

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About Your Services

January 2012

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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.

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

Public 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.

Key achievements

Some of our key achievements relating to the three aims of the duty are outlined in this report. They include:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- Tackling hate crime
- Introducing inclusive play for disabled children

Advance equality of opportunity

- Personalisation of adult social care
- Children's Centres
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children education programme
- Addressing poverty

Foster good relations between communities

- Promoting community cohesion
- Working with Solihull Faiths Forum
- Celebrating Black History Month and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans History Month

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)

Our equalities objectives, which will be published separately, will be available by 6 April 2012 and will be updated at least every four years.

More information on the duty to publish equality information can be found in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's

Equality Information and the Equality Duty: a Guide for Public Authorities.

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 Equality Objectives, which will be published in April 2012.

General information

Subsequent sections of this report consider our role as a service provider from the perspective of individual protected characteristics (see page 2). 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

It also places our employee profile as a whole in the broader context of Solihull's equality profile which is largely based on information from the 2001 Census. We have used data from the 2001 Census for comparison purposes as it is the most accurate available source, until the findings of the 2011 Census are released. Throughout this report, and to help inform our understanding of our local population, we also draw upon the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) more recent mid-year estimates. These only reflect broad trends and show that the local population is ageing and becoming more ethnically diverse (particularly amongst younger non-working age groups). Where ONS mid-year estimates have been used as a comparator it will be referred to in the appropriate section of this report.

There are five protected characteristics against which Census 2001 population percentages are available: age, disability, race, religion or belief, and sex. These percentages are reproduced in the table opposite.

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

Protected characteristic	% of population (source Census 2001)
Age	
0-4	5.6
5-15	15.4
16-24	9.2
25-44	27.0
45-64	26.0
65-84	15.0
85+	1.8
Disability	
Yes	16.3
No	83.7
Race/Ethnicity	
Asian/Asian British	2.5
Black/Black British	1.0
Chinese/Other Ethnic	0.6
Mixed	1.3
All Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)	5.4
White	94.6
Religion/Belief	
Buddhist	0.2
Christian	78.2
Hindu	0.9
Jewish	0.2
Muslim	0.8
Sikh	0.8
Other	0.2
None	12.0
Declined to Specify	6.7
Sex/Gender	
Female	51.5
Male	48.5

Our vision and priorities

'An equal chance for all' is at the heart of our business change programme. Our commitment to improving people's lives in Solihull, including achieving faster rates of improvement to narrow the gap between the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and the majority, is at the heart of our vision and priorities. More information on this is available on our [website](#). We work closely with partner organisations to help ensure our Vision, Outcomes and Priorities are realised. We have a particularly close relationship with Solihull Community Housing (SCH), the Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up in April 2004 to run housing services on our behalf. Information on how SCH are meeting their public sector equality duty is available from their [website](#).

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 2010 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

Solihull's hate crime project, "Speak Up, Speak Out", was launched

in 2011. This project aims to build confidence amongst all disadvantaged groups to report incidents motivated by hatred. We have worked with partners to set up 20 non-Police reporting-centres and provide awareness training for a range of stakeholders.

Promoting community cohesion

An independent survey completed in 2010 provided some insights into levels of community cohesion across the borough. When asked whether their local neighbourhood was a place "where people from different backgrounds get on well together", 77% of residents agreed. This is also demonstrated by findings of the Place Survey (2009) where only 23% of respondents indicated there is a problem in their local area with people not treating each other with respect and consideration compared with 31% nationally. Our **Community Cohesion Strategy** addresses the findings of these surveys.

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.

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 improve engagement and understanding of the issues facing these communities, along with encouraging voluntary and community sector development. We consult with faith-based communities through the Solihull Faiths Forum, which was established in 2006.

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 children under five and children under eight with additional needs or disabilities. 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 to meet specific needs relating to people's protected characteristics, including groups for fathers, advice and support for pregnant women, sensory rooms and crèche facilities for families who have children with an additional need or disability at selected Children's Centres.

Analysis of the profile of users at the 14 Children's Centres show that all of our centres are attracting at least 20% of the estimated number of families with a child aged under five in the local area. Some attract a particularly high proportion of the estimated number of families; these include Smith's Wood, Shirley Heath, Mill Lodge and Chelmsley Wood. Analysis has shown that attracting families from Asian backgrounds, other groups in the Lyndon and Elmdon areas, and children with disabilities are priority areas for improvement.

Children and young people in care

The number of children in care in Solihull as at 31st March 2011 was 421, of which 280 are local children and young people, 126 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and 15 children and

young people who access short break respite provision. Solihull is one of a small number of local areas most affected by a disproportionately high level of young people arriving as unaccompanied and seeking asylum. This is in part due to the location of a regional border agency reception centre. Due to our high proportion of UASCs the proportion of children in care who are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than our overall population at 48.0%.

We recognise that the needs of UASC are often very different to children in care from the local population and have adapted our services to ensure these needs are met and meet our statutory responsibilities. Our looked after children are predominately placed in foster care with both local foster carers and out of borough foster care providers. However, approximately 10% are placed in residential provision of which 5% are in hostels and other supportive residential settings as they move to more independent living. Looked after children and young people are placed in an external foster care placement (or more intensive specialist placement) when there is no suitable local authority foster care placement available. In some instances this is to meet specific needs relating to disability and cultural background.

