

# Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

## Organisational Assessment

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## Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

### Overall, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council performs well

Managing performance	2 out of 4
Use of resources	3 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	3 out of 4
Managing resources	2 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

## Summary

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council performs well overall. The Council is managing performance adequately and giving good value for money. It is involving local people in setting priorities and improving services. The people of Solihull are very satisfied with the borough and the public services they receive. 87.7 per cent of the people in Solihull are very satisfied with the area as a place to live. This is higher than average and higher than in 2006.

Solihull scores 2 out of 4 for managing performance, which is adequate. This is because there has not been consistent improvement against all priorities. The Council engages well in partnership to tackle inequalities. The Sustainable Community Strategy identifies closing the inequality gap between north and south Solihull as a significant challenge. But there is limited evidence that gaps are closing. There has been a positive response to the recession. However, long term work on reducing unemployment has not been having a significant impact in the most deprived areas.

The Council has ensured that adult social care is integrated with health care through delegating services to the Solihull Care Trust. However, major organisational development of the Care Trust has caused delays in delivering services. Adult social care is described by the Care Quality Commission as being delivered adequately. Health inequalities are being tackled. Solihull compares well in 'all age all cause mortality' rates, and is consistently above the England and Wales average. However there is a significant gap in health outcomes between the north and south of the borough. Despite several initiatives, this gap is not closing.

There is a relatively low overall crime rate, compared with the West Midlands

as a whole. The people of Solihull are very satisfied with the borough and the public services they receive. An inspection in housing in 2008 found that housing services are excellent with excellent prospects for improvement.

The Council performs well in providing services for children, Solihull is in line with or better than the England average for most indicators of education performance. The quality of education provision is variable. Education outcomes for different ethnic groups are inconsistent; mixed race and black groups do not do as well, and the gap between the north and south in educational attainment is not closing.

Solihull scores 3 out of 4, which is good, for the use of resources. This is because the Council has strong financial processes in place. These have helped the Council deliver over £26 million of savings since 2006/07. There is a sound understanding of service costs and performance levels and a good track record of managing budgets and achieving efficiencies.

Compared with other metropolitan councils, Solihull receives the lowest amount of central Government grant per head of population, and Council Tax levels are low. Overall costs have also been kept relatively low. The Council has a good track record of reviewing service provision to enable the service to be refocused on user needs, and contributing to wider social, economic and environmental objectives. For example, £1.4million has been saved from its Strategic Environmental contract by reducing duplication and achieving economies of scale.

The Council manages its assets well. It invests where necessary and sells the assets that are surplus to operational needs. As a result, the Council has an asset base that is fit for purpose and with low levels of maintenance backlogs. It has made a good start in understanding its use of natural resources, with aspirational target setting and a strong corporate commitment to addressing carbon emissions.

## About Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Solihull is a small borough in the West Midlands in the centre of England. It is a mixed urban and rural community with a large town, Solihull, at the heart. There are two other main urban centres, Chelmsley Wood in the North and Shirley in the South West. There is also extensive farmland interspersed with rural villages. The population is around 203,600 and is expected to grow at 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, locally deprivation in the north of the borough is considerable, some areas fall into England's most deprived 10 per cent. Generally Solihull has a strong economy, employment is high and people earn above average wages.

Local priorities are:

Building healthier communities

Building safer communities

Building stronger communities

Building more prosperous communities

An Equal chance for Children and Young People

Delivering good value services

The Council's vision, which these priorities support, is of an equal chance for all. This means achieving faster rates of improvement to close the gap in outcomes between the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and the majority.

## Organisational assessment

### Building healthier communities

Although adult social care is now provided by Solihull Care Trust, the Council is still responsible for these services. For 2007/08, these services were inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection, and performance was classified as good. The new Care Quality Commission 'CQC' took over inspecting adult social care for 2008/09. These services are now described as being delivered adequately. Particular elements of the service which have declined are those concerned with improving quality of life and increasing choice and control.

