

Annual Report 2024/25



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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The Solihull & Coventry Automated Links Evolution (SCALE) project

A child at the Family Hubs

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Cyclists along the Grand Union Canal

Councillor Karen Grinsell, Ollie Harrison, Nick Lyons and Joe Dillane, from Eric Lyons, and Business Growth West Midlands advisor Charlotte Bowden.

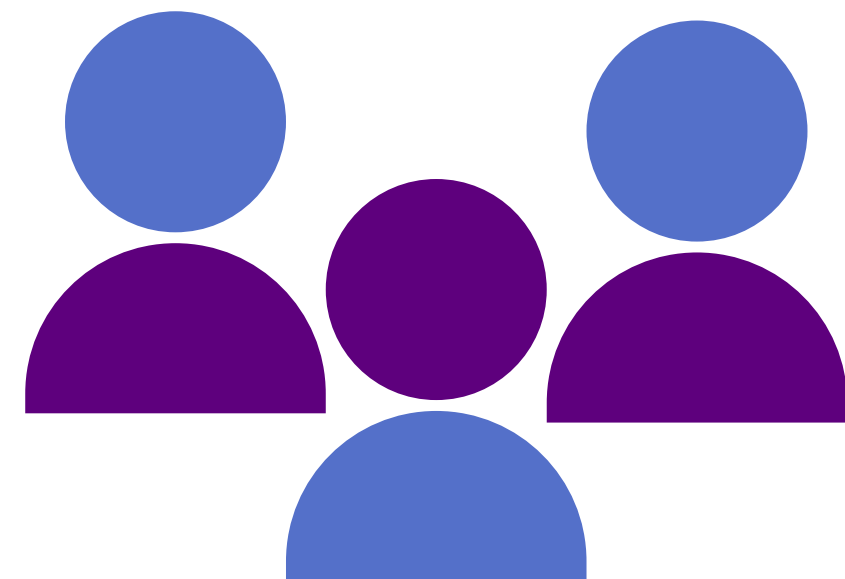
Purpose, audience and current context

The purpose of our Annual Report is to reflect on our achievements and highlights during the period from April 2024 to March 2025. This is the final Annual Report for the previous **Council Plan** cycle, 2020 to 2025.

Our Council Plan sets the direction we want to go in as a Council and describes the major steps we need to take to achieve our ambitions. It reflects our belief that economic development, environmental sustainability, and health and wellbeing go hand in hand.

This report provides case studies from across the borough and key statistics that demonstrate our progress in implementing our Council Plan priorities. It is not a definitive list of everything we have done but is intended to give an insight into what we have been working on across the past year.

The audience for our Annual Report is our residents, employees, elected members, Parish Councils, and all those who work with and alongside us.



Welcome and Introduction

From Councillor Karen Grinsell, Leader of the Council, and Paul Johnson, Chief Executive.

In this Annual Report we set out our achievements in 2024/25 and how we are addressing key challenges facing us.

Being ambitious for Solihull children is central to our work and Children's Services continues to be our top priority for improvement. Over the past year, we have made significant improvements to our Children's Services, which has been recognised in recent Ofsted monitoring visits. We are continuing our work to improve outcomes for children and young people in a way which focuses on early intervention and creating a sustainable system.

We are continuing to develop our approach to prevention. Our **all-age prevention strategy 'Living Well in Solihull'** is built on the principle that prevention and acting early is better than waiting for problems to develop. It sets our approach and opportunities to help local people to live well. We want to maximise opportunities for people to live well and independently, with a clear 'offer' when support is needed.

In July 2024, the Family Hub programme officially opened, with five facilities now located across Solihull which act as a welcoming and safe space. The Hubs can be used by parents and carers to access support, including health appointments and youth clubs. In the past year, we also launched a Family Helpline to ensure parents and children can access information and advice.

We recognise that a joined-up approach to public services is needed – and the Council continues to play a leading role, working with the NHS, local organisations, community groups and residents to take forward the ambitions in our **Health Inequalities Strategy**.

The Council is here to help residents live well and find the services and support needed at all stages of life. People can find the support they need from a range of organisations on the Council website under the Here2Help section. We are also using digital technology to extend access to services, enabling residents to self-serve when they choose.