Stability of care placements, health, educational attainment and destinations at age 16 are closely monitored and compared to the overall population of young people in the borough. This is to ensure that we can amend support plans accordingly, to lead to improvements for children in our care and to reduce identified inequality gaps.

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. This includes a breakdown of the number of UASC supported, along with the number of children and young people with disabilities. Information on the profile of those children in care supported through

the advocacy service is broken down by gender, ethnicity, and age and any specific issues relating to these characteristics are identified. This enables us and partners to put in place additional support and intervention where necessary. Young people using the service have reported very positive feedback.

Complaints

We have investigated a complaint about staff conduct and subsequently this member of staff was spoken to about their behaviour. A further complaint about access to a service was unable to be investigated due to an ongoing legal investigation – the complainant was advised why the complaint could not be investigated.

Young people's substance misuse treatment service

Within Solihull we have a dedicated substance misuse service for young people - Str8 Up; who provide a comprehensive and confidential treatment service for young people who use drugs, alcohol or solvents. It also offers support for young people who are or have been affected by parental or carer's substance use. 65 young people received the highest level of treatment during 2009/10. The trend appears to be one of gradually decreasing numbers over the last 4 years, which is in line with the national trend. Approximately two-thirds of people using this service at the highest level were male (43 people) and a third female (22 people), the proportion of males using the services has increased over the last 3 years, from a proportion of 47.9% (34 people) back in 2007/08. Although Solihull has a slightly higher proportion of young males using this service compared to the national average (63%) it is broadly consistent. Some analysis of people using the service compared to adult substance misuse services has been undertaken, which shows that girls make up a higher proportion using the service than women as a proportion of those using adult substance misuse services. Our data also shows that for Str8 Up the highest proportion of those in treatment are aged 17, who account for 32.3% of those receiving treatment.

Case Study – Involvement of young people

In 2011 we worked with Solihull NHS Primary Care Trust and national charity Changemakers to recruit a group of teenagers to develop work around sexual and mental health for young people.



Katie Buckingham, aged 17, led on the mental health project with nine 'assistant commissioners' to raise young people's awareness of mental health and combat the stigma often attached to it. Following workshops with young people, the team worked with designers to create a resource pack. The resource pack, consisting of case study cards, posters and a CD of activities, will soon be available in schools, youth centres and colleges.

Jasmine Thomas, also aged 17, led the sexual health project with eight 'assistant commissioners' reviewing the quality of the sexual health advice provided by our Just4You Clinics. Four clinics were assessed across the borough. Each clinic was asked to rate themselves on a self-assessment form and received a visit from a mystery shopper as well as being interviewed by the young people. Clinics recently received feedback as to how they were rated and the reasons for this along with suggestions for improvement. The ideas of the young people involved will continue to make a difference to the way we deliver these services.

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 then allows us to make any special arrangements prior to commencement of the training and to ensure a positive experience for all.

Personalisation of Adult Social Care services

Personalisation means making sure that services are tailored to the needs of the individual rather than delivered in a one-size-fits-all fashion. Since June 2010 all new service users requiring social care have been offered a Personal Budget, which was extended to all existing service users from August 2010. People using a Personal Budget can choose whether to manage this budget themselves, as a Direct Payment, or, if they prefer the Council can manage the budget on their behalf. In this way direct payments and personal budgets help to:

- Ensure that people are able to design and choose the support or care arrangements that best suit their specific needs and fit with their own goals and lives
- Increase the opportunities for independence, social inclusion and enhanced self-esteem

By the end of September 2011 more than 1,350 people in Solihull had a Personal Budget, with more than 500 people (including carers) in Solihull receiving a Direct Payment for their ongoing service. It is anticipated that another 200-300 people will receive a one-off Direct Payment during the remainder of the 2011-12 financial year.

Work is underway on reviewing and making improvements to both the assessment questionnaire and resource allocation system for Personal Budgets.

Case study – Personalisation of Adult Social Care

James is a man in his fifties with a learning disability and history of mental health problems. He had lived in residential care for much of his life prior to moving in with his aunt. After the death of his aunt there was concern about his ability to live independently, as he was socially isolated with no other family members living locally. Following an assessment James has taken his Personal Budget as a Direct Payment and has been able to employ a trusted neighbour as his Personal Assistant to ensure his personal care needs are met and enable him to continue to live independently. James has had support from his Social Worker and the Direct Payments Support Service to manage his Direct Payment. Since setting up his Direct Payment James' mental health has improved and he continues to live independently.

Adult learning

We work closely with Solihull College to develop the learning opportunities provided in the borough. Analysis of adult learning shows that female and those aged 24 – 44 are the highest proportion of learners in Solihull. Free family learning also supports parents/carers wanting to attend informal courses with their school aged children, particularly in support of literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, there is targeted adult learning provided for residents with learning disabilities or difficulties. Informal learning provision covers the whole of the Borough, but courses are focused in North Solihull and aim to engage disadvantaged residents and those with low skills. Lower course costs in areas of disadvantage and concessions for those on means tested benefits encourage economically disadvantaged residents to attend courses.