Major organisational development of the Care Trust has caused delays in delivering services. Progress on the Care Trust's priorities has also been slower than planned with budgets slipping. There is also a lack of general evaluation of impact. Delayed transfers of care have increased during 2008/09 and are above the average for similar councils. Provision of intermediate care 'in particular residential care' is also an area for improvement which may be a contributing factor to delayed transfers of care. The strong leadership in adult safeguarding is a positive feature. Safeguarding procedures are strengthened through monitoring and review contracts for providers of care.

Solihull is performing well in three areas of adult social care. The first of these is in increasing opportunities for people to improve their physical and mental health and fewer people experiencing preventable hospital admissions. The second is the strength of public engagement helping to shape services. The third area is the increased availability of financial assessments and direct payments and the appointment of an economic development officer to support people with learning difficulties into employment. Integrating health and social care is a strength. Good outcomes are achieved from the single assessment process. Fewer people have preventable hospital admissions, and this is due to integrating health and social care. Schemes are also in place to support people to live at home for example telecare and falls prevention

schemes. This is helping to ensure that patients receive a seamless service which meets individual needs.

A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been undertaken and this has helped to identify areas of inequality. The most deprived areas are concentrated in the three wards in the north of the borough. Most social housing is in the north with more than 40 per cent of households of this type. This is compared to overall figures for Solihull of 79 per cent owner occupied and 16 per cent social housing. Overcrowding more than one person per room is present in a larger percentage of social housing. Crime and male unemployment is also worse in the north of the borough.

Health inequalities are being tackled by the Council and its partners, but the gap in health outcomes between the north and south of the borough has not improved significantly between 1997 and 2006. Solihull performs well in 'all age all cause mortality' rates, and is consistently above the England and Wales average. However, smoking in pregnancy and breastfeeding are key issues for Solihull.

There are several initiatives in place to improve health in the borough - addressing smoking and heart disease for instance. Another is the new 'You+' one stop shop for health advice in Chelmsley Wood. However, it is too early to judge the success of these. Other actions undertaken by the Council include poverty relief, decent standard of housing, access to services for example leisure, social and economic regeneration, educational attainment, health care interventions. The Care Trust is also developing a comprehensive wellbeing and prevention service.

The borough wide obesity programme, which is funded through the Big Lottery with match funding from SCT Choosing Health and SMBC Leisure Services, lasts three years. However a big expansion of weight management services and obesity prevention interventions in the North is planned for the future. The measures undertaken in response to childhood obesity need to be long-term and provide borough wide coverage.

## 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 most 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 to be 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, which is about the average for England.

Partnership working is well established and delivers 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. The Council is a key part of the Solihull Safer Communities Strategic Group, the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership 'CDRP'. Two CDRP funded schemes have led to additional police arrests. One scheme was for additional mobile phone examination by the police and the second scheme funded three decoy cars across the Borough, each with traceable assets that allow police to track stolen property. This has also led to some significant arrests. Although Solihull has a higher level of reported racially aggravated crime than similar areas, there has been recent reduction. Reported racially aggravated crime is down 37.5 per cent in the year to date compared to the same period last year. The CDRP is considering whether to use its tension monitoring group to look at the causes and solutions for racially aggravated crime.

Anti social behaviour and social problems are linked to young people not being engaged in education, employment or training 'NEET'. The level of NEETs in Solihull is reducing and the Council, with partners, has successfully met the 2008/09 target of 6.35 per cent. But not enough young offenders are in suitable education, training and employment. The LSP has a target to get 75 per cent of young offenders engaged in this way. During 2008/09 this target was missed, with only 70.6 per cent. As a result, there is a higher proportion of disengaged young offenders, increasing the risk of further offending.

