

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About Your Services

January 2014

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Introduction

This report provides information on how Solihull Council is ensuring that the services we provide, and other key aspects of our work, are being delivered fairly to our customers, whatever their background or circumstances. This report is an update of our previous report published in January 2013

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'.¹

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

Due regard to the aims of the duty

Public authorities must take 'due regard' to the equality duty when making decisions. When the equality duty is considered to be highly relevant we undertake Fair Treatment Assessments (FTAs), to systematically analyse the impact of our services and policies on our staff and customers to ensure we deliver our services in the fairest way.

We refer to 'fair treatment', rather than 'equality impact' because our level of equality analysis goes beyond the provisions of the Equality Act, and considers fairness in a wider sense, including aspects such as socio-economic deprivation, human rights and sustainable communities. Summaries of completed FTAs can be found on the **Fair Treatment Assessments** page on our website.

¹ Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Specific duties

In order to meet the requirement of the 'general duty' we have to do two specific things:

- publish equalities information, and
- publish our equalities objectives (including where we need to do more to meet the 'general duty')

Our equalities information must be updated at least annually and is available on the **Public Sector Equality Duties** page on our website. The information duty covers two areas, which are published in two separate reports:

- Our employees
- Our services and the people affected by them (covered in this report)

This is the third Services report covering the Council as a whole to be published under the Equality Act. The first report was published in **January 2012**.

Our equalities objectives were published separately in **April 2012** and will be updated at least every four years.

More information on the Public Sector Equality Duty, including the specific duties, can be found in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's **Equality Act 2010: Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty - England**

Future Actions

We will work to identify information gaps and extend our analysis in future reports. Actions will be identified to address concerns arising from the information analysed in each section and will contribute towards our updated Equality Objectives, which will be published every four years.

General information

Subsequent sections of this report consider our role as a service provider from the perspective of individual protected characteristics (see page 4). This section covers the wider picture and cuts across the various characteristics.

We provide a large amount of information about our services and the local population on our [website](#). In particular Solihull Observatory's [Understanding Solihull webpage](#). The Observatory provides a centre of excellence in research, data collection and analysis, supporting the local commissioning process as well as evidence-based policy-making. Amongst the information it provides are regularly updated [ward profiles](#).

Equality profile

Solihull's total population of usual residents in 2011 was 206,674 of which 99.2% lived in households and 0.8% in communal establishments (1,587 individuals). 106,322 are females (51.4%) and 100,352 males.

Solihull now has 39,500 residents aged 65 and over of which 19,100 are aged 75+ and 5,500 are 85+. 85.8% (177,248) of Solihull residents describe their ethnic group as White British, compared with the England average of 79.8% and the West Midlands average of 79.2%. Solihull is becoming increasingly diverse, with the number of people from a Black or Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) group increasing by 11,638 (108%) between 2001 and 2011 compared to a fall of 4,481 (-2%) in the white population. BAME groups now represent 10.9% of the total population compared with 5.4% in 2001. The following tables show population changes for various groups in Solihull since 2001.

	2001 Count	2011 Count	2011 %	Change 2001-2011
White: British	182,099	177,248	85.8%	-3%
White: Irish	4,138	3,935	1.9%	-5%
White Other	2,488	3,061	1.5%	23%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1,401	2,395	1.2%	71%
Mixed: White and Black African	145	247	0.1%	70%
Mixed: White and Asian	599	1,156	0.6%	93%
Mixed: Other Mixed	420	606	0.3%	44%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	3,636	7,098	3.4%	95%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	983	3,413	1.7%	247%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	84	633	0.3%	654%
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	671	906	0.4%	35%
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	371	1,511	0.7%	307%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	1,527	1,930	0.9%	26%
Black or Black British: African	224	852	0.4%	280%
Black or Black British: Other Black	144	457	0.2%	217%
Other Ethnic Group	587	1,226	0.6%	109%

Source: ONS Census 2001, 2011

In terms of religion, the majority of Solihull residents describe themselves as Christian (65.6%), with no religion the 2nd largest group (21.4%). The number of Christians has fallen by 13% (-20,421) since 2001, with 'no religion' increasing by 84% (+20,154). This is consistent with the pattern nationally. In terms of other religions there are significantly more Muslims (+3,610, 221%), Sikhs (+1,938, 124%) and Hindus (+1,834, 99%) than in 2001.

Additional key facts about Solihull are available on the [Statistics and Census](#) page on our website.

Protected characteristic	% of population (source Census 2011)
Age	
0-15	17.6
16-24	12.0
25-44	23.7
45-64	27.5
65 and older	19.2
Disability	
Yes	17.9
No	82.1
Sex/Gender	
Female	51.4
Male	48.6
Religion/Belief	
Buddhist	0.2
Christian	65.6
Hindu	1.8
Jewish	0.2
Muslim	2.5
Sikh	1.7
Other	0.3
None	21.4
Declined to Specify	6.4

The Solihull Way

'The Solihull Way' is the culture that we are creating in the Council where lean principles underpin everything we do and where we all live our brand of being open, honest, approachable and keeping our promises. It's the way we do things in Solihull. It is our lean thinking and learning philosophy and it is our way of enabling all Members and staff to live the Council's Brand. It is also our strategy and approach to transforming Solihull Council into a world class lean thinking and learning organisation. One that:

- Has a rigorous understanding of its purpose (i.e. knows what the customer needs and wants); its processes (i.e. having the right processes in place to fulfil the purpose); and its people (i.e. having the right people skilled and organised to run the processes).
- Focuses on the best possible outcomes (quality and value) to its customers.
- Continually improves.

Essentially, lean thinking is about the elimination of waste and a focus on the activities that add value to the customer. Our 'Going Lean' programme has two elements. Firstly, a programme of deep reviews aligned to the Council's priorities. These are designed to deliver a step change in the quality and value of services received by customers, whilst making the processes as efficient as possible. Secondly, a programme of skills and knowledge building to embed the principles of lean thinking widely across the organisation.

Not only do we need to continually strive for maximum customer value, but we also need to 'do the right things in the right way'.

In an increasingly challenging climate, where massive changes and difficult decisions are being made, we need to think about what we do in terms of lives not services, and make sure we treat each other and our residents with the decency and respect they deserve.

Equality and Diversity Policy

Solihull Council's **Equality and Diversity Policy** was adopted in January 2012 and replaces our Equal Opportunities Policy. It expresses our commitment "to promoting equality of opportunity and equality of access that is free from discrimination, prejudice, harm, stereotyping, harassment, victimisation, and any other form of discrimination."

Socio-economic disadvantage

Although the Equality Act 2012 does not include this as a protected characteristic (see page 2), socio-economic disadvantage is an important concept for Solihull Council. There are very clear divisions in the Borough between the wealthier areas and those experiencing problems of poverty and disadvantage. This is illustrated by differences in life expectancy, which varies by nearly a decade across the Borough. Narrowing the gap of inequality caused by these differences is one of our key drivers; this is why we have included it as a separate section within this report.

Tackling hate crime

We are determined to support people who have been affected by a hate crime or incident, which is why we are reviewing all of our independent third party reporting centres across the Borough.

Introduced by the Safer Solihull Partnership, the centres are based within access points of a wider range of existing services such as children's centres and community voluntary organisations. Their role is to give both victims and witnesses a safe and supportive environment to report incidents.

We are actively working with West Midlands Police to improve our approach to hate crime across the Borough.

Complaints and customer feedback

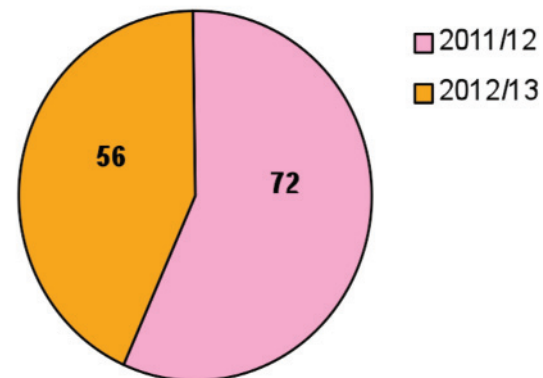
We actively monitor the nature of all complaints and customer feedback received to understand whether there are any equalities

implications and matters to address. Managers regularly receive reports on the nature of all complaints so that policies and services can be changed accordingly. Annual reports for the Adults & Children's Social Care Services Complaints & Customer feedback for 2012/2013 have been published on the Solihull Council website:

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/democracy/complaints.htm>

We received 56 complaints and 72 compliments in 2012/13. Learning from complaints and compliments is used to improve our services. We have used learning from complaints and compliments to improve internal systems and processes to respond to complaints. This has ensured that all complaints are now responded to more efficiently.

The number of complaints received by the Council, concerning Social Care services provided to adults 2011/12 - 2012/13



Increasing community participation

In recognition of lower levels of participation identified in the findings of the Community Cohesion Survey, we have actively encouraged dialogue between local Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans communities and the Council and its partners. We aim to further improve engagement and understanding of the issues facing these communities by greater involvement and engagement through the mainstream mechanisms that exist, e.g. Neighbourhood Groups and Community Forums, along

with encouraging specific support through voluntary and community sector development. We continue to consult with faith-based communities through the Solihull Faiths Forum, which was established in 2006 along with encouraging voluntary and community sector development.

Putting People First and Transforming Adult Social Services

This is one of the top six priorities for Solihull Council. Our aim is to support people to maintain their wellbeing and independence through better information and advice, better use of technology and a broader range of housing options. We will offer more choice to make sure people are more in control of the care they receive and change how we spend our money to provide improved services.

We can only achieve this with the support and involvement of our dedicated staff, partners, people using services and their carers, in planning and delivering effective and efficient services that meet the care and support needs of local people.

With this in mind, our intention is to establish different relationships with those organisations that provide services, drawing on their skills and expertise to shape our services for the future, involving people using services and their carers in all areas of our improvement journey. Solihull is committed to the government's approach to adult social care - **Think Local Act Personal** (TLAP). We have signed up to a national **Making It Real** programme which sets out what people who use services and carers expect to see and experience - if support services are truly personalised.

