

Director of Public Health

Annual Report 2023-2024

Skills, Work and Health



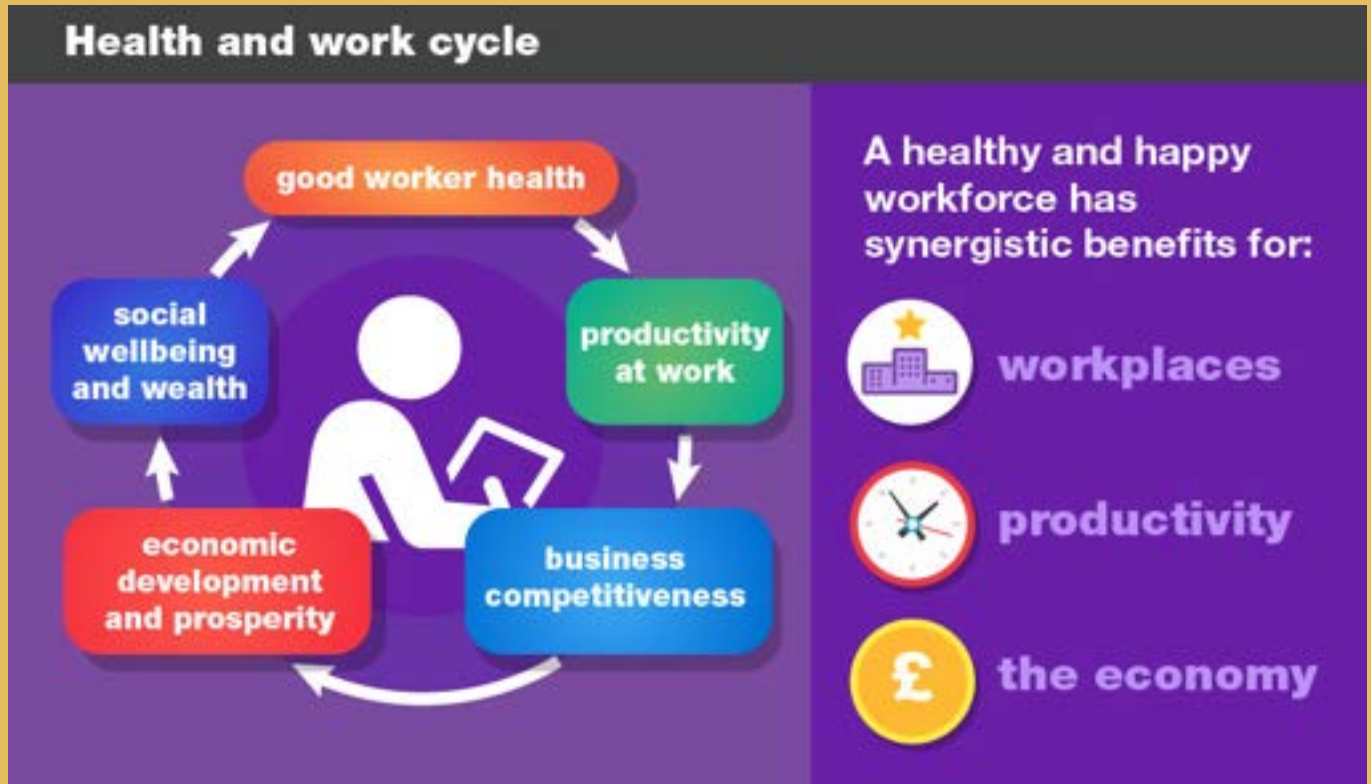
We pride ourselves on being a Council that is small enough to care, but big enough to make a difference.

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As Chair of Solihull's Health and Well-being Board and Deputy Leader, I believe that skills, work and health are a key priority. Businesses and the economy benefit from a skilled and healthy workforce. Workers are more likely to be healthy if their working environment is healthy. Good quality education and developing the right skills are crucial steps to accessing high quality and fulfilling work.



Source: Health matters: [health and work](#) (1) adapted from [WHO Health Workplace Framework](#) (2)

Ensuring people can access good work has important health benefits. Taking steps to support people into employment is key to improving long term health and well-being. This is particularly important for people who may find it more difficult to find work or who face particular barriers to work, such as young people who are or have been in care, young people who are not in education, employment or training, young people with special educational needs and disabilities or people with learning disabilities.

We want to set ourselves the ambitious challenge of growing a good economy that also supports our goal of closing the inequality gap. We believe that by working with partners, whether this is local businesses, the West Midlands Combined Authority, schools and education or the NHS we can build on our successes to date and tackle our challenges together.

Councillor Karen Grinsell
 Chair, Solihull Health and Well-being Board,
 Co-chair Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Partnership,
 Deputy Leader, Solihull Council



In 2023, Solihull published its Prevention Strategy 'Living Well in Solihull'. This strategy signs up our local partners to 'think prevention' at every stage of life, including the key role that education, employment and skills play in influencing well-being and life expectancy. The Prevention Strategy complements our existing Health Inequalities Strategy, which commits us to take action to reduce the health gap, as well as Solihull's Economic Strategy, which outlines the ambition for economic growth and development across the borough.

Ensuring there is a good supply of good quality jobs and that our residents have the skills and opportunity to access these, particularly for people living in the more deprived parts of the borough or for people who may find it more difficult to access work because of ill-health or mental health issues, is a key component of our local approach to close the long-term health gap and grow a strong and inclusive economy.

Educational attainment and skill levels are important drivers for future employability. In my report we look upstream to understand the current picture of how well children are doing at different stages of their educational journey, as well as the opportunities in later life.

I set out in more detail the links between education, skills, work and health. Having a meaningful and purposeful job is good for people's health and well-being. Being unemployed has a negative impact on people's lives, not only for themselves, but for those they live with, especially their children. People with poor health may find it difficult to find employment or may find that their health affects their ability to work. Workplaces can support people's health by providing a positive working environment and access to support if their workforce experiences physical or mental health issues.

My last report covered the effects of COVID-19 locally, focusing mainly on the response to the pandemic and its impact on our population. Now we



are further down the line, we have a clearer view on the economic and employment consequences from the pandemic and the specific challenges this raises. There are significant concerns for younger people, with employment rates being lower for 18-24 years olds than before the pandemic. This age group was most likely to be working in sectors which were subject to the furlough schemes, and they are more likely to have missed out on training opportunities. Focusing our opportunities on this age group is likely to have larger dividends and should offer longer-term positive impacts on employability and income levels for us all.

For adults aged 16-64 years, there is a striking pattern in the number of people whose ability to work is affected by health factors with record numbers of people economically inactive because of poor health. National research by the Health Foundation has found that 1.4 million more people are reporting 'work-limiting' conditions than 10 years ago (total 3.7 million people).

The inability to work due to health factors affects women, older workers and people without a university-level education the most. However, the impact of poor health is growing faster in younger workers aged 16-34 years old, who are now as likely to report a health condition affecting their ability to work as 45-54-year-olds were 10 years ago. This is most likely to be because of mental health issues, which is particularly rising in younger people.

Skills, Work and Health: Making the Case



Another key issue at national and local level is the employment impacts of aging. This raises both opportunities and issues for consideration and is particularly important in Solihull where we have an older population. Many older people continue to be highly productive in later life, by working, either paid or voluntary, into state retirement age and by bringing a wealth of skills and experience. However, as our population ages, we will have an increasing proportion of our work force living with long-term health conditions that may affect their ability to work. Reducing the onset of preventable long-term conditions such as heart disease or diabetes and improving their management is therefore an important consideration for people's health and well-being and maintaining a strong labour force.

Most factors that influence the economy and labour market are driven at the national or international level. However, there is an important role to be played at local level, such as creating the conditions for local investment and employment, working with key partners, for example the West Midlands Combined Authority, and maximising the impact of the broader local public sector spending and employment opportunities to benefit the local area.

Many people will successfully find their own routes into employment. But for some people, including people with physical or mental health conditions, special educational needs or learning disabilities, this

may be more challenging. Getting the right support into employment through targeted skills development, creating localized and bespoke opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment can – and is – being locally developed and driven, reflecting specific local demographics and circumstances.

At the local level there is much that can be done to keep people healthy and act early to better manage long-term physical and mental health conditions that may limit their ability to work. As well as specific clinical support in the diagnosis and clinical management of these conditions, preventative programmes to support people to stay healthy and age well, are also important.

In my report, I outline the case for skills and work as a major determinant of health, describe key local and national data on the employment and skills picture and outline key initiatives being undertaken locally to tackle this agenda. Finally, I set out key priorities for further action across our local partnerships.



Ruth Tennant
Director of Public Health
Solihull Council

Employment patterns include Employment, where people are in paid employment, unemployment, and economically inactive. Economically inactive is where people are neither working nor looking for work. They may be economically inactive because they are unable to work because of family commitments, retirement, study, sickness or disability.

UK employment rates have been rising since the end of 2022 as the country emerged from the coronavirus pandemic. The employment rate in Solihull is currently higher than the UK average (77.9% vs 75.9%) and Solihull has a lower unemployment rate than national (3.6% vs 3.9%). Solihull has a lower economic inactivity rate than the UK too (19.1% vs 21.1%).

One of the most striking employment trends has been the impact of the pandemic on young people. About 5% fewer 18-24 year olds are in current employed, whereas the rate for those aged over 24 has returned to late 2019 levels.

Some population groups are more vulnerable to unemployment, such as young people, those with lower-level qualifications, individuals from lower income households and people with ill-health or disability. In Solihull, there are differences across the borough where unemployment is higher in three north Solihull wards of Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge, and Smith's Wood than the other parts of Solihull (6.7% compared to an average of 2.4%).

Nearly 81% of Solihull residents who are economically inactive do not want a job compared to the UK average of 78%. Being economically inactive and retired is higher in Solihull (26%) compared with the UK (14%), reflecting local demographics. Of those who are economically inactive in Solihull, 21% is due to long-term sick.

Young people experienced significant disruptions to their education during the pandemic. In July 2023, 4.6% of 16- and 17-year-olds in Solihull were not in employment, education or training, which is higher than the 3.3% national average. Because of strong local tracking and follow-up, only 0.6% were 'not known' which is much lower than the England average of 2.3%.

Of those young people not in employment, education or training, 28% self-disclosed mental health issues.

Employment Patterns

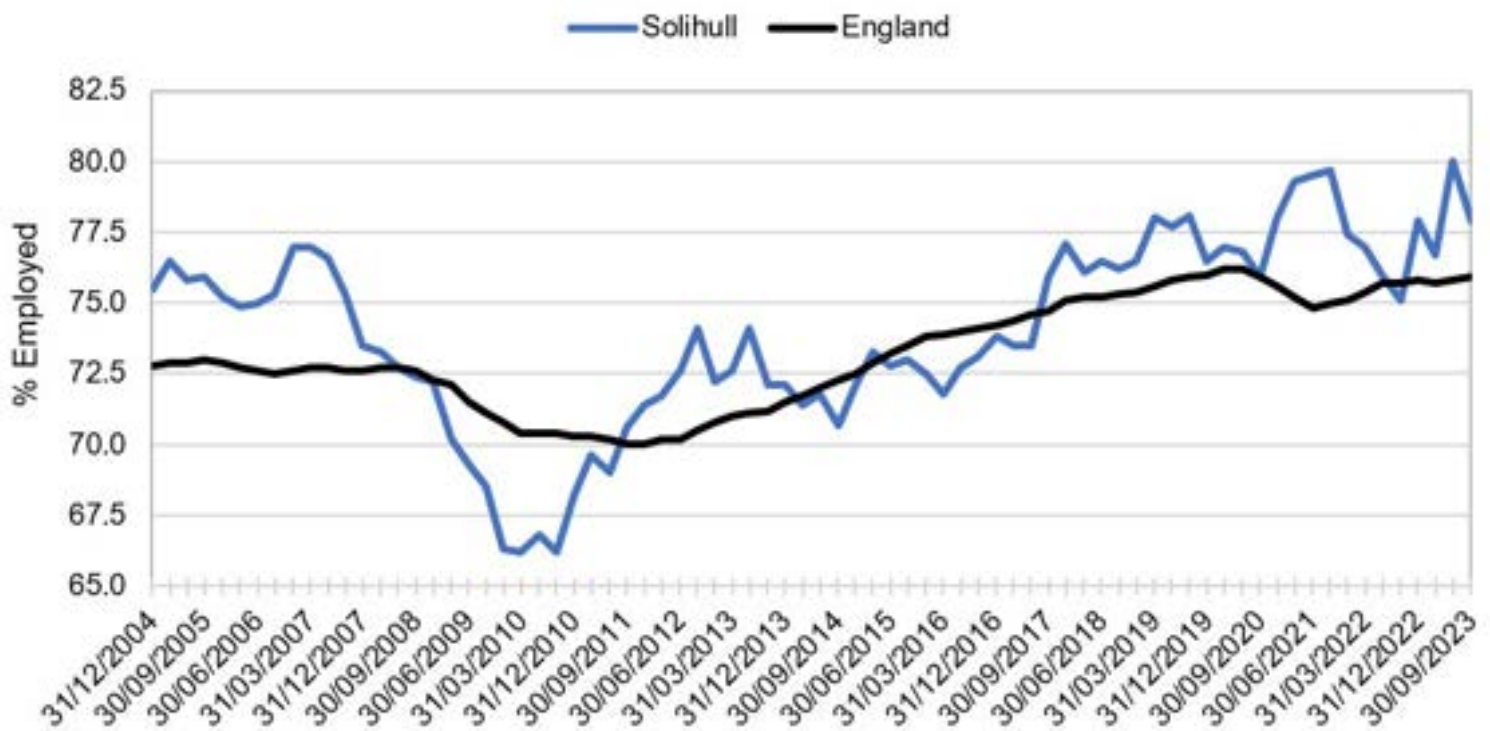
UK employment rates have been rising since the end of 2022 as the country emerged from the coronavirus pandemic. In September to November 2023, the employment rate for 16-64-year-olds was 76% compared to 75% in December 2020, with employment rising by nearly 680,000 (2%) individuals over this period. The number of adults in employment has returned to levels recorded prior to the outbreak of the pandemic at the end of 2019.⁽³⁾



One of the most striking national employment trends has been the impact of the pandemic on young people. About 5% fewer 18–24-year-olds are in current employment than before the pandemic, whereas the rate for those aged over 24 has returned to late 2019 levels.⁽³⁾

Historically, Solihull employment has mirrored national trends, with the rate moving upwards since the 2009 recession. Data from September 2023 estimates that the Solihull employment rate is higher than the England average (77.9% vs 75.9%).

