

One Borough: an equal chance for all Solihull's Community Strategy 2014-18



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Introduction

In 2008, Partners in Solihull agreed a Community Strategy for Solihull that sets out their ambitions to make Solihull a great place to live, promoting a vision of Solihull in 2018 where: **everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous**. This vision recognises that while Solihull is a broadly affluent borough, there are areas of the borough where levels of prosperity are lower which impacts **significantly on the quality of life for people in these neighbourhoods**. The partnership priorities are targeted at narrowing this inequalities gap.

In 2011, when the Communities Strategy was last refreshed, Partners identified a more focused set of eleven priority outcome areas which were seen as cross-cutting and required partners to work together on addressing. At that time, the impact of the economic downturn was biting with the less prosperous neighbourhoods in Solihull suffering the hardest. A narrowing the gap scorecard aligned to the priority outcome areas was developed; this sets out clearly the levels of inequality and the gaps we aim to narrow.

Since 2011, significant progress has been made in Solihull in raising the quality of life for all, with notable improvements in reducing levels of worklessness, improving levels of attainment and reducing crime. However, the pace of improvement has been consistent across the borough, which means that the gap in inequality remains constant, with a few exceptions such as educational attainment which has reduced due to a more targeted strategy.

This latest refresh of Solihull's Community Strategy for 2014/18 brings together the Partnership's focus on priority outcomes with work undertaken across the region by West Midlands Police which identified areas most affected by crime and anti-social behaviour. These areas require a targeted 'partnership plus' approach is required to tackle the underlying socio-economic causes of crime. Over the course of the last 6 months, partners and key stakeholders have come together to challenge their existing strategies and identify if they are:

- Sufficiently targeting services in the geographic areas which require a step change in improvement?
- Addressing poor take up of universal services in more disadvantaged communities?
- Narrowing the gap in inequality in Solihull at an acceptable pace?

The refreshed strategy focuses on five broad socio-economic themes which have been identified as making the most significant difference to the quality of life of individuals that live in our **Partnership Plus** areas of Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge and Smith's Wood. The strategy summarises the underlying objectives and targets which Partners have committed to working together to achieve to ensure that everyone, no matter where they live in Solihull has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous.



Solihull as a Place

Solihull is a broadly affluent borough in both the regional and national context, characterised by above-average levels of income and home ownership. Lying at the heart of the West Midlands motorway network, with excellent public transport connections with the Birmingham city conurbation and linked to European and global markets by Birmingham International Airport, Solihull has significant geographic and infrastructure advantages.

Economically, this supports a strong service sector economy with Solihull town centre and key regional strategic assets (the NEC complex, Land Rover and the Birmingham & Blythe Valley Business Parks) primarily responsible for drawing in around 85,000 workers to the borough on a daily basis.

However, Solihull is challenged by a prosperity gap, with many outcome measures in our Partnership Plus area (Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge and Smith's Wood) significantly lagging the rest of the borough. Alongside below average income levels and employment the Partnership Plus area is notable for a relatively higher population density, less green space per head and a substantially greater proportion of socially rented housing. The impact of this poverty gap is felt across a broad range of outcomes including educational attainment, employment, crime and health, which significantly affects quality of life for people in these neighbourhoods.

A clear focus of this Strategy is to close the gap of inequality experienced by the more deprived neighbourhoods of Solihull, building on the significant regeneration investment in the Borough, which has seen new village centres built with new schools, housing, shops, health and community centres supported by improved transport links.

Measuring Success

The Narrowing the Gap Scorecard focuses on population level outcome measures that assess impact affecting communities, with a particular focus on inequalities. A key principle underpinning the narrowing the gap scorecard is that we are monitoring the direction of travel on narrowing the gap and not progress against set targets. By tracking progress over time in reducing the gap between the Regeneration Wards (Chelmsley Wood, Smiths Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge) and the Borough average across all the priority outcomes it provides a significant tool in assessing the state of the Borough and progress toward our vision for the Borough. In addition, comparison with national averages and a comparison group of statistically similar Authorities has also been included to enable challenge against the pace of improvement.

The impact on narrowing the gap of inequality is monitored twice a year by Partners.

Accountability

The Partnership Governing Board has overall accountability for the delivery and oversight of impact of this strategy and supporting thematic plans. This will be achieved through:

- Annual report on progress/opportunities and challenges
- Bi-annual assessment of impact using the narrowing the gap scorecard

The strategic Leads for the 5 thematic areas will come together as part of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Delivery Group. Collectively the leads are accountable for driving forward the delivery of the Plans and ensuring alignment across delivery structures (operational & strategic). Ensuring a focus is maintained on impact and improving outcomes.

Priority Theme: Education & Skills

Breaking the link between early disadvantage and poor outcomes in later life can only be achieved by ensuring that all children receive the best possible start in life. There is a growing body of research which shows that supporting social and emotional development at an early age can bring about significant improvements as you get older in areas such as mental and physical health, educational attainment, employment opportunities, criminal and violent behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse and teenage pregnancy.