Solihull's roads are comparatively safe. The number of people killed or seriously injured on Solihull's roads has been reducing over the last ten years, and is lower than the national average. However, there has been a small increase in numbers recently, with the latest three year rolling average showing that 84 people are killed or seriously injured on Solihull's roads each year. In response a Council task and finish group has reviewed road safety service delivery in Solihull and recommended ways to develop the service.

## Building stronger communities

The people of Solihull are very satisfied with the borough and the public services they receive. The Place survey shows that 87.7 per cent of the people in Solihull are very satisfied with the area as a place to live. This is higher than average and higher than in 2006 when it was 80 per cent. This national survey shows Solihull performing well compared to the rest of the West Midlands. No scores are below average and three are above average 'two of these have shown improvement since the previous survey'. The better than average scores include satisfaction with the area as a place to live, the perception of people not treating one another with respect and consideration and the perception of people being drunk or rowdy in public places.

The Council has been nationally recognised, through the IDeA beacon scheme, for its work on digital inclusion. This is the partnership working with Solihull Community Housing and the Third Sector to increase social inclusion and improve life chances in the most disadvantaged areas of the borough shows commitment to tackling exclusion and promoting life chances. The scheme has provided free broadband internet access to disadvantaged communities in the North of the borough living in multi storey blocks. Over 80 tenants now have access to the internet through this scheme. The Third Sector have been involved in the delivering aspects of the programme, this

has included providing computers and training support for disabled and vulnerable people. Completion rates for these courses were high with 79 per cent of courses being completed by all those attending.

It has also installed interactive CCTV in 42 multi storey blocks to improve security by detecting and preventing antisocial behaviour. Positive outcomes so far include 68 per cent of residents feeling safer in their homes. It is estimated that criminal damage in and around the blocks has also reduced by 24.5 per cent. Other work includes setting up the Social Homes Options so applicants can express interest in empty properties over the internet, telephone or in person, and ICT training courses. This work is focused in the districts area of deprivation, in north Solihull. Other elements include Digital TV service, Laptops for Looked After Children, Telecare for older and vulnerable people online polling over local issues, Facebook access to engage young people and school to home digital services.

The Council is justifiably proud of having six public parks which have won the green flag award. Green Flag awards assess parks on how welcoming they are and other criteria such as safety and security, cleanliness and maintenance and community involvement. The award scheme is run by the Green Flag Plus partnership of Keep Britain Tidy, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Green Space.

Although the Council does not receive Government funding towards preventing violent extremism, it has developed a local plan and is organising work in communities and schools to stop people becoming terrorists or violent extremists. The Council, Police, Solihull College and the local faith communities have also developed a Community Cohesion Reassurance Plan.

The Council is providing good services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. There is a UK Border Agency reception centre in Solihull. Any unaccompanied children arriving in the region become the responsibility of Solihull Council. Nearly 180 such children are being looked after by the Council, as well as about 160 who are now over 18 but still in need of support by the Council.

## Building more prosperous communities

The Council and its partners are responding well to the recession. A credit crunch action plan has been developed to tackle the local effects of the downturn. The Council has recognised there is a high level of exposure in the local economy to sectors which are particularly vulnerable to the recession, such as manufacturing and construction, business and financial services, and retail, distribution and hospitality.

The Council has developed a recession scorecard to keep local partners and businesses up to date with local impact. This highlights information from a range of data sources, showing current trends and changes. It has been instrumental in shaping the Action Plan and identifying key priorities.

Efforts to tackle worklessness in Solihull have not been having enough of an impact on overall figures. Before the recession, dependence on working age benefits in Solihull had not changed significantly between 2005 and 2008, although it had fallen both nationally and regionally. Some targets have been

exceeded, but overall delivery has not been proportionate to the scale of the problem. Some responses are quite recent and impact is yet to be seen. For example, a job club in North Solihull is only just being set up, the skills champions' role has not been filled yet, and a renewed redundancy protocol with JCP to reflect the current economic context is still to be agreed. The Council has only recently signed up to a Local Employment Partnership and it could have done more to ensure local people benefited from the jobs created by the North Solihull regeneration scheme.

