

# Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

## About Your Services

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## Introduction

In line with the Council's public sector equality duty, this report sets out a number of equality activities the Council has carried out in 2022.

As a public body we are accountable for delivering equitable and inclusive services that both meet the diverse needs of our residents and employees and advance the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) journey to improve lives across Solihull's diverse communities. This also reflects our social and moral duty on equality.

The Council is committed to operating in a way that is respectful and inclusive so that there is equity of access and that no one is left out or disadvantaged. This is a core component of our approach. We have developed, with staff, a Statement of Intent, and a number of internal EDI documents that set out the Council's vision and intended future EDI journey as we build a fair and inclusive organisation.

The principles of EDI are deeply rooted in the Council Plan '**Where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all.**' Championing equality and role modelling the right attitudes and behaviours are integral to the way we work and deliver services. Our culture is one where everyone feels valued and respected regardless of their identity, background, beliefs or characteristics.

This report provides contextual information about Solihull as a place and the local population. We describe how people can easily access our services, give examples of actions taken to meet diverse needs, and showcase how we celebrate diversity and what we will do to maintain an EDI-focused culture where people feel safe and happy and can be themselves.

**Paul Johnson, Acting Chief Executive**

## Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on nine specific protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Under the 'Public Sector Equality Duty' public bodies must:

- a. **Remove or minimise disadvantages** suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- b. **Take steps to meet the needs of people** from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- c. **Encourage people from protected groups to take part** in public life and in any other activity where participation is disproportionately low.
- d. **Annually publish relevant and proportionate information** demonstrating compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- e. **Set specific and measurable equality objectives** at least once every four years.

This report is closely linked to two other documents published on the Council's website [www.solihull.gov.uk](http://www.solihull.gov.uk); these are:

**Fairness, Inclusion and Equalities: About Our Employees: March 2023.**

A report which provides the profile of our employees and our work as an employer.

**The March 2023 Gender Pay Gap Report:** Report setting out the difference in pay between men and women at Solihull Council.

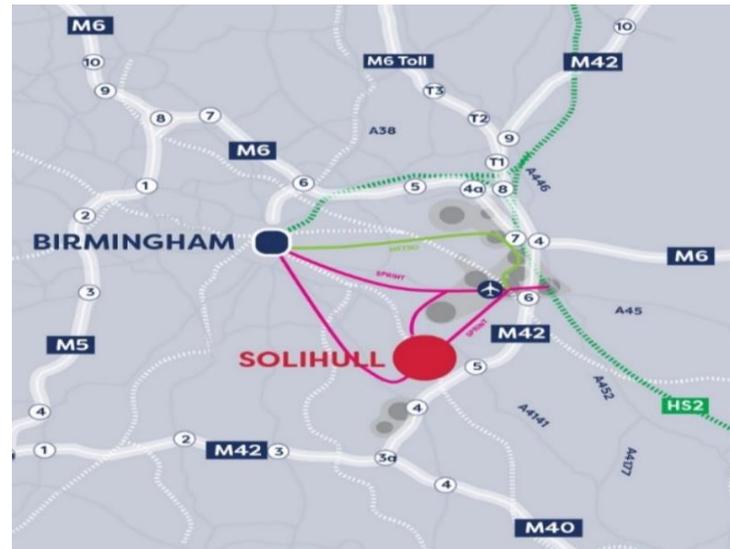
## Solihull: The Place

Solihull is in the West Midlands, close to Birmingham and the Black Country to the west and Coventry to the east. Neighbouring rural areas include towns in North and South Warwickshire such as Bromsgrove, Stratford and Warwick.

Solihull has an excellent transport infrastructure: the West Midlands motorway network, Birmingham Airport and Birmingham International Railway Station and the forthcoming High Speed Railway Network (HS2) all contribute to making Solihull a place of local, national and international significance. The National Exhibition Centre, the proposed UK Telecommunications Lab, existing notable automotive manufacturing, business and professional services make the Borough a dynamic and fast-growing labour market.

The attractive environment consists of around 18k hectares of countryside and designated greenbelt areas. The aspirational housing and excellent schools continue to build on Solihull's reputation as a desirable place to live, work and invest. The independently administered Solihull Place Survey 2022 covering neighbourhood, participation in civic life, community safety and wellbeing found that 84% of respondents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, compared to 79% across England.

Although Solihull is the least deprived upper tier local authority in the West Midlands, it is relatively polarised. 41% of residents of North Solihull live in neighbourhoods that rank among the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England while 39% of the rest of the Borough's population live in neighbourhoods that rank among the 10% least deprived in England.



Solihull has four broad geographic areas:

- a. Solihull Town Centre
- b. Urban West: Castle Bromwich, Lyndon, Elmdon, Olton, Silhill, St Alphege, Shirley East, Shirley West and Shirley South
- c. North Solihull (mainly regeneration areas): Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge and Smith's Wood
- d. Semi-rural South and East: Blythe, Bickenhill, Knowle, Dorridge & Hockley Heath and Meriden.



## Solihull: Our Residents

**Population and Household Statistics.** The Office for National Statistics is beginning to release high-level results from the 2021 Census with more detailed statistics to be published in 2023. Census data adds considerably to our understanding of the Solihull resident population. Early findings show Solihull to be an increasingly ethnically diverse borough with a large and growing older age population.

The Census 2021 found that Solihull's population is 216,245. The number of residents grew by 4.6% between 2011 and 2021, compared with increases of 6.6% in England and 6.2% in the West Midlands.



In 2021 around 50% of Solihull people aged 16+ said they were married or in a registered civil partnership. 33% said that they have never been married or in a civil partnership, up from 30% in 2011.

In 2021 there were 142,000 employee jobs located in Solihull. The Solihull job density is 39% higher than the England average and 50% greater than the West Midlands. A Solihull Chamber of Commerce report shows employment rates for ethnic minorities has grown by nearly 7% to 79% between 2018 and 2022. The corresponding figure for the West Midlands is 62%.

At £23,600 per head, disposable income in Solihull is 7% higher than the England average, the highest in the West Midlands.

Average full-time resident wages are 12% above the England average and the highest among upper tier local authorities in the West Midlands. Average full-time resident wages in Solihull have increased

for each of the last five years. However, adjusted for inflation average Solihull wages have been stagnant for the last 10 years and are 7% lower than they were in 2009. This is consistent with the pattern across England.

