

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

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March 2025 Report



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If you would like this document explained to you in an alternative language or require it an alternative format and/ or want to give comments about the content, please email: equalities@solihull.gov.uk



Welcome to Solihull Council's Public Sector Report 2025.

Firstly, we want to thank our partners for working with us to help Solihull remain 'a borough of opportunities for all', where 'everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous'. We do this through our values of being open, honest and keeping our promises.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is a statutory duty on all public authorities. It ensures organisations consider and demonstrate how their work affects people with different protected characteristics. This includes their decision-making, policies and practices.

Since reporting obligations commenced in 2011, Solihull Council has published annual reports covering our role as a service provider and an employer, and we have provided links to other equality information. We have also published Gender Pay Gap reports since they were introduced in 2017. This report covers work from April 2024 to February 2025.

We pride ourselves on being a Council that is small enough to care, yet big enough to make a difference. By working together, we will continue to achieve our priorities and deliver for people who live, work, study in and visit Solihull.



Paul Johnson
Chief Executive of
Solihull Council



Councillor Ian Courts
Leader of Solihull Council

Solihull's plans and equality objectives

The Solihull Council Plan 2024/25 **update** and **Plan on a Page** provides information on the Council's strategic plan, priorities and delivery plan for the borough. The Council Plan also includes background information about the borough, its geography and the diversity of our residents.

We welcome Solihull's increasingly diverse population that has changed over a number of years. We work in ways to keep up to date with population changes and how we function as a local authority in delivering local services, meeting demand whilst managing the Council's financial budget challenges.

In November 2024 we published an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy to provide details of the plan of EDI work we have set ourselves. The EDI Strategy is underpinned by the **Council's EDI Roadmap** that provides an overview of the EDI outcomes we want to achieve for the borough. It sets out short, medium and long-term objectives to help to deliver the overarching long-term outcomes where:

1. Solihull Council is recognised as a forward-thinking organisation that values an inclusive culture of fairness and where diversity is valued
2. Solihull borough enjoys a strong reputation as an inclusive place in which to live, work, study and visit
3. local residents and visitors are satisfied with services and their experiences
4. senior leaders feel more equipped to lead and drive an impactful and ambitious EDI agenda
5. Solihull Council makes the best use of talent and views of diverse staff and external partners to deliver the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda

As we work through our journey on the EDI Roadmap, it sets out three 'long-term objectives' which are formally the Council's **Equality Objectives for 2024-2027**.

These are to:

- protect the fairness, dignity and respect of individuals
- promote Solihull as a sustainable and inclusive place to live, work, study and visit
- be a diverse and inclusive employer

There are several existing Council EDI documents which set out what we want to achieve for people from all backgrounds who live, work, study in or visit Solihull. These can be found on **our website**.

Equality report on services during year 2023/2024

This annual report highlights a selection of our equality work which demonstrates what work we are engaging in or have undertaken to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and inclusion and celebrate diversity. Where appropriate, we have provided digital links to other equality information or documents that can be viewed on the Council's website.

This report should be read in conjunction with other equality information available on the **Council's website**.

The Council's Annual Report

The Council's most recently published **Annual Report** provides additional information on key equality achievements and statistics on the borough's population.

Making Solihull and our services accessible

Solihull Council continues to provide to all its residents a disability information portal through AccessAble that contains Detailed Access Disability Guides for a variety of venues such as public and council buildings, shops, hotels, and restaurants.

Visitors can check AccessAble's website before planning a trip to Solihull to check if they have step-free access, wide-bay parking and facilities for people with physical disabilities, those who use assistance dogs and people looking for dementia-friendly venues.



For example, visitors can locate parking in the Touchwood Shopping Centre which has dedicated Orange Zones for wider parking spaces situated neared to the lifts.

Motorised scooters and wheelchairs are available with advance booking. There are several drop-off points for visitors arriving by taxi or being dropped off.

Our Customer Charter includes a promise 'to be fair in the way we deliver services, and treat all members of the community as individuals, recognising their differences'.