Solihull Employment Rates, seasonally adjusted, December 2004 to September 2023⁽⁴⁾



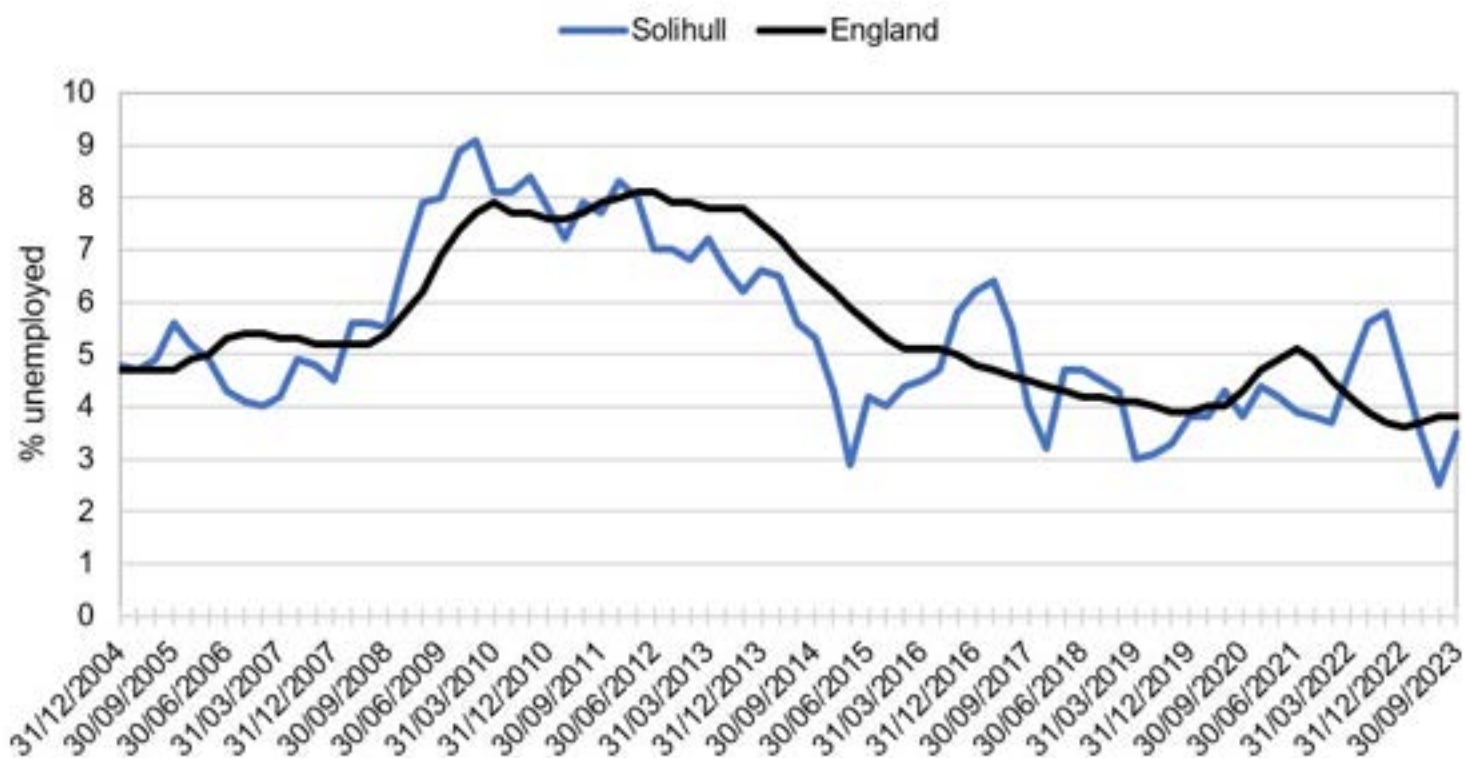
One of the strongest indications that the national employment market has emerged from the pandemic downturn is the sharp rise in vacancies during 2021 and 2022. By early 2022 there were over 1.3 million vacancies in England, indicative of labour demands out-stripping supply. The number has since fallen since its peak in 2022, with 934,000 vacancies in the economy.⁽³⁾

The Government's furlough scheme partially protected the labour market during the COVID-19 pandemic as unemployment rose, peaking at 5.2% at the end of 2020. It fell to 3.5% in the summer of 2022 but is now rising, being 4.2% by September to November 2023.⁽³⁾

Unemployment rates vary by age, being nearly four times higher among 18–24-year-olds than among those aged 25 years and over (11.5% vs 3.1%). The upturn in unemployment has been visible since Summer 2022 and is much more pronounced among younger people. 18-24-year-olds accounted for two-thirds of the overall increase in unemployment over this period.

Unemployment in Solihull has been consistently lower than the regional average. Data from September 2023 shows the unemployment rate in Solihull being 3.6% compared to 3.9% across England and 4.6% in the West Midlands. Annual Population Survey data⁴ relating to the economic activity of the population is subject to a margin of error and should be viewed in that light.

Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted, December 2004 to September 2023⁴⁾



Some sections of the population are especially vulnerable to unemployment, such as young people, those with lower-level skills or no formal qualifications, individuals from lower income households, and people with ill-health or a disability. In Solihull this is evident from the difference in unemployment between north Solihull and the rest of the borough.

Claimant count unemployment is a way of measuring employment inequalities at ward level. For 16–64-year-olds, the claimant unemployment rate in the three north Solihull wards of Chelmsley Wood, Smith’s Wood and, Kingshurst and Fordbridge is 6.7% compared to an average of 2.4% across the other 14 Solihull wards⁵⁾. Similar inequality is apparent in the rate among 18–24-year-olds: 10.0% in north Solihull versus 4.0% in the rest of the borough.

Claimant unemployment rates remain much higher in north Solihull. However, between the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and December 2023, the number of working age claimants in this more deprived part of Solihull fell by -14% (-255 individuals) compared to an increase of +40% across the less deprived part of Solihull (+715 individuals). This difference is found in the 18-24 age population with the number of claimants in north Solihull falling by -23% (or 100 people) compared to an increase of +23% (+90 individuals) in the rest of the borough.

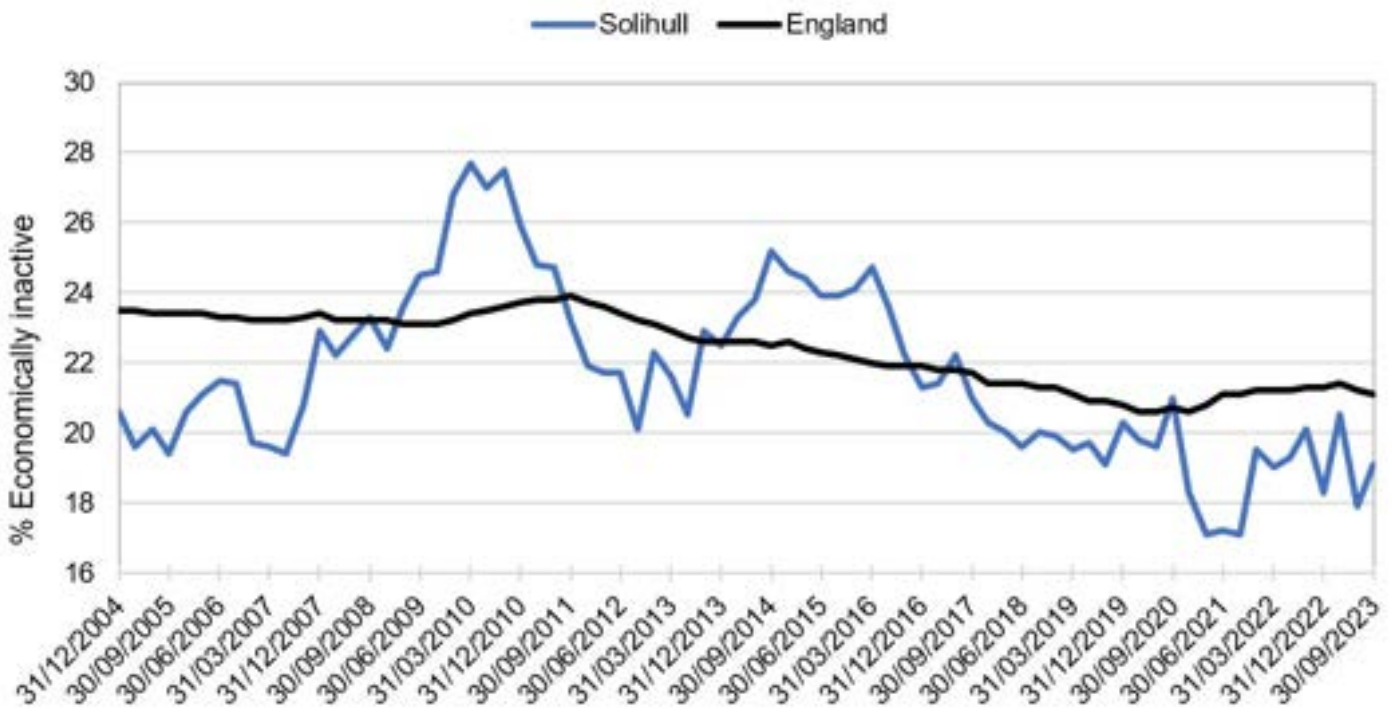
Economic Inactivity

There are three categories to describe people's working status. The first two refer to people who are employed or unemployed. The third category covers people who are described as economically inactive. This means that they are neither working nor looking for work. They may be economically inactive because they are unable to work because of family commitments, retirement, study, sickness or disability. This includes people who may want a job and are searching but none available; are not searching but there are jobs available or, are neither searching nor available⁽⁶⁾



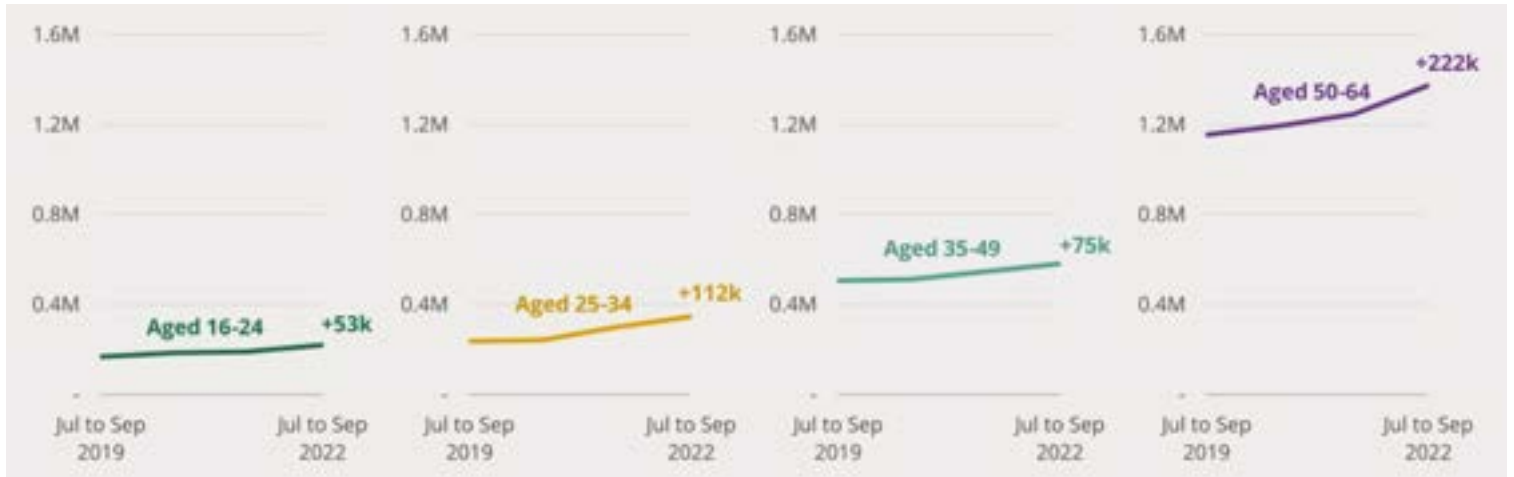
Economic inactivity had slowly been reducing, with Solihull broadly following national trends. Economic inactivity increased when the coronavirus pandemic started, as it did for all G7 countries. Whilst the G7 countries saw this trend reverse post-pandemic, the UK's economic inactivity rate continued to rise⁶. Economic inactivity in the UK has increased by 700,000 since the beginning of the pandemic⁷. In September 2023, the national economic inactivity rate was 21.1%. Solihull has a lower economic inactivity rate of 19.1%, which is also lower than West Midlands (21.6%).

