity and getting the right support. Her confidence has grown. This has impacted on her self-esteem and wellbeing.”*

“Vicki has received wraparound support including IT training, independent travelling and personal organisation. All these helped and she settled in quickly. She completes her tasks efficiently and brings joy to the team.”
(Richard Tapson, Governance Lead for Economic and Infrastructure Directorate)

English fluency statement

We want to ensure that the quality of public services in the borough is accessible and delivered to the highest standards possible. Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016 requires public authorities to meet their obligations for all employees working in public facing roles to communicate in English fluently to help ensure the safe and high quality delivery of public services. The Council maintains its process to ensure that all public facing staff meet this fluency duty including when we are recruiting new employees. Where the need is required, we signpost staff to training or retraining to help them meet the requirements of the fluency duty.

Workforce Diversity

General information about our employees:

Solihull Council has been collecting data on the diversity profiles of employees for several years. Based on the information provided by employees voluntarily, the following information gives a snapshot of our workforce profile as at 31 March 2023. For the purposes of this report, Ethnic Minority is defined as all those declaring any ethnic background other than White. Data on the current system is created when an employee commences work with the Council. The employee can subsequently update most of their personal information except their disability status through ‘self-service’. Employees are responsible for keeping their own personal details up to date however, HR will periodically request or remind employees to review and update their personal records.

Key points are summarised as:

- There are more females working for the Council (73%) compared to males.
- Older age groups are represented in the workforce more than younger age groups, with the age band 45-54 making up nearly 30% of the overall workforce.
- 6% of the workforce have shared that they have a disability.
- White employees make up nearly 80% of the workforce, with the largest ethnic minority group being from an Asian or Asian British background making up just over 9%, which is slightly less than the borough's Asian representation that stands at 11%.
- 36% of the workforce are Christian, 24% of employees have shared that they have 'no religion or belief' and 4% are Muslims. These figures are slightly lower when compared with the Solihull borough.
- 67% of the workforce identify as heterosexual/straight, with lesbian, gay and bisexual employees making up approximately 1% each of the workforce.

The table below sets out an overview of workforce data used for this report compared to 2021 Census population figures. For the purposes of this table, we have presented only what we know about our workforce and a full breakdown of unknown and 'prefer not to say' figures are included at the end of this report. Data on the current system is created when an employee commences work with the Council. The employee can subsequently update most of their personal information except their disability status through 'self-service'. Employees are responsible for keeping their own personal details up to date and HR will periodically request or remind employees to review and update their personal records.

Modern slavery statement

The Council is committed to preventing and taking action against slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities, supply chains and the wider community.

To understand and address all potential modern slavery risks related to our business, the Council conducts the steps established in previous years from our modern slavery statement to embrace our responsibility on tackling modern slavery.

Actions include:

- robust procedures for vetting new employees so that they can confirm their identities and qualifications and are paid directly into an appropriate personal bank account; and
- the application of our Safeguarding Policy to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults.

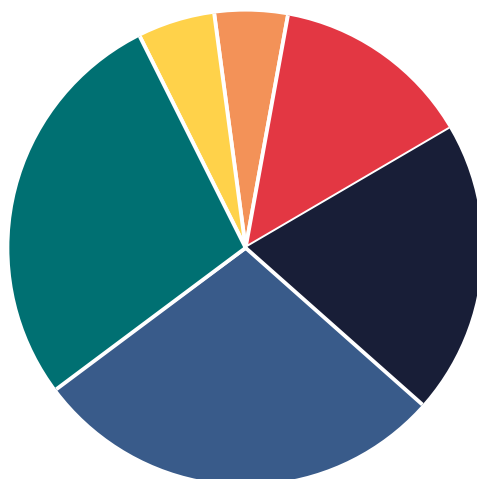
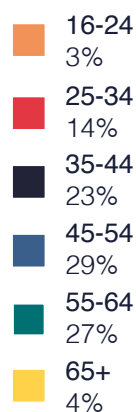
Workforce composition equality data

There are differences in the total number of employees covered in this report when compared to the total number of employees stated in the Council's Gender Pay Gap Report published in March 2023.

This is due to the statutory criteria used to calculate the gender pay gap only including employees in receipt of pay on the snapshot date.