Solihull Council is joining forces with the other six west midlands metropolitan councils and other organisations such as Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council to work more effectively and on a larger scale. This is happening through a " Multi area agreement" . This joint plan to improve employment and skills in the West Midlands has been agreed and will be implemented from April 2010. Year 2 of CAA will assess progress in this area.

There is a £1.8billion project underway to totally transform the north of the borough. This was awarded first prize in the "New Ventures" category of the Homes and Communities Agency 'HCA' Academy awards. Although progress has been slowed by the recession, it is continuing to deliver. To date, 11 sites have been delivered resulting in 341 new dwellings completed and occupied. Two primary schools and 31 social rented units are now complete. In addition, a further seven sites are being cleared for housing redevelopment with planning permission in place for a further 808 homes. There are also schemes in place to improve Shirley and Solihull town centre, but these have also been affected by the recession.

The needs of council house tenants are well met. Solihull Community Housing is the Arm's Length Management Organisation 'ALMO' set up in April 2004 to run the housing service on behalf of Solihull Council. An inspection in 2008 found that it provided excellent service with excellent prospects for improvement. As with the rest of the country, Solihull has seen reduced property values and declining house sales in the last year. However, due to the relatively low number of homes in lower Council Tax bands, home ownership is still not an affordable option for local people on lower incomes. The waiting list for social rented housing in Solihull has grown significantly over the past five years. Availability is not enough to meet demand. Large numbers of people are therefore waiting for rented homes that have no real possibility of being re-housed. And not enough new affordable housing is being built.

In common with the rest of the country, Solihull has homeless people in temporary accommodation. The number of households living in temporary accommodation has fallen from 15 in December 2004 to 13 at the end of September 2009. This is low when compared nationally and in similar authorities. With this relatively low base the longer term prospects for reducing levels to 50 per cent below the 2004 rate are unclear.. In order to meet the CLG target the Council is decommissioning the Council's two temporary accommodation hostels.

A jointly commissioned gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment has shown the current site provision of four private sites offering 37 pitches is insufficient and that 26 additional pitches will be needed during 2007/17. The Council expects to address this identified need through the Local Development Framework.

Defra has awarded £129.1 million in Private Finance Initiative<sup>3</sup> PFI funding to a long term waste management project, Project Transform, covering Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire. The project will use the funding to help develop a 305,000 tonne a year capacity facility to help serve the region's waste disposal needs. While this is being referred to in the local press as an energy from waste<sup>4</sup> EfW plant, the final design has not been agreed. The current 240,000 tonnes a year capacity EfW facility in Coventry will be replaced by a new plant to help divert 427,000 tonnes of biodegradable municipal waste a year from landfill. The three councils involved intend to also achieve a 50 per cent recycling rate.

Current recycling rates in Solihull are increasing. The amount of waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting rose from 30.8 per cent in 2007/08 to 32.9 per cent in 2008/09. However, the amount sent to landfill also increased, up from 16.2 per cent to 17.5 per cent. Levels of graffiti are higher than the Council would like. It failed to meet its target for graffiti in 2008/09. It aimed to have no more than four per cent of the area vandalised by visible graffiti, but five per cent of the area was found to be affected. However, in the first quarter of 2009/10 there have been signs of improvement.

## A brighter future for young people

The rating for children's services in Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council is that it performs well. The overall effectiveness of most inspected and regulated services and settings in Solihull is good. Children receive a good start in their care and education through high quality early years provision. However, the quality of education provision in primary and secondary schools is variable. While no schools are judged to be failing, the proportion of good or better primary and secondary schools is lower than in similar areas and nationally. Post 16 provision is variable in school sixth forms, ranging between outstanding in a third to adequate in the remainder; however, that in the sixth form and further education colleges is good. Judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving are good or better across most inspected and regulated services and settings. Three of the five special schools and two of the three pupil referral units are good or better. The local authority fostering service is good.