Our borough continues to change. Solihull is increasingly ethnically diverse, with minority ethnic groups comprising 18% of the population in the 2021 Census, up from 11% in 2011. This trend is continuing and since 2021 we have welcomed almost 5,000 adults and children to the borough through the Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) Welcome Programme. Furthermore, those aged 65 and over were the fastest growing section of the Solihull population from 2011 to 2021, growing by 15% (+6,000 individuals) and this trend is set to continue. We will consider the changing nature of the borough when planning our aims for Solihull and how we achieve them.

Our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy** was developed in 2024 and provides an overview of the Council's work focusing on equality, diversity and inclusion. EDI is a fundamental aspect of our core business to improve the quality of life and life chances for everyone. Our belief is that EDI is an opportunity and should be celebrated for the benefits it brings by making Solihull a place where everyone can thrive.

Solihull remains one of the strongest performing economies in the UK and offers a world-class, well-connected location to live, work and invest. We support the development of local businesses and have a strong reputation for sustainable economic growth and investment. We have ambitious economic plans for the **UK Central Hub** and the **East Birmingham and North Solihull Strategy**, which will ensure that economic growth delivers lasting benefits to local people.

We are committed to taking action to tackle climate change, in a way that benefits communities and businesses across Solihull. The natural environment plays a key part in climate action, and we are progressing with our Planting Our Future programme to plant 250,000 trees over 10 years across the borough.

Like many councils across the country, we have unfunded spending pressures facing us in the next few years. One reason is rising demand for essential services which support people across all our communities. Our application to Government for exceptional financial support was successful in February 2025. Significant work has been undertaken over the past year to address the current financial challenges and ensure the Council is financially sustainable in the longer-term.

We pride ourselves on being a Council that is small enough to care, yet big enough to make a difference. By working together, we will continue to achieve our priorities and deliver for people who live, work, study in and visit Solihull.



*Leader of the Council
Councillor Karen Grinsell*



*Chief Executive
Paul Johnson*

Timeline 2024/25

Key events over the past year:

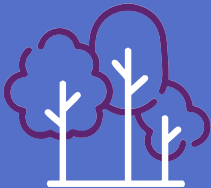
April 2024

Solihull prepares to open first new Children's Home



August 2024

Solihull retains Tree City of the World, with 25,000 trees planted in 2024/25 towards our target of planting 250,000 trees by 2030



June 2024

Solihull celebrates Carers Week



October 2024

Solihull Council partners with Vistry to deliver 177 sustainable new homes



December 2024

Family Hubs out-reach centre opens at Shirley Heath Junior School



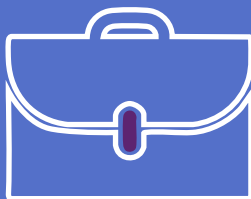
February 2025

A balanced budget is set for 2024/25, making the best use of our resources to improve the lives of all Solihull residents



September 2024

Preparing to launch the Step Up for Solihull and Match My Project business programmes



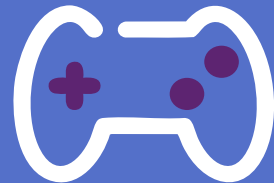
November 2024

Solihull Council and Muse sign landmark agreement for the development of Mell Square



March 2025

Major esports event takes place in Solihull



January 2025

Solihull Apprenticeship show takes place, with 1,200 attending



May 2024

Solihull Celebrates 70 years as a borough



July 2024

Solihull awarded its 17th Green Flag park

People and Communities

Some key figures:

- 4,593 children were supported by Children's Social Work teams during 2024/25.
- Throughout 2024, a total of 4,073 children attended Holiday Activities and Food Programme events; 27% of these had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- The Community Development Team has worked with over 150 groups, organisations and services to make things happen in Solihull's neighbourhoods and diverse communities.
- Over 11,000 people were able to enjoy a wide range of free arts and culture across Solihull in Summer 2024.
- The new adult social care contracts for 'care at home' support, with a value of around £15 million per year, were rolled out from April 2024, enabling people to continue living as independently as possible.
- Solihull Council has partnered with Jaguar Land Rover and primary care to deliver NHS Health Checks in the workplace, as part of a national pilot. In August 2024, this scheme was visited by the Minister for Public Health and has delivered 1,275 checks to date.