Economic inactivity rates, seasonally adjusted, December 2004 to September 2023⁽⁴⁾



Older people, often below the state retirement age of 67 years are leaving the workforce at a faster rate than their younger counterparts. Although an increase can be seen across all age groups, the biggest increase in economic inactivity due to long-term sickness has been in people aged over 50.

Economic inactivity due to long-term sickness, UK⁽⁶⁾



Nearly 81% of Solihull residents who are economically inactive do not want a job compared to the UK average of 78%.

The two main reasons for economic inactivity nationally are looking after family or home and long-term sickness, which increased to a record high in 2022. This contrasts with the reasons for the economic inactivity in Solihull:

- Retirement (26%)
- Student (22%)
- Long-term sick (21%)
- Looking after the family (16%).

Being economically inactive and retired is higher in Solihull (26%) compared with the UK (14%) and reflects local demographics.

Youth Employment

Prior to the pandemic, economic inactivity among young people was at its lowest rate since 2016. During the pandemic the rate reached a record high of 41.6% (2.83 million) before reducing to 38.0% (2.6 million) in 2023, which is higher than pre-pandemic.⁽⁶⁾



Industries such as retail and wholesale, storage and transportation, accommodation and food services, entertainment and recreation were significantly affected and notably employed some of the highest levels of young people. Young people, compared to other age groups, had the highest proportion of 'zero hour' contracts, were least likely to be able to work remotely, and most likely to be furloughed⁽⁸⁾

Young people experienced significant disruptions to their education during the pandemic. 52% of the Youth Employment UK 2022 Youth Voice Census respondents said their education was disrupted 'a great deal' or 'a lot' in the previous 12 months. This affected young peoples' ability to prepare for examinations, transition to employment or further education as well as impacted their overall mental health and wellbeing⁽⁹⁾

Young people were more adversely affected than other age groups by changes to employment and work caused by the pandemic. In 2020, 1.9 million young people were fully furloughed. This is nearly half (47%) of all young employees. At the same time, there was an unprecedented number of young people staying in or moving into full-time education. Young people had the highest growth in unemployment with long term unemployment rising to 170,000.⁽¹⁰⁾

In July 2023, 4.6% of 16- and 17-year-olds in Solihull were recorded as being not in employment, education or training (NEET), which is higher than the 3.3% average for England. However, because of strong local tracking and follow-up, only 0.6% were 'not known', which is lower than the England average of 2.3%. The proportion of young people in Solihull who are NEET increased by 1% from 3.6% in July 2022 to 4.6% in July 2023. In July 2023, 28% of the total 16- to 17-year-olds who were recorded as NEET had self-disclosed mental health issues.



Certain groups of young people require particular focus. Care experienced young people bring unique skills and experience to the workforce. They have high aspirations for training and employment, but many need additional support to reach their full potential. Care-experienced young people face the same challenges as other young people but these are compounded by their specific challenges and vulnerabilities. They are more likely to face poverty and lower earnings, higher unemployment, difficulties with housing and homelessness, physical and mental health issues and stigma. They are less likely to go onto higher and further education, and less likely to be employed compared to those with no care experience.⁽¹¹⁾

Nationally, 38% of those who leave care aged 19-21 years are not in education, training or employment compared with 11.6% for all young people. Many care leavers face difficulties in finding and keeping career options in the early years after care, and for some this can persist for many years, increasing the risk of long-term unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Where work is found, it is often casual or temporary employment, or low-level, short-term training and education courses. For these young people, the idea of getting a job, and even applying for a job, can be overwhelming often due to emotional wellbeing and mental health needs. Also, many aspects that are often taken for granted by the general population, i.e. clothing, travel, food, socialising, workplaces are often additional challenges for young people who have left care.

- Educational attainment at all stages throughout childhood are key markers of longer-term adult health and employment outcomes. There is detailed national and local tracking in place to monitor this and to enable action to be taken.
- For Early Years and Key Stage 1, Solihull performs above national average across five key areas of communication and language; personal, social, and emotional development; physical development; literacy; and mathematics. Solihull is ranked the 43rd Local Authority out of 153 authorities for children reaching a 'Good Level of Development at age 5'.
- At the end of Year 6 (ages 10-11 years) children take Key Stage 2 SAT assessments, which assesses a child's standard for English Grammar, punctuation and spelling, reading, and mathematics. Solihull is above national average. However, for some schools within the Borough, less than 50% of pupils achieved expected levels.
- A more mixed picture emerges at secondary school, Key Stage 4 or stage of education that includes GCSEs and other exams. 'Attainment 8' score, which is an average score for pupils across either core subjects, has declined over the last year and has fallen behind national average.
- Using the 'Progress 8' score, which is a way of measuring individual pupil progress since primary school and has been introduced alongside 'Attainment 8', showed a decline from 2022 to 2023, both nationally and more marked in Solihull. This does not mean children are not making progress, but it is an indication that they may be making less progress than expected. Results need to be interpreted with caution as this is provisional data.
- Qualifications are a key factor in employment. People with higher levels of qualifications are more likely to be in employment. People with low levels of qualifications are more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive. The qualification profile for Solihull (aged 16-64 years) is similar to the UK, with 43% having NVQ Level 4 and above. Solihull has a lower percentage of people with no qualifications compared to national (4.7% versus 6.8%), with slightly more people having NVQ Levels 2 and 3 compared with national figures.
- In Solihull, there were 1,350 Apprenticeship starts in the academic year 2022/23 of which 18% were at Intermediate Level, equivalent to 5 GCSE passes at Grade 9-4; 40% were at Advanced Level, equivalent to 2 A Level passes; 43% were at the Higher Level, equivalent to degree and above.
- Key to people's job and career opportunities is being skilled in financial, literacy, numeracy, digital and citizenship. This has become more important because of economic and social changes as well as advances in technology. As many as 1 in 4 people in our most disadvantaged wards could be lacking essential skills, i.e. literacy and/or numeracy skills.

Educational Outcomes and Attainment

Educational attainment at all stages throughout childhood are key markers of longer-term adult health and employment outcomes. There is detailed national and local tracking in place to monitor this and to enable action to be taken.

In the early years, at aged 5, Solihull performs above the national average with 69% of children achieving a good level of development across five key areas of communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development; literacy; and mathematics.



Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results 21/22 to 22/23(12)

	Year	Percentage (%) reaching a Good Level of Development at aged 5
Solihull	2023	69
	2022	67
National	2023	67
	2022	65
	Year	Rank (out of 153 authorities, where 1 is the highest)
Solihull	2023	43
	2022	46

At Key Stage 1, at around 6 years of age, Solihull children achieve well across the core areas of reading, writing and maths, compared with the national position and children across Solihull have shown improvements in national rankings over the last year.

Key Stage 1 provisional results 2023(12)

	Reading		Writing		Maths	
	Expected Standard	Higher Standard	Expected Standard	Higher Standard	Expected Standard	Higher Standard
Solihull: Percentage of pupils achieving expected or higher standards (%)						
2023	71	23	60	11	72	20
2022	70	22	58	11	70	19
National: Percentage of pupils achieving expected or higher standards (%)						
2023	68	19	60	8	70	16
2022	67	18	58	8	68	15
Ranking out of 153 authorities (1=highest)						
2023	21	22	68	18	44	25
2022	27	21	60	22	36	24

Primary Attainment

At the end of Year 6 (ages 10-11 years) children take the Key Stage 2 (KS2) SAT assessments, which assess a child's standard for English Grammar, punctuation and spelling, reading and mathematics. Overall Solihull has an above average level of achievement in the KS2 SATs. However, in some schools less than 50% of pupils achieve the expected level.



School	KS2 Pupils	Percentage meeting expected standard				
		Reading, Writing & Maths %	Reading %	Writing %	Maths %	Grammar, punctuation & Spelling %
Solihull	2,956	62	77	72	76	76
England - state-funded Schools	673,069	60	73	71	73	72
England - all Schools	676,101	60	73	71	73	72

Secondary Attainment

The picture at secondary school (Key Stage 4 or the stage of education that includes GCSEs and other exams) is more mixed. 'Attainment 8' score, which is an average score for pupils across eight core subjects, has declined over the last year and has fallen behind the national average.



Progress 8 score, which is a way of measuring individual pupil progress since primary school and has been introduced alongside Attainment 8, showed a national decline from 2022 to 2023. This has been more marked in Solihull. This does not mean that children are not making progress, but it is an indication that they may be making less progress than expected. As a result, Solihull's position in national rankings has fallen. This is provisional data, so results need to be interpreted with caution.

End of Key Stage Four	Attainment 8	Progress 8	% 9-4 pass in English and Maths
Solihull			
2023	45.8	-0.11	66
2022	49.9	0.02	71
National			
2023	46.3	-0.03	65
2022	48.9	-0.03	69
Ranking out of 153 authorities (1=highest)			
2023	68	95	61
2022	47	53	47

Borough-level data masks significant variation between individual schools with some achieving well above the national average against Progress 8 scores and others well below. This is of particular concern as schools making less progress are located in the more deprived areas of the borough, risking a longer-term widening of the inequality gap.

Qualifications

Qualification levels are a key factor in employment. People with higher levels of qualification are more likely to be in employment. People with low levels of qualifications are more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive. The qualification profile of Solihull's working age population is similar to the UK, and more favourable than that of the West Midlands as a whole.



Highest Level of Qualification – Population Aged 16-64(4)			
	% 16-64 Population		
Highest Level of Qualification	Solihull	UK	West Midlands
NVQ Level 4 & above	43.1	43.5	38.9
NVQ Level 3	17.7	16.5	16.9
NVQ Level 2	17.5	15.2	16.6
NVQ Level 1	8.2	9.3	9.7
No Qualifications	4.7	6.8	7.8
Trade Apprenticeships	2.2	2.8	2.8
Other Qualifications	6.5	5.8	7.5

Employment rates increase with higher level qualifications. For instance, the working age employment rate among people in Solihull qualified to a maximum level of NVQ Level 2 is 64%, but among those qualified to NVQ Level 3 and above, the employment rate increases to 85%. The impact of qualifications on employment rates is particularly evident at the lower end of the spectrum. The rate among those with no qualifications is just 31%, jumping to an average of 70% for those with an NVQ Level 1 or Level 2 qualification.

In Solihull, there were 1,350 Apprenticeship starts in the academic year 2022/2023 of which:

- 18% were at Intermediate Level, equivalent to 5 GCSE passes at Grade 9-4
- 40% were at Advanced Level, equivalent to 2 A level passes
- 43% were at Higher Level, equivalent to degree and above

Adult Literacy

In England, 16.4% of adults (16-65 years old), or 1 in 6 adults, have 'very poor literacy skills,' which is also known as being functionally illiterate. This means that they understand short, straightforward texts on familiar topics accurately and independently, and they obtain information from everyday sources. However, reading information from unfamiliar sources, or reading about unfamiliar topics, often causes problems⁽¹³⁾



In Solihull, 30,642 (17.6%) adults have no qualifications which could suggest a literacy level of 1 or below.

According to the 2021 Census,⁽¹⁴⁾ English is not the main language in 4.5% of the Solihull population. Rates vary across the borough with almost 9% of the residents of Solihull stating that English is not their main language. Of the 9,412 residents with English as a second language in Solihull, the majority 8,053 (85.6%) can speak English well or very well. Just 1,359 people cannot speak English well or at all.

English as main language and English is not the main language by wards, Solihull⁽¹⁵⁾

2022 Ward	Main Language				Main Language is not English							
	English		Not English		Can speak English very well		Can speak English well		Cannot speak English well		Cannot speak English	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Bickenhill	12,269	97.0	376	3.0	207	1.6	117	0.9	45	0.4	7	0.1
Blythe	14,349	95.2	725	4.8	485	3.2	166	1.1	66	0.4	8	0.1
Castle Bromwich	10,902	97.7	251	2.3	114	1.0	83	0.7	38	0.3	16	0.1
Chelmsley Wood	12,260	96.9	389	3.1	174	1.4	149	1.2	55	0.4	11	0.1
Dorridge and Hockley Heath	10,598	98.1	205	1.9	131	1.2	45	0.4	22	0.2	7	0.1
Elmdon	11,263	94.3	678	5.7	376	3.1	189	1.6	102	0.9	11	0.1
Kingshurst & Fordbridge	12,293	96.5	450	3.5	212	1.7	164	1.3	59	0.5	15	0.1
Knowle (Solihull)	10,647	97.6	266	2.4	187	1.7	53	0.5	22	0.2	4	0.0
Lyndon	12,635	94.3	766	5.7	401	3.0	224	1.7	117	0.9	24	0.2
Meriden (Solihull)	12,152	98.1	233	1.9	160	1.3	56	0.5	11	0.1	6	0.0
Olton	11,346	94.5	664	5.5	358	3.0	189	1.6	103	0.9	14	0.1
Shirley East	10,834	92.5	875	7.5	544	4.6	218	1.9	93	0.8	20	0.2
Shirley South (Solihull)	11,269	94.9	603	5.1	338	2.8	187	1.6	64	0.5	14	0.1
Shirley West	11,968	95.3	591	4.7	317	2.5	163	1.3	101	0.8	10	0.1
Silhill	11,127	91.1	1,089	8.9	675	5.5	277	2.3	112	0.9	25	0.2
Smith's Wood	12,021	96.7	413	3.3	214	1.7	136	1.1	56	0.5	7	0.1
St Alphege	12,186	93.6	838	6.4	540	4.1	204	1.6	84	0.6	10	0.1
Solihull	200,119	95.5	9,412	4.5	5,433	2.6	2,620	1.3	1,150	0.5	209	0.1

Essential and Life Skills

Key to people's job and career opportunities, as well as being key to a person's ability to be active and engaged within their communities, is being skilled in literacy (including health literacy), numeracy, digital, financial literacy and citizenship. This has become even more important due to economic and social changes, especially with the advance of technology⁽¹⁵⁾



The Learning and Work Institute⁽¹⁵⁾ calculated ward level estimates on the proportion of the population with 'essential skills needs' – those that have low literacy and/or numeracy skills. As many as 24.1% of adults are thought to have low numeracy skills in England, more than 16.4% with low literacy skills. This is reflected in our ward figures for Chelmsley Wood, Smith's Wood and Kingshurst and Fordbridge where as many as 1 in 4 people could be lacking essential skills.