Solihull is in line or above the England average for the vast majority of indicators of education performance. When compared with similar local authorities, Solihull educational outcomes are close to the average for that group. Standards at age 11 and 16 are higher than national standards and broadly average when compared to those in similar local authorities. Very young children are well supported. The proportion of early years settings judged good or better in inspection is higher than in similar areas and nationally. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage children's achievement is higher than that in similar areas and nationally and the gap between the highest and lowest achieving children is about average. By the end of their primary education children's achievement remains well above national levels and is broadly in line with that in similar areas.

Performance against most national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving is in line or better than similar areas and nationally. The gap in achievement between children and young people

whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and their peers is narrowing and is in line with similar areas and nationally. Activities for teenagers is a priority for local residents and is reflected in the LAA. However, Solihull spends less than its statistical neighbours on activities for teenagers and inspections published in 2008 noted that in parts of the Borough there was no local provision and no public transport to access youth provision elsewhere.

Solihull's Anti Bullying Behaviour Alliance 'ABBA' has led on a wide number of initiatives to tackle bullying and in December received recognition 'for the second time' at the national Youth Service Awards in receiving the Diana Anti-Bullying Award. The Playground Pals project is an anti-bullying Peer support programme which also contributes to this priority and targets primary school settings.

Health of children in Solihull is better than in other similar areas but health inequalities within the Borough remain an issue. The number of teenage girls becoming pregnant is lower than average but numbers have increased and limited progress has been made towards the 2010 target for reduction. There is good performance on childhood obesity but progress on breast feeding, a factor linked to childhood obesity, varies across the Borough. In 2008/09, the breastfeeding rate at 6 to 8 weeks was just over 20 per cent for the north and 50 per cent for the south of the borough. Initiatives are focused in the north such as a breast feeding team to provide encouragement and support for mothers. Performance in decreasing smoking in pregnancy is better than average. Progress in reducing young people's drug and alcohol abuse is adequate for most young people but good for young offenders.

Progress in addressing drug and alcohol abuse among young people is adequate. Good progress is being made with young offenders, who make up the vast proportion of the services clientele. Of all clients discharged from tier three treatment in 2007/08, 70 per cent completed successfully. This figure is a marked improvement from the 2006/07 figure of 60 percent. Of those with a planned discharge, the most successful groups are white and female. Surveys in 2007 showed that, within Solihull, drug taking and perceptions of drug taking were showing slight signs of decreasing although the number of 11 to 15 year olds that had ever had an alcoholic drink was higher than the national average 'Solihull 53 per cent, nationally 48 per cent'. During 2007/08, black and minority ethnic 'BME' groups represented in the young peoples treatment population accounted for 8.5 per cent. This figure decreased significantly compared with the previous year when the BME proportion was significantly higher at 14.3 per cent. Solihull is doing better than national and statistical neighbour averages for young offenders who receive specialist assessments within five days, and early intervention and treatment within ten days.

## Delivering good value services

Six out of ten people '58.9 per cent' are satisfied with the way Solihull Council runs things. This is among the highest scores in a recent national survey. Although just over four out of ten people '42.5per cent' think the Council gives value for money, this is also among the highest scores in the country.

Solihull is a low spending Council. Three quarters of metropolitan councils

spend more money per head of population than Solihull. The Council has a detailed understanding of its costs and has made efficiency savings of £4.4million in 2008/09. This is as well as the £22million savings made in the previous two years.

The Council is working in partnership with Warwickshire and Coventry to identify how joint resources could best be used. A shared services project is looking at Customer Services, Procurement, ICT and HR. Also under consideration for joint provision are legal services and libraries. An example of partnership working with the aim of providing greater economy and value for money through partnership work is Project Transform. Solihull, Coventry and Warwickshire councils have agreed and signed a memorandum of understanding which sets out collective aims and objectives for the delivery of a long term residual waste treatment facility. This will help achieve landfill diversion targets and meet waste reduction, recycling and composting targets.