Libraries

Our libraries provide a wide range of informal adult learning opportunities as well as hosting agencies such as Nextstep and

Connexions who provide youth and adult careers and employment guidance. Basic ICT 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 Learner's Week; Family History courses are delivered each term at Central Library and primarily attended by those aged 55+.

Solihull Libraries are dedicated to meeting the needs of families with pre-school, school age and teenage children, and 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 purpose

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- providing access to a wealth of resources to inspire the start of a lifelong love of reading for pleasure and for purpose
- 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 leisure interests
- providing access to quality online resources and to direct 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.

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 45's 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 provide independence and a good 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 also targets families from lower socio-economic backgrounds as the evidence shows that families from these backgrounds have a higher likelihood of becoming obese. The programme aims to reduce weight gain, and improve physical fitness and 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.

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; inspiring personal development and community spirit through sport, volunteering and active lifestyles for young people within Solihull. We provide monthly reports to the Home Office on participation rates, and this shows that we have worked with people aged 5-23, with the largest proportion of users aged 15 (11.25%).

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 being particularly vulnerable to keeping warm, including at risk of death.

Case study – Winter Warmth Campaign

Mr E is an 87 year old man with very little mobility; he lives on his own and is very lonely. Linking People went to see Mr E at his home and we had a long chat about his life and how he manages. His health isn't good; he suffers with poor mobility, heart and prostate trouble and also skin cancer. The linking people form was filled and referrals were made to Solihull Independent Living for a grab-rail by his front step, and Linking People arranged for an electrician to go round to look at his electrical wiring.

His health has deteriorated and through the Winter Warmth Campaign he was taken a double electric blanket and a food parcel before Christmas. He rang in the New Year as he was unable to go out and needed some shopping. Another food parcel was delivered through the Winter Warmth Campaign. He now has a befriender with Age UK, who provides ongoing friendship and support.

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.

Consultation with vulnerable groups

In 2011/12 we have conducted two significant consultations specifically affecting vulnerable groups using adult social care services – the introduction a fairer contribution policy and changes to fees, and proposals to close two residential care homes. In both consultations an information booklet and survey were produced and sent to all those affected, with easy-read version of the information produced for people with learning disabilities. We have also used advocacy worked to help people understand the proposals and what that meant for them.

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

Our performance indicators in respect of independent living suggest that for adults in settled accommodation we are meeting expectations for those in contact with secondary mental health services (79.4%

compared to target of 80.8%); but for adults with learning disabilities we are not where we want to be (13.3% compared to a target of 20%).

Over the last two years we have made significant progress in helping people with different care needs live independently within the community with a number of further initiatives nearing completion. For instance, in October 2010 we opened the Borough's first extra care housing scheme, Phoenix House in Shirley, providing 49 units for older people. A further scheme offering 33 units is being developed in Hampton Lane and is due to open 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 previously be 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 it as an alternative to residential care over the past two years.

Complaints

We have investigated a number of complaints relating to disputes about care plans. This has resulted in reassessing those care plans, addressing individual social worker's training needs, and a management review of the care assessment process. We have also investigated a complaint about safety at a Nursing home; these issues have been addressed by the nursing home.

Case Study – Moving to independence

Starling Grove is a supported housing scheme for 11 adults with learning disabilities in North Solihull. The service works with individual tenants to maximise their independence.

At the heart of the project was to create a scheme that considered the needs of the individuals and ensured that the transition to more independent living was as smooth as possible. Our Adult Social Care Services, worked with the Landlord (Bromford Housing Association) and other partners to provide support. Through this support, they were able to make the transition into living more independently with their own tenancies. This is quite an achievement for a number of individuals who have lived in hospital and residential care for over 50 years prior to this transition.

Just one of the success stories is Darran, who had previously lived in a 24 hour care home for 10 years sharing this accommodation with two other tenants. When Darran was told his care home was due to close he asked his care staff and social worker about moving on. Jo from Solihull Advocacy informed Darran of the new scheme at Starling Grove and asked if he would like to be nominated for a flat.

Darran enjoys being independent, the move from care to more independent living at Starling Grove allows him to go out and about in the community with no support and to take ownership of his day to day routine. This experience has given Darran more confidence. Darran can arrange his own weekly schedule and is very organised, always planning for the week ahead

We have worked with Bromford to develop another similar service in South Solihull.



Shopmobility

We provide an annual grant to support this charity in improving equality of access and to encourage the independence of disabled people and people with mobility problems. In 2011 we worked with Shopmobility to expand the scheme to cover the North of the borough, opening a new branch in Chelmsley Wood to complement the two in Solihull town centre. Through these sites people can hire mobility equipment such as scooters, wheelchairs and power chairs for a small fee.

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 2,592 people receive this service, which equates to 3.28% of houses across the borough.

Disabled persons parking spaces

In December 2010 we approved a new policy on advisory **Disabled Persons Parking Spaces**. These parking spaces are available for use by any Blue Badge holder, with the intention to provide parking close to the applicant's home. The 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 sped up the referral time for those applicants who do require this. 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 we follow.

Employment support (learning disability)

Within the Council we have the Support Towards Employment Progress and Satisfaction (STEPS) team, who offer a tailored recruitment service to employers and matches people with learning disabilities to appropriate jobs. Having this service available in Solihull has made a big difference to the lives of people with learning disabilities, as well as ensuring that we meet our duty and responsibility to promote equality for disabled people. Since the scheme's inception over 30 people have been supported to find lasting employment in the borough; ongoing contact from the team means that both the employee and employer can seek our support if needed.

