

Solihull

Area Assessment (Summary version)

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Provided under embargo



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for an independent overview
of local public services

Solihull at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Solihull. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from

No green flags have been identified for Solihull

Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

No red flags have been identified for Solihull

The local area

Solihull is a small borough in the West Midlands, in the centre of England. It has three main urban areas and extensive farmland interspersed with rural villages. The population is around 203,600 and is expected to grow just above the regional rate. Solihull has an above average older people population which will continue to grow over the next two decades. The area consists of people from mainly white ethnic origin, however the ethnic make up of the Borough is changing with latest population estimates indicating 9.4 per cent of the borough are from Black Minority Ethnic communities: more than double the rate within the 2001 Census. Overall deprivation is low; nevertheless parts of north Solihull fall into England's most deprived fifth, with pockets of the community in the 10 per cent most deprived. Solihull has a strong economy, employment is high and people earn above average wages.

Solihull's public services have agreed the following challenges that they need to tackle:

Building healthier communities

Building safer communities

Building stronger communities

Building more prosperous communities

An equal chance for children and young people

Narrowing Solihull's Gap in Inequalities

The next section tells you how Solihull's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Solihull doing?

Building healthier communities

The health of people in Solihull is mostly good and improving. Life expectancy for women is 83.8 years and 78.4 years for men. This is in the top 25 per cent nationally. However, there is a big split between the affluent areas of the borough and the deprived areas of the borough. Men in the more affluent parts of Solihull live, on average, 8.3 years longer than people in the three most deprived wards in north Solihull, and for women the gap is 6.5 years. The gap ranges up to nearly ten years between the best and worst wards.

The health priorities for Solihull's partners are: reducing health inequalities; promoting healthy lifestyle choices; ensuring dignity and prolonging independence; and improving people's emotional wellbeing.

Building safer communities

Compared to other areas of the West Midlands, crime rates are relatively low in Solihull. Partners in Solihull have made a difference in bringing down crime but the overall volume of crime remains higher than similar areas. Some types of crime have fallen following action by the Police and its partners, for instance burglary. But less progress is being made in tackling serious violence and hate crime where rates remain higher than similar areas.

Public perception of antisocial behaviour, and confidence in the Police are all similar to regional and national averages. The proportion of people who feel very safe or fairly safe after dark are better than the regional average. Fewer people than average think drunkenness or people using or dealing drugs is a problem in their local area. Nine in ten Solihull residents say they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the area as a place to live, this is better than national and regional averages. Just over three quarters of people in Solihull think that different communities get on well together, this is about the average for England.

Local public services work well together and deliver good results, results the public is noticing. In the north of the borough there has been success in reducing the recorded incidents of antisocial behaviour.

Building stronger communities

The people of Solihull are very satisfied with the borough and the public services they receive, 87.7 per cent of people are satisfied with the area as a place to live. This is higher than average and has improved since 2006/07. The Council has achieved beacon status for its work with partners on digital inclusion. Through this local public services have provided free broadband internet access and computers to people in the North of the borough living in tower blocks. Partners are thus investing in technology to increase social inclusion and promote life chances in the most disadvantaged areas of the borough. The Council is providing good services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. .

Building more prosperous communities

Although progress on North Solihull regeneration has been slowed by the recession, it is continuing to deliver. The regeneration partnership in Solihull has recently received significant funding from Government to continue work. Solihull Community Housing, which is rated excellent, is making good progress in making more homes decent. Solihull is on target for providing extra homes. However Solihull is currently below target on the supply of homes that are affordable.

Local Public Services are responding well to the recession and have developed a credit crunch action plan to tackle the local effects of the downturn. Partners have recognised the local economy has a high number of businesses which are particularly vulnerable to the recession, such as manufacturing and construction, business and financial services, and retail, distribution and hospitality. Solihull is now joining forces with the other six West Midlands areas and others to work more effectively, on a larger scale on worklessness.

There is a strong commitment to addressing levels of carbon emissions. For example the Council has signed the Nottingham Agreement on Climate Change and has developed a Climate Change Strategy and a Carbon Management Plan with a target to reduce emissions by 33 per cent by 2012. Recycling is increasing with plans for further improvements in 2009/10

An equal chance for children and young people

Solihull is in line or better than the England average for most indicators of education performance. When compared with similar local authorities, Solihull educational outcomes are close to the average for that group. The issue in Solihull is not the educational achievement of children and young people overall but the inequality in performance between the pupils from the more disadvantaged areas of the borough compared to the more affluent areas. There has been some progress in closing the gap but the difference in levels of achievement is still too wide. Health of children in Solihull is better than in other similar areas but health inequalities within the borough remain a challenge.

Narrowing Solihull's Gap in Inequalities

Solihull has one of the widest gaps in the country between the wealthiest and the poorest communities. Most of the population are better off than the national average, however parts of the Borough are among the most deprived in England. These clear inequalities are generally between the north and south of the borough. Local public services have identified closing the inequality gap as a significant challenge and a priority. This is a big test, the educational achievement gap for children and young people between the north of Solihull and the rest of the area, while reducing, remains wide and health inequalities are significant.

Addressing the needs of disadvantaged local people is central to partners' aims and aspirations. There is an innovative 15year physical regeneration programme for North Solihull to improve the quality of housing, schools, health and community facilities, transport and shops, as well as the physical environment of the area. This is complemented by other strategies to improve healthy lifestyles, overall educational achievement of children and young people as well as tackling worklessness and improving job opportunities. However, as Solihull is a relatively well off borough overall, it has not been able to secure external funding to tackle issues such as worklessness.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>



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