Estimated essential life skills by ward, Solihull⁽¹⁵⁾

Ward	Percentage of people with essential skills needs %	People with essential skills needs Number
Chelmsley Wood	24.8	1,930
Smith's Wood	24.4	1,270
Kingshurst and Fordbridge	24.3	1,933
Bickenhill	20.6	1,636
Castle Bromwich	20.4	1,479
Lyndon	19.7	1,652
Elmdon	19.6	1,450
Shirley West	19.4	1,388
Shirley East	18.8	1,479
Shirley South	18.8	1,317
Olton	18.6	1,367
Silhill	18.3	1,452
Meriden	17.4	1,239
St Alphege	17.4	1,915
Knowle	17.4	1,079
Dorridge and Hockley Heath	17.1	1,133
Blythe	17.0	1,499
Total		25,219

- Levels of ill-health in the working age population affect productivity. This may be through short- and long-term sickness absence levels. It is believed that the pandemic worsened an existing trend in high levels of poor health, especially as a reason for inactivity. People with a physical or mental long-term health condition are less likely than the overall population (16-64 years) to be in employment.
- There has been an increasing trend of more people working with work-limiting health conditions. There are now about the same number of people in employment with work limiting health conditions as are out of the labour market. The proportion of people who have a physical or mental long-term health condition and are working, is higher for Solihull (68.4%) compared with national (65.5%) and West Midlands (64.8%).
- About 1 in 3 employees have a long-term health condition, with 1 in 8 having a mental health condition and 1 in 10 having a musculoskeletal disorder (MSK). Solihull has a significantly higher proportion of people who report a long-term MSK to their GP: 20.8% reported MSK compared with 17.6% for England. There is also a higher proportion of people living in Solihull who report at least two long-term conditions, such as high blood pressure or cardio-vascular disease.
- There has been a stronger focus in recent years around the impact of menopause on employment. Women aged 45 to 55 years who have experienced menopause symptoms said that it had a negative impact on them at work. Many workplaces now have in place menopause policies to provide support to their employees. Solihull Council launched a Menopause Hub in 2019.
- Sickness absence has reduced nationally and locally. However, sickness absence related to mental health has increased. 15% of people aged 16-64 years' experience symptoms of an existing mental health condition.
- People with physical and/or learning disabilities experience significant inequalities, with a life expectancy that is 20 years lower than non-disabled people. People with longstanding illness or disability are more likely to earn a below average income.
- Solihull's adult social care outcomes framework shows that the proportion of people who are aged 18-64 years with a learning disability and are in paid employment is 3.5% compared to 5.1% nationally and 3.2% regionally. Latest local data points to a more positive picture due to targeted work to develop supported work placements through Solihull Council.
- Health and Safety at work is essential for creating a healthy workplace and preventing unemployment or economic inactivity because of poor health. Occupational Health focuses on improving working conditions and environment, ensuring they are favourable to health and safety. Good workplace health policies can help retain and support staff to be productive at work, and create a fair environment and healthy work culture.

The health impacts of unemployment

Levels of ill-health in the working age population affect productivity. This may be through short- and long-term sickness absence levels; because people are leaving the labour market through ill-health or, people who remain in work whilst trying to manage their health conditions.



It is believed that the pandemic worsened an existing trend in high levels of poor health, especially as a reason for inactivity.⁽⁷⁾ Even before the pandemic, self-reported good health was declining. Only 45% of people reported being mostly or completely satisfied with their health in 2020/21, compared to 52% in 2010/11. Similarly, people reporting experiencing anxiety and/or depression increased from 18% in 2010/11 to 24% in 2020/21.⁽⁷⁾

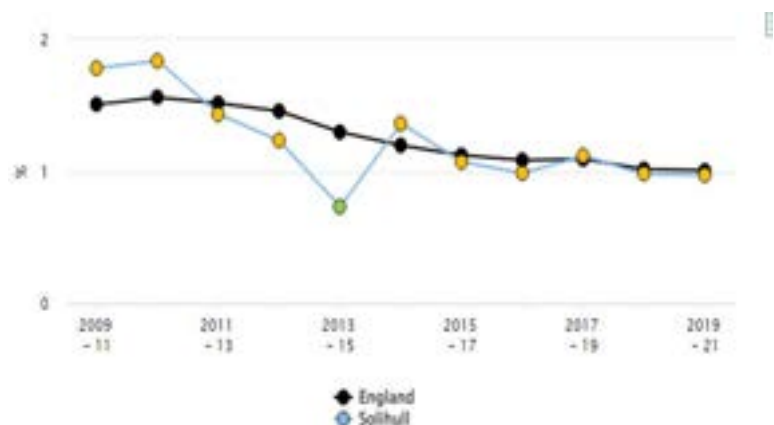
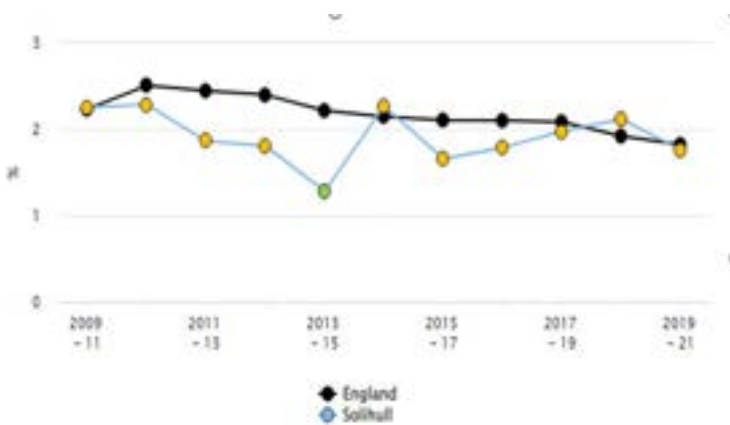
Nationally, people with a physical or mental long-term health condition are less likely than the overall working age population to be in employment. For instance, in 2021/22 the gap in the employment rate was around 10 percentage points. The gap for Solihull has tended to track the national average and has been on a downward trend over the period 2014/15 to 2021/22. Over the last three years, the gap in Solihull has improved more than that for England.

Sickness absence

COVID-19 brought an increased focus on the impact of long-term sickness in the job market. There has been a general decline in work sickness over time, yet workplace sickness affects millions of workers each year. Solihull has similar sickness absences to England, for both employees who had at least one day off in the previous week and working days lost due to sickness absence.



Sickness absence: (a) the percentage of employees who had at least one day off in the previous week and (b) the percentage of working days lost due to sickness absence⁽¹⁶⁾



Health issues as a driver of economic inactivity

The rise in economic inactivity, particularly in older age groups, is often linked to health-related factors. This includes access to healthcare; impact of long Covid; long-term trends in declining health and increased sickness. If people are economically inactive at an older age, then they are less likely to return to work, which is even less likely when combined with poor health⁽⁶⁾

Economic inactivity due to long-term sickness was increasing before the pandemic and has since continued to increase.

Many older people are not returning to work after prolonged ill health, which is of concern as it limits labour supply and economic growth. The cause for such high numbers of people reporting long-term poor health could be long Covid as well as long waiting times for treatment⁽⁷⁾



Key health conditions affecting working aged adults

There is an increasing trend of more people working with work-limiting health conditions, reflecting an overall increase in the number of adults with these conditions in the general population, as shown in the graph below⁽¹⁷⁾

There are now roughly the same number of people in employment with work limiting health conditions as are out of the labour market, as shown in the graph overleaf⁽¹⁷⁾



The prevalence of long-term health conditions has risen for the working age population
Proportion of working age (16–64 years) population with long-term health conditions: UK, 2013–23

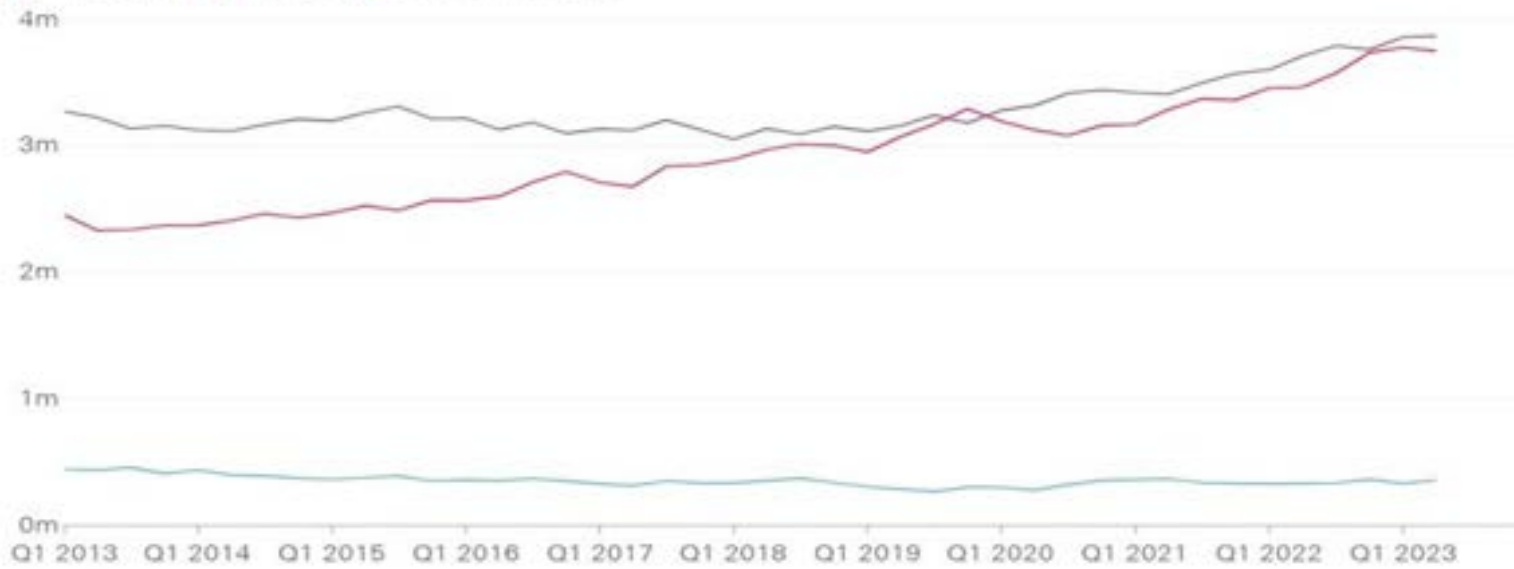
■ % with any long-term health condition ■ % with work-limiting health conditions



Of people with work-limiting health conditions, almost the same amount are now in employment as out of the labour market

Number of people with work-limiting health conditions, by labour market status: UK, 2013-23

■ In employment ■ Unemployed ■ Labour market inactive



About 1 in 3 employees have a long-term health condition, with 1 in 8 having a mental health condition and 1 in 10 having a musculoskeletal disorder. The proportion of people who have a physical or mental long-term health condition and are working, is higher for Solihull (68.4%) compared with national (65.5%) and West Midlands (64.8%).⁽¹⁶⁾

This could be a positive development with many people being able to work productively with long-term health conditions. However, it also highlights the importance of active workplace plans to manage the growing trends of enabling more workers to work whilst managing their poor health.

Defining patterns of ill-health

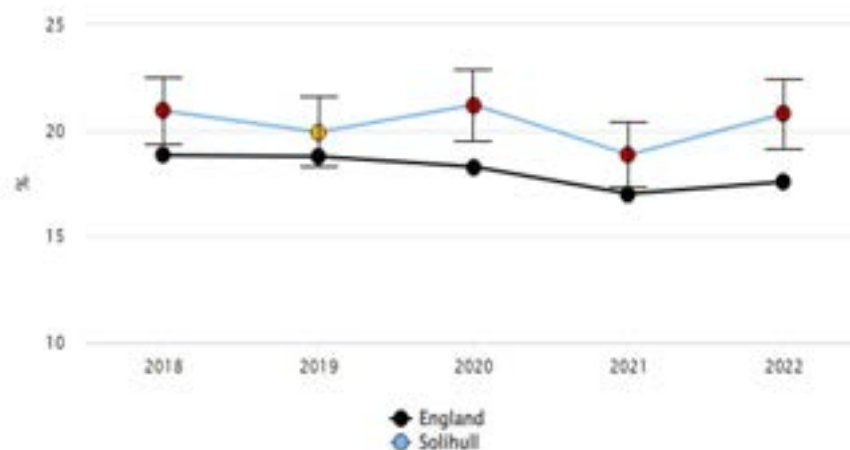
Unemployment is a risk factor for various health conditions, including musculoskeletal disorders* (MSK). Being unemployed due to MSK or other health conditions is known as 'health-related worklessness'.