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 selected items 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 188 customers receive this service. A 2011 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. There were 924 customers registered as having a visual impairment at 31st October 2010. 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 mechanism. 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.

An additional lift is currently being installed at Solihull Central Library, to increase accessibility to the library and the arts gallery and theatre 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 appropriate opportunities with assistance and adapted facilities. The national Active People Survey 2007/08 found that only 9.1% of adults with a limiting long-standing illness or disability had participated in recommended levels of physical activity compared with 23.6% of all adults.

To increase equality 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 may 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/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.

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 the service.

Mental health services for young people

We recently won an award for our proposal to improve and extend access to mental health services for young people. Our approach will cover young people aged 14-25, in recognition of higher risks of self-harm and suicide than in the adult population. This work is in its early stages but we recognise that improving mental health services for young people is vital as young people consulted with have found current services difficult to access.

Targeted mental health in schools project

This project aimed to transform the way mental health support is delivered to pupils and young people aged 5-13 to improve their

mental wellbeing and tackle problems more quickly. Nine educational establishments in Solihull were involved. All 9 schools carried out some whole school screening or intervention involving 1,826 pupils; some schools carried other initiatives with supported interventions for individual children, groups or parent/family. Three schools set up a new approach to manage play and behaviour on playgrounds at lunchtime with pupils acting as play leaders or mediators. This involved 1,020 pupils and was the biggest single intervention to improve pupils' experience of life at school.

In making connections between a child's two major worlds of school and home, schools sought information from families, their views on desired outcomes and included them in interventions.

The schools have developed a lasting capacity through developing key staff able to deliver interventions, providing resources for pupils and staff and organising mental health awareness training for staff. Through mental health awareness training, staff increased their confidence in intervening in pupils' mental health needs by 29%.

The project resulted in a number of recommendations around supporting mental health in schools.

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.

Case Study – Revealing Culture Head ON

In 2011 our Gallery displayed Tanya Raabe's new exhibition. Tanya is an internationally known artist tackling issues around disability. As a disabled artist herself she uses her artwork to represent disability and challenge presumptions around disability and art. This particular exhibition featured portraits of cultural figures well known in the disabled art movement as pioneers and crusaders to alleviate suppression of disabled people within society. The exhibition comprised portraits, moving image installation and supportive text.



Solihull Gallery was the only regional Gallery to host this show. Tanya created this work as a result of a successful Arts Council funding bid; which we supported her to put together. Since her show in Solihull she has secured an exhibition slot at the Tate Modern linking with the Paralympics.

Alongside the exhibition Tanya ran a series of talks to targeted groups, local disability groups and disabled artists; along with a number of participatory workshops for local day centres, a specialist arts college for disabled young adults and health care workers. She ran a more intense educational project with Park View Day Centre for 6 weeks, developing a body of work of their own which was exhibited in our smaller gallery space.

Case Study - Reveal 2 arts and autism – Day 2 Day

Through our Arts Team we have developed an annual project that explores the connection between creativity and autism, which offers different opportunities for artists to be involved. The 2011 project focused on 3 key strands: an exhibition of artwork from regional



practising artists with autism; a high quality book that showcases the national breadth of talent of autistic artists; and a community aspect where selected children and young people attended workshops.

The exhibition opened to the public with a community open event, a series of community engagement workshops for schools that support young people with autism and the launch of the national publication with full evaluation of the community activities. We continue to mentor one artist that took part in the previous year's show and she is now in her final year of a fine art degree – and we hope to work with her on a solo show as a graduate.

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

Under 18 conception rates are falling across the borough; however we recognise we need to maintain a focus to ensure rates do not increase. We offer a ten week learning programme "Baby, think it over" aimed at young women designed to teach with them about contraception, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and healthy positive relationships in a safe environment. The long term goal is to equip them with knowledge and skills to stay safe, healthy and reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancies. Participants who complete the course receive a certificate for taking part. During October and December 2011 there were 9 young women who participated in the programme, between the ages of 14 and 17 years of age, two of whom were young people in care. 8 of them described their ethnicity as White British and one as White Irish. 8 of the 9 young women who took part in the programme live in Smith's Wood, Kingshurst and Chelmsley Wood. We have specifically targeted the programme to young people in North Solihull as ward-level analysis has shown that

North Solihull has a significantly higher rate of teenage pregnancy than the rest of the borough. All the 9 young people have demonstrated improved knowledge in accessing sexual health services, identifying healthy and unhealthy relationships and knowing what contraception is available and how it works. They have also shown improved confidence in accessing sexual health services, working within a group, keeping safe within relationships and resisting peer pressure to have sex. This has been demonstrated by some participants from the programme seeking support from the Youth Service regarding their sexual health and relationships.

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

Physical activity

Research shows that a baby born to a family where one parent is obese has 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. We offer 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) BMI over 30.

Case Study – ‘Be a Star’

We have worked with other partners to fund the ‘Be a Star’ social marketing campaign which has made a significant difference in encouraging young mums to breastfeed. Since its launch in January 2010, it raised the rates of young mums breastfeeding which contributed to us achieving our local target.