The average house price in Solihull is £325,000, 14% higher than the England average and 44% higher than the West Midlands. Lower quartile prices are even higher – 30% above the England average and 46% above that for the West Midlands.

The 2021 Census identifies 89,486 Solihull households, a 4% increase since 2011, compared to a 6% increase for England.

Home ownership in Solihull is high, accounting for 72% of households but has fallen slightly since 2011. The proportion of socially rented households also fell slightly to 14% offset by an increase in private renting (from 14% in 2011 to 18% in 2021).

The Solihull household profile is similar to England, albeit with a slightly higher proportion of older single households (15% single aged 66+ vs 13%) and more households with dependent children (30% vs 28%).

There are significant differences within Solihull with North Solihull having a higher proportion of single young adult households than the rest of the Borough (17% vs 13%) and households with dependent children (32% vs 29%). The rest of the Borough has more households of just older people compared to North Solihull (28% vs 22%).

Of particular note, is the fact that North Solihull accounts for 49% of all Solihull households of lone parents with dependent children with this group making up 13% of all households in North Solihull compared to just 5% across the rest of the Borough.

Between the 2011 and 2021 Census, the number of older households in Solihull increased by 12%, comprising a rise of 9% in the number of

single older people and a 15% increase in households of older couples. This is broadly in-line with England. At 4% the number of households with dependent children increased in-line with England, but the increase in households of single people was much lower (3% vs 6%).

### Age

The age profile of Solihull’s residents is shown below. Solihull has an older population than the England average. In the 2021 Census, 21% of the Solihull population were aged 65 and over (England 18%) including 10% aged 75+ (England 9%). Between 2011 and 2021, the number of Solihull residents aged 65+ increased by +15% (18%, age 75+) whereas those aged 16-64 increased by just 1% and those aged 0-15 by 7%.

Age			
Age	Solihull	England	West Midlands
0-15	19.3%	18.6%	19.3%
16-64	59.6%	63.0%	61.9%
65+	21.1%	18.4%	18.8%
<i>Source ONS Census 2021</i>			

Detailed statistics about the age profile of Solihull’s population in 2021 compared with the 2011 Census show a sharp reduction in younger adults aged 18-22, most likely to be caused by students leaving to go to university, substantial increases in the number of people in their late 40s to mid-50s and increases in residents who are in their early 70s.

### Sex

The 2021 census found that 51% of residents were female and 49% were male, in line with the England average and stable since 2001. The

2021 census also found that single parent, women-headed households are more prevalent in North Solihull than elsewhere in the Borough.

Sex				
Sex	Solihull count	Solihull %	England %	West Midlands %
Male	104,966	48.5%	49.0%	49.2%
Female	111,279	51.5%	51.0%	50.8%
All people	217,487			
<i>Source ONS Census 2021</i>				

### Health, Disability and Unpaid Care

In the 2021 Census, 83% of the Solihull population described their health as good or very good and just 5% said that their general health was bad or very bad. This is in-line with the England average. People in North Solihull were less likely to say that their health is good or very good than people living elsewhere in the Borough (78% vs 85%).

General health				
General health	Solihull count	Solihull %	England %	West Midlands %
Very good health	106,508	49%	48%	46%
Good health	72,192	33%	34%	34%
Fair health	26,816	12%	13%	14%

Bad health	8,293	4%	4%	4%
Very bad health	2,432	1%	1%	1%
Total Population	216,240			

Source ONS Census 2021

76% of the Solihull population have no long term physical or mental health conditions, with a further 7% saying that they have a long-term condition but that their activities are not limited. The remaining 17% are in some way disabled. Of these 15,700 people (7%) say that say that their daily activities are limited a lot and represent those most likely to require care.

Disability				
Disability	Solihull count	Solihull	England	West Midlands
No long term physical or mental health conditions	164,103	76%	76%	75%
Has long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited	14,903	7%	7%	6%
Day-to-day activities limited a little	21,535	10%	10%	10%

Day-to-day activities limited a lot	15,699	7%	7%	8%
Total Population	216,240			

Source ONS Census 2021

10% of the Solihull population over 5 years old provide at least some unpaid care for a family member or friend. This is in-line with the England average and varies little across the Borough. Of the nearly 20,000 Solihull residents who do provide some care, 30% do so for at least 50 hours per week.

Unpaid Care				
Unpaid Care	Solihull count	Solihull	England	West Midlands
No unpaid care	184,606	90%	91%	91%
19 hrs or less unpaid care	10,051	5%	4%	4%
20-49 hrs unpaid care	3,926	2%	2%	2%
50+ hrs unpaid care	5,963	3%	3%	3%
Population Age 5+	204,546			

Source ONS Census 2021

## Ethnicity

Solihull continues to become more ethnically diverse with net migration from neighbouring Birmingham being a significant influence. People from ethnic minority backgrounds accounted for 18% of the Solihull population in 2021, compared with 12% in 2011. This includes an increase from 6.6% to 11% in the category of Asian, Asian British and Asian Welsh.

Ethnicity				
	Solihull count	Solihull %	England %	West Midlands %
White	177,668	82.2%	81.0%	77.0%
Mixed Race/Ethnicity	7,496	3.5%	3.0%	3.0%
Asian/Asian British	23,845	11.0%	9.6%	13.3%
Black/Black British	3,955	1.8%	4.2%	4.5%
Any Other Ethnic Group	3,276	1.5%	2.2%	2.1%
White	177,668	82.2%	81.0%	77.0%
Minority Ethnic backgrounds	38,572	17.8%	19.0%	23.0%
Total Population	216,240			
<i>Source: ONS Census 2021</i>				

People from ethnic minority backgrounds account for a substantially lower proportion of the population than in neighbouring West Midlands metropolitan boroughs such as Birmingham (51%), Coventry (34%) and Wolverhampton (39%).

Age group differences in the 2021 Solihull ethnicity profile were not available at time of writing, although the 2011 Census shows the extent to which younger age groups are more ethnically diverse. For instance, 17% of Solihull children aged 0-15 were from ethnic minority backgrounds in 2011, compared 11% of those aged 16-64 and just 3% of those aged 65 and over. The latest School Census data shows that 28% of Solihull school age children are from ethnic minority backgrounds so the ethnic diversity of the Borough will continue to grow.