In this regard, we have developed a service user group of “Experts by Experience” to help us on our improvement journey. Our “experts” are people who have experience of using our services or who are carers of people using our services. There are 26 “I” statements, written by real people and families which describe what people expect and want when it comes to care and support. They are themed around six key areas including:

- Information and advice
- Active and supportive communities
- Flexible and integrated care and support
- Workforce
- Risk enablement
- Personal budgets and self funding

Age

The initiatives outlined below have been developed as a result of data analysis, recognised best practice and customer feedback. As part of our decision making processes we consider the relevance of age equality, specifically highlighting when targeted consultation has taken place and the likely impact of the decision on people of different ages.

Children's Centres

There are 14 Children's Centres across the Borough, which bring together a wide range of services for families with young children. The centres offer a one-stop shop within the community for parents/carers and providers of childcare and family support.

We have a number of targeted initiatives in place at selected Children's Centres to meet specific needs relating to people's protected characteristics, including groups for fathers, advice and support for pregnant women, and sensory rooms and crèche facilities for families who have children with additional needs or disabilities.

Children's Centres support health partners by providing universal and targeted breastfeeding support groups and breastfeeding cafes. These groups are established to support all mothers to breastfeed their babies.

Children's Centres also deliver alongside midwives, a specific Solihull Approach ante-natal parenting course to support parents to-be.

In Solihull, we currently offer free 15 hour places for two year old children. Specific criteria for these places are based on free school meal eligibility and/or referral from other partners. In addition there is specific support for two year old children with special learning and care needs through this funding.

Children and young people in care and care leavers

The number of children in care in Solihull at any one time is around 308, of whom 42 are unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Solihull Council also has responsibility for around 344 care leavers aged 18-21, of whom 199 are unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.

We are mindful that our unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people and our local looked after children and young people have different needs. We shape our services to ensure the needs of all looked after children are met, that they are supported to achieve good outcomes in stability of care placements, health, educational attainment and destinations at age 16.

The majority of our looked after children are cared for by foster carers. We provide foster care for children and young people from all cultures and backgrounds from birth to independence. Good foster carers come from all sorts of social, racial, cultural and family backgrounds. All enquiries are considered regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and religion or relationship status. In every case, the most important thing is that the child receives care, attention and feels secure and valued.

Advocacy support for children in care is commissioned from the National Youth Advocacy Service. An annual report is provided to stakeholders outlining the service provided and any issues that have arisen.

The Adoption service has a clear commitment to place siblings together and to consider adoption for all children, whatever their age, level of ability or ethnic origin, supported by stringent and robust efforts to find appropriate families.

Transition For Young People From Children's To Adult Services

In April 2013 we had an event called "Pathway to Possibilities" which showed what the journey looks like for young people with disabilities

when they move from children's to adult services. The event was attended by young people, parents, professionals and providers who worked together to think about what we needed to do to improve transitions.

In May 2013 we held a stakeholder workshop to identify steps to improve transition into Adult Social Care services.

We continue to work with young people and families in Solihull to test plans for a new single education, health and care plan ("Single Plan") for children and young people aged 0-25 years who need support. We are using all the feedback from the Transition event in April 2013 to inform our work plan. We need to be clear about which young people need additional support to achieve good outcomes. We will endeavour to have consistent support to enable all young people to have an opportunity to continue in education, training and employment. We will establish effective arrangements to enable transition for young people from Children's to Adult Mental Health Services.

Making Safeguarding Personal In Solihull

In December 2012, Solihull Council underwent a Local Government Peer Challenge. The peer challenge team looked at how well Solihull safeguards adults at risk from harm and abuse. The peer challenge team responded with positive feedback and identified many examples of where people were supported to keep them safe and well.

We are supporting the Local Government Association with the 'Making Safeguarding Personal' project. We are working with people who use services and carers and Experts by Experience, to understand their views of Adult Social Care and safeguarding in Solihull.

Throughout October 2013, the "My Safeguarding Experience project" took place. The purpose was to understand how we support, investigate and respond to safeguarding referrals. The project enabled Adult Services to measure the impacts on people and will guide us to make changes that will ensure people and their outcomes remain the central focus.. We recognise that if we do not seek

people's experiences of Safeguarding, we will not know if what we are doing is appropriate for victims/survivors. Our aim is to move towards keeping people safe and meeting people's outcomes as opposed to being process driven. To facilitate this we will respond to what people tell us they wish to see change, tailoring our processes to the individual.

Following the review, we have created a single point of access for Adult Social Care issues which means all information can be gathered in one call, providing a simpler and more efficient service for our customers and our partners.

More information about safeguarding adults can be found on <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/adultabuse/default.htm>

Road safety

Our **Road Safety Strategy** includes analysis of why some groups are more at risk of road traffic accidents, including young drivers, children and older people. As part of our strategy we want to develop more targeted educational programmes.

Cycle training is offered to all of our schools as described in our Road Safety Strategy and aims to increase young people's confidence in cycling, contributing to increased road safety. Prior to receiving training, parental consent cards are issued by class teachers to parents for completion and these include information regarding any disability or condition their child may have. This allows us to make any special arrangements prior to commencement of the training, ensuring a positive experience for all.

Following feedback from local schools we reviewed and condensed our Child Pedestrian Training, which helps towards reducing casualties amongst vulnerable young road users. The Walk Smart project contributes to reducing the inequality in child casualties between deprived and affluent areas, and during the academic year 2011/12 all schools in the Chelmsley Wood, Smith's Wood and Fordbridge and Kingshurst wards received the training.

Case Study – Homelessness Education Programme

If young people become homeless, they are more likely to experience a range of risks which will impact negatively on their life chances. They are more likely than the general population of young people to be affected by drug and alcohol misuse, to be involved in crime and to be the victim of crime, to experience mental health problems, to have a poor diet and more general ill health, to become pregnant and to fall out of education, training or employment. Research also shows that even when permanent accommodation is found, those who have had a period of homelessness in their teenage years continue to be disadvantaged across a number of areas compared to those who have never been homeless.

Working with partners such as Solihull Community Housing (SCH), our arms length housing provider, we have developed a Homelessness Education Programme, “Young, Alone and Without a Home,” which aims to prevent homelessness amongst young people by helping them to understand the reality of living alone and the need to make plans for their future. The programme uses drama sessions and real life case studies of young people from Solihull who have been homeless themselves.

Using the drama sessions and case studies, Young, Alone and Without a Home gives students a realistic and thought provoking picture of:

- what life can be like for a homeless young person;
- the type of housing that might be available to them if they were to become homeless;
- why it is best for most young people to continue living at home (whilst also offering support and guidance for those where it might not be safe to continue living at home); and:
- the things that young people leaving home need to consider such as the cost of paying rent and bills and the need to carry out day-to-day household tasks for themselves.

The programme targets young people aged 14-16 but it is flexible and has been designed to be used in a variety of ways and for a variety of settings which may involve those aged slightly below or slightly above the target age range. Since its inception about two years ago, the programme has seen more than 100 young people benefit from it.

Assistive Technology and Telecare (ATT) (often referred to as “Useful Gadgets”)

Assistive Technology is: “any device or system that allows individuals to perform tasks that they would otherwise be unable to do, or increases the ease and safety with which tasks can be performed”

Solihull’s vision is to enable older people, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems and other vulnerable people to live as independently as possible in their own homes. Technology plays an increasing role in promoting such independence.

The use of ATT is a way of supporting people with care needs, and those that care for them, to have greater choice and control over their own lives. We have an ATT demonstration flat that has recently been renovated and has on show a range of equipment in a real-life setting so that people can try it out for themselves and see how it works. As a result of user feedback, we have launched a quarterly assistive technology newsletter and are filming video case studies for staff and service users. The newsletters are published every quarter and can be accessed via:

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/adultsocialcare/28218.htm>

We want to make ATT available for more people in need. We are recruiting more staff and trialling a new electronic assessment tool called ‘Just Checking’

Just Checking is an activity monitoring system used for people with dementia, living in their own homes or people with learning disabilities in shared living accommodation. It creates a chart of daily living activity that can be securely viewed online. Just Checking is the easiest way to care when family can’t be there.

Case Study – Telecare

Mrs G was a frail, older adult receiving domiciliary support from a Care Agency when her husband died. She was struggling to use the telephone due to her hearing impairment and was feeling increasingly isolated. Her family lived over 150 miles away and she was at risk of falling after having had a stroke.



A Social Worker and a Telecare officer visited Mrs G together and found that Mrs G would benefit from wearing a device around the wrist, to detect falls. Mrs G now has this device, giving her peace of mind that should she fall an alert will be raised immediately with Safe and Sound who provide a 24 hour physical response service.

Another gadget that has helped Mrs G is an amplified phone with pre-programmed and photo contacts. Mrs G had tried out the phone for a couple of weeks and found it very helpful. Mrs G’s family purchased the phone for her and this allowed them to communicate with each other, when this was not possible using a standard telephone.

The use of Telecare has provided peace of mind for both Mrs G and her family. It has meant that no increase in domiciliary care was required. This, along with the effectiveness of the amplified telephone has reduced her isolation and enabled her to continue to live independently.

Libraries

Our libraries provide a wide range of informal adult learning opportunities as well as hosting agencies such as National Careers Service and Connexions who provide youth and adult careers and employment guidance. Basic computer tuition is available for all ages but is primarily required by and delivered to those 55+, as individuals and groups. Taster sessions occur during Adult Learners' Week.

Family History courses are delivered each term at Solihull Central Library and primarily attended by those aged 55 and over.

