



Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods



Meeting The Equality Duty

March 2020

1 About Solihull Community Housing (SCH)

We manage around 10,000 tenanted homes, 1,200 leasehold properties and 5,000 garages on behalf of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC). We also deliver SMBC's statutory duties on housing options, manage the Council Housing Register and deal with emergency homelessness. The majority of our homes are in North Solihull with the rest being spread across Solihull.

SCH employs over 250 people. Equality is part of the way we work and deliver services so that everyone is treated fairly and diversity is valued. The accessibility of our services, homes and jobs is routinely reviewed for equality impact and services are tailored to meet individual circumstances.

This annual report sets out what we have done to continue to be a fair and inclusive organisation.



2 About Solihull

Solihull is an affluent Borough with an attractive environment, quality of life, aspirational housing and excellent schools. However, there is a challenging prosperity gap between the wards of Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge and Smith's Wood in North Solihull and the rest of the Borough. North Solihull has a relatively higher population density, less green space per head and educational attainment, employment and income levels are notably lower.

The Solihull Place Survey 2018 found that 84% of residents are satisfied with the area as a place to live compared with 77% in England. Respondents from North Solihull were least satisfied (74%) and residents in East Solihull were most satisfied (92%).



3 Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Our legal duties under the 'Public Sector Equality Duty' are to:

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



4 How we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty

Removing and minimising disadvantages

- a. Fair Treatment Assessments are part of major changes in services. For example, when assessing the impact of introducing the customer portal. 'My SCH Account' which enables tenants to digitally access some services, we identified potential negative impacts. As a result, tenants now have a step-by-step guide to set up their Account and people who do not have digital access can use free equipment at public libraries across Solihull.



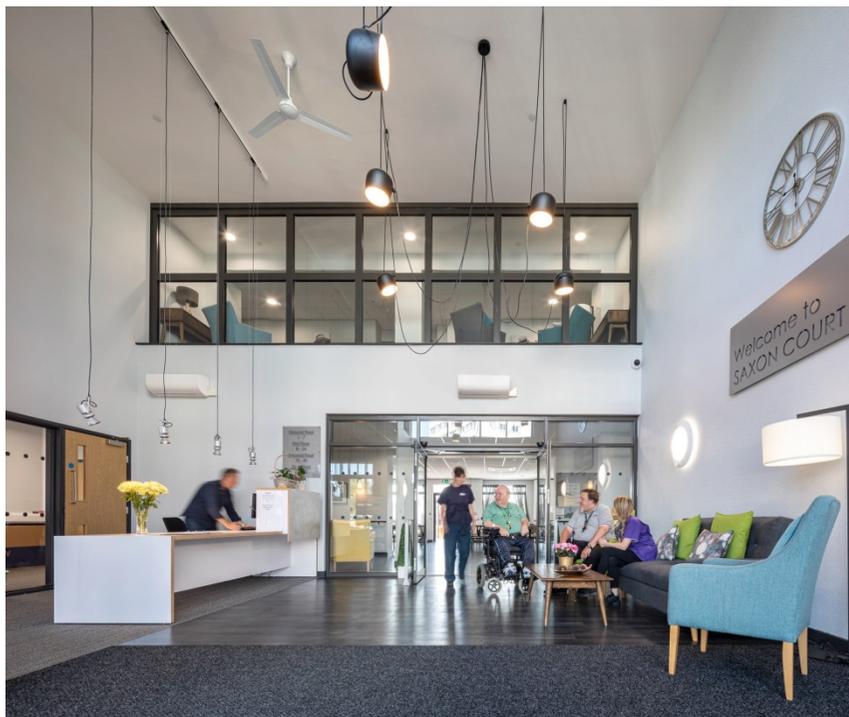
- b. Information can be accessed in different formats such as large print, audio, Braille and other languages and via interpreters.
- c. We use plain language in our publications to support people with literacy difficulties and consider the use of Easy Read format where this is requested.
- d. Providing a link to 'Google Translate' on our website supports users to translate information in more than 50 languages.

Meeting needs

- a. We worked with SMBC to develop the Council's first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and reviewed the Allocations Policy. SCH and SMBC work in partnership with the West Midlands Combined Authority Homelessness Taskforce to design out homelessness by collaborating across departments, agencies and work streams. Initiatives to prevent and deal with people in

housing crisis include building new homes and working with private sector landlords.

- b. Our Wellbeing Services include choices for vulnerable people, such as pendant alarms, fire safety package that includes smoke detectors, Handyperson Home Support Service and home hazard checks.
- c. At our extra-care scheme at Saxon Court there are 51 self-contained flats for residents who need 24/7 care and dedicated support. Facilities include concierge, CCTV cameras and communal areas such as lounge, computer/hobby room and hair salon.



- d. We carry out property adaptations for people with disabilities. Small changes range from lever taps to grab rails. Major adaptations include walk-in showers and home extensions.
- e. We automatically send routine information such as rent statements in different formats where tenants' preferences are known.
- f. Our offices have accessible facilities and portable hearing loops.
- g. Home visits are offered to customers who cannot come to our offices. We allow more time for disabled and older people to get to the front door and offer choices for repairs appointments, for example when people have hospital appointments or to avoid school run times.

Encouraging people to participate in public life

- a. Opportunities for residents to give their views range from consultation meetings, door-step chats and satisfaction surveys to formal and informal complaints.