A significant majority of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds live in the urban west of the Borough. Most are Asian and Asian British. The rural wards of Dorridge, Hockley Heath, Knowle and Meriden have the smallest concentrations of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

In 2021, 190k Solihull residents (88%) were born in the UK, compared with 90% in 2011.

## Religion

Response rates for the question about religion are varied and there are differences in the way people choose to self-identify their religious affiliation. In 2021, 53% of Solihull residents answering the Census question described themselves as Christian, a fall from 70% in 2011. Those with no religion increased from 23% to 35%. Other religions found in Solihull include Muslims (5.3%), Hindu (2.8%), Sikh (2.3%), Jewish (0.1%), Buddhist (0.3%) and other religions (0.4%). The highest numbers of people without a religion are found in North Solihull. Many people belonging to religious groups other than Christians, are found in the urban west.

Religion (% responding to question)		
	Solihull %	England %
Christian	53.5%	49.3%
No religion	34.7%	39.0%
Buddhist	0.3%	0.5%
Hindu	2.9%	1.9%
Jewish	0.1%	0.5%
Muslim	5.6%	7.2%
Sikh	2.5%	1.0%
Other religion	0.4%	0.6%

*Source: ONS Census 2021*

## Sexual Orientation

The size of the Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual population in Solihull is uncertain due to a lack of local data. The ONS and Public Health England estimate that 2%-2.5% of UK adults identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. This suggests a Solihull adult LGB population of between 4,000 and 5,000.

Public Health England estimates that the proportion of the population that identify as LGBT is highest between the ages of 18 and 54 and lower among older age groups.

Estimated Adult Lesbian, Gay and Bi-sexual population		
	Estimated % National 16+ Population	Solihull count based on 2021 Census
Lesbian or Gay	1.25%	2,181
Bisexual	0.63%	1,099
Other	0.61%	1,064
Total 16+ LGB		4,345

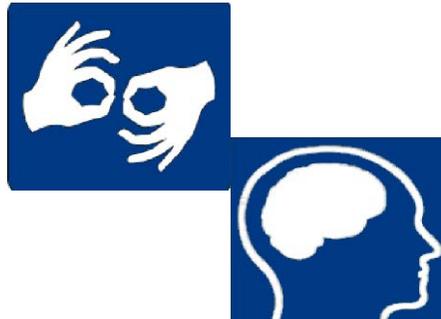
*Source: Public Health England; ONS Census 2021*

## Making our services easily accessible

### Access to Services

We continue to meet our Solihull Connect [Customer Charter promise](#) 'to be fair in the way we deliver services, and treat all members of the community as individuals, recognising their differences'. Our services are easy to access, we give choices where possible and provide easy to understand and accurate information. We eliminate barriers to accessing services by offering interpretation and translation facilities:

- British Sign Language Signer
- Face to face interpreting
- Telephone interpreting
- Translation of documents in Braille and community languages
- Documents in large print
- Documents in alternative formats

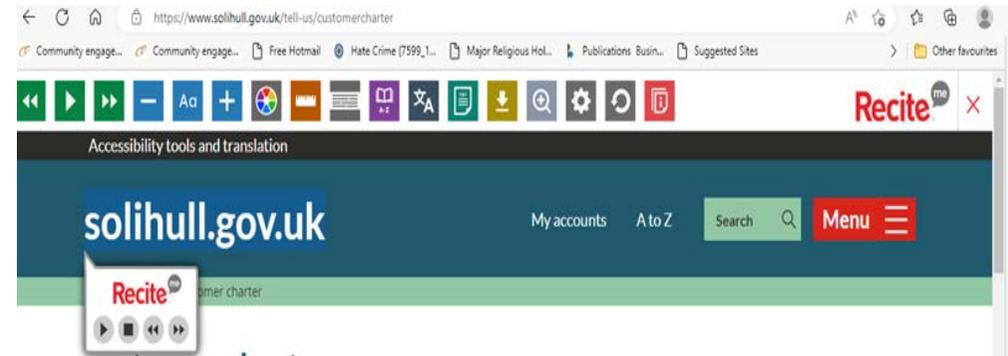


### Digital Inclusion

The Accessibility Statement is easily accessible on our website, and it gives information on tools and software to enable readers to easily change font and text size. Publications and written information are in plain English, and unavoidable jargon is explained.

Residents can access our services via the Solihull Connect walk-in centres for routine enquiries such as obtaining a Blue Badge and pay charges.

The 'Recite Me' software enables users of the website to have the information read aloud if they wish to.



Over 2000 people are known to have used the Recite Me software. Our user data shows that screen reader software, through which written information is read aloud for the user, is most used (by 59% of users). We also found that 27% of users adjusted the text size or screen colours while 15% used the language translation facility.

Council offices are accessible for people with mobility impairment. Hearing loops and other facilities are available on request. Our intranet is regularly updated to ensure that staff know how to access translation and interpreting services, including direct links to external service providers to ensure speedy response to customers.

## English as a Second Language

Free lessons are provided in the community for people with very little or no English in line with the well-recognised 'English for Everyone' method. Useful resources such as graphics and pictures are used. The classes are run by community volunteers who also arrange activities for children so that parents and carers can join the classes.

## Services Provided by Partners

The Council's website provides information about help, advice and services available across the Borough. Information is categorised under the headings of organisations, halls for hire, local speakers, tutors and sports clubs. Residents can find out information about residential care homes, home help, health and well-being and debt advice. A vast range of information is available to support vulnerable people and about healthy living.

The 'MySolihull' Facebook page provides the latest news and information about Solihull. There are nearly 6,000 regular followers and non-signed up members can visit the Facebook page whenever they wish.



Residents can access information from the Community Advice Hubs which offer a range of self-help tools and support from community volunteers who can give advice on a range of subjects such as employment, training and volunteering.

## Accessible Libraries and Resources

Each of the public libraries across Solihull has been assessed for physical access into the buildings. Residents can check information on our website before coming to the library. There is extensive information about ramps, number of steps to enter the venue, the height of reception counters and lighting levels. Customers can also check parking arrangements, bus routes and nearest bus stops.