In addition, some of those mums at the forefront of the campaign have secured personal achievements from their involvement. Danielle said,

"I loved being part of ‘Be a Star’, I have breastfed my daughter, gained confidence and now I am a qualified Breastfeeding Peer Supporter".

In January 2011 we launched two breastfeeding cafes in Shirley and Smith’s Wood. At these Cafés, antenatal "feeding your baby" sessions are available for pregnant women, delivered by the breastfeeding team with the help of newly qualified breastfeeding peer supporters.



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

This service works with schools and families to help children using English as an Additional Language (EAL) to acquire English. It supports international new arrivals, including separated children, to integrate into school and to access the curriculum. Support for children is accessed through schools and with parents' permission. During the academic year 2010-11 the Service provided advice/support for 172 children from 35 countries (including UK) of 40 different language backgrounds other than English and in 52 schools/settings. Children were from a range of ethnic backgrounds and faiths. Updated guidance on supporting children with EAL has recently been made available to all schools to support improved equality for this group of young people.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children education programme

Three years ago, in response to the significant number of unaccompanied young people arriving in Solihull, the Council introduced a specific education programme to support the transition into main-stream education as well as integration into British society.

The programme covers the fundamentals of English, Maths, ICT, the 'British Education System' and Cultural Awareness. All students attending the programme were assessed by the EAL Service. Over the last three years 87 young people attended the programme.

The nationalities of the young people were: Afghani, Iranian Kurd, Eritrean, Iranian, and Somali, with regular monitoring of nationality. The length of stay on the UASC Programme varied 1 to 12 weeks.

Where possible young people using the service are encouraged to attend mainstream school and to undertake GCSEs. After leaving the programme young people, social workers and carers are asked to evaluate the programme; all those returning evaluations have found the programme helpful.

Demand for the induction programme has fallen as the number of number of newly arrived UASC has reduced which has made it more practical at the current time to provide individual tuition and language assessment and support.

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 the 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.

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 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 to celebrate Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. In October 2010 we held our first Community Read to celebrate Black History Month. The Community Read invited people to read one of two titles which explored the immigrant experience 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 what is readily available to others. We see it as essential that everyone involved in the provision of council services knows how to access interpreters (for the spoken word) and translators (for the written word). Where possible we encourage the use of interpreters over translation as understanding can be clarified and any questions answered.

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).

Case Study – Black History Month

Black History Month is celebrated in Solihull each October and forms part of our wider programme of promoting good community relations. The month-long festival is celebrated annually to highlight the history, cultural heritage, achievements and valued contributions that African, African Caribbean, Asian and other minority ethnic communities make to Solihull and British society.



In 2011 the month’s activities were launched at Akamba Garden and African Heritage Centre in Dickens Heath, where the Deputy Mayor and Leader of the Council, along with other guest speakers including celebrity chef Rusty Lee, took the opportunity to emphasise the importance of Black History Month for Solihull. Throughout the month people enjoyed activities including a Caribbean Family History Exhibition, Diwali Night Celebrations, a Caribbean Food and Culture Day, a community read initiative and activities from the Council’s Children’s Centres. There were also a range of workshops promoting a range of health issues typically found in Black and Asian communities. All the events were well received by people of all backgrounds.

Gypsy and Traveller strategy and housing needs

There are an estimated 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, of which only a third live in caravans, with the remainder living in 'bricks and mortar'. The Council is committed to meeting the housing needs of all groups, therefore in 2008 a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment was completed with the neighbouring authorities of Birmingham and Coventry. This allowed us to understand the number of pitches the Council needs to provide and for progress against this to be monitored.

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. Currently 8 households have identified themselves as having an ethnicity of "Gypsy or Traveller". This includes access to a support worker who is independent of the Council but funded through our Supporting People service. Over the longer term, the intention is that we will be able to allocate social rented pitches to those Gypsy and Travellers who have been identified as in priority need for housing through our Housing Waiting List.

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 equality based on religion and belief, specifically highlighting when targeted consultation has taken place and the likely impact of the decision on people of different religions/beliefs.

Holocaust Memorial week

Solihull has commemorated Holocaust Memorial week for the last four years, working closely with Solihull Faiths Forum to organise events. The 2012 service involved a greater number of schools and academies than ever before, with some hosting their own events during the week. A holocaust survivor attended the main service and gave talks to primary and secondary students. Poetry and art competitions were organised on the main themes.

Religious events

In 2011 we produced a policy for events in our parks and open spaces 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.

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 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.

Inter-faith work

Solihull Faiths Forum, supported by the Council and partner organisations, organised our first multi-faith festival in September 2011. Each faith sought to share a little about its beliefs and give a glimpse of its traditions. The audience were made up all ages from across various faiths – contributing to improving relations between people of different faiths.

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 5 main local religious groups.

Case Study - Diwali Night in Partnership with Sampad

Our Arts Service has developed a programming relationship with Sampad - a South Asian Arts agency for the West Midlands. This adds to the diversity within our programming, helps to promote good community relations and makes Solihull audiences aware of Sampad's wider work.

In 2011 we decided to hold an evening of music and dance to celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. The internationally acclaimed classical Indian vocalist Sanyogita Kumari performed Bollywood hits. In addition there was a themed buffet and curtain raiser performances by local groups Anjali Dance and Asian Flava (based at Alderbrook School).