Case studies

To illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on

Strengthening Early Help in Solihull

Family Helpline

The Council has made significant strides in transforming its Early Help offer, ensuring children and families receive timely, effective, and community-based support. Between April and June 2025, all families referred were allocated a worker within one day—an improvement directly addressing previous Ofsted concerns. This rapid response has helped prevent escalation to statutory services and ensured families receive the right support at the right time.

A key development has been the empowerment of community partners to lead Early Help Assessments (EHAs). In just 12 months, the proportion of EHAs completed by partners rose from under 1% to 27%. As a result, the Council's own EHA workload has reduced, allowing staff to focus on more complex cases. This shift has contributed to a significant reduction in long-term cases, with only 26 families open for over 26 weeks compared to 143 in the same period last year.

Targeted family support has also shown strong outcomes, with 75% of interventions completed successfully and only 15% of cases escalating to Children's Social Care.

The Family Helpline, launched in March 2025, has handled 645 contacts with only five requiring escalations. Most calls resulted in signposting (54%), early help episodes (18%), or advice (16%), demonstrating its role in diverting non-safeguarding concerns from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Parenting support has expanded through Five to Thrive and Solihull Approach sessions, alongside a dedicated Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) Coordinator delivering multi-agency training. Early Help Coordinators have also strengthened school partnerships, contributing to a reduction in MASH contacts from education professionals.

Overall, the data and feedback reflect a service that is responsive, collaborative, and impactful. Solihull's Early Help transformation is a model of how strategic investment and community empowerment can lead to better outcomes for children and families.

Family Hubs

In May 2024, the first Solihull Family Hub opened, followed by an official launch of the programme at Elmwood Family Hub in July 2024.

The aim is to give children and families the best start in life through a 'one-stop' shop approach, with each hub providing services including health appointments, youth activities, family support, parenting programmes, mental health and SEND support. These services are available for people all the way from before pregnancy through to adulthood, with attendees able to book onto sessions and find out about news and events through the Solihull Family Hubs app and webpages.

Some of the support provided relates to the cost of living, where staff have helped families most in need claim a total of £5,220 from the Household Support Fund (HSF). In addition, 162 individuals were supported in quarter one of 2025 to secure travel passes, which enabled 5,726 journeys to be made.

Engagement with the Family Hubs programme has been positive, with families returning to the hubs for a range of activities and services. In the first three months of opening (July to September 2024), 1,945 people were seen at a Family Hub, comprising 3,589 total individual visits, including repeat visits.

Since this time, visits to Solihull's four Family Hubs has increased each quarter, with a record footfall of 11,530 at the end of the quarter ending June 2025, highlighting the increased use and value to local residents, as well as the reach to new service users.

There has been an increase in volunteers across the hubs, and we continue to hold several community and multi-agency events. We have also increased our partnership offer, with 79 partners currently operating out of our hubs.

Alongside Elmwood, there are three other Family Hubs supported by the Council and located across the borough, including Evergreen (run in partnership with the Colebridge Trust), Riverside and Hatchford Brook. These were initially made possible after the Council were one of only twelve local authorities to have been awarded up to £1m to create a network of Family Hubs by the Department of Education back in 2023.



The opening of Elmwood Family Hub

Solihull Celebrates

Over the past year, a substantial amount of work has been undertaken by the Council, in collaboration with partners, to deliver commemorative events and cultural activities across various corners of Solihull.

As part of the Victory in Europe (VE) Day 80th Anniversary Celebrations, the then Mayor of Solihull, Shahin Ashraf MBE, lit a beacon at Elmdon Park as part of a ceremony to reflect on the peace and freedom granted by those who sacrificed their lives to end the war in Europe. In Knowle, a selection of artisan, community and food stalls was available in the village centre. An entertainment stage on the High Street hosted a range of performances from local dance schools, musicians and tribute acts to the 1940s.

Meanwhile, a mural of poppies was created and displayed at Chelmsley Wood Library, decorated by residents in memory of relatives who fought, or lost their lives, during the war. A VE day coffee morning and afternoon tea was also held at Castle Bromwich, Kingshurst and Balsall Common libraries.