Our Library Service continues to promote a wide range of printed, spoken and digital material for borrowers. Dedicated reading lists are developed to mark special events. Material can also be provided in alternative languages and large print where a need has been identified. For example, we have sourced books and audio information for the recently arrived Ukrainian communities. Groups and individuals can easily request resources to be accessed via their local library.

We also hold events at the Core Library, such as workshops, school visits and family days. Sessions are also arranged for hearing impaired children and their families to join our 'Rhyme Times'. Free use of computers in the libraries has been extended to 3 hours a single session for job seekers.

## Inclusive Parks

All public parks are suitable for people with limited mobility. Residents can find out about the services and facilities within the grounds of the park they wish to visit, such as ramps and slopes, parking spaces, dedicated picnic spots, sensory gardens and walking trails.

We regularly upgrade children's play equipment and facilities to ensure that children can play safely in our parks.



## Easy Access to Shopping and other Facilities

The 'Visit Solihull' website provides information about accessible parking, the 'Shopmobility' Scheme that enables shoppers with disabilities to have equal access to the Town Centre shopping areas. Our Access Guides give information for people with limited mobility,

including accessible facilities at restaurants, tourist attractions and washrooms.

Customers can hire manual and powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters when visiting Solihull Town Centre so that they can easily get around the Touchwood Shopping Centre, the Core Library, Theatre and other facilities.



The Touchwood Shopping Centre was crowned Business of the Year 2022 by the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce Business Awards for its performance during the Covid-19 pandemic when it remained open for essential services and retained 92% occupancy.

## AccessAble

As part of the Council's continuing vision and ambition for the wellbeing and opportunities for disabled people, we have commissioned [AccessAble](#) (formerly DisabledGo) since 2007 to provide an online disability / accessibility information website providing details on the accessibility of venues for disabled people in the Borough.

The online portal holds information about Council and Solihull Community Housing buildings open to the public, as well as health centres, doctors, health services, main shopping centres/areas and shops to name but a few. Neighbouring councils and Birmingham Airport also commission the same service from AccessAble. This provides accessible information for disabled users as well as a wider resource for families with young children who may also use the information on accessibility of venues for use with prams and buggies.

Services and information for disabled people is critical in gaining and maintaining independence in work, family, leisure and study. Planning before visiting an accessible venue when you have a disability, especially a mobility impairment, is automatic as many venues, public places or attractions are not (or cannot be) as accessible as we would like. More and more locations are gradually becoming more accessible for people with disabilities and mobility issues so the resources of AccessAble are not only beneficial but crucial to a better quality of life for disabled people, their carers and families.

### **Fair Treatment Assessments**

Our approach to conducting assessments and ensuring that EDI is reflected in commissioning practices and decision-making was revised in 2022. A key change was to simplify the process and include health inequalities alongside considerations about the impact on people from diverse protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010. This is because it may be appropriate to consider the impact on other groups not protected by the Equality Act 2010 such as socio-economic factors or armed forces.

The revised proposals were piloted through training a small group of officers who were likely to be completing Fair Treatment Assessments (FTAs) in their areas of service. Their feedback was used to inform changes to the revised process. All Solihull Council employees can access the new procedures and guidance via the intranet.



Fair Treatment Assessments were completed in a number of areas, including:

- a. Developing the Carers Strategy
- b. Discretionary Crisis Fund
- c. Adult Day Care Opportunities
- d. Strategy to develop First Homes under the Government's initiative to build more affordable homes
- e. The introduction of a digital app for parking permits
- f. Proposals for revamping Solihull Railway Station
- g. Locality developments such as the Kingshurst Regeneration Project.

There is very good practice in many areas of the Council but also room for improvement. We will create a performance management process to bring about consistency and upskill managers and staff on the early completion and monitoring of actions arising out of FTAs.

## Protecting individuals and promoting independence

### Safeguarding Children

Children's Services is the Council's top priority for improvement. During 2022, there was considerable internal and external scrutiny of the service and an Ofsted inspection of the whole service published in January 2023 graded the service as inadequate. An ambitious improvement plan for Children's Social Care has been developed and will be delivered at pace while Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership has developed a multi-agency improvement plan to address key issues that require a multi-agency response.

Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership has three named safeguarding partners: Solihull Council's Chief Executive, the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police and the Accountable Officer for Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board. They are supported by representatives from the school sector and other partner organisations.



The Partnership has 3 key priorities:

Priority 1: To implement Solihull's Neglect Strategy

Priority 2: Solihull's Early Help arrangements

Priority 3: Actions to address the findings from external inspections and peer reviews

### Early Help

The need to improve early help for children, young people and families has been identified by Ofsted and the Children's Commissioner and is a priority in our Improvement Plan. We have made a comprehensive assessment of early help needs and are designing a service to address these needs. The new service will be introduced in 2023/4.

### Supporting Children and Young People with Additional Needs

Our Joint [Additional Needs Strategy 2022](#) was produced in partnership with young people, their families and carers and other statutory agencies to cater for the needs of children and young people with special educational needs or additional needs.

The aim is to recognise differences in individuals and work with them so that we create life opportunities for young people so that they enjoy the same life chances as everyone else.

### Making a Difference to Children in our Care

Solihull Council launched an [online campaign](#) to recruit more foster carers from across the region in October 2022.



The 'Foster for Solihull' campaign aims to encourage people to consider becoming a foster carer and provide children with a loving home and a sense of belonging.

The campaign focuses on the 24/7 support for foster carers, as well as the opportunity to join a community of like-minded people.

'Foster for Solihull' prides itself on the wealth of support and resources for its fostering families. It's a combination of 24/7 access to an experienced fostering team, as well as local training that's exclusive to the Borough.

In other areas of work for the Fostering Teams, their Christmas Appeal resulted in gathering over 400 gifts donated by SMBC colleagues for children in our care. The gifts were distributed at the 2022 Christmas Party held for looked after children and foster carers.

### **Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board**

The Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) provides the strategic leadership for adults safeguarding work across the Borough. In Solihull we aim to prevent and reduce the risk of significant harm to adults from abuse or other types of exploitation, whilst supporting individuals in maintaining control over their lives and in making informed choices without coercion.