The event attracted new audiences and enabled local young people to take to the stage. We will continue to work with Sampad on two promotions in 2012.



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 Active @ Work project specifically targets women as participation levels in physical activity by women in Solihull were below national and regional levels. Active @ Work has engaged with 1,278 women since the project began in April 2009 and together they have clocked up over 11,927 attendances in activities including tai chi, tennis, zumba, yoga, pilates, aerobics, football, netball, rounders, running, walking and cycling.

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 were successful in obtaining funding for the Active Women (Us Girls) programme which commenced July 2011 to promote activity to young women aged 16-25 years within North Solihull. Our monthly data returns to the Home Office show that between April 2011 and December 2011, 543 males and 177 females took part in Neighbourhood Sports Programme activities.

Children and young people in care

The gender profile of children in care in Solihull shows significant differences between the profile of local children and young people in care. Of those local children in care during 2009 and 2010 48.2% were male, whereas of the UASC in care over the same period 95.3% were male. Data from March 2010 shows that the male population in care tends to be significantly older than the female population – again this is mostly down to the high number of male UASCs.

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. In 2011 there was an increase in boys taking part, rising from 2,021 in 2010 to 2,273 in 2011.

Case Study - ForceTEN boys dance project in North Solihull

Dancescape, the sub-regional dance development agency (hosted by Solihull Council). In recognition of the barriers boys may face when trying to get into dance Dancescape worked with us to create a boys dance project for 4 secondary schools in North Solihull. A team of professional male dance artists were contracted to work with boys groups from each of the schools to work towards a performance that would take place at Solihull Arts Complex in February 2010. The main objectives of the project were:

- To provide participants the opportunity to work with a male professional dance artist who would act as a good role model and influence participants pre-conceptions about the masculinity of dance – and that dance isn't just for girls!
- To provide participants with the opportunity to present their dance piece as part of a public performance in a professional theatre setting, and to see work created by their peers within the same context
- To push the boundaries and influence pre-conceptions of the participants, teachers, schools management, parents and families regarding the dance abilities of those individuals involved as well as the wider issue of boys dancing
- To provide participants with the opportunity to consider dance as a past-time activity and/or a career path alongside other more familiar activities, such as sport.

Approaches from the schools differed, for examples in one school boys volunteered because they had a keen interest in dance, whereas at another school teachers chose the boys to take part as they were at risk of exclusion. Both approaches had equal positive affect for the boys involved.

At the ForceTEN performance showcase, the school groups performed alongside other more established boys dance groups from Solihull and the wider sub region. Dancescape invited these other groups to perform in order to present an evening of boys dance that was of high quality and would allow those involved and audience members to see the possibilities of skill and career development for boys and young men in dance, and to inspire the younger boys to work towards and achieve the skills of the older boys who presented work that evening.

The evening's performance went extremely well. Feedback from all participants, group leaders/teachers and audience members was extremely positive with a recognition of the value of the programme being presented as a progression route in dance for boys and young men. Each of the groups involved in the project have continued with dance in different ways, whether as part of a regular group/class or within their studies.



Domestic abuse

We are working with a range of Partners to secure improvements in how we respond to Domestic Abuse. The priorities within our domestic abuse strategy (2011 – 2014) identify a range of development activity to:

- Secure stability and sustainability in support services for victims and their families
- Rebalance what we do and spend to deliver earlier interventions to encourage earlier reporting, intervention and access to support.

This strategy builds on our strong history of focusing our partnership efforts in addressing domestic abuse and support to victims, such as investing in building our own purpose built refuge provision and running a specialist domestic violence court with appropriately trained magistrates.

In 2011 Solihull introduced an Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service providing more coordinated support to victims and their families and ensuring the right information, advice and guidance through the court processes to secure more successful court disposals. Currently most investment is in women, and we know from our fair treatment assessment that we are potentially missing support to victims in same-sex relationships, and disabled and older people who are at risk of control and financial abuse by their families. Our investment strategy is looking to strengthen the IDVA capacity to strengthen support to a wider group of victims in addition to women. Other areas of focus are teenagers so that we can help prevent abusive relationships being established.

Complaints

We have investigated one complaint relating to the behaviour of an operative working for an organisation commissioned to provide services on our behalf. The contractor was spoken to about inappropriate conduct.

Case Study – Children’s Centres Outreach

Solihull’s Children’s Centres are a hub for a whole range of services for families. Outreach and Inclusion Teams reach out to parents who could benefit from the Children’s Centres Services.

Julie (not her real name) had suffered domestic abuse and it was having an impact on her children. She also had debt problems. The Children’s Centre Outreach and Inclusion Team set out to raise Julie’s awareness of the impact of domestic abuse and to make sure that Julie knew about services and resources that could help her and her family; including her parenting skills and ability to manage her debt.

The Team worked with Julie to explore ‘what is an abusive relationship’ and the ‘cycle of violence’, and helped her to understand the impact of the violence on each of her children. They helped Julie to access a range of groups and activities at the local Children’s Centre, including Play and Stay, Life in Mind, Parent Matters, Maths, English and Crafts groups. They also helped her to get counselling, and weekly sessions with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team. Finally the Team supported Julie to get CAB advice on her debt and to talk to her creditors.