Solihull Libraries are dedicated to meeting the needs of families with pre-school, school age and teenage children, and to promoting equality of access, through:

- providing access to a wealth of resources to inspire the start of a lifelong love of reading for pleasure and for learning.
- providing access to materials to help build and develop reading skills
- providing access to Bookstart packs
- delivering a range of opportunities to develop communication and concentration skills and to support families
- providing homework support and study space as well as information in support of the curriculum and of leisure interests
- providing access to quality online resources and directing children and young people to authoritative and appropriate online information
- providing teenage reading groups
- running a Summer Reading Challenge, to encourage literacy throughout the summer holidays for 4-14 year olds.

Supporting unemployed young people

Solihull Council's Kickstart Project is offering a wage subsidy to local businesses that create new jobs for unemployed young people aged 16-17 years who live in North Solihull.

Wage subsidies vary according to business size and sector from 50% to 100%.

The Council recognises that getting that all important first job makes a huge difference to the life of a young person. Therefore, this project offers them a paid job to help them to take their first step towards a new career.

Physical activity and leisure opportunities

Research shows that those most at risk of physical inactivity include older people who experience a notable decline in physical activity, with 70% of women over the age of 55 not doing enough to benefit their health. Solihull has a high proportion of older people, with 43% of residents over 45. Participation levels in physical activity by the over 45s in Solihull was below national and regional levels and targeting this priority group through the provision of selected activities is helping to increase participation levels. Maintaining mobility as long as possible helps to preserve independence and a better quality of life. We have a number of physical activity initiatives targeting older adults including Step into Solihull and DocSpot.

Step into Solihull targets older adults and provides a range of activities including Tai Chi, Dance, Walking, Extend and Nintendo Wii. We have targeted various residential homes/sheltered accommodation. Currently over 70% of the participants on the overall project are over 45 and 89% who take part on the walking programme are aged over 45.

DocSpot is targeted at patients with an identified health need which could be improved by leading a healthier lifestyle. A large proportion of participants on the scheme are aged over 45 years (currently 83% of

those joining the scheme). Throughout the programme, patients are provided with the knowledge and motivation to continue being physically active afterwards.

Living Well is a weight management programme for children aged 6-15 that targets families from lower socio-economic backgrounds as the evidence shows that these families have a higher likelihood of becoming obese. The programme aims to reduce weight gain, and improve physical fitness and the emotional well being of participants. We have a similar scheme for families with children aged 2-5. These initiatives focus on educating and encouraging individuals to adopt healthy lifestyles from an early age through increased physical activity and improved nutrition.

Us Girls is a targeted project in North Solihull for women and girls aged 16-25 years as participation levels in sporting activity decline markedly in these ages. Us Girls is part of a National Consortium, led by StreetGames, aiming to get 30,000 women living in disadvantaged areas participating in sport. Us Girls will establish new doorstep sport interventions, new training packages and new ways of thinking that are tailored to meet the specific needs of young women in Smith's Wood, Chelmsley Wood and Kingshurst.

Our Neighbourhood Sports Programme is aimed at young people, with the main focus on those aged 8-19 years. The programme aims to positively change lives by inspiring personal development and community spirit through sport, volunteering and active lifestyles for young people within Solihull. We regularly monitor participation rates, which show that we have worked with people aged 5-25, with the largest proportion of users aged 10 (9.41%).

Case Study – Craig Croft Boxing

Following consultation with young people in the Craig Croft area to see what they wanted, we have introduced weekly non-contact boxing sessions to engage with young people, residents, and other partners. Posters and flyers have been distributed in the area promoting the sessions with the aim of engaging 10 young people at each session.

Since the activity started about a year ago, there has been a 100% reduction in anti-social behaviour and residents are now talking to the police and supplying them with local intelligence. There is also an increased awareness of the positive impact of sport, in particular, boxing.

This activity is a continuation of the legacy of London 2012 Olympics.



Boxing class run by Wayne Elcock, former British and WBU (World Boxing Union) World Middleweight Champion.

Winter Warmth Campaign

Since 2008, the Council and Age UK, supported by other agencies in the Solihull Partnership, have run an annual winter warmth campaign. Its objectives are:

- To provide timely support and assistance to vulnerable residents,
- To provide emergency equipment and assistance when heating breakdown occurs,
- To provide a referral mechanism to a range of services provided by internal and external partners.

The campaign is targeted at vulnerable residents, specifically older people, people with disabilities and low income families with young children. These groups have been identified as having particular difficulties keeping warm with a higher risk of death from the cold.

Case Study – Winter Warmth Campaign

Mrs S is 92 and, in the winter of 2012/13, her boiler broke down and was beyond repair. After contacting the Winter Warmth helpline she was referred to Solihull Age UK.

Solihull Age UK visited Mrs S and, in the process of looking at her options, discovered she was not claiming benefits that she was entitled to. She was assisted in successfully claiming pension credit and in turn was referred to Act on Energy for a new boiler and loft insulation with the assistance of a grant.

As the relationship and trust between Mrs S and Solihull Age UK developed, she agreed to them contacting her fuel supplier to ensure she received the warm homes discount she was entitled to. Mrs S also accepted a free fire safety check, which recommended additional fire alarms as well as a replacement electric blanket.

Therefore, the Winter Warmth helpline has not only helped Mrs S to replace her boiler through a grant, but has also improved her life through saving her money through energy efficiency measures and making sure she maximises her benefit entitlements.

Disability

The initiatives outlined below have been developed as a result of data analysis, recognised best practice and customer feedback. As part of our decision making processes we consider the relevance of disability equality, specifically highlighting when targeted consultation has taken place and the likely impact of the decision on disabled people.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

On 3 December 2013, Solihull Council and other local organisations held the Borough's first ever celebration of the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).

Representatives from Solihull Council and seven other local organisations were involved in the planning of the day.

The aim of IDPD is to showcase and celebrate the contributions that people with disabilities make to their communities, as well as to highlight some of the physical, social, economic and attitudinal barriers that can exclude them from participating fully and effectively as equal members of society. This year's international was, "Break barriers, open doors: for an inclusive society for all."

There was a daytime event held at Green Acres Day Centre, which is Solihull's main day centre for people with physical disabilities. It included guest speakers with disabilities talking about their experiences, as well as people who use Green Acres providing craft displays showcasing their skills. There were also discussion groups and afternoon entertainment for visitors. In all, more than 30 local organisations were involved in the event, either as direct participants or by holding information stands.

In the evening, SoLO (Solihull Life Opportunities) hosted a free disco and there was a static display in Touchwood Shopping Centre during the day.

All the immediate feedback on the Day has been extremely positive, with visitors finding the events interesting and enjoyable - and hoping we now make IDPD an annual event in Solihull.

A review of the Day was held in January 2014, enabling us to build on this success and hopefully hold an even bigger celebration in December 2014.

Mental Health and Dementia Services

Our specialist mental health services have been extended to cater for those people who would previously have been excluded. Adult and child and adolescent services are now supported through the specialist mental health services.

We commissioned a service across all Birmingham and Solihull hospitals. To assess the level of care being provide, we have developed a dementia strategy co-produced with people with dementia, their carers and dementia service providers to get a better understanding of what they felt would help them live better with their dementia. This strategy is now out for consultation.

We are working in partnership with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Services Foundation Trust, to ensure that people with dementia, who need physical health support, can have these services provided in their own home. Previously people with dementia would have had to go into hospital to receive support for certain physical health conditions which, had they not had dementia, could have been provided in their own home.

We are also working with Alzheimer's Society to develop information for people with dementia.

Consultation with vulnerable groups

We continue to consult with vulnerable people in Solihull on various issues that affect them. As an example, recent consultation with residents who receive home care support led to the Council reshaping a new specification for home care providers. Current and potential home care providers were invited to tender for new contracts based on the specification. Evaluation took place during January 2013 for new contracts to be awarded, which came into force in April 2013.

Key findings from the consultation were published on the Council website in standard and easy read formats (<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/consultation/29055.htm>). Individual

service users affected by the tender process, for example those whose existing providers were unsuccessful in preliminary stages of the tender, have been kept informed by their social work teams.

People with learning disabilities nationally have had fewer opportunities to live independently (with appropriate support) than the wider population. In Solihull, for historical reasons the percentage of people with learning disabilities living in residential care is higher than the national average. Additionally, there is a shortage of social housing, particularly property suitable for people with disabilities, and it was identified locally that there was a need to raise awareness of these issues in order to increase the pace of future change.

Case Study – Consultation with vulnerable groups

The Solihull Partnership Board for People with Learning Disabilities identified housing as a 'big issue' for people with learning disabilities and their carers. This was following the production of Solihull's Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities, which included information about the need to increase access to housing for people with learning disabilities. In order to address this issue a Housing Sub-Group was set up, co-chaired by a Commissioner and a Partnership Board member with a learning disability. The Housing Sub-Group included a member with learning disabilities and their friend/carer, a family carer; a commissioner, and senior staff from the Council's Housing Strategy Team, Solihull Community Housing, a Registered Social Landlord, and the Community Learning Disability Team.

The Sub-Group was tasked with arranging a 'Housing Big Issue Day' with the aim of raising awareness of the issues faced by people with learning disabilities and family carers. These were: insufficient housing choice, access to housing with support, and a need for improved access to appropriate information about housing choices.

The Sub-Group met on several occasions to identify specific issues and to plan the Housing Big Issue Day which took place in February 2013, ensuring that the agenda truly reflected the wishes of all those involved. For the benefit of members of the group, all paperwork for the meetings

was produced in Easy Read format with Photosymbols.

The event was well attended by people with learning disabilities, along with professionals from a variety of services, including social workers, support staff and managers, housing strategy managers, housing managers, benefits staff, police officers, advocacy and advice staff and managers. The event included a series of talks and workshop groups, along with displays. Most importantly for the people with learning disabilities and family carers who had initiated the group, there was an opportunity to raise questions and speak to senior Council Members and staff.

This event met its aim of raising awareness (among senior staff in the housing team and housing associations, Council Members, etc) of the housing issues faced by people with learning disabilities, through the questions asked at the event and through the preparation and the consideration of issues required for individuals involved in the event. Additionally, those participating were made more aware of the importance of involving people with learning disabilities and family carers in service development.