Our services are easy to access. We give choices whenever possible and provide accurate and easy to information. We eliminate barriers to accessing services by offering interpretation and translation facilities as follows:

- A.** British Sign Language signer
- B.** face-to-face interpreting
- C.** telephone interpreting
- D.** translation of documents in Braille
and community languages
- E.** documents in large print
- F.** documents in alternative formats



Our website provides accessibility features through Recite Me on how to change council information on the site by font and text size, for example to assist people with sight impairments. Residents can access 130 services via the website.

Residents can access our services via the Solihull Connect walk-in centres for routine enquiries such as obtaining a Blue Badge and pay charges. The offices are accessible for people with mobility impairment. Hearing loops and other facilities are available on request.

We continue to develop and deliver our Digital Strategy 2022-2027 as digital technology continues to become an essential part of life for customers and the community to work, access information, share knowledge and remain connected to others.

Our digital offer is based on the principles of offering a universal service to all residents whilst continuing to support people who cannot access services digitally.

Our Connect offices and libraries offer free access to computers and the internet for those who wish to use the Council's online services such as paying charges, requesting services and getting **more information**.

It is vital for residents to know how to access services offered by other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector. The 'Solihull MyLife' website, maintained by Solihull Council, provides information about help, advice and services available across the borough and how to contact service providers. Information is categorised under the headings of organisations, halls for hire, local speakers, tutors and sports clubs. Residents can find out information about residential care homes, home help, health and wellbeing and debt advice.

Making complaints accessible

We reviewed our policy for dealing with customer feedback to build on our commitment to provide the best services and support continuous improvement. **Solihull Council's Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Customer Comments Policy** was revised in January 2024. The policy supports our ethos of handling complaints impartially, objectively, professionally and treating customers the way we would wish to be treated.

Our approach includes supporting people who need help to complain and accepting complaints via others, such as family members and carers, and dealing with issues appropriately when cases involve children, vulnerable adults and those concerning safeguarding issues.

The 2023/24 Complaints Report for Adult Social Care includes examples of reasonable adjustments such as supporting customers who have different communication needs such as large print, Braille and alternative languages. We accept complaints in a variety of ways to ensure that our formal complaints procedures are accessible for all.

For example, in 2023/24, complaints about Adult Social Care Services were received via four main channels: 72% by email, 18% by telephone, 6% by letter and 4% using a dedicated complaints leaflet. All complaints are handled in a confidential manner. We discuss matters with individuals to allow complainants the opportunity to discuss concerns and explain the impact on them. This helps us to deliver dedicated responses and arrive at appropriate solutions.



Meeting the needs of our diverse communities

Supporting families

Our four **Family Hubs** provide places where children, young people and families can get help and support on issues such as health, wellbeing, and join in activities where people can make friends and create lasting relationships.



Craft event at Elmwood

Family Hub in Smith's Wood

Examples of activities include health visitor and midwife clinics, toddler sessions, emotional and practical support for women and money management advice sessions. The four Family Hubs are supplemented by an Outreach Centre based at a local junior school in Shirley.

Supporting families with children

The Family Information Service provides dedicated advice to those who need to access childcare, children's activities, funded childcare places, free school meals and other advice to enable children to have a positive start to happy and healthier lives. Parents and foster carers with digital access can search for information on dedicated pages on our website.

Parents can join the Solihull Parents' Network to help share ideas and information and discuss common concerns. Members receive regular eBulletins that are also publicised via our website.

The Solihull Educational Psychology Service (SEPS) provides professional psychological services for children, young people and their families to understand complex situations to help address child developmental issues, including special educational needs.

We continue to deliver the Solihull Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme of activities and nutritious meals for children who receive free school meals, during school holidays. The Social Life Opportunities programme (SoLO) delivers a range of after school, evening, weekend and holiday activities for children with learning disabilities to learn new skills, become more independent, and have fun together.