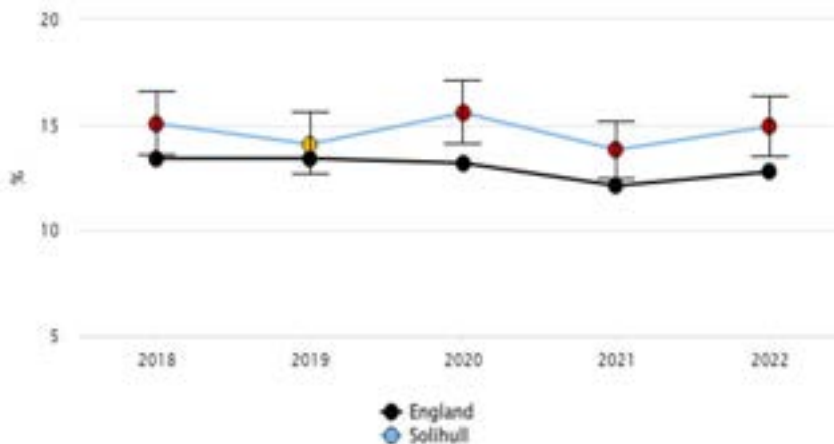
Work-related MSK can develop at work due to the physical tasks with which individuals carry out their normal work activities. MSK is not usually life threatening, but it can impair the quality of life of a large proportion of the adult population. They are most likely to be diagnosed in both males and females aged 45 years and above. In England, 15% of people suffer from work-related MSK said that it was caused, or made worse by, the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Solihull has a significantly higher proportion of people who report a long-term MSK to their GP; 20.8% reported MSK compared with 17.6% for England. There is also a higher proportion of people living in Solihull who report at least two long-term conditions: this includes conditions such as high blood pressure or cardio-vascular disease.

Percentage of people reporting a long-term Musculoskeletal disorder (MSD)⁽¹⁸⁾



Percentage of people reporting at least two long-term conditions, at least one of which is Musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) related⁽¹⁸⁾



* Musculoskeletal disorders can include back pain, neck or arm strains and diseases of the joints

Long-COVID

Emerging evidence shows a growing number of people who contract COVID-19 cannot shake off the effects of the virus months after falling ill. These long-term effects are often referred to as 'Long COVID' and 'Post COVID Syndrome' and are defined by [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk) as:



- Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19: signs and symptoms of COVID-19 from 4-12 weeks
- Post COVID-19 syndrome: signs and symptoms that develop during or after COVID-19 and continue for more than 12 weeks and not explained by alternative diagnosis.

About 1.9 million people live with long COVID⁽¹⁹⁾, and 1 in 10 stop working, with 110,000 workers being on sick leave, rather than losing their jobs altogether.⁽²⁰⁾ Overall, 45% of patients with Long COVID had to reduce their work and 22.3% were not working for various reasons, i.e., sick leave, dismissal or resignation, unsuccessful job search.⁽²¹⁾

There is a lack of local data on long COVID although referral processes are in place for people who may need support to manage the impact of long COVID. In the year from October 22- October 23, 298 people in the Midlands region were referred for support.⁽²²⁾

Menopause

There has been a stronger focus in recent years around the impact of menopause on employment. A recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)⁽²³⁾ survey reported that three out of five (59%) working women between the ages of 45 and 55 who were experiencing menopause symptoms said it had a negative impact on them at work. Nearly a third (30%) of women in the CIPD survey said they had taken sick leave because of their symptoms and, according to the Wellbeing of Women survey in 2016, one in four women considered leaving their jobs because of the impact of their symptoms in the workplace.



In recognition of this, many workplaces now have in place menopause policies to provide support to their employees. This includes Solihull Council which launched a Menopause Hub in 2019 for its employees. The national Wellbeing of Women campaign encourages employers to sign-up to its workplace pledge and a number of Solihull organisations having taken this step.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Unemployment and poor-quality work are associated with financial hardship, insecurity, stigma, and loss of daily structure, having an adverse effect on mental health. It causes stress which can lead to long-term psychological problems such as depression, low self-esteem and anxiety which negatively impacts people's mental health.⁽²⁴⁾ Additionally, the effects of unemployment on life satisfaction, mental and physical health increase with the duration of unemployment.



Jobs that are emotionally and cognitively demanding as well as stressful work environments impact on both mental and physical health. Psychological risk factors such as the way work is managed, organised, designed, the surrounding environment and overall job satisfaction can lead to work-related stress which is shown to deteriorate mental health and increase risk of musculoskeletal disorders and cardiovascular disease.

The UK is experiencing significant mental health challenges in the workplace. Despite unemployment levels being low, about 300,000 people lose their jobs each year due to long-term mental health issues: a rate much higher than physical health problems. 15% of people of working age experience symptoms of an existing mental health condition.⁽²⁴⁾

Across the UK, mental ill-health is one of the main causes of sickness absence. Although the rate of overall sickness absence has decreased by 15%-20% since 2009, absences due to mental health issues have risen by 5% during the same period; people with mental health conditions are three times as likely to take prolonged periods of sickness leave.⁽²⁴⁾

Mental health issues in the workplace, if unmitigated or unsupported, can go on to impact productivity. In 2021-22, 17 million working days were lost in the UK, due to work related stress, depression or anxiety⁽²⁵⁾ with 914,000 workers suffering mental illness related to their work. This accounted for 51% of all work-related illness cases in the same period⁽²⁵⁾. It is estimated that the post-pandemic increase of the impact of unemployment, job loss and income change on mental health would result in an additional 200,000 people experiencing poor mental health.⁽²⁴⁾



Disabilities

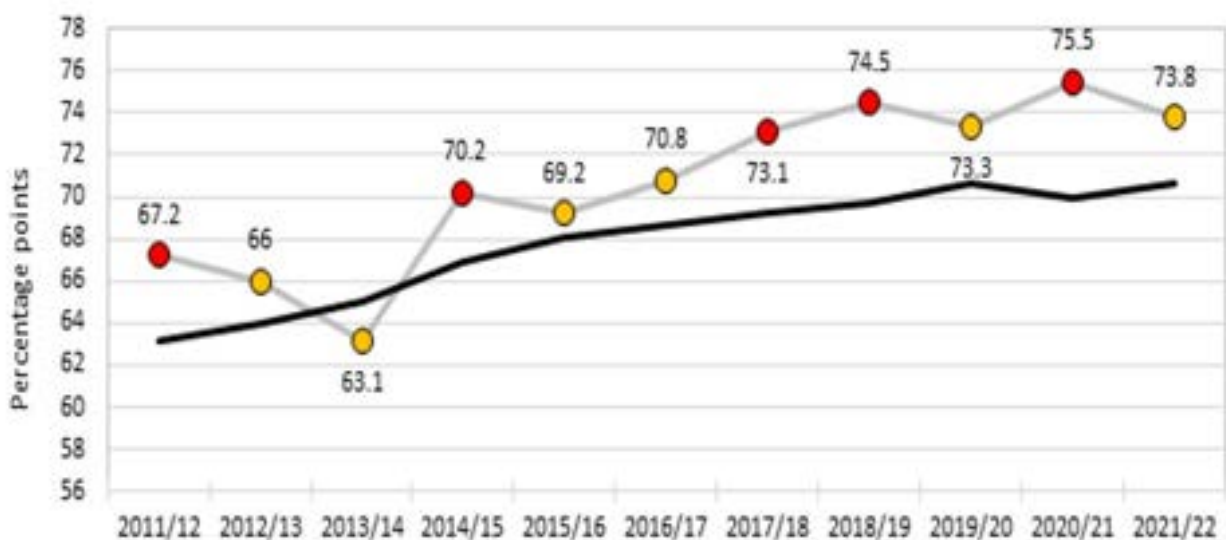
People with physical and/or learning disabilities experience significant inequalities, with a life expectancy that is 20 years lower than non-disabled people. Disabled people are twice as likely to develop asthma, depression, diabetes, obesity, stroke, and poor oral health. People with longstanding illness or disability are more likely to earn a below average income⁽²⁶⁾



In the UK, only 53.5% of working age disabled people were in work in 2021, compared with 80% for the rest of the population⁽²⁵⁾. People with disabilities are three times less likely to gain employment and twice as likely to leave employment as non-disabled individuals. This is despite many people with a disability wanting to work and could work with the right support. Over the course of a year, 10% of disabled people move out of employment compared to 5% of their non-disabled counterparts. Similarly, 10% of disabled people move into employment compared to 26% of non-disabled people. The disability inequality is a result of a wide range of barriers and injustices. As such, many people are missing the various positive impacts that come with good work, including good health and social outcomes.

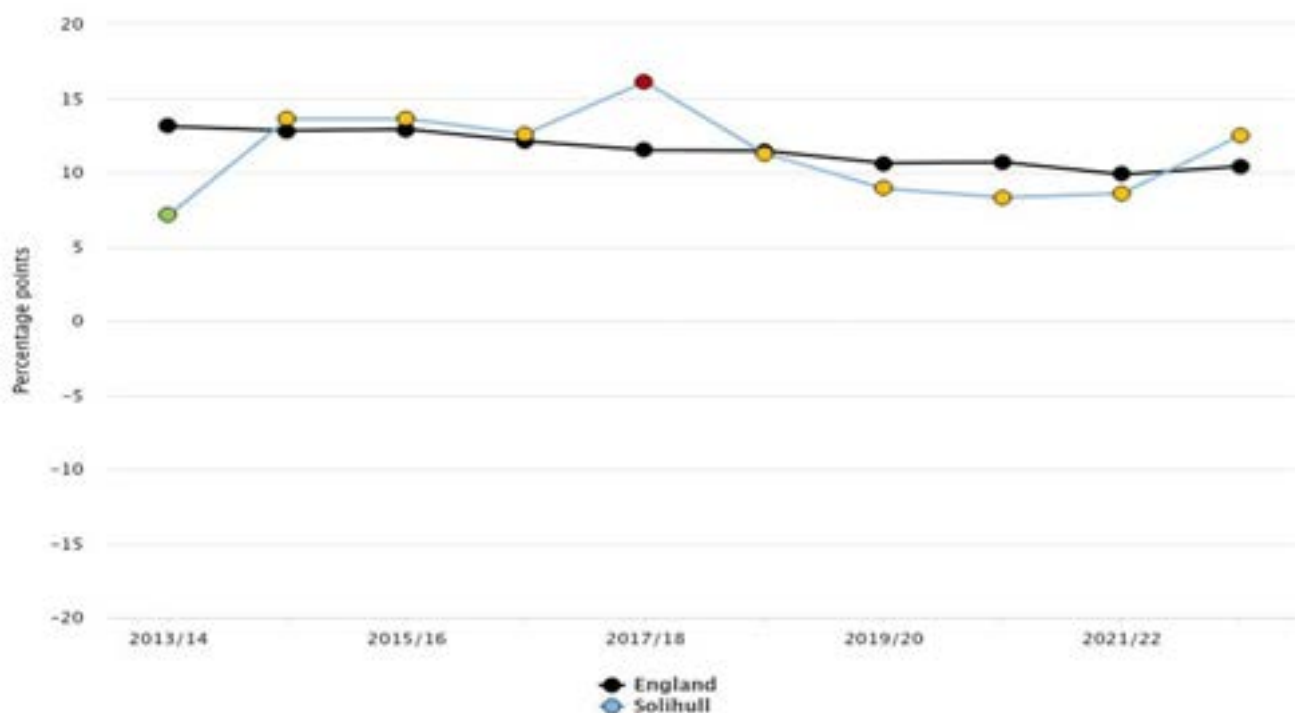
Solihull's adult social care outcomes framework shows that the proportion of people who are working age with a learning disability and are in paid employment is 3.5% compared to 5.1% nationally and 3.2% regionally. The latest local data points to a substantially positive picture as a result of targeted work to develop supported work placements through Solihull Council.

Gap in employment rate between those who are in receipt of long term support for a learning disability (aged 18-64) and overall employment rate (solid line is England; pale line is Solihull)



Evidence suggests that economic downturns have a disproportionate negative impact on the employment of disabled people. In downturns, disabled people are often the first to be made unemployed while in upturns disabled people are often the last to gain employment.

Gap in the employment rate between those with a physical or mental long term health condition (aged 16 to 64) and the overall employment rate for Solihull



Nationally people with a physical or mental long-term condition are less likely than the overall working age population to be in employment. The gap in Solihull has tended to track the national average and has been on a downward trend over the period 2014/15 to 2021/2 below that for England but in the year 2022/23 has shown an increase.⁽²⁷⁾

Healthy Workplaces

There is agreement amongst global agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO)⁽²⁸⁾ and International Labour Organization (ILO)⁽²⁹⁾ that wellbeing, health, and safety of workers is of utmost importance. It has the potential to impact individual workers and their families, as well as the productivity, sustainability, competitiveness of organisations and therefore national and global economies.