The event contributed to the development of Solihull's Independent Living and Extra Care Strategy, ensuring that it reflected the needs and aspirations of people with learning disabilities.

Review of Day Services for people with Learning Disabilities

The Review phase of this work has been completed, and a formal consultation about the future shape of these services was undertaken, at the end of November 2013. The Review adopted a person centred and inclusive approach to establishing what was important to people, and the Consultation has sought to develop this by ensuring that a lot of opportunities were put in place for people to be involved in and comment on the proposals. In January 2014, Scrutiny and Cabinet Members approved recommendations for the next steps.



Equipment and housing adaptation

Solihull Independent Living is a not-for profit partnership between the Council and Solihull Community Housing (SCH), which offers people who are older, disabled or on a low income, an affordable way to repair, improve or adapt their homes. This scheme has successfully delivered a speedier turnover of work and reduced waiting lists for adaptations.

Further information on this service is available from [SCH](#).

Supporting independence in Adult Social Care - Independent Living

Over the last three years, we have made significant progress in helping people with different care needs live independently within the

community and a number of other initiatives are currently nearing completion.

An extra care housing scheme providing 32 units has been developed in Hampton Lane. It opened in the autumn of 2012. These initiatives are supported by our redesign of the older mental health inpatient service which has released extra resources for community based care.

Similarly, we have made progress on our objective to increase the number of adults with a learning disability living in their own home. The recently opened Tivoli Court provides supported housing for 13 people with learning disabilities, who had previously been living in residential care or with parents. Residents receive housing support from Bromford Housing and are able to choose their own home care provider if needed. A similar scheme developed in partnership with Mid Way Care has enabled two people to return to Solihull whose complex needs could not have previously been met locally.

These two developments, combined with the opening of Starling Grove in February 2010 and several smaller scale developments of housing with support, has resulted in 41 people moving out of residential care, or accepting a home in one of the developments as an alternative to residential care, over the past two years.

Supported housing

The Willows provides supported housing with care and support to ten people with learning disabilities, all of whom have individual tenancies for their own beautifully appointed apartments. This service has enabled a number of people, who had previously lived in hospital settings and residential care, to have a key to their own front door for the first time in their lives. This included a number of people who had lived in Solihull Council residential care homes which have been closed in order to provide people with their own homes.

Case Study-Supporting people to have a life!

John has spent nearly 20 years living in hospital settings, and it was felt he would only ever be able to live in a specialist residential care home. He has just marked the first year of having his own home and being supported by a committed and skilled team who are enabling him to make new friendships, re-establish relationships which had been lost, and to do 'ordinary' things which hadn't been possible for him for so long.

Delaying and reducing the need for care and support – Rehabilitation and Reablement

Our rehabilitation and reablement services provide speedy and practical help over six weeks which aim to help people get back on their feet and get their confidence back after an illness or the onset of disability. Specifically they are there to:

- Help people with poor physical or mental health or a disability to learn or re-learn the skills necessary for daily living;
- Maximise the long-term independence of those with care needs, by supporting care closer to home;
- Reduce future demand for adult social services;
- Lower the cost of care packages.

One of the strengths of these services is that they draw on a range of skills including those of care staff, social workers and community occupational therapists (OTs) who visit the person to identify the goals they wish to achieve and agree a programme of support. Throughout the six week period, support can be reduced as goals are achieved, or changed to accommodate new goals.

Over the last year, we have been able to expand our reablement services. This has contributed to a reduction in people having to

receive care after they have had this support. Equally where care packages are required after reablement they are at a reduced number of hours.

Case Study – Reablement

Doris is in her 80s. She lives alone in her house and was struggling to manage due to her arthritis and her recent hip replacement. Climbing in and out of the bath and managing the stairs was a challenge. Doris was also breathless due to asthma and has recently been with angina.

Doris applied for an assessment of need and for financial assistance towards having some adaptations carried out in her property. The Trusted Assessor service provided Doris with grab rails at the front and rear of her house, a frame to raise her armchair and a perching stool to sit on when she was preparing meals, all within seven days of referral. She was also referred for a Disabled Facilities Grant to cover the cost of a stair lift and provision of a level access shower to replace the bath. These adaptations were completed within six months and now Doris is able to live independently and safely in her own home, improving her health and well being significantly.

Complaints

As part of our commitment to service improvement, we continue to investigate any complaints relating to disputes about care plans. In addition to addressing clients' complaints, we have had invaluable learning for our staff and providers, helping us to deliver improved services. Training needs of individual social workers, and a management review of the care assessment process, have, for example, been addressed as a result of complaints.

Shopmobility

Shopmobility promotes and enhances the independence of people with limited mobility through the use of mobility equipment.

Solihull Shopmobility offers manual and electric wheelchairs and motorised scooters to help people shopping in Solihull. The service is available for anyone who finds it difficult getting around because of illness, age, accident, injuries or disability. People can hire mobility equipment such as scooters, wheelchairs and power chairs for a fee. For people under the age of 16, the Shopmobility service hires out equipment such as wheelchairs, under the Shopmo Kidz scheme. No membership is required for this scheme.

Waste collection

We provide an assisted waste/recycling collection service for people who are unable, due to a disability or infirmity, to place their containers at the edge of their property for collection, and do not have anyone else living at the property that can place them out on their behalf. The service was introduced following a redesign of our collection services, as it was recognised that some residents may have difficulties in being able to use the kerbside collection service. Currently 2,502 people receive this service, which equates to 2.82% of houses across the Borough.

Disabled persons parking spaces

Disabled Persons Parking Spaces are available for use by any Blue Badge holder, with the intention of providing parking close to the applicant's home. The Disabled Persons Parking Spaces policy was informed by consultation with Occupational Therapy, Enable-Solihull and previous applicants. The consultation led to the development of a more stream-lined process where those applicants 'automatically entitled' to a Blue Badge would no longer have to wait for an assessment by Occupational Therapy. This has speeded up the referral time for those applicants who do require an assessment. We have also reviewed the number of applications which have been

refused in order to comply with The Highway Code. To increase transparency on decisions and reduce this number, we now publish the guidelines on this area. Since the policy was introduced three years ago, we have installed 60 new spaces and the policy continues to be monitored by the Council.

Employment support and training (People with disabilities)

We continue to increase the range of available employment options for people with learning disabilities, for example, through helping them set up a small business.

Key programmes include the Solihull Mind Employment Support Service which supports people with depression and anxiety to remain in, or to go back into, employment. Among the services provided are career counselling, job searching and accompanied visits to colleges and appointments. In the last two years, demand increased by an average of 20%.

Libraries

We provide a home library service for those residents who are physically unable to access a library, due to their disability. People who use the home library service receive items they have selected direct to their home at a pre-arranged time every four weeks. Potential customers are referred to the service and assessed to confirm suitability and identify preferences with regards to subject matter and authors, along with specific requirements to ensure access. Currently 172 customers receive this service but there is capacity to take on more. A recent survey found 98% of customers rated the service as 'excellent' or 'good'.

Following feedback from customers, a Listeners' Circle was set up for people to share and enjoy a wide selection of new titles on audio. The group meets every other month in the Sight Loss Resource Centre at Solihull Central Library. There are currently 15 members, mainly older

people with a visual impairment. A hearing loop is now available to ensure accessibility for people with hearing impairments.

We provide a range of Large Print reading materials and Spoken Word titles for people with visual impairments. We have approximately 925 customers registered as having a visual impairment. Audio books are free for visually impaired customers to borrow, as it is recognised that they would otherwise be at a disadvantage from our charging arrangements. We also have a small collection of children's books in Braille available for loan at Solihull Central Library.

Displays on autism, osteoporosis, heart disease, and epilepsy have been run in libraries to help promote awareness of these conditions.

Information is published on our website on the **facilities available for disabled people** at all of our libraries. There are now two lifts in the library to increase accessibility to the library, the arts gallery and theatre facilities.

Case Study – Beyond Barriers – Improving Library Services for All

In last year's report, we gave details of events held in our two main libraries, Solihull Central Library and Chelmsley Wood Library, in response to feedback from a customer with multiple disabilities. The Library Services team worked with partners at Enable-Solihull and Action for Blind People to organise the events which were aimed at assisting people with disabilities to a) understand the barriers that exist for people using our libraries and b) raise awareness of some of the specialist services our libraries offer people with disabilities. The first event was held to coincide with the UN's International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2012 and the second event took place in February 2013.

In response to these events, the Library Service has prioritised areas for improvement and the following changes have already been made:

- improved signage to increase visibility on glass entrance doors;
- automatic lighting available in all accessible toilets;

- yellow stripes painted on the edges of emergency exit steps at Chelmsley Wood Library;
- more prominent positioning of the Sight Loss Resource Centre in Solihull Central Library;
- PC keyboards and mice for visually impaired customers always on display in computer areas in all libraries so customers are aware of their availability;
- large print signage available in the large print fiction section of libraries;
- increased provision of audio books and spoken word;
- and - in terms of building design, signage, accessible toilets and other features - feedback has been taken into account when preparing the plans for new library facilities.

Physical activity

Research shows that people with disabilities are at particular risk of inactivity largely due to health reasons, a lack of information and an absence of appropriate opportunities with assistance and adapted facilities. The national Active People Survey 2009/10 found that only 8.9% of adults with a limiting long term illness or disability had participated in recommended levels of physical activity compared with 23.6% of all adults.

To address this inequality, the Step into Solihull Project has worked with disability groups, to provide physical activity sessions such as Extend and Nintendo Wii. Currently over 17% of the participants on the overall project, and 20% who take part on the walking programme, have declared a disability.

53% of patients referred to the DocSpot programme report a long term limiting disability. DocSpot has demonstrated particular effectiveness in improving patients' physical health (95%) and mental wellbeing (over 60%).