Under the Short Breaks programme, we offer breaks and leisure opportunities for children and young people with disabilities. This provides parents and carers respite from caring responsibilities. The Nurture Provision initiative, Refresh, is designed to support children who have difficulties in managing mainstream school education. The aim is to enable children to successfully return to mainstream schools.

Making hospital to home a better experience

We recognise that disabled people or those who live on their own may need dedicated support and ongoing care after being discharged from hospital or when returning from a care setting. Our dedicated team works closely with hospital staff to plan for prompt and safe discharge, ensuring that the person's health care needs are met and that they are able to make progress towards independence.

Where appropriate, equipment such as hospital beds and high-rise chairs are provided, carers are supported, and those needing reablement support are given the necessary help.

Community Development

The Community Development Team has worked with over 150 groups, organisations and services to make things happen in Solihull's neighbourhoods and diverse communities.

Highlights include:

- supporting the delivery of local cross-sector events, such as a dementia marketplace event, a “community around the school” event introducing school support staff from 22 schools to a range of voluntary and community sector groups and organisations, as well a mental health themed networking meeting with over 50 attendees
- supporting schools to deliver careers days, new parent induction evenings, and introducing children and families to local services and organisations
- supporting social workers and social prescribers to connect people with support, such as dealing with money, paying bills and taking part in social activities
- establishing a Solihull Migration Forum for newly-arrived communities and refugee resettlement. The forum has attendees representing organisations from across Solihull and the wider West Midlands. The purpose of the forum is to bring professionals and practitioners together to promote successful resettlement, inclusion and integration of people arriving from refugee and migrant communities
- securing a new Interfaith Restorative Justice project in Solihull and Glasgow as national pilots funded by the National Lottery Fund, exploring how restorative justice practices can be applied to address hostility against and between faith communities in Solihull and Glasgow. The project is being delivered via the Faith and Belief Forum, working with local councils, stakeholders and regional and national experts, to help inform restorative justice approaches to hate crime over the next three years
- working with Touchwood Shopping Centre and five Solihull Muslim groups to see the first Eid celebration hosted by Touchwood. It was a great success with nearly 500 people in attendance and the event received positive feedback

Community Advice Hubs

Residents can get advice, information and support through our Community Advice Hubs in the Chelmsley Wood and Connect Offices in central Solihull. The purpose is to bring together a range of organisations to work together to deal with diverse issues such as provision of care, dealing with disabilities and long-term physical and mental health conditions, benefits and grants, energy poverty, and debt and money management.

Our Children's Directorate work in partnership with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The early help and family support service is designed to deliver a graduated approach to meeting children's needs so that early help is available at the right time and in the right way. This enables the Council and other agencies to identify the needs of the family and children and identify any safeguarding concerns. Our Family Support Workers support parents to deal with diverse challenging issues such as sleep and behaviour issues.

Reducing poverty

Solihull Council's New Working Age Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been reviewed to make it easier for working age people and low-income families to apply for a discount of between 25% to 85% off their Council Tax. The scheme is linked to Universal Credit to support families suffering from financial hardship.

The Council also offers a **Here2Help** scheme, to help people to live well and find the services and support they need at all stages of life. This includes money advice.

Solihull Community Housing also has a **money advice team** dedicated to their tenants and leaseholds to help manage their finances.

Families with children in receipt of free school meals can receive a supermarket voucher for each child during school holidays, funded via the Government's Household Support Fund, to help pay for the meal that a child would have received during a school day.

Foodbanks are run in collaboration with partners such as AgeUK, Helping Hands, WeCareUK, North Solihull UK and Around Again, to help provide enough food for three days to households who are in crisis or do not have enough money to buy food for themselves. The initiative is funded via the Government's Household Support Fund.

Reducing health inequalities

Public Health work with a range of services, agencies and partners to support people to live longer and healthier lives by improving and protecting health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities. The most recent **annual report** sets out key areas of work the service has focused on.