The [Solihull All Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy](#) outlines the partnership approach we are taking in the Borough to prevent exploitation; identify and protect those at risk of exploitation and strengthen resilience of victims and communities.

The [SSAB Involvement and Engagement Plan 2022-2025](#) sets out the approach for involvement and engagement for people and communities in the work of the Board.

Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board 's campaign to raise awareness about safeguarding adults includes posters and a guide to Staying Safe Online with tips on internet safety and using the internet responsibly and positively.

### **Preventing, Reducing and Dealing with Domestic Abuse**

Following the review of our Domestic Abuse Policy and Strategy and encouraging citizens to share the message 'No Place for Hate Crime' during the National Hate Crime Awareness week in October 2021, a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was set up. This is in line with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which considers a range of issues, including commissioning Specialist Housing Advocates to work with victims living in temporary accommodation and setting up a new 6-bedded refuge to meet the needs of victims from ethnic minority communities. In 2021/22, 4881 incidents were reported to the Police, of which 371 were identified as high risk. 1097 victims were provided with specialist community or accommodation-based support and 61 people were granted homelessness priority need duty.

In response to a 39% rise in domestic abuse in the last 12 months, West Midlands Police now provides increased levels of support to LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse through a service commissioned with Birmingham LGBT for Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) that also covers Solihull. Support is provided by the Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates who cover the West Midlands local authority areas. The posts are funded by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and cover work relating to violence based on enforced marriage so that victims can discuss issues in a safe and supportive environment for crisis intervention, advocacy, safety planning, emotional support and practical guidance.

## Reducing Alcohol Dependency

The Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS) works with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust and Aquarius to support individuals and families to lessen the impact caused by the behaviour of someone with alcohol dependency.



SIAS supports an average of 980 adults with addiction each year, including around 50 young people and 140 family members.

Another supportive charity is Welcome, which is an access point for drug and alcohol related treatment and support services, as well as other partners.

## Supporting Employment for Adults with Learning Disabilities

The benefits of working include increased confidence, learning new skills, a sense of satisfaction and of “having contributed”, experiencing opportunities to meet new people and supporting independence through paid work. Two of our teams - Adult Social Care and Employment and Skills - are working with residents with care and support needs and support them into employment.

The aim is to take people through the steps needed to start the journey towards employment through practical support and information and identify training courses to help them to gain experience, to become work ready. As well as identifying possible work opportunities, preparing applications and supporting people to attend interviews, officers undertake assessments such as travel to a workplace.

Solihull Council is also leading the way by supporting individuals with learning disabilities to be employed in the Council across teams where the new employees can develop their skills and abilities and gain valuable experience in the workplace. The very first role offered was in Adult Social Care’s Reablement and Occupational Therapy teams which has proved to be hugely successful and really embedded the learning on how best to support a person with a learning disability in the workplace.

The Employment & Skills Team also provides dedicated support to new communities under the Solihull Youth Employment Promise, for those aged between 15 and 29 and Employed for Success, which supports adults aged 30 and over who live in the Borough.



Are you over 30 and looking for work?

Solihull Council's Employment and skills Team can help.

[SRTC@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:SRTC@solihull.gov.uk)



Both programmes are designed to provide tailored one-to-one support. A designated Outreach Officer delivers advice and guidance about local employment and training opportunities. People can access the service from two locations: the Solihull Recruitment & Training Centre in Chelmsley Wood, which has a dedicated Digital Hub, and the Core Library in Solihull Town Centre.

## Enabling Independent Living Through Home Adaptations

SMBC's Housing Assistance Policy was reviewed in October 2021 to provide greater flexibility with funding housing adaptations to support people with care needs or chronic health conditions to be more independent in their home and have access to suitable facilities. Assistance is arranged for adults and children.

Adaptations work to support Council tenants is funded by Solihull Community Housing, who provide specialist advice and administer support to tenants and non-tenants alike.

The range of adaptations is extensive, for example widening doors, installing ramps for wheelchair access, creating wet-rooms and providing safer access into homes and gardens.

The Home Assistance Policy has been operating for 12 months. It is under review to ensure that it remains effective and meets the needs of residents with physical disabilities.

## Protecting Rough Sleepers

The Council commenced '[Change into Action](#)' in partnership with the Mayor of the West Midlands, West Midlands Combined Authority and the Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH) to eradicate homelessness. The initiative operates as a charity and donations are held by SCAH under the theme of small change into big change.

Although Solihull has a low number of rough sleepers on a single night, we believe that many more people are at risk of sleeping rough. In October we changed the way we work with people who sleep rough. A Rough Sleeper Outreach Team works flexibly from 5.30am each day to identify sleepers and enable them to access services. The Team's work is helping us to build up a comprehensive picture of reasons why people become homeless, sleep rough and what their needs are. Our

purpose is to prevent homelessness and enable rough sleepers to move into safe and secure housing and give rough sleepers the stability needed to have better life chances.

The annual figures for people sleeping rough in Solihull are usually low when compared with national and regional figures. Our official figure from November 2022 is eight – an increase of four on last year. There are various reasons why a person rough sleeps. However one of the contributing factors we are now seeing is as a result of cost-of-living pressures which can affect people's finances, family relationships and mental health.

To report someone sleeping rough, contact Streetlink at [www.streetlink.org](http://www.streetlink.org) or for emergency housing provision, contact Solihull Community Housing on 0121 717 1515. The line is open 24 hours, seven days a week.

## Supporting Parents and Children during Half Term

SMBC's Holiday Activities and Food Programme supports parents and children during school holidays. For example, from 19-23 December, children from reception age up to Year 11 in receipt of benefits-related free school meals were provided with the chance to attend activity sessions.

As part of the delivery of this service, we conducted a Fair Treatment Assessment to ensure we captured the needs of the diverse community in the rollout of the Programme.



## Supporting People to Deal with the Economic Crisis

Our staff volunteers joined the 'Here to Help Heroes', an initiative involving national and local organisations to give a supporting hand to people during the winter months. Our Financial Inclusion Group arranged events where over 100 people were given help and advice by 15 agencies who provided free and confidential support on energy and fuel, mental health, housing and financial crisis. Our libraries are also continuing to provide 'warm welcome' activities.