Parks and open spaces

We recognise that through the effective design of outdoor public space, we are able to address some of the barriers that may prevent disabled people from participating in activities that other people take for granted.

Since 2008/09 there have been 23 new/improved play spaces created throughout the Borough. This has included targeted consultation with disabled children, and children and young people with additional needs, to find out what would encourage them to use play spaces more often. The key issues arising from the stakeholder consultation meetings included a lack of provision within play areas for people with disabilities. This has been addressed through the use of inclusive design in all 23 Playbuilder sites.

Case Study – Solihull Gets Active

The Solihull Active Team supported the 'Solihull Gets Active' Games, which took place at the North Solihull Sports Centre, in September 2013.

We worked with a wide range of disability groups across Solihull on this project, which was led by Enable-Solihull. Two of the aims were to showcase the amount of opportunities that exist to take part in sport and physical activity across Solihull and to increase sports/physical activity participation by disabled people in Solihull.

The event was planned following full consultation and engagement with local disabled people and was aimed at people with disabilities, mobility impairments and health conditions.

Over 100 people attended the day and took part in activities including archery, wheelchair basketball, table tennis and martial arts.

As an incentive to encourage people to try out different sports activities, passes were offered by Tudor Grange to all participants on completion of an 'activity card'.

It was felt that there was a good atmosphere throughout the day and overwhelmingly positive feedback was received from participants and helpers.



Following a review, our **parks webpages** now provide more detailed information on the facilities available within our principal parks and access within our parks for people with disabilities.

Feedback from park users is reviewed, and appropriate action taken as necessary, to improve access or facilities within public open space. To increase overall access to parks and following discussions with various members of the community, we provide a Park Mobility Scheme. The scheme allows people to borrow wheelchairs on a similar basis to the Shopmobility scheme. The wheelchairs are fully collapsible so they can be taken in a vehicle to be used in any park and open space within the Borough. We work closely with Shopmobility and other agencies to promote this service.

Mental health services for young people

Prevalence rates of mental health illness (for young people)

There is little trend data available, but it is estimated that around 3,800 children aged 5-16 years in Solihull suffer from some sort of diagnosed mental disorder (1,785 conduct disorders, 1,139 emotional disorders including depression and anxiety, 462 hyperkinetic (hyperactivity) disorders and 400 less common disorders including autism, eating disorders and selective mutism).

Approximately 30% of the primary presentations to the Child and Mental Health Service are for emotional disorders, which is slightly less than the regional average. 50% of caseloads relate to hyperkinetic and autistic spectrum disorders, which is 10% higher than the regional average. Hospital stays for self-harm at 174.1 per 100,000 were significantly better than the England average rate of 198.3 in 2009-10.

Children with a mental disorder are more likely to be boys, living in a lower income household, in social housing and with a lone parent. As much as can be estimated, disorders will be higher among children living in areas of Solihull with higher levels of deprivation in the Regeneration Zone and the Urban West.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Case Study: Understanding Your Child's Behaviour Programme

The Solihull Parenting team co-ordinate a menu of parenting groups across the Borough including:

- Universal 'Understanding Your Child's Behaviour' groups open to all parents and carers in the Borough
- Specialist parenting support groups including: fathers only, parents of teenagers, parents of children with ASD and/or additional needs
- Targeted 'Understanding your Child's Behaviour' groups open to families who are currently involved with Children's Social Services (referral only)

The 'Understanding Your Child's Behaviour' programme is designed to run for 2 hours per week, over 10 weeks, and sessions include:

- How do you know what you and your child are feeling?
- Tuning into your child's development needs
- Having fun together
- Sleep and anger
- Different styles of parenting
- How to recover when things go wrong

The Borough wide parenting group network is a real demonstration of multi-agency working, with facilitators from

health, education, children's centres, the educational psychology service, Child, Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and children's services, regularly delivering programmes.

For the year 2012-13, 33 programmes were delivered across the Borough, with over 200 parents attending.

Recent research undertaken in conjunction with Birmingham University shows that Understanding Your Child's Behaviour parenting groups deliver improvements in wellbeing for parents and better outcomes for their children. Parents' comments included:

- "The group was wonderful, I really enjoyed it. I think every parent should attend the group"
- "At first I didn't want to join the course but I'm so glad I did. It's opened my eyes towards how my outlook was towards my son"
- "I have learnt so much, keeping calm, self awareness and think how my child is feeling"
- "I am able to step back in difficult situations and think how best to deal with issues and think how they feel"

For more information contact Solihull Parenting Team on telephone number 0121 329 1911, or by email to

[**parenting@heartofengland.nhs.uk**](mailto:parenting@heartofengland.nhs.uk)

[**www.solihull.gov.uk/psychology**](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/psychology)

Interpretation and translation

We have provision for communicating with disabled people who have specific communication needs. We have access to British Sign Language, Sign Supported English and Deafblind Interpreters for the Deaf community as well as audio transcription, and translation into Braille, Makaton, Moon and other formats suitable for blind and visually impaired people.

Pregnancy and Maternity

The initiatives outlined below have been developed as a result of data analysis, recognised best practice and customer feedback. As part of our decision making processes we consider the relevance of equality for pregnant women/new mothers, specifically highlighting when targeted consultation has taken place and the likely impact of the decision on pregnant women.

Our public buildings

Our public buildings are welcoming places for women to breastfeed, with staff aware of women's rights to breastfeed in public, and facilities in larger buildings for mothers to breast feed in privacy if desired, as well as baby-changing facilities.

Supporting young people in sexual health and relationships matters

Through various initiatives such as "Baby Think It Over", we have managed to reduce under 18 conception rates in the last few years. "Baby, Think It Over" (BTIO) is a ten week learning programme aimed at young women, designed to teach them about contraception, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and healthy positive relationships in a safe environment. The long term goal of this programme is to equip young women with knowledge and skills to stay safe and healthy, and reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancies. Participants who complete the course receive a certificate for taking part. We also provide a shorter introduction to healthy relationships programmes that have been delivered in a variety of venues across the Borough. Young people who have enjoyed taking part in this programme have often then joined a BTIO programme. During the last twelve months, these programmes have been delivered to at least 126 young people between the ages of 13 and 19.

All of the young people have demonstrated improved knowledge of how to access sexual health and support services, and identifying healthy and unhealthy relationships. They have each gained an AQA unit award certificate to recognise their achievements.

Even though the project is targeted at young women, there is recognition that young men also need this type of learning. Plans are underway to look at how the programme could be adapted to fit the needs of young men.

Physical activity

Research shows that babies born to a family where one parent is obese have a 30-40% chance of becoming obese themselves; this increases to 70-80% where both parents are obese. Pregnancy is identified as a time in a woman's life where she is at a high risk of developing obesity, i.e. putting on extra weight during pregnancy that she is never able to lose. Research shows that eating habits, food preferences and activity levels are learned early in life. Therefore avoiding the development of unhealthy lifestyles in the first place provides the best chance for a child to avoid obesity.

The Living Well Project, managed by the Solihull Active Team, offers a weight management programme for pregnant women and new mums. It works with the woman to help minimise weight gain during pregnancy, helps in weight loss following birth and provides information to help the whole family to adopt a healthier lifestyle to ensure their child gets the best start and to prevent childhood obesity. The programme works with women with a (pre pregnancy) Body Mass Index over 30.

Race (or Ethnicity/Ethnic Origin)

The initiatives outlined below have been developed as a result of data analysis, recognised best practice and customer feedback. As part of our decision making processes we consider the relevance of race equality, specifically highlighting when targeted consultation has taken place and the likely impact of the decision on people of different ethnic backgrounds.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) service

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service works with schools and families to help children for whom English is an additional language to acquire better English. It helps international new arrivals (who are from diverse ethnic backgrounds) to integrate into school and to access the curriculum. The EAL Service also supports those children whose families have been long established in the UK and have English as an additional language. Support for children is accessed through schools and with parents' permission.

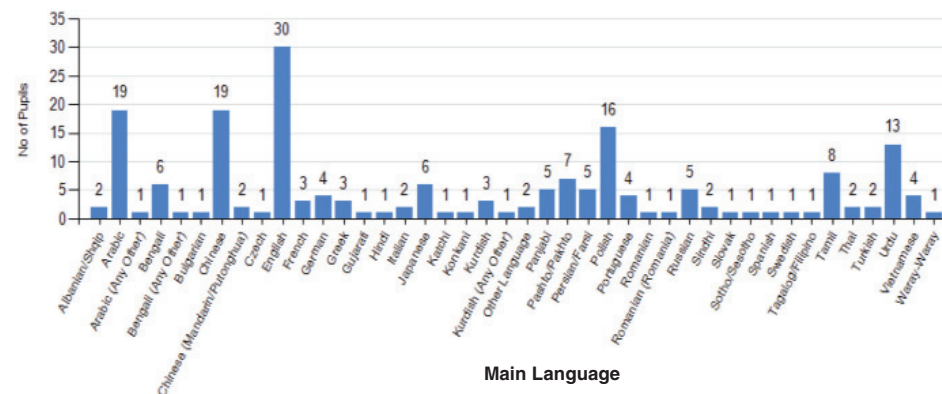
The EAL Service can offer additional short-term support at all Key Stages to international new arrivals, that are unable to benefit fully and immediately from the curriculum offered, because their first or home language is not English. Support is aimed at equipping them to become part of the school academically and socially, as quickly as possible. It aims to avoid anxiety or disruption to their education.

During the 2012/13 academic year, the Service provided advice/support for 191 children from 42 countries (excluding the UK) of 41 different language backgrounds other than English. 46% of all interventions were for children born in the UK. There was a rise in the number of Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children who were referred to the Service. There was a rise in Secondary referrals in the second year as schools converted to Academies.