The Council's **Health Inequalities Strategy 2022-2025** sets out a number of key priorities we are working on with the community and partners including the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System and the West Midlands Combined Authority, to reduce health inequalities in the borough and the wider West Midlands region.

The strategy represents the Council's ambition to create a place where everyone in Solihull has a fair chance to be healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous, and focuses on key areas that create health inequalities and the relationship health inequalities has between four overlapping groups:

- socio-economic groups (e.g. those on low incomes or living in deprived areas)
- geographic groups (e.g. Solihull localities (North, West, East), urban vs. rural areas)
- equality and diversity groups including nine protected characteristics in law
- socially excluded groups (e.g. people experiencing homelessness, vulnerable migrants)

Promoting health and wellbeing through greener Solihull

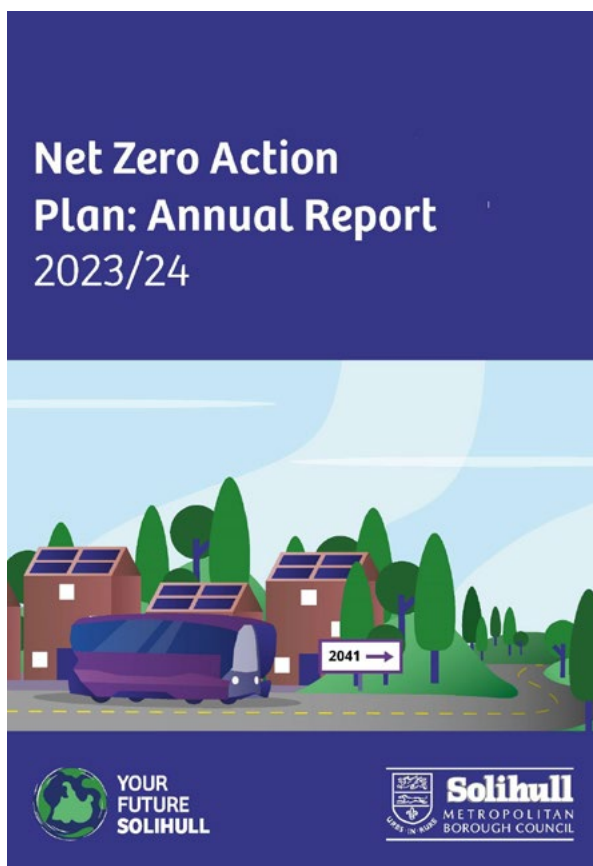
Solihull Council recognises the enormous benefits of promoting the green agenda as initiatives help to reduce respiratory illnesses most commonly found amongst children and older adults. 'Green health' supports people's mental and physical wellbeing due to reduced pollution, improved air quality and reduced risks from flooding and heatwaves.

We continue to build on the findings from The Place Survey 2022 that found that 84% of respondents are satisfied with their local neighbourhoods compared with the England average of 79%. We aim for Solihull to be a net zero borough by 2041. Small and medium-sized businesses, many of which are owned by women and minority ethnic communities, were able to access advice, support and grants via the Birmingham and Solihull Business Growth Hub. The Growth Hub has now changed to Business Growth West Midlands.

Under the Local Authority Treescale Fund, 2024 saw 350 trees planted in North Solihull to replace diseased or aging trees, contributing to our target through our 'Planting Our Future' campaign to plant 250,000 trees across the borough by 2030.

More than 50 homes across our borough have benefitted through a Home Upgrade Grant. Examples of work undertaken includes loft insulation, provision of solar panels, and high-heat retention storage heaters. Benefits for householders include reduced energy bills and a reduction in carbon emissions through renewable, affordable and clean heating solutions.

Solihull Council also provides a free small item collection service for household items such as electrical gadgets, paint, textiles and batteries.



Reducing gender-based violence

In 2023/234, 1,164 women accessed our specialist support for victims of domestic abuse, of which 387 cases were managed through a Solihull Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where there was a high risk of harm or death.