Julie is now far more confident to ask for help when she needs it, whether it is about her children’s needs, or managing her ongoing debt. She has used the counselling and therapeutic support she has received to better understand her role as a parent and puts her children first.

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

We are currently working on an information and book display for Solihull and Chelmsley Wood libraries as part of LGBT History Month 2012; this will feature information on LGBT heroes as chosen by members of GaySol (see case study). We are working with local groups, such as Birmingham Parents Support Group (for families and friends of LGBT people) to help people access the information and support they require.

Libraries

A range of books which reflect the needs of the LGBT community are available through all of our libraries. An LGBT fiction collection is available at Solihull Library. In February 2011, Solihull Libraries participated in Solihull's first LGBT History Month by proving a range of books celebrating the LGBT community, in conjunction with the Gay Birmingham Remembered Exhibition.

Case study – Gaysol

Following a review of our youth services we worked with local young lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people to find out what support they require. One thing the young people were sure of was that they wanted to be able to access information safely, through a specific website.

We worked with these young people and a designer to create a website that met their needs; including agreeing that it should be easy to access without going onto the Council's website. On the Gaysol website there is information about coming out, where to get support, where to meet other GLB young people, details of gay-friendly magazines, books and films, and "agony aunt" questions.

Our Youth Service continue to work with this group of young people, who meet on a regular basis to provide peer support and access targeted information that they perhaps wouldn't receive otherwise.

***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.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Solihull is one of the most economically polarised boroughs in the UK, with stark differences between outcomes experienced by residents of North and South Solihull. Whilst the majority of the south is affluent, with high educational attainment, low levels of worklessness and high life expectancy, areas of North Solihull have consistently featured some of the most deprived wards in the UK. Our policies and working practices attempt to address some of these inequalities, along with the disadvantage which may be faced by those living in the more rural areas of the borough.

Addressing poverty

We recognise that poverty is the biggest underlying factor of ill health and inequality across the borough, which is why we are committed to helping families and individuals affected by it.

To get an idea of poverty levels in Solihull, in 2010 we carried out consultation with partners and residents. As a result of this work we put together a needs assessment which highlighted **seven categories of actions** to help drive our anti-poverty strategy.

As part of this strategy we recently piloted a Multi-Agency Outreach Support (MAORS) programme to plug the gap in partnership outreach work which involved meeting with residents to provide support and assistance from a range of services.

Partners including the Council's employment support and benefits services, Citizens Advice Bureau, Solihull Community Housing, Family Information Service and Credit Union, hosted the drop-ins to provide local residents with advice on employment, benefits and money.

In total, we helped 89 households of which 77% of residents said they found the sessions very useful. The pilot was especially successful in reaching disadvantaged groups particularly those with a disability.

Due to the success of the pilot, we have run further drop-in sessions.

In recognition of the financial pressures people are under we are working to help people maximise their income, and reduce the effects of poverty across the borough. We actively promote the benefits from the financial services of The North Birmingham Community Credit Union (NBCCU) to staff and residents across the borough. The aim of the credit union is to encourage its members to save regularly and/or provide loans to members at very low rates of interest.

Another strand of our Action against Poverty Strategy is to tackle illegal lending. A series of roadshows for residents and partners took place in September and October 2011 to help people understand some of the problems victims of loan sharks may face, and how they can access support.

Community engagement

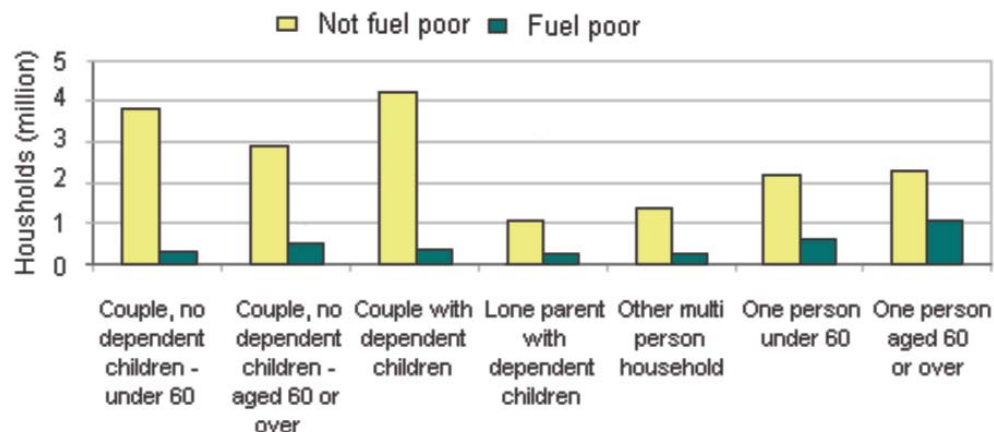
We seek to involve residents in identifying and tackling issues in their neighbourhoods. We widely distribute a Neighbourhood Partners newsletter in the North, Central and Rural Neighbourhoods. We engage with all parish and town councils and key residents groups by attending regular meetings and sharing 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 and are involved. 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 regime. Many households living in fuel poverty are also classed as vulnerable, for example where one or more household member is elderly, there are children, or there are members of the household who are disabled or have a long term sickness.

The table below shows the national picture of those who are not fuel poor and those who are, by household composition. This shows single people aged over 60, single people aged under 60 and lone parents with children are most at risk of being fuel poor.