Direct support of EAL pupils in Reception/Foundation Stage 2 has been well received by schools. There has been an increase in work with schools regarding collection and analysis of accurate data

Range of main languages spoken by pupils using the Service

EAL Service by Main Language (191)



The 41 first languages other than English can be contrasted with the 62 languages identified in the Local Authority (LA) January census. Arabic, Chinese, Polish and Urdu speaking communities constituted 36% of all pupils supported. English is often being recorded as a main language where children are multilingual. Both the Service records and the LA census confirm that there continue to be a considerable number of 'isolated' learners (learners whose first language is not English and who are learning in schools or settings where few, if any, pupils share their first language) in Solihull. Again, this academic year, the highest proportion of children supported by the Service was for those born in the UK. Many of this group of pupils appears similar to last year. Many were Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 requests, for children who had had little exposure to English before starting school or who were not making expected levels of progress.

Ethnicities of pupils supported by the EAL Service

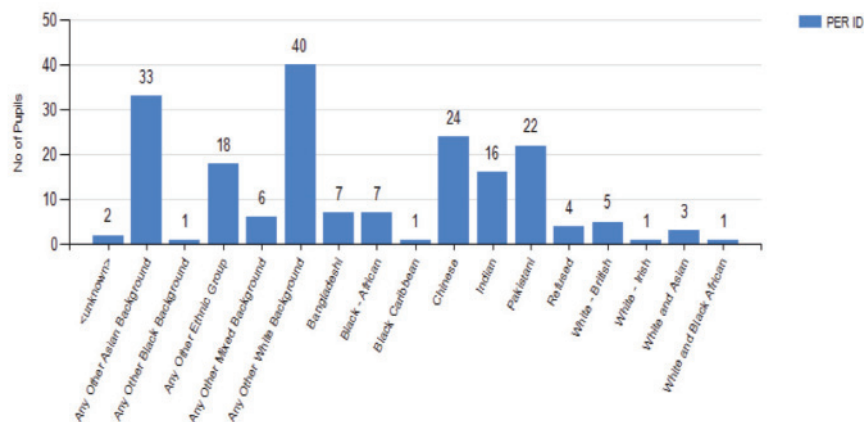
The highest numbers of identified pupils were recorded as WOTH (Any Other White Background), AOTH (Any Other Asian Background), CHNE (Chinese) and APKN (Pakistani).

The largest number of children supported belonged to the Islamic and Christian faith communities. This remains similar to previous years. The service continues to work with more boys (constituting 59% of the cohort) than girls.

Libraries

Our libraries provide a range of books in languages other than English. A Community Language collection comprising Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati and Punjabi is situated at Solihull Central Library along with a range of newspapers and periodicals. There is also a section with European language novels, and children’s dual language books are available.

EAL Service by Ethnicity (191)



The installation of Self Service Kiosks in all Solihull libraries has ensured that all library customers are able to self-issue/discharge and renew materials and pay charges easily without having to wait in queues to see library staff. Customers can easily operate the kiosks

by the use of on-screen written prompts and visual images/directions. To ensure equality of access the kiosks have been programmed with up to four alternative languages – which can be changed to meet the profile of the local community.

At Solihull Central Library we also offer Black Writers and Asian Writers fiction collections. This stock is accessed by all communities and increases understanding and good relations between people of different ethnic backgrounds. To support Black History Month, Solihull Libraries provide a book and information display that celebrates Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. We have also held Community Reads to celebrate Black History Month, inviting people to read one of two titles which explore various relevant experiences and to write a review or place comments on a blog. One reader said of *Small Island*: “Overall I found this a magnificent book providing historical education in a humorous manner. Delicate subjects are addressed carefully. Whilst engaging, it encourages the reader to look at their personal belief and attitude”

Interpretation and translation

Solihull Council is committed to ensuring that all members of the public can access our services and the information we provide. We recognise that some people speak little or no English, or have other communication requirements, and may require an interpreter or translator to access Council services. We have separate suppliers for face-to-face and telephone based interpreting services, and for translation work. Most of our interpreting work is in the support of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

The Council is currently reviewing its contract for Interpreting and Translation, which could lead to a more systematic approach to the provision of Interpreting and Translation services.

Gypsy and Traveller strategy and housing needs

There are an estimated 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, of which only one third live in caravans, with the remainder living in 'bricks and mortar'. The Council is committed to meeting the housing needs of all groups, and carried out a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment in 2012. This allowed us to understand the number of pitches the Council needs to provide. The Council has approved a Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) which was examined by an Inspector in December 2013. It sets out the Council's approach to meeting the identified need for 38 permanent residential pitches between 2012 and 2027, and includes the identification of sites that the Council considers suitable to meet these requirements.

Following assessments of our services, when those applying for housing are asked to define their ethnicity, "Gypsy or Traveller" is now provided as an option. Planning permission has been granted for a social rented site of 11 pitches for those Gypsy and Travellers who have been identified as in priority need for housing through our Housing Waiting List. There is also support for "Gypsies and Travellers" to access a support worker who is independent of the Council but funded through our Supporting People service.

Religion or Belief

The initiatives outlined below have been developed as a result of data analysis, recognised best practice and customer feedback. As part of our decision making processes we consider the relevance of religious equality, specifically highlighting when targeted consultation has taken place and the likely impact of the decision on people of different religious backgrounds.

Religious events

In 2011 we produced a policy for events in our parks and town centres to provide clear information on the charges and types of events that will be accepted. The policy outlines that the Solihull Faiths Forum will be notified of events of a religious nature to increase the opportunity for inter-faith work.

Wherever possible and subject to limited resources, we support a number of religious events which take place in our town centres and parks. These include Chanukah in December, Prayers in the Park, crib blessing, St Alphege Fayre and the Walk of Witness on Good Friday. For these events there is no charge as we class them as religious celebrations or festivities, and they help to promote an awareness of diversity within the Borough.

Initiatives are organised to raise awareness of different faiths amongst our workforce; this has included features in the staff magazine, talks by faith leaders to Council staff and Councillors and visits to places of worship.

Case study: Bereavement Services

The Bereavement Team are experienced and trained in providing a sensitive and compassionate service. This includes understanding different needs relating to faith. We know that people of different religions, belief (and non-belief), and faith perspectives follow different traditions and rituals around the time of death.

Officers have developed a close working relationship with some local community groups for specific service provision. These include the development of a burial section and 365 day service for the local Muslim community and the development of a burial section and service provision for the local Coptic community.

In recognition of our growing and increasingly diverse community, in 2012, we made the decision to further enhance the options available to the bereaved, this includes the introduction of a new Natural Burial facility and an additional "Muslim burial section". This was based on feedback from the local community and consultation with Funeral Directors.

Libraries

Solihull Libraries provide a wide range of material across religions, beliefs and faiths, which are available from all library locations. In response to a complaint about a lack of material relating to the Baha'i faith, we have purchased more up to date stock. Working with Solihull Faiths Forum a programme of displays on religious festivals was established, with input from the five main local religious groups.

Sex (or Gender)

The initiatives outlined below have been developed as a result of data analysis, recognised best practice and customer feedback. As part of our decision making processes we consider the relevance of gender equality, specifically highlighting when targeted consultation has taken place and the likely impact of the decision on people of different genders.

Employment support

Employment support is available to all unemployed Solihull residents and can be provided in a public location of their choice at a time to suit their circumstances. We work closely with Children's Centres who can provide a crèche facility for the children of parents who are receiving employment support.

Data capture sheets are used to ensure that we are appropriately targeting our service delivery, and include questions on gender.

Physical activity

Participation in physical activity differs by gender and decreases with age. National research shows 40% of men and 28% of women meet the minimum recommendations for physical activity in adults, with a gradual increase in numbers achieving these levels between 1997 and 2006. To contribute to increasing female participation in physical activity, DocSpot provides a range of activities which are attractive to females; as a consequence, 62% of participants are women.

The Step into Solihull project specifically targets women as participation levels in physical activity by women in Solihull were below national and regional levels. The project has engaged with 1,357 women since the project began in activities including walking, tai chi, Extend, Nintendo Wii, and aerobics.

Our Neighbourhood Sports Programme provides opportunities for male and female participants. As part of our sports strategy, women and girls within the north of Solihull are a priority group. We are still successful in running the Active Women (Us Girls) programme, which promotes activity to young women aged 16-25 years within North Solihull. Us Girls has now established new doorstep sport interventions, new training packages and new ways of thinking that are tailored to meet the specific needs of young women in Smith's Wood, Chelmsley Wood and Kingshurst.

The Active Women Programme is now co-ordinated by the Solihull Active team and our monthly data returns to the Home Office and StreetGames show that between April 2012 and December 2013, more than 680 males and 230 females took part in Neighbourhood Sports activities.

Case Study – International Women's Day

In 2013 we celebrated International Women's Day with a number of activities; our Active Women project dyed the swimming pool at North Solihull Sports Centre pink.



In March 2013 we held an all-day event at North Solihull Sports Centre. There were activities for all ages, and we encouraged families to attend as a means of intergenerational working. We also worked with Oxfam, encouraging all women attending to bring a bra to donate to Oxfam. The activities on the day included taster sessions to include: girls' football, cycling, zumba, table tennis, tai chi, boxing, running, swimming, hair and beauty including nail painting, henna tattooing, cupcake decorating and a market place of wrap around services such as Str8up, Breastfeeding, and Sexual Health.

Libraries

Our Summer Reading Challenge for 4-14 year olds has targeted boys, due to the recognised literacy differences that regularly place boys below girls.

Domestic abuse work in Solihull

Domestic Abuse cuts across ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, disability and religion or beliefs and class/status. Domestic Abuse can affect any individual within society; however some specific groups are more vulnerable or suffer more abuse because of additional factors, such as their gender, age, mental health, learning disabilities or religion or beliefs. It is recognised that there is significant under reporting: women may be fearful to report being a victim; men may feel embarrassed; minority ethnic groups may be subject to cultural and religious pressures; etc.