In 2023/24, 4,098 cases of domestic abuse were reported to the West Midlands Police for our area, compared with 4,782 in 2023/24. In the same year, 37% of social work assessments found domestic abuse to be a factor. Our recent review of the Housing Allocations Policy recognises a high priority (Band A) award for victims of domestic abuse where an assessment deems the applicant to be at high risk.

The Solihull Domestic and Sexual Abuse Champions Network includes staff from diverse teams and agencies who work in partnership to improve community responses, deliver dedicated training and assistance to staff to enable them to support victims and survivors, and signpost people to specialist services.

The Global 16 Days to Activism Campaign, a worldwide call to eliminate gender-based violence, is held from 25 November to 10 December each year.

Working with Soroptimist International Solihull & District and other community led groups, the campaign was marked and promoted by the Council in 2024 to raise awareness across the borough on identifying domestic abuse, supporting victims, and dealing with perpetrators through partnership working.

A theme was given for each day of the campaign that covered:

- White Ribbon Day
- women's safety in public spaces
- elder abuse
- the impact of domestic abuse on children
- rape and sexual violence
- victim blaming
- male victims of domestic abuse
- so-called honour-based abuse and forced marriage
- coercive control
- exploitation modern slavery
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- stalking and harassment



- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning or Queer + (LGBTQ+)
- perpetrators
- misogyny - challenging sexist behaviours
- domestic abuse is everybody's business - in remembrance

Outcomes from the discussions contributed to our overall approach to dealing with domestic violence that focused on prevention and early intervention, protection of adult and child victims, strengthening accountability, and partnerships.

Preventing suicide

We recognise that suicide is a tragedy for those who take their own lives and for their families, carers and friends. We continue to deliver our Suicide Prevention Plan 2023-2026 that is based on prevention of suicides and supporting families and others to deal with loss of loved ones. We encourage people to become a member of the **Orange Button Community Scheme**.

The orange 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 to someone in distress or with suicidal thoughts.



Celebrating equality, diversity and inclusion

The following main events were celebrated in Solihull, arranged in partnership with Touchwood Shopping Centre and members of the community. Each event featured food, entertainment and music for families and children.

- January: Beginning of the celebrations to mark the Chinese New Year with Chinese dancers and calligraphy
- February: Chinese New Year – to mark the Lunar New Year
- April: Eid – to mark the end of Ramadan
- September: Hong Kong mid-autumn festival to mark the moon to be at its fullest and brightest
- October: Diwali – the festival of lights and to mark the Hindu New Year

Our library service produced a range of reading materials and exhibitions, working with community partners to mark international events such as the LGBTQ+ History Month, South-East Asian Heritage Month and the Black History Month. The Core Theatre hosted the Comedy Shutdown – Black History Month special event to deliver dedicated entertainment, and the Heritage Team in the Council worked with the Solihull and Birmingham Caribbean Family History Group and hosted a two month-long exhibition raising awareness of the work the Caribbean Family History Group have been involved with since they set up in 2008.

We supported the Refugee Week in June 2024 with many of our newly-arrived communities, for which the theme was 'Our Home' to showcase Solihull as a welcoming, safe and sustainable place for all. Events included a Careers Fair in partnership with the Solihull College, a Cultural Market in central Solihull where Hong Kong residents showcased food and handicrafts, a music festival at the Core Theatre square that included Indian traditional Kathak dancing and storytelling, and the sharing of the experiences of members of Ukrainian community who had recently arrived in the UK.