Health and Safety at work is essential for creating a healthy workplace and preventing unemployment or economic inactivity because of poor health. In the UK, employers are required by law to prevent mental and physical ill health in workers because of business practices. The law ensures that workers are medically fit to carry out their roles safely, and that their health is not negatively impacted. Employers must implement health or medical surveillance that considers all health hazards; ensure workers are medically fit to carry out their work safely; review risk assessments when workers return from sickness absence. Employers must also comply with equality legislation when supporting workers, particularly those with health conditions or disabilities, both in work and returning to work.

The WHO⁽²⁸⁾ defines a healthy workplace as:

One in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety and well-being of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace by considering the following, based on identified needs:

- health and safety concerns in the physical work environment
- health, safety and well-being concerns in the psychosocial work environment including organization of work and workplace culture; personal health resources in the workplace
- ways of participating in the community to improve the health of workers, their families and other members of the community

Occupational Health focuses on improving working conditions and environment, ensuring they are favourable to health and safety. It also prioritises the creation of working cultures that promote and maintain worker health and capacity. In essence, occupational health does all it can to keep people healthy at work and manage any risks in the workplace that could lead to work-related ill health⁽²⁸⁾ UK organisations are obliged by law to maintain the occupational health of their employees by the Health and Safety Act of 1974.

Workplace policies, which are statements that outline an organisation's practices and procedures concerning part of its business, are critical to building a fair environment and healthy work culture. They can cover everything from day-to-day operational matters to compliance with employment legislation.

Public health aims to maintain and promote the highest level of mental, physical, and social well-being of workers in all occupations. It brings together various aspects and works alongside health and safety as well as occupational health. [The Workplace Health Needs Assessment toolkit^{\(31\)}](#) provides practical tips and advice to support employees. Wellbeing programmes in the workplace can give employers an edge and are increasingly expected by employees.

Enabling flexible working hours, working from home or workload support could enable a member of staff with a mental health condition or disability to continue doing their job or for someone with caring responsibilities. Such action can have a positive impact for employees and employers alike. Evidence shows that work can aid recovery for people with mental health conditions. Similarly, employers experience reduced sickness absence and staff turnover; improved staff productivity and engagement; and lower recruitment costs.

Changes within the work environment and ways of working can make a huge difference to people, especially those with mental health conditions, learning disabilities and physical disabilities, by allowing them to remain in work whilst maintaining healthy, productive, and well-balanced lives.





JLR (Jaguar Land Rover) has created a wider wellbeing culture to support their colleagues which in turn supports productivity and keeps the 'Work and Health Cycle' moving forward. Across their health services they see 200 new referrals a week.

'Centre for Wellbeing' is a one-stop-shop for staff. Programmes focus on rehabilitation, nutrition, mental health, fitness, and long-covid. They are designed for clinical outcomes and to support personal satisfaction. Some of the interventions that the Centre for Wellbeing offers include:

- **Body Ready:** Exercise programme designed to help improve aspects of wellbeing including weight management, depression/low mood and fatigue. Employees learn how to progress their own exercises within safe and healthy parameters to achieve personal goals, whether this is to improve health, fitness or within injury rehabilitation.
- **Functional Restoration Programme (FRP):** Work based progressive exercise programme to improve physical fitness. Aimed at employees who are struggling to undertake a work process or are likely to struggle in the future, and/or is aimed at musculoskeletal rehabilitation or pre surgery. Participants reduced their restrictions by 56% by the end of their programme
- **Long Covid Rehabilitation:** The service has seen 195 registered referrals across all JLR sites. Out of the 195 referrals, 127 employees had been discharged from the Long Covid Rehabilitation Service. 93% of those discharged were able to return to their normal duties without any restrictions.



Vaccinations: JLR worked with local NHS and public health colleagues to provide vaccinations on-site for UK employees, agency staff and the community. JLR provided colleagues with over 3,500 onsite vaccination appointments, and 2,500 flu vaccination vouchers for high street pharmacies.

Health Checks: In partnership with Aviva, JLR launched DigiCare+ app to support physical and mental wellbeing and free easy access to health care including an annual employee health check as well as second medical opinions, GP/mental health/nutritionist appointments for them and their family members. In eight months, over 6,000 registrations have been received.

'May Measure Month', a wellbeing roadshow encourages staff to check their blood pressure, BMI and lifestyle factors, i.e. smoking. Of those staff who took part, 83% had either an elevated systolic blood pressure or elevated diastolic blood pressure, or combination of the two; 15% had high blood pressure. All were referred to the 'Centre for Wellbeing', Occupational Health, and/or their GP depending on their level of symptoms. Employees have access to 18 health kiosks distributed across our sites, where they can learn more about their health metrics in confidence. The kiosks are designed to provide users with information around: weight and BMI, body fat, blood pressure, heart rate, and lifestyle. In the last year, our kiosks had over 6,600 unique users taking over 16,000 tests.

LeadWell is for executive leadership teams, to engage them with the Centre for Wellbeing and connect them with the most appropriate wellbeing support including mental health pathways and musculoskeletal support. LeadWell 2.0 is now running for the next tier of managers and we are trialling LiveWell for all colleagues.

An emphasis on training and upskilling of managers about mental health is being implemented, to build confidence by increasing awareness of common mental health conditions and providing tools to recognise and respond through supportive conversations. Managers who have completed the training have teams with lower level of mental health issues and when issues arise, they are identified, and the right support is provided more quickly.

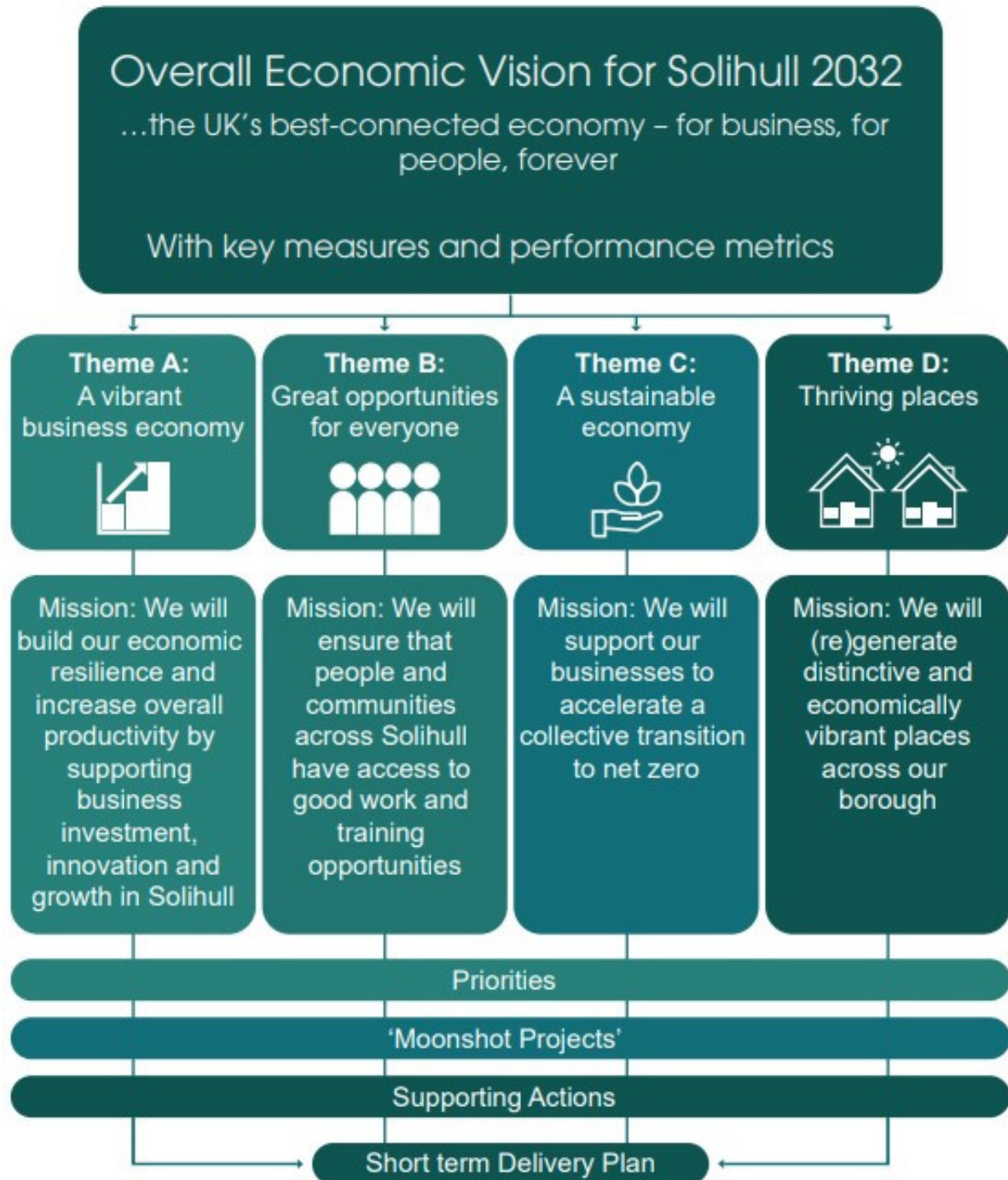
In this chapter we describe the range of activities in place to create an environment to enable people to access skills and employment and to improve the health of working aged adults. Our approach is driven through the lens of inequalities, with the need to focus on people and places with the most to gain, thereby reducing inequalities and the life expectancy gap across Solihull.

Our approach recognises that although many factors in relation to 'work and health' do not sit within local control but rather are driven by national and global factors, by working as a system there are many things that we are doing across Solihull with local and regional partners, to improve work and health. This includes strategic approaches to place-based interventions, to investing in skills and routes to employment as well as initiatives to keep our workforce healthy. Here, we describe some of these initiatives.



Strategic Approaches

Solihull's Economic Strategy 2023-32⁽³²⁾ sets out a vision to deliver further and better economic growth within Solihull, whilst ensuring that all communities can participate and benefit, net zero aspirations for the borough is achieved and we develop thriving places that become centres of our communities.



Read the Strategy and Delivery Plan in full at:
www.solihull.gov.uk/economic-strategy



There are many barriers preventing people from accessing employment or skills development opportunities. Lack of transport, including availability and affordability limits people's options when it comes to skills development and employment. Solihull Council has worked with its residents and partners to develop a [Solihull Connected Transport Strategy](#),⁽³³⁾ adopted in 2023. This has four objectives:

Objective 1: To make the transport network accessible to all people.

Our transport system will offer access for our residents including those with disabilities, it will be simple and comfortable to use, and it will use new products, services and technology and will add diversity of modal choices.

Objective 2: To help the economy grow in a way that is equal and fair for everyone

Our transport system will get people and goods to where they need to be, provide access to new housing and employment sites, and will support regeneration of our town, local and district centres.

Objective 3: To be safe and secure for all users

People of all backgrounds will be confident travelling in the Borough. Transport will support steps to improve equality whilst accident and crime rates on the transport network in the Borough will fall.

Objective 4: Transport will contribute to improving the quality of life in our borough

Our transport system will make it easier for residents to travel around the Borough, offer a choice of travel modes to allow us to reach net zero carbon and will make our communities great places to live.

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), of which Solihull is part, has a key role to play in moving people into the labour force, improving workplace support and helping people find good, well-paid employment and progress at work; making sure no one or place is left behind.



Anchor Organisations

Being attached, or 'anchored', to an area is a positive opportunity for many organisations. Such anchor organisations, i.e., local authorities, NHS Trusts, universities and large local businesses, have a large stake in the place and they can shape their area and can help to reduce inequalities. Their sizeable assets can be used to support their local community's health and wellbeing and tackle inequalities, whether this is through procurement, training, employment, professional development, buildings and land use. Anchor institutions can play a defining role in creating and reinforcing local economic ties.



CLES⁽³⁴⁾ defines anchor institutions as organisations that:

1. Have an important presence in a place, usually through a combination of being largescale employers, the largest purchases of goods and services in the locality, controlling large areas of land and/or having relatively fixed assets.
2. Are tied to a particular place by their mission, histories, physical assets and local relationships.

Solihull Council is an anchor institution and is using its position to ensure that growth opportunities happen across the whole Borough and so that everyone can contribute to, and benefit from, this growth. Through its Inclusive Growth Programme, the council has captured the contribution of social value and uses the Council's role as an employer to provide opportunities for targeted groups with an initial focus on young unemployed people and those with learning disabilities.

Solihull Council's social value policy has been revised to align the council's social value priorities to key inclusive growth outcomes. The policy outlines the main local outcomes that future contractors will be expected to focus on, and the council is working with the Community and Voluntary Sector to identify projects that could be delivered in line with these priorities.

Through Birmingham and Solihull's Integrated Care Board, wider work is taking place to maximise the impact of the wider 'public pound' on local outcomes.



Building local routes in employment

Integrating new communities

In the last two years, and since the Census, Solihull has welcomed a significant number of people from refugee and migrant communities. This has created noticeable population changes, new needs and opportunities. The borough is an asylum dispersal area and has seen the arrival of approximately 4,500 people from Hong Kong via the government's British Nationals Overseas (BNO) programme, as well as the arrival of people fleeing war and violence in Afghanistan, Ukraine and Sudan.