## Promoting healthier lives

### Addressing Health Inequalities

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to be felt across all communities resulting in greater health inequalities affecting disadvantaged groups such as in areas of high deprivation, low income, poor housing and in particular impacting on people who are older, vulnerable and disabled. [SMBC's 'Tackling Health Inequalities: a blueprint for Solihull 2022-2025'](#) was launched in 2022. This strategy is designed for the Council to work with residents, community groups and all partner agencies to create a Solihull where more people have a fairer chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous. We are focussing on fair access to services for all but modifying services so that those in greatest need get the greatest support. Our focus is on the following key priorities, all of which are inter-linked with equality, diversity and inclusion:

- a. Maternity and Early Years
- b. Adulthood and Work
- c. Supporting High-Risk Groups
- d. Healthy Places

A significant part of our focus on health inequalities is to prevent, reduce and stop the escalation of mental health issues. The implementation plan is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure we meet the goals set out in the Health Inequalities Strategy.

### Birmingham and Solihull (BSol) Integrated Care System (ICS)

We have the biggest opportunity in a generation for the most radical overhaul in the way in which health and social care services covered by the ICS in Birmingham and Solihull are designed and delivered.

The [Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System](#) was established in 2022 and brings together local NHS, councils, voluntary community organisations and the faith sector to better serve the people covering the area. We are an active partner in the BSol ICS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, which looks across a number of work areas to improve the way we all operate in our roles as fair and inclusive service providers and diverse employers.

### Birmingham and Lewisham African & Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR) Report

BLACHIR was a joint research project between Lewisham Council and Birmingham City Council. It began its ground-breaking work to gather insights about health inequalities experienced by Black African and Caribbean communities during the time of the COVID 19 outbreak.

The aim of BLACHIR is to break the cycle of inequalities and disadvantage for Black African and Black Caribbean communities and reduce health inequalities that affect them.

All partners within the ICS are working together to understand, address and reduce health inequalities and reviewing and identifying recommendations from the BLACHIR review that may apply in their respective service areas to reduce health inequalities.

## Preventing Sexual Ill-health

Birmingham City Council and SMBC joined forces to develop the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy for 2023-2030 that provides a framework for ensuring equal access to sexual health services for anyone who needs them, providing services that are local, relevant, approachable, confidential and non-judgemental, and enabling citizens to have control of their own sexual health. The strategy focuses on key areas such as unplanned pregnancies and abortions, consequences from sexual coercion and abuse and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

## Boosting the Health of Children and Younger Adults

Our Local Offer on health is designed to encourage healthier lifestyles for children and younger adults so that as adults they have better lifestyles and life chances. The Solihull Parenting Team offers a range of free supportive information and workshops for parents and carers, both face-to-face and virtually. The purpose is to equip parents and carers to understand their child better, improve communication, manage challenging behaviour and build supportive relationships.

We have a team of skilled and experienced teachers in the Social, Emotional and Mental Health Team who provide support to children and young people to improve access to the school curriculum, engage with social aspects, family and community life and enhance reliance in healthy living and mental health. Their work is informed by the results of the 2022 sample survey of over 8,000 children from local primary and secondary schools, funded by Public Health and Children's Services. The survey focused on a range of subjects from healthy eating, emotional and health wellbeing, alcohol and tobacco and staying safe. The results are being used to support the Solihull Healthy Schools Programme.

## Improving Health Through Environmental Intervention

We are committed to achieving the target of being a net zero carbon Council by 2030 and Borough by 2041. Better air quality and natural environment will contribute to healthier lives for diverse citizens. Our nationally recognised Climate Action Plans are being delivered through a range of initiatives, such as a tree planting programme of 250k+ trees over the next 10 years. We are one of the 19 areas across the UK to be awarded the Tree City of the World status. Another key initiative is the piloting of a state-of-the-art self-driving shuttle bus to transport passengers at Birmingham Airport; this has proved to be successful, and lessons are being shared more widely to inform future plans.

We held a special event in November that coincided with the COP27 Summit in Egypt, to hear the views of students from 10 of the Borough's schools. The children took part in the model COP27 debate in our council chamber. Split into teams and roleplaying countries ranging from Bhutan to the USA, the children had to carefully defend their country's climate policy and conduct negotiations with others. The event was



followed up by a Solihull Sustainable Schools Conference where over 40 school representatives were present. The Greener Solihull School Awards were presented to schools for their exceptional commitment to sustainability and environmental conservation.

## Creating safer and stronger communities

### Sustaining Safe Communities

SMBC continues to work with multi-agency partners to reduce crime and disorder through the Safer Solihull Partnership. This is an alliance of organisations who collectively develop strategies and commission and oversee services that tackle crime and disorder, address drug and alcohol misuse and deal with anti-social behaviour.

### Reducing and Dealing with Race and Hate Crime

The Safer Solihull Partnership's Hate Crime Project Plan 2021 to 2023 is a key strand of work to reduce and deal with incidents of hate crime. There was a steady increase in hate crime, from 248 in 2018/19 to 383 in 2020/21. Statistics show that racially motivated crime accounts for over two-thirds of all incidents. Of the balance, 14% of incidents were categorised as homophobic crimes. Our priority remains to prevent, reduce and deal with hate crime in collaboration with statutory agencies. We support the West Midlands Safer Travel initiative that works with West Midlands Police, Transport for West Midlands and British Transport Police to identify and address areas of the transport network vulnerable to crime, anti-social behaviour and nuisance.

Our Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board developed a briefing on managing racial abuse faced by staff from people with limited capacity such as those living with dementia, acute or long-term medical conditions and learning disabilities so that employees and partners can respond appropriately and resolve problems more speedily.

### Working with Faith Communities: Faith New Deal Project

In partnership with the [Faith and Belief Forum](#), we launched a project to redefine the way we engage with the faith sector. In 2022, we held a series of workshops with faith and community leaders to understand

community concerns and develop ideas for strengthening partnership working, strengthening democracy and improving community cohesion. This work is continuing so that we can capture the voice of representatives from all faith groups and newly arrived refugee groups.