Reflecting equality, diversity and inclusion in work planning and decision-making

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is an important part of the Council's core business of improving the quality of life and life chances for everyone. Below shows a diagram setting out the Council's journey so far on EDI:

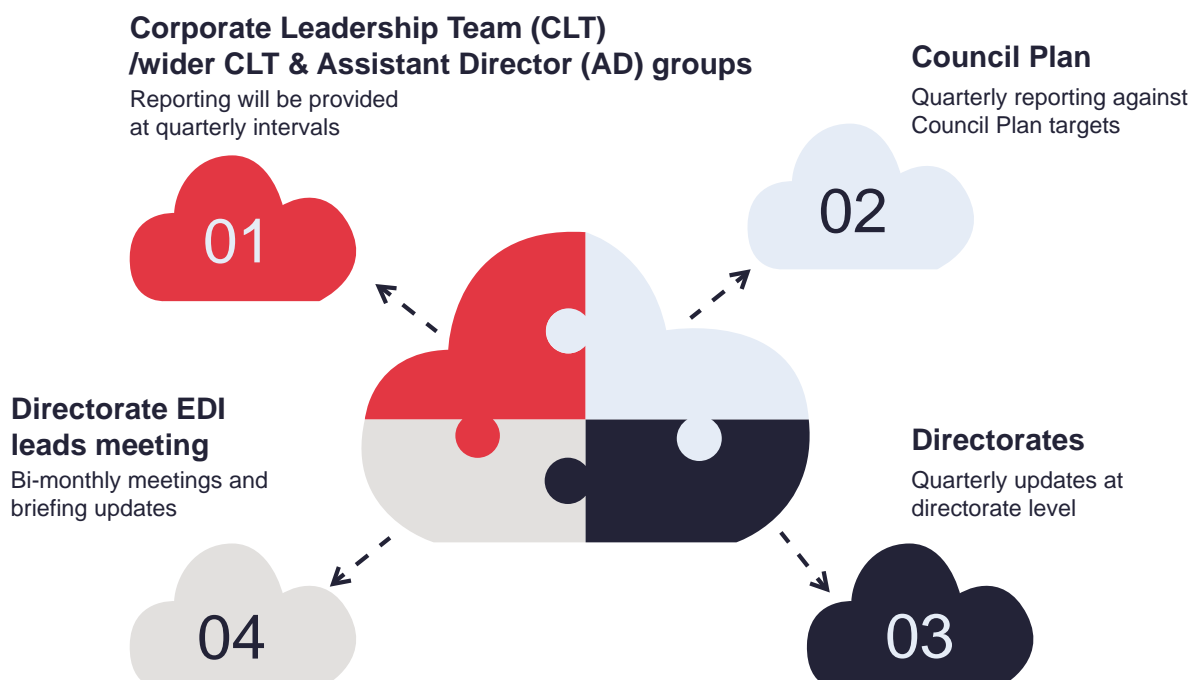
The Journey So Far



Our monitoring and decision-making process on EDI has been improved where we are clear on the frameworks we will use to ensure that the drive of EDI work through the EDI Roadmap and EDI Strategy are achieved.