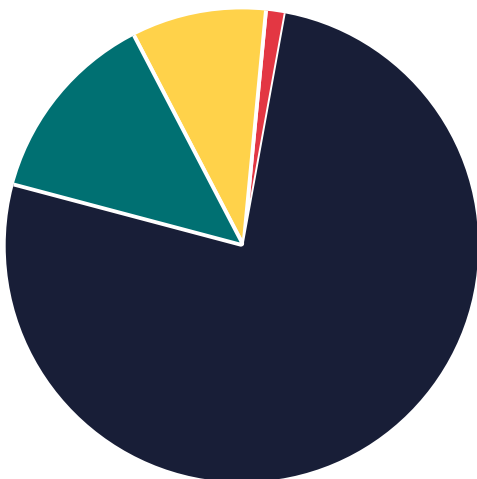
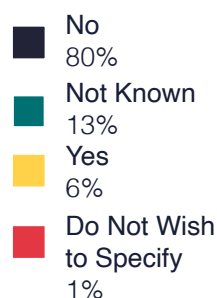
The Council's core workforce profile is set out on the following pages. The percentages (%) are rounded up to whole numbers in the tables unless otherwise stated.

Age



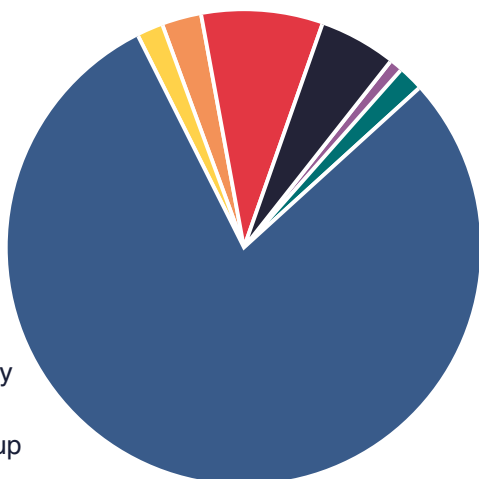
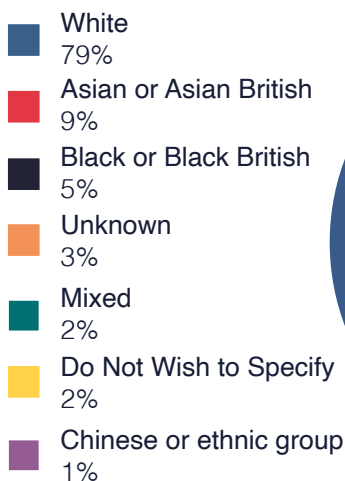
Age Band	No. of Employees
16-24	89
25-34	370
35-44	588
45-54	743
55-64	685
65+	98

Disability



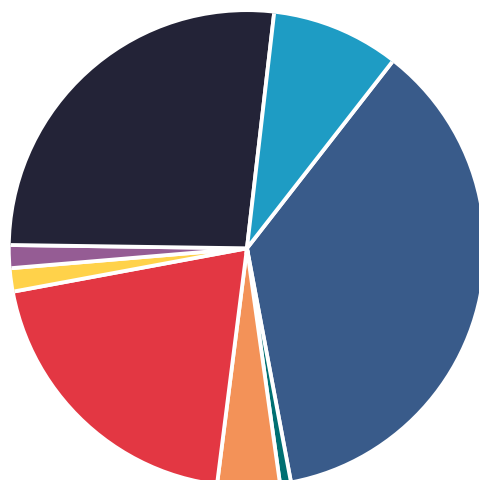
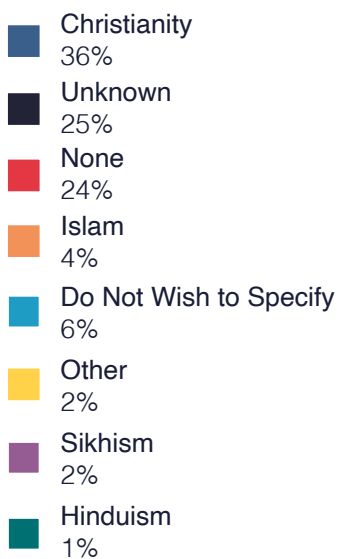
Do Not Wish to Specify	26
No	2059
Not Known	345
Yes	143