When looking at outcomes for children, we know that children from the lowest income households have an average percentile score on school readiness that is more than 30 points below their peers in the first quartile, and their vocabulary at age 3 is more than 20 points below their peers. Therefore our strategy is to identify early those children who can benefit most from access to good quality early years provision to ensure their development by the age of 5, and improve their school readiness. This is complemented by helping their parents, who are children's first and most important educators, to develop effective home learning environments.

Being ready for work is similarly challenging, therefore a main focus of our work is to secure that transition from school to work for our young people. There is a particular focus on raising employment aspirations within families where there are not well established patterns of employment. Critical to this is to reduce the number of young people who stop participating in education and training in their early teens, and provide participation routes which enable them to develop their ambitions in ways that connect meaningfully with the opportunities that exist in the labour market. It is also critical that the education system in Solihull is well aligned with the needs of employers. It is our objective to ensure that those leaving the education system have a good awareness of the world of work and strong employability skills.

Our objectives:

Pre-emptive identification of families with pre-school children who need extra help and linking them into services.

- Increased take up of free 2 year old nursery placements.
- Increase in school readiness among vulnerable pupils.
- Increase in parental skills.

Ensuring that pupils are in school or receiving appropriate training up to the age of 18.

- Reduction in permanent exclusions.

All young people are ready for work.

- Better identification of those at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training).
- Reduced number of NEETS.

How we will measure success:

Metric 1	Foundation Stage: Good Level Development
Metric 2	Not in Employment, Education or Training (Years 12-14)
Metric 3	Overall 18-24 year old claimant unemployment rate

Priority Theme: Employment & Poverty

In recent years we have increased our focus on the need to reduce poverty and support people back into employment. Changes to benefits and the recession have exacerbated the problem particularly in poorer areas. Through our focus on action against poverty partners are working together to deliver a range of initiatives focused on addressing the underlying causes of poverty, and mitigating its impact. Additional support is also being provided to support our most vulnerable customers and those further away from the jobs market.

Customers in financial difficulty are at risk of turning to loan sharks and high cost lenders to make ends meet and we need to explore and promote alternatives to these as well as raising awareness of the real costs of using these types of lenders. It is particularly important that we support and promote financial literacy: helping people make informed choices about money.

One of our key strategies is to ensure our local community based credit union, Advance, is effective in promoting saving and sensible borrowing within the community and safeguarding those at risk of financial exclusion and those that are vulnerable: against loan sharks, gambling, over borrowing and signposting people to help needed.

While we use hardship grants to support customers in the short term we maintain our objective on working together to find long term solutions to poverty. The main way we are doing this is through supporting customers into employment, with training, promoting apprenticeships, supporting them to access the internet and to complete application forms.

This is a holistic and coordinated approach which ensures our economic development activities links directly to our objective to secure employment for local people. Our strategy of working with employers means we can take a personalised approach to target training, work experience to secure the right skills to match people with potential employment in the Borough. This strategy also promotes self-employment and business start-ups as a viable alternative to employment.

Our objectives:

Promote access to affordable credit & support those in debt.

- Credit Unions operating in the right location.
- More people are accessing the credit union.
- Evidence of reduction of people using unaffordable credit.
- In new developments, there is a point providing access to affordable credit.

Digital Inclusion / Financial Inclusion.

- More people sourcing information and accessing services via the internet rather than through face to face or telephone contact.

Access to jobs.

- Increase in uptake of volunteering, employment and apprenticeships.
- Increase in priority level referrals.
- Regular employer events to encourage taking part.
- Reduction in unemployment in the partnership plus areas.

How we will measure success:

Metric 1	Children living in households in receipt of out of work benefits
Metric 2	Unemployment (Long Term - over 12 months) Claimant Rate

Priority Theme: Health

Lifestyles are a major contributor towards the pattern of health inequalities in Solihull. Life expectancy is directly correlated to the number of unhealthy lifestyle behaviours that a person engages in. People who engage in all four unhealthy lifestyle behaviours (smoking, excess drinking, poor diet and limited exercise) live an average of 14 years less than those who engage in none.

Evidence from the recent report by The Kings Fund, *Clustering of Unhealthy Lifestyle Behaviours Over Time* (2012), highlights how although multiple healthy lifestyle behaviours have improved across the population as a whole, for those in the lowest socio economic groups the change has been much less significant.

We are addressing this through sustainable programmes focused on reducing health inequality which are both integrated and targeted to those most in need. By taking a personalised approach, using innovative engagement techniques like peer support, we are seeking to empower individuals to take action on improving their lifestyles.

Being out of work can have a detrimental effect on an individual's physical and mental health and wellbeing. As well as poor health and disability potentially preventing individuals from gaining secure and stable employment there are also significant psychological consequences from being out of work, especially for the long-term unemployed. By providing early community based mental health services for adults and children we will respond to higher levels of needs in the Partnership Plus area due to the complex issues that can limit individual's ability to build positive relationships and support networks that help with coping with day to day life.

Our objectives:

Engaging with the community on health issues so they recognise the issues preventing their communities from being healthy.

- Increase in number of smoke-free homes.
- Increase in number of community organised activities with a positive health benefit.
- Increased take up of screening & support - health checks, breast screening, smoking cessation.