### Connecting Families

Connecting individuals with their families and families with their relatives is a key part of creating stronger bonds across societies. In 2022, SMBC became the first local authority in the UK to have our libraries designated as Family Search Affiliate Libraries so that people from international families can help to discover their family histories by accessing digital records that are not available generally. Family Search Affiliate Libraries can access over 400 million records digitally. The Core Library Solihull also continues to support the work of the local [Caribbean History Group](#) and provides a room for their meetings.

### Welcoming Newer Communities

We have whole-heartedly welcomed migrants from Hong Kong, many of whom chose to leave because of political turmoil and restrictive laws in China. Over 2,000 Hong Kong migrants have settled in Solihull, and we work with those communities to ensure their needs are met. As the community is settling, members have arranged a range of community events and activities for children to bring communities together and raise awareness of the needs of the Hong Kong community.

## Maximising Value from Partnerships

Examples of how we have maximised value through partnerships are set out in this section.

### Delivering social value through procurement

Our Social Value Policy provides a consistent and collaborative approach to achieving social value when working with contractors.

Examples of this include:

- a. Asking contractors to demonstrate the impact of their development plans on local neighbourhoods and how they will combat climate change, reduce travel and support the creation of high quality, connected and sustainable communities.
- b. Assessing opportunities through large-scale projects to increase the number of disabled, younger adults and employees from ethnic minority backgrounds working on specific projects.
- c. Introducing ways in which crime can be reduced, independent living can be promoted, volunteers can be engaged, and isolation can be minimised.
- d. Seeking ways in which money advice, befriending schemes and healthier lifestyles can be promoted.

### Value from partnership working with service users

We reviewed our strategy for Adult Day Care Opportunities in partnership with service users and their carers. Day Care Opportunities cover a range of services for adults to develop skills, prepare for the jobs market and make and meet friends. Such services can make a vast difference to the individuals and their carers who might not otherwise have respite breaks. The service is suitable for people in wide-ranging circumstances, including those with learning and physical disabilities,

mental ill health and other complex needs. Reducing social isolation is a key aspect of this service which is designed to enable people to build social and support networks to promote self-resilience and independence.

### Value from partnership working with peers

The Safeguarding Adults Boards from Solihull and Sandwell Councils joined forces to develop guidance for professionals who work with people who find it difficult to engage with officers or access services. The guidance is designed to support practitioners to recognise and understand what they can do differently to support individuals from diverse backgrounds. The guidance reflects good practice from the National Engagement Toolkit that has been developed for use by Safeguarding Boards generally.

### West Midlands Combined Authority – Race Equality Taskforce

In 2021 a regional Race Equalities Taskforce was launched by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Solihull Council is a partner in working towards the vision ‘that in the West Midlands, ethnicity, race and heritage should never be obstacles to people having a fair start in life, or the opportunity for people to reach their full potential and flourish’ (Source [Race Equalities Taskforce \(wmca.org.uk\)](https://www.wmca.org.uk)).

In 2022, the Taskforce identified a number of key areas that member organisations have been focusing including:

- the economy and jobs
- skills and education
- transport and connectivity
- housing and homelessness
- health and wellbeing

For more information, please visit the [Taskforce](#) site.

## Celebrating diversity

Raising the awareness of national EDI events and religious observances is an excellent way of understanding the diversity of communities we serve and how we make people feel valued and recognised.

All employees have access to a digital calendar of religious, cultural and international festivals. The calendar can be linked to staff Outlook diaries so that they can automatically receive reminders about events each day. The calendar helps teams to plan ahead events and advertise them via the staff intranet and news bulletins.

Below are just a few examples of events that we marked in 2022.

### Holocaust Memorial Day: 27 January 2022



We marked the event under the banner of 'One Day' to remember and learn about the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and genocides and the 6 million Jews who were murdered and other similar events that have happened in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur in the hope that there is 'one day' in the future without such crimes. The event involved local communities and featured readings and poetry from children from schools across the Borough. A special guest speaker shared with us her experience of being imprisoned in a concentration camp and escaping from Nazi Germany.

### Pride50 Month: February 2022

We celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Pride March in the UK and commenced the celebrations by flying the Rainbow Pride flag above the Council House and remembered those affected by crimes against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community and others because of their sexuality or gender status. Staff had access to a resource pack with relevant information, such as where to obtain 'Pride 50pence coins' produced by the Royal Mint and a reading list created by our Libraries Team. All employees were invited to attend a 'lunch & learn' style workshop that was facilitated by experts from the Birmingham LGBT organisation.



### World Autism Acceptance Week: March & April 2022

The week was marked via our partners 'Everyone Active' to shine a light on people who live with autism by sharing their experiences and to offer inclusive sports and leisure services where everyone is welcome and encouraged to use the facilities. The initiative included awarding a Solihull Shining Prize to an individual who won one month's free membership at the local sports centre.



### Refugee Week: June 2022

Our very first Refugee Week marked the welcoming of and supporting the arrival of refugees from Hong Kong, Ukraine and Afghanistan.

A range of activities held at the Core Library were officially opened by Solihull's Deputy Mayor, Councillor Tildesley who spoke about the contribution of diverse people across Solihull. Guests heard from

speakers from different communities about the experience of recently arrived refugees, watched the animated short film 'Solidarity: The Migration Blanket produced by the award-winning producer and Human Rights activist Salam Zulficar', experienced live music and tasted food from different

cultures. The event included activities for children to learn about diverse traditions and external organisations presented information on their services. Poems and arts supported the theme of 'Healing'.



### South Asian Heritage Month: August 2022

Our very first marking of the South Asian Heritage Month helped us to celebrate the increase in the proportion of people from Asian heritage in Solihull. Staff attended a 'lunch and learn' event where they heard from 4 different colleagues who are all from Asian backgrounds with each person speaking about their unique journey to the UK, early experiences and their current lives.

Our Library Team developed a 'recommended reading list' featuring book titles covering non-fiction, current affairs, arts and culture and children's reading materials to promote the South Asian heritage.

Other events included the 'Movie Mahal' exhibition covering the opening of Birmingham's first South Asian cinema in Balsall Heath in 1961 and the 'City of Empire to the City of Diversity' event at the Moseley Road Baths, providing a visual journey of Birmingham's diverse population from the 1890s to today.