Solihull is one of the top UK destinations for people coming through the BNO programme. The numbers are currently estimated to be approximately 4,500, based on the number of new school admissions from this community (as there is no official data available at local authority level). This group have been granted visas with no recourse to public funds, although they can apply for British citizenship after 5 years of their arrival. It means they need to be financially self-sufficient and there is therefore a strong focus on developing employment and enterprise opportunities for this community.

The resettlement process can be difficult, adapting to a new country, its language, culture, communities and the way public services operate, for instance. Many people who are arriving have experienced some form of trauma, which may also take some time to come to the surface.

To help overcome these issues and challenges, the Council has developed a New Communities and Resettlement Team, which provides, coordinates, and commissions support and services to address a range of needs from English language to employability and mental health, and to promote a warm welcome in communities. This support will also enable new arrivals to make the most of their skills, experiences and assets and successfully start new lives here in Solihull.

Working with Schools and Colleges

Working with young people to plan for future careers is an important local priority. Solihull Careers Hub, run by the Council, collaborates with local schools and colleges to help build careers education programmes through a network of enterprise advisers and by offering specialist advice, support and resources.



Solihull Careers Hub³⁵ works with schools and employers to provide information and engagement opportunities aiming to prepare young people to make their next best steps towards their desired futures. The Hub brings together 24 secondary schools and colleges across the Borough, including 8 Special Educational Needs providers, Alternative Provision and Pupil Referral Units.

An Enterprise Advisor is a business volunteer matched exclusively to one school to support and share best practice. They provide strategic input by advising on the skills and needs of the world of work and acting as a critical friend. They provide guidance to school careers leaders on developing a whole-school careers plan, outlining the school's approach to delivering employer encounters and work-related activity across all year groups and subject areas.

The council works closely with local and regional employers, schools and colleges to develop routes into apprenticeships. In 2022-23, two apprenticeship shows in the North and South of the Borough attracted around 3,300 visitors. Over 50 different employers and learning organisations were part of the day and were able to talk to young people, parents and carers.

Investing in skills development

To have a local economy with successful local businesses, Solihull needs a workforce that has the skills and capacity to drive up economic growth. Last year, around 1,000 people were supported through the council's Employment and Skills Team.



Funded through a range of sources, its primary goal is to support residents into employment, education, and training, encouraging partners to look for solutions to address underlying barriers which prevent people from gaining work and providing direct support for local residents. It provides a service that residents can engage in voluntarily to support them into employment, training and/or education. It works alongside other employment support services such as Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), who provide important functions such as administering benefits. Over the past six years, the team has built up local knowledge by working with residents to shape services for the future and respond to the changing requirements of the local population and economy.

The team takes an inequality-driven approach and works with groups where the council can provide the most added value. Through the European Social Fund this covered two major projects:

1. Solihull Youth Employment Promise (SYEP), formerly Youth Promise Plus (YPP) which also includes the Experts by Experience programme for young people and for those with mental health and/or disabilities.
2. Employed for Success (E4S) for adults.

Across these projects over 2,400 unemployed or economically inactive people have sought help with over 900 people successfully gaining education, employment or training in Solihull (2017 – Feb 2022). Following the coronavirus pandemic, the service has seen the highest number of new registrations overall. Many registered users are still active in projects and so the numbers moving into positive outcomes are expected to increase.

Project	Years	Age Group	Years	Registered	Recorded Outcome	Successful Outcome
Youth Promise Plus (YPP)	2017/21	Young Adults	15-29	385	311	193
Solihull Youth Employment Promise (SYEP)	2021/23	Young Adults	15-29	491	*	223*
Employed for Success (E4S)	2018/23	Adults	30+	1,605	1,088	485
Total ²				2,481	1,399	901

*majority of users still active in project with no recorded outcome. Employment, education or training is subject to increase

² Due to variations of each project there is inconsistency in the way data is captured and comparisons not possible. Due to funding recording requirements, residents are not exited from projects until the final months of delivery as once removed, they cannot be 're-engaged' as a customer. All personal data is self-declared, which can lead to under and over reporting, i.e., with health conditions, many instances are self-diagnosed and service users may describe worry, anxiety, stress, upset, as 'poor mental health'.

Employment and Skills Team, NEC Group & Amadeus Group

The Employment and Skills Team has worked closely with NEC, building a focused partnership supporting local people into jobs at the NEC and local arenas.

The NEC & Amadeus Group were involved in several local job fairs and expressed a desire to be more approachable and accessible to candidates. The Employment and Skills Team offered their services, arranging a site visit and several meetings to gain a better understanding of the



organisation and its needs. A tailored NEC and Amadeus recruitment event at the Solihull Recruitment and Training Centre (SRTC) was planned to support people furthest from the labour market. The NEC and Amadeus Group aim to offer jobs to individuals who had been long-term unemployed as an opportunity for them to develop and progress.

The Employment and Skills Team also looked at their existing clients, to create a candidate group for NEC and Amadeus roles. Candidates were matched to the right roles, all candidates were local and all were offered employability support prior to interview as well as support from Employment Officers.

In March 2023, 12 people were invited to interview, having all been pre-selected at an information event. The information event had given candidates a chance to ask questions, get feedback from mock interviews and apply for the jobs. Of the 12 people invited for interview, 8 attended and 3 people were successful and started within three weeks.

One candidate had attended the interview session unprepared but was keen to have an interview. Fortunately, she was supported with interview preparation by an Employment Officer. The NEC & Amadeus group kindly offered to interview the candidate despite them having no prior work experience or qualifications. Through the interview processes, the recruiters were able to find out her strengths and skills, eventually matching her to a hospitality role at the NEC and offering her the role.

The job process and role has ***'changed my outlook on recruitment and I'm still happy in work, working at large music events and festivals.'***

An additional two information and interview sessions have been held with six additional jobs being offered and two people starting in new roles.

Solihull Youth Employment Promise (SYEP) formerly Youth Promise Plus (YPP)



Levels of youth unemployment have been historically high in Solihull, and are higher than national, whether measuring number of people claiming legacy benefits such as job seekers allowance or the newer and broader Universal Credit benefit. Youth unemployment is high in North Solihull with claimant rates being 10.0%, which is more than double the 4.0% found for the rest of the Borough (December 2023).

Working closely with schools and colleges, the Employment and Skills Team supports young people who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training. When careers support in schools is limited, they step in and work with young people to help them enroll on education or training, or to look for employment or an apprenticeship.

In-depth needs assessments are completed to help employment officers create bespoke package of support for the young person. As well as job search, interview preparation and CV development, the team's links with local employers help young people to access opportunities they may not be aware of. Where appropriate, advisers 'reverse market' candidates to employers (i.e. the adviser targets employers that were advertising vacancies to participants job goals and skill set). Other activities help to build young people's confidence, develop their workplace etiquette, and improve their digital skills.

The Employment and Skills Team offer similar support for people aged 30 years and over. At the end of 2023, the employment offer for all residents will be universal, with opportunities to pick the levels of support that suit their needs and circumstances with fewer restrictions on eligibility criteria.

Over the course of the youth unemployment projects (2017 to 2023), 876 young people have engaged and been supported to find education, employment or training. In the first phase of delivery, through the 'Youth Promise Plus' project, a third (33%) of young people lived in the three north Solihull regeneration wards. By the second phase, the Solihull Youth Employment Promise project, half (50%) of young people supported lived in those three regeneration wards.

For the Solihull Youth Employment Promise project:

- More than half of people supported were aged 20 years and over when registering, 64.2% were male and 79.2% described their ethnicity as White.
- Over half (54%) of registered young people were unemployed, 23% economically inactive and 23% had unknown labour market status when joining.
- More than half (54.8%) had a disability or health condition.

The Recruitment and Training Centre in North Solihull opened in 2019. Located in a busy shopping precinct, the Centre offers one-to-one appointments with staff, recruitment events, job fairs and hosts training courses. In 2022 the Centre became a Digital Hub, offering intensive ICT packages designed to improve essential digital skills for work.

In 2021, the Centre became Solihull's first Youth Hub, which enabled the co-location of Job Centre Plus staff alongside local employment support. This has led to an increase in referrals to the Employment and Skills Team.

The Centre has had a positive impact on the number of young people engaging with the service. There were 134 young people visiting between April – March 2022. A year later this increased to 245. The biggest increase was found in the Youth Employment Promise project.



For the Solihull Youth Employment Promise project:

- 62% of young people who received support recorded a positive outcome of education, employment or training, of which:
 - o 45% did so within 100 days of starting on the project
 - o 33% did so within 200 days of starting the project
- 70% are male, of which 56% secured education, employment or training upon completion of the project.
- 30% are female, of which 77% secured education, employment or training upon completion of the project.

Experts by Experience (EbE): young people and disabilities/ mental health needs



Experts by Experience Solihull specialise in supporting young people with disabilities or mental health needs, including people with autism.

The project is delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector, Colebridge Trust and 'Experts by Experience'. They support with engagement, stabilisation, confidence building, and preparing young people to become ready for their next step. They can work with people in their own home, taking time to build up relationships and getting them more confident to start to think about their next steps toward employment, education or training.

The Employment and Skills Team supports young people with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND). The project across Solihull was redesigned to provide specialist support and since then, the number of young people registered as having a disability has increased from 35% to 55%. This is likely to be a combination of additional poor mental health post pandemic and addressing unmet need within our community. Further, 69.1% of young people who had disclosed a disability with Youth Promise Plus Project went into education, employment or training compared to 58.0% of those that had no disability.

Employed for Success



The 'Employed for Success' project supported adults aged 30 years and above to move into education, employment or training. The project provided universal employment support. There was also a specific objective to support adults aged 50 years and above, and those furthest from the labour market who may be economically inactive.

The project worked with partners to provide specialist wraparound support to help people to move closer to employment, including improving their skills and confidence. Partners included Citizens Advice Solihull to provide financial advice and Colebridge Trust to provide health and wellbeing activities to enable people to manage their health or disability. The project recognized that for many people, successfully addressing these factors will maximise people's chances of gaining and sustaining employment.

The service has engaged with:

- 1,605 residents, of which 54.8% were males
- 76.5% described their ethnicity as White, similar to Solihull's unemployed and economically inactive population (78%)
- A disproportionately high number of 'older' people looking for employment
 - 26.4% are aged 45-54 years compared with 13% of the Solihull population
- 67.3% were unemployed and 32.7% were economically inactive
- 65% declared no disability when registering with the service.

Gwyn

The Council's supported employment scheme funds teams to offer paid work for adults with learning disabilities. The Honeycomb Café at Park View Centre has taken on three team members through the scheme, and staff have been amazed by the remarkable transformation in each of them. One of the team members is called Gwyn.

Gwyn has been a volunteer for years but struggled to find paid work. Sasha, Gwyn's supervisor, recounts their first meeting: ***"Gwyn was very nervous and guarded. Over time, we noticed that he became more confident and started to take initiative. In fact, he has been performing so well that he has now offered to work two days a week instead of one day!"***

To help with team integration, Odette was appointed as the Catering Support Assistant to provide hands-on training in the kitchen. Odette shares: ***"It was a challenge, but I really enjoyed it. Gwyn has great sense of humour, and we always have a laugh whenever he is in!"***

Gwyn shares: ***"After losing my parents, I needed to get on with life the best I can. This opportunity has given me a sense of purpose and the motivation to get up every day. It makes me feel good about myself."***

When asked about the future, Gwyn said, ***"I feel more confident and independent now. Having this work experience on the CV will show employers that I am capable of paid jobs. I am completing a Level 1 Food Hygiene course in July, and I may progress with Level 2 courses. I am also looking into finding a catering role at schools after this role."***

Sasha explains why she signed up for the scheme, ***"We felt that it was a great chance for us to support individuals with learning disabilities with inclusive and welcoming work opportunities. It helps them gain long term paid employment by empowering them with the skills and confidence built."***

Sasha continues, ***"This is a fundamental piece of work by the Council for inclusive employment that helps lead on to external employers. I hope our experiences will encourage other teams to get involved. Just take the leap!"***

After completing his 12-month placement with the scheme, Gwyn has moved on and has secured paid employment.



Engagement with older people could be attributed to changes in national policy relating to benefits. More people are now expected to actively look for work or employment. More initiatives and support are available to help people with health conditions and disabilities to consider employment as a realistic goal. The recent current cost-of-living crisis may have driven more people to look for work or find additional work to be more financially stable.

People face many barriers getting into employment, education or training. In Solihull, two fifths (41.2%) of young people getting into employment, education or training felt a lack of confidence, a third (34.5%) did not feel they had the specific skills and just under a third (29%) felt a lack in work experience was a barrier.

Of the 1,605 people that registered with Employed for Success, 1,088 have left the service. Nearly half (44.6%) had an employment status of either 'employed' or 'in training'. Given the barriers to work, the reason why people find it difficult to find employment, education or training, and given the impact of COVID-19, this is an encouraging result.

Barriers to Employment, Education, Training	Number	%*
Lack of confidence	662	41.2
Lack of specific skills	553	34.5
Lack of work experience	465	29.0
Not sure what jobs would suit me	446	27.8
Travel to work Issues	384	23.9
Looking after children	342	21.3
Long term health condition	259	16.1
Lack of basic skills	259	16.1
Mental Health issues	248	15.5
Financial issues	230	14.3
Learning Difficulty	153	9.5
Physical Disability	142	8.8
Criminal record	89	5.5
Other, not specified	83	5.2
Other responsibilities (caring)	63	3.9

**clients could select multiple responses so % total more than 100%*

Of those people who declared a disability upon registering with the project, a third (33.4%) went into education, employment or training compared to half (50.5%) of those that had no disability. There is a significant relationship between work and disability. People with a disability are less likely to find employment, education or training upon leaving. Older people with a disability are less likely to find work than younger people with a disability.