Ethnicity



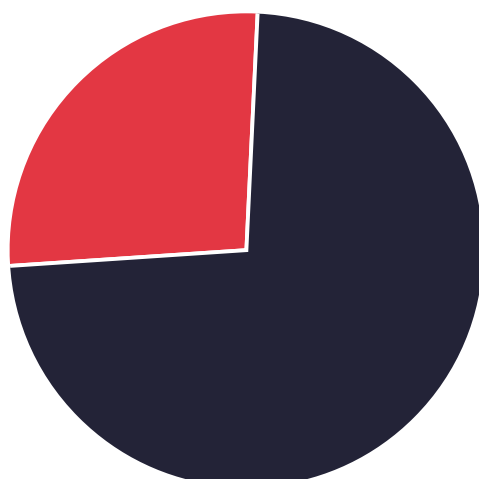
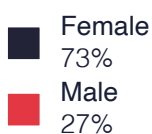
Ethnicity	Number of Employees
Asian or Asian British	227
Black or Black British	122
Chinese and other ethnic groups	15
Mixed	62
White	2026
Do Not Wish to Specify	56
Unknown	65

Religion or Belief



Religion	Number of Employees
Christianity	918
Hinduism	38
Do Not Wish to Specify	154
None	614
Other	52
Islam	90
Unknown	651
Sikhism	46

Sex



Sex	Number of Employees
Female	1870
Male	703

Employee Relations Data

Oracle, the Council's employee data system, records personal employee information and learning and development statistics. Oracle enables us to better understand the take up of training, development and career progression across the protected characteristics and identify any gaps we need to focus on to improve workforce learning opportunities.

An analysis of flexible working, maternity and carers leave data will help us to better understand take up of policies and decision-making processes to identify potential barriers. A full breakdown of employee relations data is featured below:

- Employee relations data is largely reflective of the wider demographics of the workforce. For example, disciplinary cases relate to white, heterosexual women.
- Dismissal data is slightly more balanced in terms of gender with 43% of cases relating to men but is still largely reflective of the wider workforce in terms of ethnicity.
- Resolution cases are slightly overrepresented by ethnic minority employees in comparison to wider workforce data.
- Flexible working requests tend to be requested more so by White women in the age range of 55-64 years.

Protected Characteristic	Equality Group	Disciplinary %	Capability %	Resolution %	Dismissal %	Flexible Working Requests %	Care Break %
		16 Cases	5< Cases	8 Cases	14 Cases	34 Requests	5< Cases
Gender	Female	81%	50%	13%	81%	57%	100%
	Male	19%	50%	87%	19%	43%	0%
Disability	Yes	19%	0%	0%	43%	3%	0%
	No	69%	100%	87%	29%	41%	100%
	1*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	2*	12%	0%	13%	28%	56%	0%
*1 Prefer Not to Say *2 Not Specified							
Ethnic Origin	Asian - other	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%
	Asian - Indian	0%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%
	Asian - Pakistani	0%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%
	Black/ Black British - African	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	50%
	Black/ Black British - Caribbean	6%	0%	0%	7%	6%	0%
	Black - Other	6%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%
	White/ White British	88%	100%	63%	79%	79%	50%
	1*	0%	0%	0%	7%	6%	0%
*1 Not Specified							
Age Band	16-24	0%	50%	13%	7%	3%	0%
	25-34	19%	0%	0%	7%	18%	50%
	35-44	13%	0%	25%	7%	12%	0%
	45-54	25%	0%	25%	29%	23%	0%
	55-64	37%	50%	37%	29%	41%	50%
	65+	6%	0%	0%	21%	3%	0%
Sexual Orientation	Hetero-sexual/ Straight	50%	50%	75%	57%	59%	100%
	Gay Man	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Gay Woman/ Lesbian	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Bisexual	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%
	1*	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	2*	31%	50%	25%	43%	35%	0%
*1 Prefer Not to Say *2 Not Specified							
Religion	Christian	31%	0%	13%	64%	38%	50%
	Hindu	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%
	Muslim	0%	0%	12%	0%	3%	0%
	Sikh	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
	1*	38%	50%	0%	7%	15%	50%
	2*	25%	50%	50%	22%	38%	0%
	3*	6%	0%	12%	7%	0%	0%
*1 No Religion or Belief *2 Not Specified *3 Prefer Not to Say							
	Other*	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%

Priorities for 2024/25

Our new recruitment tool, that allows us to improve our brand and intelligence will help us to remain a diverse and fair employer.

Analysis of application, interview and recruitment data is being completed across directorates and protected characteristics to better understand employee attraction and to ascertain representation of applicants moving through the recruitment process. Analysis will be completed to inform target setting.

We also be reviewing the outcomes from the EDI Workforce Strategy Action from 23/24 to inform new actions for 24/25 unless otherwise stated.