In addition, between 19 and 25 June, a range of events was delivered for Refugee Week via the Together in Solihull grant scheme project, supported by the Council with many of our newly-arrived communities. The theme was 'Our Home', and aimed to showcase Solihull as a welcoming, safe and sustainable place for all.

Events included a Careers Fair where attendees could explore career opportunities and participate in workshops to boost their employability skills. A Cultural Market was also held in central Solihull where residents of Solihull's Hong Kong community showcased food and handicrafts from 30 stallholders. A music festival was held in Theatre Square, outside The Core Theatre, offering families an afternoon of entertainment from around the world.



The Careers Fair in Solihull

Economy

Some key figures:

- Solihull has the 5th largest economy in the UK outside London and the Southeast and is the leading economy in the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- In Solihull, as of December 2024, the unemployment rate is 3.6%, which is lower than both the England (4.2%) and West Midlands (5.5%) averages.
- Over 3,100 people attended our two Apprenticeship Shows in 2024/2025.
- The Employment and Skills team delivered employment support to 824 residents throughout the year. Of which, 535 people were able to move into education, employment, and training.

Case studies

To illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on



Solihull Indoor Bowls Club is one of the local organisations to receive funding support. Club Member George, Solihull Council former Leader Councillor Ian Courts, Club Managing Director Tom Millership, and Club Director Margaret

Supporting Solihull Businesses

Between April 2022 and March 2025, £5.3m was allocated to the Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to build pride in place and increase life chances. A key element of this has been supporting local businesses.

Across the programme, over 533 small and medium-sized enterprises have received support, and 84 potential entrepreneurs supported in their journey to start a business.

Helping drive local growth and investment, the West Midlands Grant Programme has provided capital funding for expansion across a range of business sectors. This has been complemented through a programme of support focused on climate change and sustainability with net zero grants, helping our local businesses become more energy efficient through a variety of projects. In total, this has provided over £900k to local businesses.

Alongside dedicated account managers, specialist support programmes have been commissioned by the Council – including early-stage support to freelancers and enterprises within the cultural and creative sectors, supporting a key pillar of the Council's new **Cultural Strategy**.

Other programmes include export support for those businesses taking their first steps to trade overseas or enter new markets, and a focus around circular economy, reducing waste and resources.

For more information, get in touch with the team at business@solihull.gov.uk.

Self-driving shuttle

In March 2025, a new autonomous vehicle trial began operations in Solihull. The 7km route will link passengers from Birmingham International Train Station to the NEC and Birmingham Business Park, offering greater connectivity during busy events.

The Solihull & Coventry Automated Links Evolution (SCALE) project is a collaborative initiative led by Solihull Council. It works in partnership with the Warwick Manufacturing Group at the University of Warwick and Coventry University, Transport for West Midlands, the NEC Group, Coventry City Council and automated vehicle specialists IPG and dRISK.

The autonomous vehicles were built by New Zealand-based manufacturer Ohmio and can carry up to 14 passengers. They use a sophisticated suite of cameras and sensors to understand their surroundings, allowing them to interact with live traffic and move around safely. In line with current legislation, the shuttles will have a human operator permanently onboard, who will have the ability to take control if required.

The project builds on the success and knowledge gained from previous passenger trials, in which Solihull became the first local authority in the country to purchase its own electric autonomous shuttle. Due to its success, it was announced in July 2025 that the pilot would be extended into a more complex route.



The Solihull and Coventry Automated Links Evolution (SCALE) project at the NEC

Environment

Some key figures:

- The number of publicly available electric vehicle (EV) charging points in Solihull has increased from 53 in October 2019 to 358 in April 2025, which is a 545% increase.
- 390 new litter-picking volunteers joined between April 2024 and March 2025, bringing the total number of active Love Solihull litter pickers to 1,818 across the borough.
- 330 volunteers spent a total of 640 hours planting trees and hedgerows to support Planting Our Future.
- The Council's carbon emissions have reduced by 79% in 2023/24, compared to 2009/10.
- There are 155 miles of public rights of way opening up woodland and open countryside within the borough and neighbouring Warwickshire.