Local data shows that victims in Solihull are predominantly young and female. In March 2013, the definition of domestic abuse was widened to include those aged 16–17 and wording changed to reflect coercive control. Nationally and locally there is a growing concern about the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

Solihull Council is committed to tackling domestic abuse and continues to work in partnership with a range of agencies to help victims of domestic abuse. At the moment female victims of domestic abuse who live in Solihull can access advice, information and support from:

- A local helpline run by Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid
- A community based drop-in
- One-to-one independent support
- Refuge accommodation

Men who are at high risk because of domestic abuse are able to access local specialist support and, in 2013/14, we are considering how we can make sure more people are aware of what domestic abuse is and have access to information, advice and support.

Complaints

At all of our Children's Centres, we continue to monitor complaints. We try to deal with any complaints as efficiently as possible using our established procedures depending on whether a complaint is a statutory or corporate one. For the past year we have not had any complaints to report on from any of our Children's Centres.

Case Study – Working with people who experience domestic abuse

Michelle was in an abusive relationship. In the beginning she felt sorry for her partner and really believed that she could help him with his problems, but as the relationship progressed and his abusive behaviour escalated she says 'I wanted to leave but felt trapped and isolated'. Michelle said she was really scared of him. He was aggressive and she had a real worry that he would track her down if she left him.

The police had been involved before and a support worker (from Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy) contacted her. Michelle said she used to speak in code with the support worker, if he was about when she rang 'she used to tell me to pretend it was a sales call'. Michelle says 'I was not ready to leave just then, I was in denial and he caught on pretty quick about the calls so I stopped answering the calls'.

Michelle says when she became pregnant, Social Services made contact and explained how worried they were due to his past and the previous reported violent incidents in their relationship. She understood that there was a real risk that her child would be taken into care, but felt powerless to do anything.

Michelle knows she took a lot of blame and responsibility for his actions. He said it was her fault and she agreed. He also used to taunt her by saying that nobody (Police/Social Services) could do anything; they couldn't touch him, which she believed to be true. Some of the violence was witnessed by his father but he did little to help. On one occasion he told his son to stop beating her as she had had enough. On another occasion the father actively encouraged him to hurt her by making up a story despite knowing his son was aggressive and beat her up regularly. Michelle said she had been walking back from the shops with her child in the pushchair, and was on the other side of the street. On arriving home her partner's father told him she had been flirting with workmen. Her partner went into a rage and

dragged her out onto the street by her hair to humiliate her in public. His father and others were watching but nobody did anything to help her.

The incident which led to her leaving the relationship was witnessed by her child and it was this that made her realise that she had to leave. He accused her of seeing another man and started strangling her with her young child watching.

Michelle was working with a mental health worker, as the extreme pressure of the abuse had led to her having mental health issues. When Michelle explained that she needed to leave and needed help they linked her in with the refuge. Michelle describes feeling numb and things being a blur and expecting to be sent to a shelter.

On the day she was due to arrive at the refuge she changed her mind repeatedly, but her mental health worker and refuge staff gently coaxed her to come and try it. Michelle has now been in the refuge for four months and is still very vulnerable and fragile. She has a strong fear her ex-partner will track her down and support staff are trying to help her overcome this. She has been supported to take out a non-molestation order and was accompanied to court by two support staff, as there was a high risk that her ex would attend the hearing.

Michelle's child is on the 'at risk' register. She understands why and her support worker attends all the meetings with her and helps her to explain the changes she is making to protect herself and her child.

The support she has received in the refuge has helped Michelle to re-engage with her family and given her the confidence to explain why she isolated herself from them. Michelle is not yet at the point that she can look forward to a safe life but she is aware of how far she has travelled in a short space of time. Staff are helping her to consider areas that will be safe for her to live and working with her to put safety measures and support in place for when she moves out.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment

The initiatives outlined below have been developed as a result of data analysis, recognised best practice and customer feedback. As part of our decision making processes we consider the relevance of equality based on sexual orientation and gender reassignment, specifically highlighting when targeted consultation has taken place and the likely impact of the decision on people of different sexual orientation and gender reassignment. We recognise that gender reassignment and sexual orientation differ, but our policies tend to address Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans* (LGBT) people together in recognition of the shared experience of discrimination they may face.

LGBT history month

As for last year, our Equality and Diversity Team worked with the Library and Information Service and GaySol to put together an information and book display in Solihull and Chelmsley Wood libraries as part of LGBT History Month 2013.

This featured information on LGBT heroes as chosen by members of GaySol, as well raising awareness of other local groups. These services are working together with the LGBT Employee Network on the new *Pride in Our Past* project (see Case Study).

Case Study – Gaysol

Gaysol is a project for supporting young people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual in Solihull. It is run by young people through the Youth Service. It caters for young people between 13 and 19 years of age. Gay, lesbian and bisexual young people regularly meet to socialise and get supported in a safe environment.

Gaysol also runs a website supported by Solihull Council. The website gives advice and information to young people on understanding homosexuality and also about relationships.

For more information visit the website: www.j4usolihull.co.uk/gaysol

***Note** – we use the term Trans as the preferred umbrella term used to describe anyone who feels that the sex that was assigned to them at birth incompletely describes or fails to describe them. This term includes people who are transsexual, are intersex, identify outside the female/male binary, or have a gender expression which differs from their perceived sex.

Case Study – Pride in Our Past

During February 2013, the Heritage Gallery at the Solihull Central Library held a special exhibition to mark the national Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) History Month.

The exhibition included a giant comic strip which depicted the story of how the gay writer, John Hampson, took part in a sham marriage in Solihull in 1935 with the German Jewish actress, Therese Gift, to enable her to get a passport.

Also at the Central Library there was a timeline of LGBT history, and a display promoting the works of some LGBT writers. These works are available for loan from Solihull Libraries.

There were also memory sheets for people to record their own LGBT memories of life in the Borough and how attitudes and experiences have changed over time. The memory sheets will be added to the heritage collection as part of a 'Pride in our Past' project which aims to build a historical picture of LGBT experience in the Borough.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Families First Programme

Solihull Families First was established in April 2012 to meet both the Troubled Families national agenda and also our local agenda to provide more effective support to families facing a range of complex issues, such as crime, antisocial behaviour, serious non-attendance at school and having no working family members. The aims include improving the lives of the families concerned; breaking inter-generational cycles of behaviour within the families; and achieving long term improved outcomes for family members and improved community relations.

The Solihull Partnership is the host for the Families First approach. It is overseen by a multi-agency Programme Board which includes police, mental health services, community health, social services, probation, youth services, Solihull Community Housing and the voluntary sector; and it is delivered by a multi-disciplinary team. The team provides intensive support for around 45 families at any one time and works with a variety of services including children's social services, employment support officers, family workers, schools admissions team, special education needs team, transport services, children missing in education team, and youth services teams to ensure that families facing complex issues are getting the right support to meet their needs.

Solihull is committed to working with 355 families who meet the national Troubled Families criteria over a three year period. Families are identified through data matching and professional referral; many families come to the attention of Families First via both sources. By the end of September 2013 (half way through the three year programme), we had worked with 206 families.

In addition to the benefits for the families, there are cost savings to be made from reducing the disproportionate contribution some of these families make to social problems, benefit claims, police time, anti social behaviour, and so on. Evidence also indicates that families which have undergone the family work approach, as used by the Families First team, experience reduced stress, improved social functioning and need fewer services.

Example of Benefits for Families

- For three families we began working with in summer 2013, school attendance has increased from 83% in the last academic year to 97% in the first half term of the 2013/4 academic year.
- For one single parent family with six children, working with the school admissions team to arrange for all children to attend the same school resulted in improved attendance rates, for example, for one child from 50% to 82% .
- An analysis of the first 15 families worked with showed a 45% reduction in police call outs compared to the previous six months.
- To date, we have been able to claim a reward payment for five families who met the Troubled Families criteria and have now moved into work.

Case Study – One Family’s Experience

Families First became involved with this family of five at the end of January 2013.

One of our family workers engaged with the family who agreed to work with Families First and then set to work....

The youngest son was not attending his special school place which was costing the local authority £47,000 a year. After numerous attempts to get him to return, it became apparent that it was not going to work. With persistence we were able to find suitable alternative education for him, which he has been attending since the beginning of May.

The eldest son was assisted to get to his Youth Offending Service appointments to complete his referral order and also to gain a six month employment placement, which has raised his self worth and stopped family arguments, as he has been earning his own money. He has stopped smoking and joined a local gym, and is gaining new friends and more positive role models.

The youngest daughter has now got into a positive routine and is attending school on time every day. This was with the intervention of getting the school minibus to collect her along with other pupils which was arranged by Families First. She has also started to attend the school drama club and is over all much happier in school.

Getting the youngest son back into school has had the biggest positive impact on the family while gaining employment for the eldest son and staying out of trouble with the police has also created positive change in the family.

The family has now ceased all intervention from social services and has continued to stay off the police radar. Families First still has involvement with the family once a week, but this has reduced considerably compared to the intensity of the initial few months.

More information about Solihull Families First is available at <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/familiesfirst/default.htm>

Local Discretionary Housing Payments and Grant Schemes

The Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) funds Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) through an annual grant which is administered by the Council. DHPs are free-standing payments made at the discretion of the local authority, dependent on meeting the set criteria.

The Government has abolished nationally administered Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans and transferred the responsibility for grant payments to local authorities, who in turn, are given the flexibility to operate schemes that match local needs. The scheme for Solihull is now known as ‘Local Welfare Provision’.

The Council is working with partners to ensure Local Welfare Provision can enhance existing support for particular groups to access funding. These include care leavers, ex-offenders on release, people experiencing domestic violence and people receiving homeless support as part of a resettlement plan.

Preventing Homelessness: Money Advice and Repossessions Prevention

Close links are also in place between SCH, the Council’s Housing Strategy Team and the Council’s Income and Awards Team, so that a co-ordinated package of advice and support can be delivered to residents that have been, and are likely to be, affected by welfare reform and financial hardship. This has included the joint funding of a

new post of 'Financial Support Officer' who is responsible for coordinating support to households with complex and complicated financial needs who have been affected by changes brought about through Welfare Reform.