Fuel Poverty by household composition, 2008



Source: Department of Energy and Climate Change - Annual report on fuel poverty statistics 2011

The most recent estimate is that in March 2010 there were 13,469 households in fuel poverty in Solihull. This accounts for 15% of the Borough's households. The number has increased each year since 2006, partly down to significant increases in fuel prices over recent years. 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 the Energy Saving Trust 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 the over 75s 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; the Local Development Framework, 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, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion/belief, sexual orientation and area deprivation. A key element is labour market analysis, which has informed the development of a local **Work and Skills Plan** setting out how "worklessness" is to be tackled locally.

Case Study – North Solihull Regeneration Programme

The North Solihull Partnership (NSP) was formed in 2005, which comprises the Council, Solihull Community Housing (SCH), Sigma Inpartnership (programme management & village centre development partner), WM Housing (Consultation & 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 project the programme 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 5 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. It is also about the regeneration of local communities and developing the capacity of local people to actively engage in the

changes that are taking place and ultimately take a lead in making change happen.

The North Solihull Regeneration Programme is underpinned by Partnership working and this is the key to making this project a success both in terms of physical and community regeneration. The NSP primarily works in partnership with local communities through a series of Resident Implementation Groups that have a specific regeneration focus and emerging resident-led partnerships, which have a wider neighbourhood and community agenda. This is in addition to community and consultation events that are held at various points in the delivery of the programme.

The focus is now on developing and equipping local people to work with partner agencies to bring forward change in their community, this will help sustain the benefits of the regeneration programme into the future.



Employment roadshows

After engagement with stakeholders and providers, including community groups, we provided a series of roadshows and work clubs in 2011 to highlight the employment and learning support available in Solihull. We provided these roadshows in those areas with statistically higher areas of worklessness: - the 4 wards in North Solihull (Chelmsley Wood, Fordbridge, Kingshurst and Smith's Wood) and the wards of Shirley East & West, Olton and Lyndon in the South.

By using accessible venues in the community the roadshow events were designed to get out to the most disadvantaged residents who do not normally access Council services. The use of the Community Bus enabled delivery on street corners and outside of community facilities. These events have led to an additional 215 local residents receiving support in these areas.

Data capture sheets (which include information on age, gender, ethnicity and disability) are analysed to ensure the project is meeting

the needs of the local community, and will also help to identify areas where the project needs to target in the future.

Free Early Education for 2 year olds project

This pilot project provided 10 hours of free early education per week to disadvantaged 2 year olds, with the aim of narrowing the gap in achievement between disadvantaged children and their peers.

Families taking part in the project tended to have a lower income than the general population; part of the criteria was receipt of particular benefits. 79.5% of participants were families living in the wards of Chelmsley Wood, Fordbridge and Kingshurst and Smiths Wood. The wards with the least referrals were Knowle and St Alphege.

66% of those approved for the pilot were for boys whilst the rest were girls. Overall experiences and views of the pilot were typically positive. Most parents felt that they had received enough help and support during the pilot. However, some parents whose children have a Special Educational Need or a disability required more support. Numerous families and their referrers have observed the positive contribution that this provision has made to their children's development and well-being. Evaluation of the pilot found it had a positive impact on children and families. The offer will be continuing in the coming years with an extension to 15 hours per week.

Case Study

Rachel's son Liam who has been receiving free childcare said *"Since he started at nursery he's been amazing, his confidence has grown and I'm not anxious about leaving him there anymore. Without it I don't think he would have been ready to start school. This has really given him a head start"*

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 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.

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/neighbourhoodsports>

<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, the unemployed and those people with a disability. These lower charges are available in 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 at 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.

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 technology for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with friends, do their homework, find information, look for jobs and find information. Free public WiFi facilities are available in both Solihull and Chelmsley Wood library, where users can access the Internet using their own devices. To help people make use of these facilities we run free computer training in all libraries showing people how to get online and be safe while using the Internet. These sessions are particularly useful for those families who do not have computer facilities at home.

Digital Inclusion

Two complementary elements of our Digital Inclusion programme are providing access to technology and making it simple to use. We work closely with partners to improve digital access to people living in the borough.

Solihull Community Housing (SCH) has provided free broadband Internet access to people living in high rise blocks in North Solihull. The Council has provided equipment, such as personal computers, which the charity ReCOM while the social enterprise, Colebridge Trust, supported their installation.

Together we are helping families with children and unemployed people to use the Internet so that they can readily seek information to improve their educational and employment prospects.

Funding through the Learning & Skills Council has supported ReCom to provide IT and Internet training workshops to SCH tenants. To date, 84 disabled and disadvantaged people in North Solihull have been given recycled computers and taught how to use them in specially formed computer clubs.

While this project is still in its early days, it's already having a

positive effect on residents. Sarah King, a resident in one of the high-rise blocks who benefited from the project, said:

“Getting this computer from Solihull Community Housing has made my life a lot easier. I can do my shopping; I can pay my bills; my son can do his homework. We can just look up anything we need to... plus I have been able to enrol on a college course.”

Les Bicknell, in training at the Hobs Moat computer club, said: *“These [computers] change lives, for people with disabilities, they are fantastic. You need the help to be trained to do that, and we have had it here.”*