Of the service users who were economically inactive upon registering with the Employed for Success project, 20.6% were successful in gaining employment, education or training compared to 57.1% of those that were unemployed when joining the service. Evidence shows that the inactive population is less likely to go into education, employment and training compared to the unemployed population. Our local service has had impact for both groups.

I Can

The 'I Can' programme is an employment support programme designed to help people in Birmingham and Solihull, especially from more deprived areas, to secure employment in entry-level NHS jobs. Partners have worked together to create a route which people can follow, from initially expressing interest, to a more detailed follow-up conversation, through to pre-employment training and ultimately an NHS job. 'I Can' therefore links up the 'supply' side of employment and skills services with the 'demand' side of employers.



Solihull Council, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board, NHS Trusts and community organisations have worked together to create a joined up pathway, with the result that people who would never have considered even applying for an NHS job previously have successfully secured NHS employment.

'I Can' focuses on attracting people from disadvantaged areas through a joined-up referral process across several community organisations. To date, 531 offers of employment have been made through this process with a further 190 awaiting or engaged in pre-employment training.

An advertisement for the 'I Can' NHS program. It features a woman wearing a yellow hard hat and a high-visibility yellow safety vest over a dark top. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a teal color. The text 'Local jobs for our community' is written in a white, cursive font. Below this, a white box contains text about Natasha's story. A yellow speech bubble with 'I can' is next to her. The NHS logo is in the top right. A QR code is in the bottom right. Contact information is at the bottom left.

**Local jobs for
our community**

Natasha worked in a factory until the pandemic. She is now co-ordinating deliveries of medical supplies in the warehouse.
She didn't think she could work in health.

I can

NHS

www.bsolpeople.nhs.uk/ican
0121 748 8100

Developing more integrated work and health support for residents



In recognition of the economic and health impact of the growing number of people whose health affects their ability to work, the DWP and DHSC are piloting a 'WorkWell Partnerships Programme' to provide work and health support for people with a disability and/or health conditions who want help to start, stay and succeed in work. The programme brings together the NHS, local authority, jobcentre and other partners to reduce health inequalities and remove barriers to work and embrace principles of personalised care and psychosocial support.

The WorkWell Partnerships Programme could include an assessment of an individual's work and health needs and a 'return to work' or 'thrive in work' plan with clear objectives that address biopsychosocial needs. The biopsychosocial model of care recognises social, psychological and environmental influences on health, as well as biological factors. Advice and support are given to employers where appropriate with referrals or signposting to clinical and non-clinical support, including wider community provision, i.e. debt advice.

Solihull Council is working with partners across Birmingham and Solihull to develop a WorkWell Partnerships proposal for the East Birmingham North Solihull area.

A healthy population

A healthy workforce needs a healthy population. Our local Prevention Strategy is based on the principle that prevention and acting early is better than waiting for problems to develop so that people can stay as healthy, happy and independent for as long as possible. Delivering the key actions in this strategy will have long-term impacts on the health of our population and therefore the health of our workforce.



Mental Health and Well-Being

In Solihull we are doing many things to improve mental wellbeing and reduce suicide.



We have a [Solihull Suicide Prevention Pledge](#) for workplaces. By signing this pledge, workplaces are making a commitment to look after the wellbeing of staff and volunteers as we all do with our family and friends. Workplaces are asked to encourage their workforce to sign up to the personal pledge and take the free online suicide awareness training.

We also have the [Orange Button Community Scheme](#) which is where people who are having thoughts of suicide or who are worried about a friend or family member can ask Orange Button wearers in their community for information and support. People who wear the Orange Button have undergone specialised suicide prevention training and can provide comprehensive signposting to relevant services.

Seeking help is often the first step towards getting and staying well but it can be hard to know how to start or where to turn to. Several **Mental Health Support Services** are available for people requiring support for their mental health. The NHS target is for 75% of referrals to talking therapies (formally known as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies or IAPT) receive treatment within 6 weeks and 95% by 18 weeks to ensure people are seen as quickly as possible. Waiting times are closely monitored with 3 out of the 4 local providers of talking therapies exceeding target. Solihull's talking therapy services are run by Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust and are currently meeting all waiting times targets.

With partners, we promote the **Five ways to wellbeing**. Evidence suggests that there are five steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing, these are:



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED



DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY



EMBRACE NEW
EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF



Your time,
your words,
your presence



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED

Our Community Advice hubs in Chelmsley Wood Library and Solihull Connect at The Core in Solihull town centre are available Monday to Friday to discuss and support you or the person you care for.

These Hubs bring together a partnership of local organisation to provide you with high quality information, advice and support. Click [here](#) for more information.



DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD

Solihull on the Move is a framework supporting a borough-wide commitment, to inspire healthier, happier and more sustainable communities through moving more, more often. The year-long physical activity campaign SoGo! showcases ways to get moving and provides information about how to support the campaign to help inspire others. Click [here](#) for more information.



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY

The **parks and green spaces** of Solihull are a wonderful way to enjoy the outdoors. Packed with playgrounds, gardens, lakes and facilities to suit all ages and provide a natural meeting point for friends and family. Click [here](#) for more information.



EMBRACE NEW
EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF

Solihull libraries are offering customers a warm welcome, with increased events and activities. Alongside these events, you can visit the library to spend time browsing books, access warm refreshments, take advantage of free PC usages (up to 3 hours for members) and connect with others within a safe and inclusive space. There's also Libraries@Home where you can sign up to borrow eBooks and eAudiobooks as well as eMagazines and eNewspapers. Click [here](#) for more information.



Your time,
your words,
your presence

We have many ways in which people can **help within their community**, whether that is through donations or by volunteering. People can support their local foodbanks, create a warm welcome space in your community or volunteer. Click [here](#) for more information.

Getting Active, Staying Active

Moving more and staying physically active is important for both physical and mental wellbeing. The [Move More @ Home](#) catalogue hosts a range of inclusive online activities for people to access wherever and whenever. There are [home-based exercise](#) options and advice from national organisations and charities, such as the NHS; [local exercise groups](#) and advice for people with heart conditions, cancer, MS, Parkinson's disease, conditions that affect your breathing and to prevent falls and [Step into Solihull](#), a gentle exercise and activity programme aimed at people aged 45 and above.



GO ON CAMPAIGN GET MOVING GET SUPPORT TO BE ACTIVE ACTIVE PLACES CLUBS & VOLUNTEERS CONTACT



As older adults, it is important to stay active and lead a healthy lifestyle. There are lots of opportunities in Solihull to take part.

This page contains information on [Gentle Activity Programme](#), [Wellbeing Walks](#), [Ping! Solihull](#), [Walking Sports](#), [Events & Local Organisations](#).

Taking part in physical activity can:

- Increase mobility, strength and flexibility
- Maintain independence
- Reduce the risk of falling
- Improve mood and increase self-esteem
- Delay the onset of dementia
- Help to meet new people and stay sociable!

Increase your activity levels gradually if you haven't been active for along time.

Walking Sports

Walking sports are a slower version of the traditional game played at a walking pace with adapted rules. Sessions are fun and friendly with many health and social benefits. Opportunities in Solihull include: football, netball, rugby and tennis. Find out more on the [walking sports webpage](#).

Gentle Activity Programme

The Step into Solihull project is a gentle activity programme in Solihull which incorporates a walking programme and gentle exercise sessions.

We have a full activity programme, including days/times/locations and prices, can be found in our: [Step into Solihull Booklet](#).

Sessions are aimed at people aged over 45, and there is something for everyone. You are welcome to just turn up on the day or for some sessions you can book in advance. Sessions run on a first come-first served basis. Exercise sessions are suitable for everyone. If you are unsure, please come along to a session and find out for yourself.

On arrival at your first session you will be asked to fill out a registration form, you can complete the form in advance [online](#) or request a copy to be mailed out by contacting Solihull Active. Please contact us on 0121 704 8207 if you have any questions or need the registration form in a different format.



People with long-term health conditions

People with long-term health conditions can benefit from a range of physical activity programmes that are available in Solihull. These can support the management of long-term health conditions and include specialist services, community exercise sessions and home-based options.

DocSpot - Exercise on Referral

If you have a mild or moderate health condition DocSpot is a great opportunity to improve your health through a programme of physical activity.

[Explore DocSpot](#)

Cancer Rehab

Being active can support you on the road to recovery, opportunities include specialist Cancer Rehab exercise classes.

[Explore Cancer Rehab](#)

Cardiac Rehab

If you have a history of heart disease or are recovering from a heart op, exercise can help, there are even specialist Cardiac Rehab exercise classes.

[Explore Cardiac Rehab](#)

MS & Parkinson's

There are a variety of local opportunities for people that have MS or Parkinson's Disease, including weekly specialist exercise classes at Tudor Grange Leisure Centre.

[Explore MS & Parkinson's](#)

Strength & Balance

Taking part in strengthening and balance activities has major health benefits and improves quality of life. There are lots of local community exercises and home-based options to try.

[Explore Strength & Balance](#)

Better Breathers

Regular exercise can help you to manage your respiratory condition, find support and activities here.

[Explore Better Breathers](#)

Being physically active can help prevent and manage over 20 health conditions. [DocSpot Exercise on Referral](#) is a 12-week physical activity programme for adults aged 16 years and over who have an existing health condition or other risk factors for disease. There are different types of exercise and a physical activity timetable will be given at an induction session. Activities can include:

- Gym-based exercise programmes
- Swimming
- Gentle group exercise classes, i.e. Tai Chi, Aqua, Table Tennis, Walking sports
- Walking groups

Early identification and prevention of long-term conditions

Many of the health conditions that can prevent people from working – and living life- to their full potential are preventable. By identifying clinical risk factors early, it's possible to take early action to reverse changes which might over time lead to common conditions such as heart disease, common respiratory issues and certain cancers.



General practice is at the heart of this: the routine work they do to measure blood pressure and other key markers is critical to making sure people get the right advice to prevent conditions, as well as getting access to the right medication and treatment.

The **Birmingham and Solihull Healthy Hearts programme** is a new initiative to work together to reduce the risk of strokes and heart disease. Working with residents to empower them to take steps to improve their heart health this programme is being rolled out with health professionals and communities. As part of this programme, Solihull Council has invested in self-service machines that people across the borough can use to check their height, weight, blood pressure including at The Core, Shirley Library, Chelmsley Wood Library, Hobs Moat Library and the Evergreen Family Hub.

Alongside this, the NHS Health-checks programme provided by GPs offers a free check to anyone between the ages of 40 to 75 to assess your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, and stroke. The check takes about 20–30 minutes and anyone who has it will be given clinical advice, treatment if needed and will also be given information and referred into services such as stop smoking. Solihull Council is responsible for the programme locally and is working with NHS partners to improve take up Health-checks supported through post-pandemic recovery investment. This work will have a particular focus on parts of Solihull that have traditionally had lowest uptake, including the North of the borough.

Birmingham and Solihull's Tobacco Control Alliance, led jointly by Solihull Council, has recently developed its Smokefree 2030 pledge. This signs all partners across the Integrated Care Partnership which includes the NHS, local councils, West Midlands Police and others to take action to tackle smoking and will be supported by new funding in 24/25 to support people to quit smoking, enhancing existing local stop smoking services.



My Public Health Annual Report has shown how Good Work and Good Health are related, and the importance of education and skills as fundamental building blocks. There is much to celebrate here in Solihull. However, there are always things that we can build upon and aspire to achieve so much more.

The Director of Public Health recommends:

1. It is important to **maintain and communicate a strong and strategic vision that connects economic growth and health**. Solihull Council should continue to work with its partners and residents to ensure that Good Work and Good Health is a priority and key strategies are aligned to deliver this, including the forthcoming Health and Well-being Strategy.
2. **Continued investment in skills and routes to employment** is important so that we can improve health outcomes and increase economic investment. There should continue to be a clear focus on supporting people with the most to gain to achieve their potential including care experienced young people, young people who are not in education, employment or training, young people and adults with special educational needs or disabilities into skills and employment.
3. Tackling physical and mental health issues that can make it difficult for people to access work or increase the risk of not being able to stay in work should be a local priority. This should include **developing stronger links between health and skills services** to provide holistic support for local residents through the development of a Local Well-Work Partnership.
4. Social Value is a key lever to **create more opportunities for good local work within public sector organisations** and the organisations we buy services from and work with. This should continue to be a local priority and further opportunities to increase impact through sharing best practice across public sector bodies should be maximised.
5. There should be **continued investment and prioritisation into areas of the borough with lower skills and educational attainment and poorer health outcomes** working with key partners to improve educational attainment, promote access to training and work-related skills and reduce wider barriers to employment. Existing and emerging opportunities through joint working with the West Midlands Combined Authority and the East Birmingham – North Solihull Levelling Up Zone should continue to be maximised.
6. There should be a **continued focus on prevention and maintaining good health in working aged adults** through the roll-out of the Birmingham and Solihull Healthy Hearts programme, maximising the local NHS Health-checks programme and making it easy for people to access preventative programmes such as stop smoking services. As the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board develops its approach to long-term conditions, this should be a key element of our plan working across all parts of the NHS, with local government and the voluntary, community and faith sector.

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