Solihull has a good track record in leadership and capacity to deliver effective outcomes. Financial management and planning to ensure resources are deployed effectively were judged sound and the Council works productively in partnership. This shows the potential for leadership, capacity and capability to be effective is present.

The Council is identifying actions to contribute to environmental sustainability. Each divisional performance plan includes at least one outcome and measure about how it will contribute to the delivery of the Carbon Management Plan or Climate Change Strategy. The Council has an overall CO2 reduction target of 33 per cent by 2013. Over 90 per cent of Solihull schools have travel plans to promote sustainable, safe and healthy alternatives to car travel.

The Council is committed to working closely with the voluntary sector to deliver its commissioning priorities. The Voluntary and Community Sector Steering Group Compact Plus was launched on 10 December 2008 and will have a role in the commissioning process both as a service provider and supporting the identification of needs and specification of services.

A Leadership and Core qualities Framework has been developed which sets out what behaviours are expected from all employees. The identified behaviours support recognised competencies which link into Business plans and the Council Plan so each employee understands their role in Shaping Solihull and deliver our organisational vision for Solihull 2018. This should help to secure delivery of the organisation's vision.

One area of weakness noted previously was the approach to diversity and equality, which was underdeveloped. Since then the Council has improved the performance management frameworks to ensure that it can track equality outcomes across the Council. It has also developed a set of actions and targeted outcomes that complement the Equality and Diversity Scheme Action Plan and support the delivery of the Shaping Solihull, Positive about People Transformation Project. The Council is exceeding its target for ethnic minority representation in the workforce, but has missed its target for the percentage of employees with a disability.

## Narrowing the gap

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 some 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. This is a severe 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 show some men dying eight years earlier than others and some women living six and half years longer than others.

Addressing the needs of disadvantaged local people is central to partners' aims and aspirations. There is an innovative 15 year 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 designed 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 money such as Working Neighbourhoods Funding to tackle worklessness.

Responding to the changing economic climate, the North Solihull Partnership has placed a much greater focus on bringing forward social housing schemes. This includes exploring new and innovative forms of funding for intermediate rented housing. The economic situation has clearly been a challenge for all regeneration projects across the country. The Partnership recognised that an over reliance on the private housing market and associated land values alone to fund activities was a risk in the current climate. However both the Partnership and the programme are well placed to respond to the changing market. The programme's track record in its initial period of delivery means that it has received regional and national recognition, for instance being included as an Impact Investment location in the West Midlands Regional Funding Advice to Government. It is working effectively with partners and funding agencies including AWM and the HCA to support the delivery of the programme, with £9.65m of HCA funding being secured for example. This funding is helping to support the delivery of the Partnership's new business plan. This is placing a much greater focus on bring forward social housing schemes in the short term, including exploring new and innovative forms of funding for intermediate rented housing. This short term focus on social housing not only keeps momentum in the programme, but also responds to current needs. This short term focus does not however compromise the long term aims and objectives of the programme, with the Strategic Framework Review specifically confirming the Vision and key objectives and principles of the Strategic Framework. This remains the focus of the work being carried out by the North Solihull Partnership and form the basis on which the Partnership will seek to move forward. Delivery of the new business plan is being underpinned with a new spatial strategy, and a refreshed approach to communications and engagement and a governance review is also being concluded.

The Pathways to Employment and Training programme aims to narrow the skills gap in Solihull. This is a partnership between the Council, Solihull Community Housing and Solihull College. The partnership delivers construction training and support, aligned with employment opportunities, arising from

work to achieve the Decent Homes Standard. In 2007/08 targets for participation and employment secured were both exceeded. The Council is now building on this experience by developing several linked initiatives to encourage local recruitment of workless people. This includes the use of community benefit clauses in Council contracts, developing an Employment Charter to be promoted to local businesses, and a commitment to employ people with a learning disability during 2009.

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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