### Commonwealth Games Baton Relay: July 2022

We were delighted that the 2022 Commonwealth Games 2022 took place so close to us in Birmingham. The 16<sup>th</sup> official Queen's Baton Relay reached Solihull on 26 July and covered almost all parts of the Borough. The event was marked with more than 20 community

celebrations and events along the route. When the Baton passed through Solihull Town Centre, it was accompanied by the Band of Grenadier Guards. There was entertainment, food, sports and displays such as historic bikes and stilt-walking. Special guests included Albert Jarrett who represented the immense contribution of African-

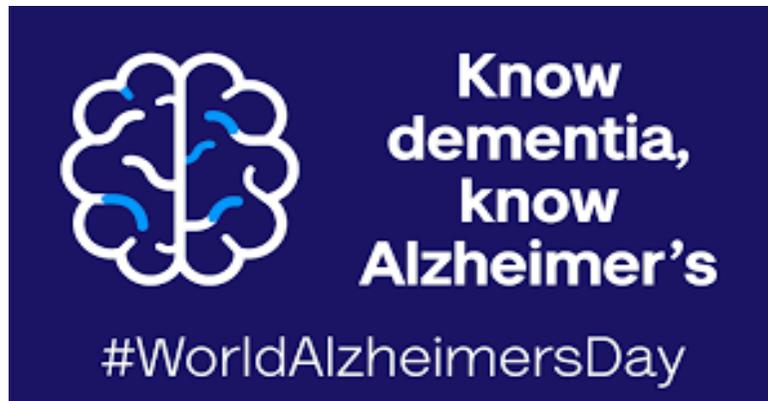


Caribbean communities to the Allied Forces in the second world war.

### Breaking the Glass Ceiling: November 2022

Another first for us was a session where 3 senior colleagues, all women and from ethnic minorities, shared their stories about their employment journey to senior positions. Issues covered included perspectives both from gender and ethnicity.

## World Alzheimer's Day: September 2022



Colleagues marked the occasion by attending a special event where they heard from guests from the Alzheimer Society who spoke eloquently about the impact of dementia on patients and their families and carers.

Extensive information was shared with all staff following the event, including a Positive Language Guide, the benefits of 'Singing for the Brain' and local activities that customers could be signposted to for attending activities and wellbeing events.

## Interfaith Week: November 2022

The purpose of the Interfaith Week is to increase understanding between people of different faiths and those with no faith. The commemorations included marking Remembrance Sunday that encourages people to remember the service and sacrifice people who have defended freedoms and protected a way of life where violence, conflict and terrorism are not tolerated and to create a just, peaceful and harmonious world. Interfaith Week is designed to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs. The week ended with the marking of the Mitzva Day, an annual day

that is an integral part of Jewish life and is the day when people are reminded to conduct good deeds and acts of kindness.

## Black History Month: September 2022

We are proud to continue our long-standing tradition of marking the contributions of people from ethnic minority backgrounds to the success of UK and our region. The promotion of multi-faceted programmes included working with the Caribbean Family History Group that produced a display of the life of residents in the region from the 1800s.



A cross-Council working group collaborated to support events such as hosting films that explore civil rights, prejudice and discrimination and promoting the work of a community church that hosted an event where residents shared traditional food and saw traditional costumes from different countries.

## Building on our success

The Council Plan 'Opportunity for All' sets out on one page the direction we want to go in as a Council and describes the major steps that we need to take to achieve our vision for a Borough where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all.

Overall, the Borough's population will grow by around 20,000 by 2040 with significant growth in rural and semi-rural areas. Challenges will include how to enable people to work, interact with others and access services whilst also achieving the Borough's target to be net zero carbon by 2041.

We want the Borough to be a tolerant, diverse place that celebrates the increasingly diverse, ageing and changing community with different needs and creating opportunities, knowing that 'one size does not fit all'.

The Council has delivered several actions and initiatives designed to have a positive impact on advancing equality, diversity and inclusion in the Council and the Borough. This work over the last year has included staff consultations and setting out with staff the Council's EDI Journey over the coming years.

We are reviewing and identifying key sources of data, including the Census 2021 and continuing to engage with our partners and communities to improve our insight and intelligence on inequalities in the Borough. This will drive our EDI work forward and improve equality outcomes for people living, visiting, studying or working in the Borough.

For 2023/24, our key actions will include:

- Reviewing our published Equality Objectives to ensure they still fit the EDI Journey of the Council.
- Developing a refreshed corporate EDI Action Plan.
- Working with each Council Directorate to develop a specific EDI action plan for their business area.
- Using the talents of the whole workforce and fostering an inclusive working environment that can bring benefits to our staff, residents and the organisation.
- Reviewing how EDI is managed and communicated internally and externally so that we work with stakeholders to effect change.
- Reviewing the practice of how we attract and retain a diverse workforce where difference and diversity is valued.
- Strengthening our understanding of equity of access to and use of services.

# Solihull Council Plan 2020-25

Updated March 2022

- Intended Outcomes
- Key things to do



### A Strong Economy

- People, business and the environment benefit from UKC and HS2, including increased access to good work
- More environmentally sustainable affordable and social housing is built
- Safe, welcoming town and local centres where businesses can thrive
- More visitors to the borough
- The local economy is more resilient to economic shocks

### Actioning our Climate Change Declaration

- The council is net zero carbon by 2030
- The borough is net zero carbon by 2041
- An enhanced, well connected natural environment
- More people walking, cycling and using public transport
- Air quality has improved by 2025

### People and Communities

- Children and their families are safer and better supported by statutory and early help services
- Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs
- Improvements in skills and access to good work
- Improvements in early childhood development and school readiness, particularly in disadvantaged communities
- Connected, resourceful communities where people find solutions to local issues

**Learning and recovery from Covid-19 (Health, Economic, Educational and Social)**

**Driving inclusive growth through the Council's roles as employer, procurer, service provider and system influencer**

**Strong Foundations:**  
 Connected and engaged communities and a vibrant VCS | Strong effective regional and local partnerships  
 Sound finance and management of assets | Smarter Ways of Working | Digital Empowerment | Analysis and Insight

**If you have an identified need where you would like this document to be explained in an alternative format and/or language or want to give comments about the contents, please email: [equalities@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@solihull.gov.uk) or contact the Equalities Team on 0121-704-6119.**