Improve emotional wellbeing by building resilience.

- Increased provision of community emotional wellbeing services & reduced demand for specialist and inpatient mental health services.
- Fewer school days lost.
- More people with a mental health condition in education, training or employment (target 20% increase within 5 years).

Ensure that services enable people to get the help that they need as early as possible.

- Increased take up of 2 year old places and children's centres among target groups.
- Reduction in demand for more intensive services.

How we will measure success:

Metric 1	Deaths from circulatory diseases (coronary heart disease) early mortality rate (persons aged <75) in Solihull (based on 3 year average)
Metric 2	Children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 pop. aged under 18

Priority Theme: Housing & Environment

Solihull is a relatively 'well housed' place, but many people across the Borough experience difficulty in obtaining and sustaining a home which meets their needs in a neighbourhood in which they feel safe. These issues can be referred to as 'housing stress', which covers many things from struggling to set up a first home, being homeless, being seriously short of space, having serious problems of disrepair or being unable to afford to heat your home adequately.

People who want to set up a home are finding it harder to do, with more people than ever looking to rent. This has led to a marked increase in applications for social housing and in people taking tenancies in the private rental sector, with a comparable reduction in availability in either the social or private sector. There is now a high incidence of homelessness in Solihull compared to most other areas in the West Midlands.

Early intervention through a multi-agency response to tackle housing stress provides an essential foundation to help people to deal with problems in their lives. Developing the range of skills required to maintain a tenancy is a key element of our strategy to prevent homelessness.

Neighbourhoods are where people live most of their lives: supporting their sense of place and identity. Where someone lives provides one of the main reasons for communities coming together, whether formally through organised community groups and networks or informally through being good neighbours. We are actively taking a placed based approach to encourage people to get more involved in their community, be more self-reliant and do more for themselves. Above all, we want to promote a culture of reciprocity, with people supporting each other to overcome challenges and difficulties as well as encouraging them to realise their aspirations.

Our objectives:

Residents take pride in their properties & the local environment.

- Increase in community led activity to maintain local environment.
- All new tenants receiving pre & post tenancy support.
- Reduction in tenancies breaking down.

Community mix and cohesion.

- More events which bring generations together taking place in the 'partnership plus' area.
- More street & neighbourhood level community activity.
- Reduction in antisocial behaviour in the 'partnership plus' area.
- Increase in proportion of people who say that people of different backgrounds get on well.

Better meeting community needs through an integrated approach to neighbourhood working.

- Support services in place and fully integrated.
- Increase in people from targeted groups accessing services.

How we will measure success:

Metric 1	Community Cohesion (% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area)
Metric 2	Reported ASB incidents - rate per 1,000 population

Priority Theme: Targeting Key Individuals

Underpinning our approach to targeting individuals is the recognition that we need to focus both on those individuals at the greatest risk of causing harm (to people and our communities) as well as protecting vulnerable victims (e.g. victims of domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation or hate crime).

Through our integrated approaches to offender management, working with complex families and support to victims we can see the impact of partnership working to improving outcomes and reducing the demand for more intensive interventions.

A focus of our work will be to continue to extend our partnership co-located working for integrated offender management and Families First to include Job Centre Plus, Health and Voluntary Community Sector colleagues. This will enable us to extend skills and knowledge to enhance our targeted approach and also secure early intervention.

Sharing information underpins the work we do to target individuals to ensure that our assessments are evidence led and our action is outcome focused. By engaging partners such as schools we are able to identify earlier those at risk of causing harm, and therefore put in appropriate actions and activities that divert from offending. Similarly we are working with a range of partners to promote safeguarding, raising awareness in relation to domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, hate crime etc. with practitioners and also with communities. The approach recognises the hidden harm nature of many of these risks and is actively promoting reporting to enable the provision of support to victims.

Our objectives:

Improving skills, knowledge & systems that support working in a joined up way to tackle offending and protect vulnerable victims.

- More efficient targeting of partnership resources.
- Build confidence of ground workers.

Offenders (ensuring that we identify those at risk of offending or those whose offending may escalate & take targeted action to prevent this).

- Reoffending rates drop among target groups (e.g. medium risk offenders).
- Targeted young people don't go onto become adult offenders.
- Problems tackled earlier resulting in reduced demand for reactive services from these families.

Vulnerable victims:

- Increased referrals and recording of domestic abuse from partner agencies (outside of police).

Understanding the impact and effectiveness of targeted working.

- Evidence based on which to make decisions about future arrangements.

How we will measure success:

Metric 1	Rate of domestic abuse incidents recorded by the Police (per 1000 of population)
Metric 2	Reported incidents of crime (rate per 1,000 population)

The following organisations are involved in the work of the Solihull Partnership and have contributed to this Partnership Community Strategy:

- Department for Work & Pensions
- National Probation Service
- North Solihull Community Collaborative
- Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group
- Solihull College
- Solihull Community Housing
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Staffordshire & West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company Probation
- West Midlands Fire Service
- West Midlands Police Service
- Voluntary & Community Sector



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