Case studies

To illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on

Energy Saving Homes



Councillor Mark Parker, Councillor Ian Courts and Councillor Andy Mackiewicz joined by Kinghurst residents outside the new Mountfort homes

In December 2024, the first tenants received their keys for their affordable, energy-efficient homes in Kingshurst. Managed by Solihull Community Housing, the 25 newly-built homes are located on the site of the former Mountford pub, marking a significant contribution to the 78 homes envisioned in the wider Kingshurst Masterplan being delivered by the Council.

The new development includes a mix of three and four-bedroom family homes as well as one-bedroom maisonettes,

helping to meet the specific needs of the local community. This will help transform Kingshurst while addressing the current shortfall of affordable housing in Solihull.

Each property has been designed with sustainability in mind, featuring a range of low carbon and renewable technologies to help generate heat and power, such as air source heat pumps and integrated solar panels to provide additional power and an EV charging point. These are designed to reduce their environmental impact whilst providing residents with lower running costs.

Work to deliver phase two of the Kingshurst regeneration scheme is ongoing, which will include a new mix of sustainable housing and retail space, centred around a new community and health and wellness hub at the heart of the village.

Hope Coppice

Hope Coppice won a national award in November 2024 for its contribution to biodiversity enhancement and improving the well-being of the local community.

Following Hope Coppice being awarded Green Flag status in July 2024, the Keep Britain Tidy Green Flag Award campaign gave the park a coveted 'Best of the Best' award in the Best Biodiversity Habitat Creation Project. The awards celebrate the volunteers, park staff and community groups who play a vital role in the success of parks that were honoured the prestigious Green Flag status.

Hope Coppice used to be an underutilised piece of land but has been transformed into a vibrant nature reserve by the Council's Public Realm team and the 'Friends of Hope Coppice' group, for the benefit of the local community and beyond. Over the last three years, hundreds of residents have supported the Planting our Future tree planting campaign to plant over 10,000 trees at the park. This has created a beautiful forest thriving with diverse wildlife, with Hope Coppice becoming a sanctuary for rehabilitated hedgehogs through our partnership with Solihogs Hedgehog Rescue.

The wider Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards high quality and well managed green spaces and is managed by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Since Hope Coppice achieved Green Flag status, two further green spaces in the borough have been awarded the accolade, meaning there are now a record 19 Green Flag parks, cemeteries and allotments in Solihull (up from 7 in 2010).



Councillor Ian Courts and Councillor Ken Hawkins with Friends of Hope Coppice

Enablers

Enablers are the foundations on which we build our services and which enable us to achieve our priorities

Some key figures:

- We recognise the importance of a motivated and diverse workforce and providing inclusive places for people to work. As of 31 March 2025, there were 2,587 staff employed by the Council with 19.4% recorded as being from an ethnic minority background, higher than the borough average of 18%.
- To enable us to deliver the services that residents need, we have 49 operational buildings across the borough which provide services for our residents, including libraries and adult day centres.
- The wellbeing of our workforce is essential to support the delivery of the Council's priorities. During 2024/25, the Council's Organisational Wellbeing Team held 32 sessions, attended by over 300 employees.
- We continue to increase accessibility for residents to access Council services at a convenient time that suits their needs. In 2024/25, there were 881,032 visits to our online Customer Portal as well as 21,624 service requests raised through digital methods.

Case studies

To illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on

Digital transformation in Adult Social Care



Social Council work practitioners demonstrate Magic Notes to Councillor Tony Dicicco

The Council has introduced artificial intelligence software to help adult social care teams spend more time supporting people and reduce admin hours by as much as 65% per week.

Magic Notes is a software developed by UK-based organisation Beam and assists staff by avoiding the need to write or type notes by recording information from assessments, reviews and other discussions they have with adults receiving care and support.

As conversations are captured precisely and are ready to review immediately after a visit, staff can share assessments and support plans more quickly. It also boosts employee wellbeing by helping to manage workload better and complete follow-up actions quicker.

When trialled by 20 adult social care staff across 282 visits and meetings in 2024, the technology led to a 65% average drop in the amount of time social care staff spend on compiling assessments. Staff taking part in the pilot scheme reported they had better quality conversations with people they were supporting, while a member of the public felt less anxious about an assessment because the social worker could fully concentrate on them. Magic Notes has since been rolled out to about 270 staff across the adult social care directorate and Solihull is one of the first councils in the West Midlands to adopt this technology.