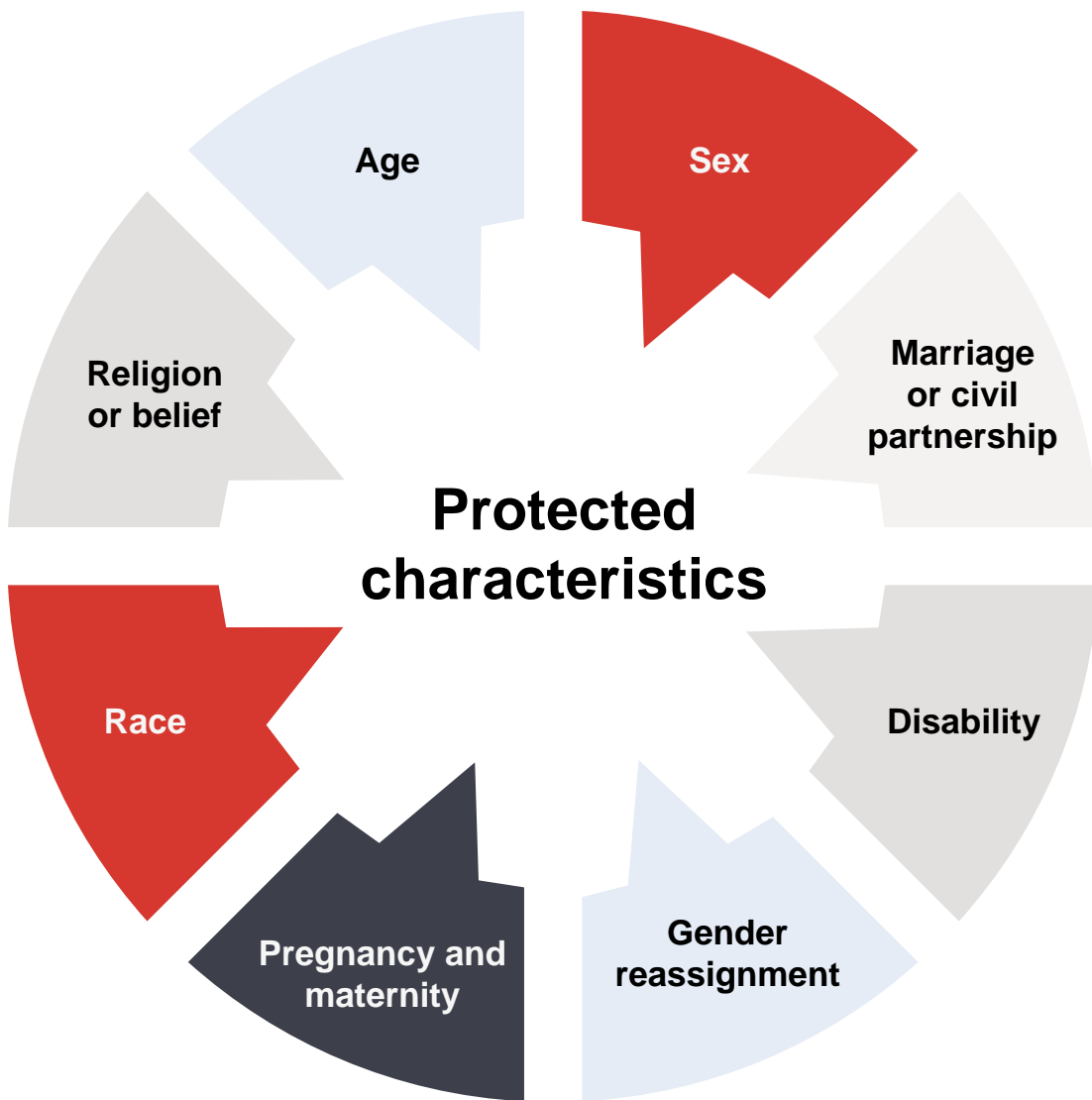
Councillors are informed on the progress of the EDI Strategy through the reporting framework for the Council Plan milestones.

Framework on how progress will be monitored and measured



We continue to undertake Fair Treatment Assessments (FTAs) – equivalent to an Equalities Impact Assessment – to inform our decision-making process in meeting our duty under the Equality Act 2010.

FTAs provide a comprehensive way of ensuring that services are inclusive and they can be accessed and used by all sections of the community. FTAs cover all of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act:



In addition to the characteristics covered above, FTAs also consider:

- care-experienced people - introduced from a decision by Full Council in July 2024
- carers
- health inequalities
- human rights
- military status
- safeguarding arrangements
- socio-economic background

A few examples of FTAs completed against service changes or new services are:

- A45 improvement scheme
- all-age care provision
- allocations
- Damson Parkway/Termination Road junction improvements
- day care charges
- ex-offender service

- Family Hubs ex-offender service
- Healthy Child programme
- housing allocations
- local authority Tax Reduction Scheme
- Tenancy Strategy

All reports presented to councillors for decision include a section on what considerations have been taken on equality. Access to Council reports can be found [here](#).

We recognise that we are on a journey to further advance equality, diversity and inclusion in the Council.

We welcome any feedback that will be considered as we review progress on the EDI strategy.

Please email any queries, comments or questions on this report to: equalities@solihull.gov.uk