Community engagement

We seek to involve residents in identifying and tackling issues in their neighbourhoods. We widely distribute a Neighbourhood Partners newsletter in the North, Central and Rural Neighbourhoods. We engage with all parish and town councils and key residents groups by attending regular meetings and sharing ideas and formulating joint projects and initiatives. We recognise that some communities may otherwise miss out on the opportunity to engage with the authority and partner agencies due to socio-economic/geographical disadvantage.

We hold regular surgery/drop in sessions where residents have access to Council Officers, the Police and other partners. These are held in local community facilities. We actively work in socio-economically disadvantaged communities to encourage participation. We have also worked with residents in Smith's Wood, Fordbridge, Kingshurst and Chelmsley Wood to develop resident-led neighbourhood partnerships, each of which has held an event to consider their priorities and to draw up an action plan.

Home energy efficiency and affordable warmth strategy

Households are classed as experiencing fuel poverty if more than 10% of net income is spent on maintaining a satisfactory level of heating. Many households living in fuel poverty are also classed as vulnerable, for example where one or more household members is elderly, there are children, or there are members of the household who are disabled or have a long term sickness. The most recent estimate from the Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2013 (Department for the Environment and Climate Change), identifies there were 9,909 households in fuel poverty in Solihull. This accounts for 12% of the

Borough's households. It is recognised that the effects of being fuel poor are more acutely felt by vulnerable groups, including older people, disabled people and children and young people.

We work in partnership with a number of agencies, including the Energy Saving Trust and Act on Energy, to provide free and independent energy efficiency advice to all residents of Solihull, with support targeted at vulnerable households

Affordable Housing

The population of the Borough is projected to increase by around 20,000 between 2011 and 2028; with the number of households projected to increase by 14,000 over the period 2006 to 2028. It is expected that by 2028 around one third of all households will contain single people. The number of households represented by people of 75 years of age is projected to increase by 7,000 between 2008 and 2023 to comprise 21% of all the Borough's households.

Affordable housing need is exceptionally high, as Solihull has one of the most severe affordability problems in the West Midlands Region. The shortage of affordable housing is particularly acute in parts of the mature suburbs and the rural area. A Strategic Housing Market Assessment completed in 2009 estimated that 70% of newly forming households could not afford to buy or rent at market prices.

We have developed policies through our Local Plan, to help meet the housing needs of the Borough. This requires a proportion of homes in qualifying sites to be 'affordable' and the Council will identify the tenure, mix and type of the homes and any requirements for homes to be designed to meet specific needs such as those of older or disabled people.

Local economic assessment/Work and skills plan

The **Local Economic Assessment** (LEA) identifies key issues and recommends policy interventions to realise Solihull's economic potential. This assessment includes information on our demographic

profile and access to, and participation in, economic activity by the characteristics of age, gender, and area deprivation. A key element is labour market analysis, which has informed local priorities and activities for tackling worklessness.

The LEA consults the economic intelligence base to inform local strategies and plans including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Development Framework, investment priorities for housing and transport and the 'Action Against Poverty Strategy'.

Case Study - North Solihull Regeneration Programme

The North Solihull Partnership (NSP) was formed in 2005, and comprises the Council, Solihull Community Housing (SCH), Sigma Inpartnership (Programme Management and Village Centre development Partner), WM Housing (Consultation and Affordable Housing Delivery Partner) and Bellway (Housing Development Partner).

Together they signed up to deliver 15-20 years of holistic and sustainable regeneration designed to make a noticeable improvement to the lives of local people, in respect of housing choice, education, health, employment and the physical environment.

Over the lifetime of the programme, it aims to:

- Change approximately 40,000 people's lives for the better
- Invest £950 million in social and public assets across the area
- Build up to 5,903 new modern homes
- Build new state of the art primary schools for all children
- Create five vibrant village centres to deliver key services – initially to be developed in Craig Croft and North Arran Way

However, the Regeneration Programme is not just about physical regeneration. The goals of the North Solihull Stewardship and Legacy programme are to complement the physical regeneration taking place by focussing on the social and economic benefits to the local community once the physical regeneration is complete. This approach is applied across all the Village Centres within the North Solihull Regeneration Programme and focuses on three priority areas in each location:

- Community Engagement and Communication – Enables better connected services, stronger community networks and more decision making opportunities for local residents.
- Business and Enterprise – Enables local businesses to flourish and deliver local services and increase the number of businesses operating in North Solihull. Also enables local third sector groups to manage local assets and buildings.
- Employment – Enables more local residents to maximise the take up of local job opportunities.

The key driver for the North Solihull Stewardship and Legacy programme is to help sustain the benefits of the regeneration programme into the future for the local community.

Employment Work Clubs

Work Clubs are provided in areas with statistically higher levels of worklessness, or areas which have high levels of unemployment. They are currently provided in Smith's Wood, Chelmsley Wood, Shirley and Hobs Moat. By using accessible venues in the community, such as Excellence in the Communities centres and libraries, the Work Clubs are available to the most disadvantaged residents who may not normally access Council services. Registration forms collect information about age, gender, ethnicity and barriers to employment that people face. This information is used to refer people to other services, which may provide them with the most appropriate, individualised support.

Tackling high levels of youth unemployment in the Borough remains a priority. It is recognised that Work Clubs are not always a suitable method of engaging with young people, therefore the Employment Team works with a range of partners to ensure young people receive employment support through an appropriate route. The new Solihull Jobs Fund brings together various funding streams which will offer at least 50 new jobs, apprenticeships or paid work placements to young people over the next twelve months.

Physical activity and access to leisure services

DocSpot aims to improve health outcomes within the Borough, and consequently, targets areas of greatest health inequalities in order to contribute to a narrowing of the current age of mortality gap in Solihull. At present, there is a 30% greater attendance on the scheme from areas of health inequality, largely as a result of greater provision and health need in these areas. At present, the scheme is offered from North Solihull Sports Centre and Smith's Wood Community Gym in North Solihull.

The Neighbourhood Sports Programme and Active Women Programme both have projects in place to address the socio-economic inequality within the Borough. The current main focus for the provision

is within Kingshurst and Fordbridge, Chelmsley Wood and Smith's Wood. Community capacity building is vital to ensure these types of programming continue.

The targeted programming for Neighbourhood Sports and Active Women can be found at:

<http://www.solihullactive.co.uk/napsolihull>

<http://www.solihullactive.co.uk/usgirls>

As socio-economic disadvantage is likely to result in lower incomes and a potential difficulty in being able to afford to access leisure services, we have introduced a number of price related initiatives. These include price reductions for income disadvantaged groups, including those over 60, unemployed people and people with a disability. These lower charges are available for swimming, the gym and some studio fitness classes. Access indicators for North Solihull Sports Centre and Tudor Grange Leisure Centre suggest both centres are performing well in attracting people from lower socio-economic groups. Satisfaction levels are high at both leisure centres, which are delivered through a Public/Private Partnership with Parkwood Leisure.

In 2013, the Solihull Active Team worked with community groups in Smith's Wood to introduce a 'Smith's Wood Active Zone' to raise the profile of sports and physical activity opportunities in the area, as well as identify gaps in provision in order to further develop what's on for local residents.

Case Study – North Solihull Strategic Cycle Network

This scheme is a £2.6 million project that will create a series of strategic cycle routes connecting residents of North Solihull with key employment sites in the area.

The Scheme, funded jointly through the European Regional Development Fund, managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government and Solihull Council, develops and enhances existing cycling opportunities in North Solihull by creating an additional 13km of cycle friendly routes. The routes will allow more local people to take advantage of this cheap, healthy and environmentally friendly way to get to and from work. The new routes will link into cycle improvements created through the recently completed Airport and NEC Integrated Transport Access Scheme, which was funded by the Department for Transport.

We are working with local businesses to remove perceived barriers to cycling and encourage its uptake by promoting the potential benefits that it offers to both employers and employees.

As part of the project, grants will be made available for businesses located in the North of Solihull to assist in improving cycle facilities for staff, with the aim of making cycling more accessible and attractive as a way of getting to work. The grants will fund

improvements such as the supply of cycle parking facilities, cycle changing facilities or even pool bikes.

The first two phases of the scheme were completed more than a year ago. Subsequent phases followed in January 2013 and run through to March 2015.

In response to consultation undertaken on the impact of the first two phases of works, and feedback received from local residents and stakeholders, including the local disabled people's network Enable-Solihull, we have actively responded to feedback and tailored our working practices to ensure that the works have minimal impact on local people.

North Solihull
Strategic Cycle Network Scheme

Supporting you and your staff to cycle to work

A new 13km cycle network is being built in north Solihull over the next three years, which will make it easier, quicker, safer and more convenient for people to cycle to work.

Working with local employers we are seeking to make cycling a viable and attractive alternative to the car.

EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in Your Future
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Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Libraries

In recognition of the large geographical spread of the Borough, we opened a new flagship library in Chelmsley Wood in 2009. Library usage has increased significantly since re-opening in the new location with large numbers of new customers joining the library, as well as increased borrowing statistics.

Our library opening hours and locations are designed to ensure access for the community. 25% of library users live within 0.5 kilometres of their local library. In partnership with Warwickshire County Council we offer a modern and accessible Mobile Delivery Service. The mobile library visits a mix of rural locations and sheltered housing over a three week cycle. The new joint service provides budget efficiency for the two councils whilst providing a more inclusive service to the community. Ongoing evaluation of services and customer satisfaction surveys help refine and develop services to meet the needs of all communities.

We provide a range of family learning programmes, a breadth of resources and free access to computers with a range of software and internet access across all of our libraries. This enables access to information and communication technologies for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with friends, do their homework, look for jobs and find information. Free public WiFi facilities are available in both Solihull and Chelmsley Wood libraries, where users can access the internet using their own devices. To help people make use of these facilities staff can provide basic support.

There is a mix of computer courses available and a range of accessibility devices and software, such as adjustable desking, track balls and big keyboards.