Inclusive Employment

For Learning Disability Week in June 2024, Michelle from the catering team shared her experiences with supported employment and how the scheme helped her with her current role at the Council.

Since 2016, the Council's Employment and Skills Team have supported almost 4,000 individuals, with nearly half of them achieving an outcome of employment, education or training. Among all participants, over a third had a disability or health issue, and on average spend nine weeks longer accessing support to secure a job or training.

In 2022, Michelle signed up for the supported employment scheme which aims to help residents with a learning disability gain skills for work. As part of her placement, she undertook a one-year paid work trial at Honeycomb Café, adult social care services. With the support from our partners, she obtained a food hygiene certificate and gained transferrable skills such as travel planning, whilst boosting her confidence.

Her experience on her placement has helped her secure her current paid role in September 2023 as catering assistant at Woodlands Infant School. With her new wages, she has learnt how to manage her money. Michelle has developed a new hobby – horse riding.



Michelle (middle) and Suzanna (right) with their team

Financial outturn position

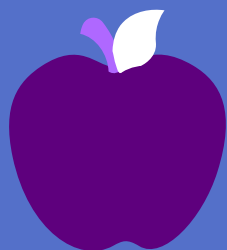
The breakdown below shows our financial outturn position for April 2024 to March 2025, by cabinet portfolio. (£)

Adult Social Care and Health	77,550,000
Children's Services (excluding non delegated Dedicated Schools Grant)	74,129,000
Economy and Infrastructure	35,447,000
Public Health	1,249,000
Resources	34,703,000
Centrally held reserves, grants and other funding	(32,065,000)
Sub Total	191,013,000
Levies	8,891,000
Total Core Council	199,904,000

£
Total
199,904,000

Key Statistics

While we have priorities to deliver and outcomes to achieve, a huge amount of other work takes place across teams each and every day. Here are some highlights from the last year (up to March 2025) which all contribute to serving the needs of our Solihull residents, visitors, businesses and stakeholders.



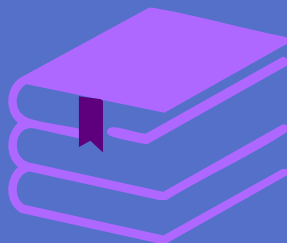
First preference places were achieved for **92%** of applicants for primary schools

5,389
adults received support from Solihull Adult Social Care.



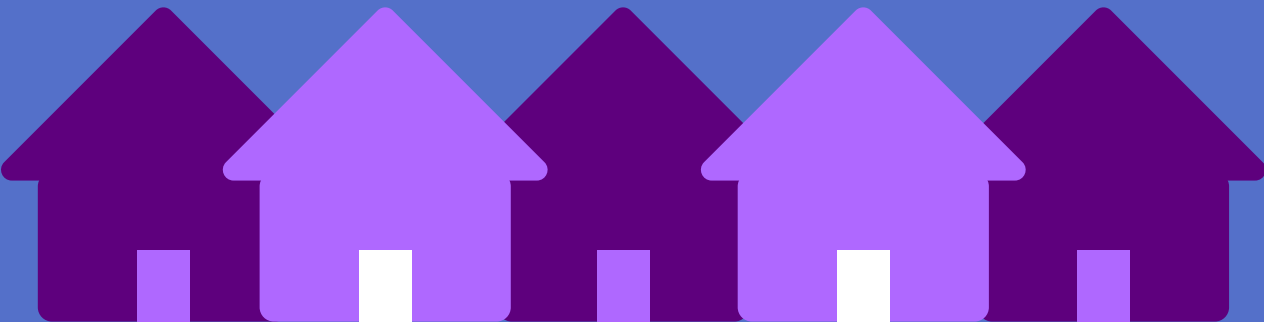
9.4m
waste and recycling collections

First preference places were achieved for **79%** of applicants for secondary schools



Homelessness prevention was provided to **81% (155)**

of young people who presented to the Council in the period 2024 – 2025.



1,138

Freedom of Information requests asking for a total of 14,188 pieces of information.



190k
calls answered by our contact centre



We received **2.6m** web visitors

560km

of roads were gritted **26 times** during winter 2024/25