We use accessible venues when holding meetings for residents, ensure appropriate seating arrangements such as allowing adequate space for wheelchair users and meet dietary needs when providing refreshments.

- b. Wheelchair accessible taxis are arranged for residents who attend consultation meetings with taxi firms instructed to ensure that drivers help people to get in and out of taxis as necessary.
- c. We adopted our 'Charity of the Year', Solo, that provides a range of social and leisure opportunities for people with learning difficulties.
- d. Diversity is recognised in a variety of ways, from charitable fund-raising to hosting events such as the recent Armistice Day marking 101 years since the end of the First World War.



Some examples demonstrating compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty

Warmer homes

In with our strategic priority to 'provide warm, healthy and safe places to live', we worked with our tenants, David and Joyce, to replace their coal-fired heating system that was inefficient and costing over £1,000 a year to run. A gas central heating system, installed with funding under the Warm Homes Fund, means that David and Joyce now enjoy a warmer home and pay less for heating.



Keeping residents and communities safe from fire risks

When carrying out fire risk assessments for tenants living in high-rise blocks, we work with the West Midlands Fire Service to assist individual households that might require dedicated support in a fire emergency. Each apartment block is regularly visited to check for fire and health and safety hazards to keep residents, their visitors and our staff safe.

Working with resident with speech impairment



Ms D, a new tenant, was helped with applying for welfare benefit as her speech impairment was hindering communication with different agencies. Our Money Advice Team worked with Ms D to apply for Housing and Council Tax Rebate, Attendance Allowance and Pension Credits, resulting in back-dated benefits of £15,600.

Assisting housing applicant with visual impairment

Mr P has visual impairment. Our Occupational Therapist worked with him to assess his needs and accompanied him at the property viewing. When he accepted the offer, we redecorated the home rather than using the normal practice of offering decorations materials to new tenants. He was also referred to the West Midlands Fire Service who worked with him to ensure that he can safely evacuate the building in the event of an emergency.

Supporting vulnerable care leaver

Mr A, a care leaver was facing racial and hate crime from neighbours due to his ethnicity and religion. He now lives in an SCH property, works part-time and studies. He is supported by us and other agencies to sustain his tenancy. He is in a better state emotionally and mentally.

We regularly work with external agencies such as St Basils that works with young people to find and keep a home, grow their confidence, develop their skills and prevent homelessness.



Identifying needs of vulnerable people through routine contact

Ms P is a tenant who reported a leak during out of office hours. Upon visit, a range of other issues were identified, including high levels of damp. The tenant is partially sighted and has severe physical impairments. We worked with Ms P over some time and transferred her into a more suitable home.

Working with individuals with complex needs

Mr B stopped working as a result of a stroke. He is now partially paralysed and housebound. His welfare benefit claim was rejected as he had not paid enough national insurance contributions. We worked with him to reapply for benefits and worked with him over several months to get his financial affairs resolved. Backed benefit entitlement worth £1,700 has been awarded to Mr B, together with ongoing support via Universal Credit.



Another example involves Mr F who receives support from the Psychiatric Nurse. His home needed significant repairs but he was nervous about letting our Repairs Team into his home. We worked with him and other support workers to enter his home and carry out a full assessment of work needed. Our Repairs Operatives were introduced to him to build a rapport, following which work was completed. During this time, support staff met him throughout the day to ensure that he was fully informed of what work was underway, completed and planned for the next day. When the work ended, he was independently support by the Psychiatric Nurse to assess whether he was satisfied with the quality of work and the way we handled the work. Mr F lives in a home that has a new heating system, secure doors and is free from pests.

Working with families with complex needs

Family Q has five people with three young children. They lived in privately rented property where the landlord refused disability-related adaptations. The landlord gave them notice to leave. Under homelessness legislation the family was assessed as having priority need. We rehoused the family into a more suitable property that has been adapted to meet disability needs of the young children.

Creating safer communities

Our Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Team is trained to support residents who face anti-social behaviour ranging from noisy neighbours to serious issues such as racial harassment, hate crime, drug misuse and dealing and other criminal activity.

Examples of how we support residents includes enabling residents to record noise levels from neighbours through the 'Noise App' to working with the police and other agencies to take possession of our homes where drug dealing, and other criminal behaviour is found.



Solihull Community Housing: Meeting the Equality Duty March 2020

Locality working

Partnership working is crucial to meet the needs of Solihull's diverse community. We are a key partner in Locality Working, an initiative designed to unite organisations and people to enable joint use of assets, skills and resources. Each of the three main localities, East, North and West has a dedicated Plan drawn up from local priorities. The multi-agency approach is helping to identify issues such as hotspots for anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and other crimes. For example, a workshop to raise awareness of domestic abuse was held in the North Locality where participants came together to discuss types of domestic abuse, ensuring safe disclosures, accessing local agencies and barriers for marginalised groups such as Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups (BAME), older women, gay people and those with mental ill-health.

Connecting communities

The annual Solihull Gets Active Games took place on Wednesday 9th October 2019 at North Solihull Sports Centre in Chelmsley Wood.



118 participants with disabilities, some joined by their carers/family members, attended the event where they experienced free sport and physical activity taster sessions. The 17 activities ranged from football and netball to soft archery, boccia, Tai Chi and movement to music. The event provides an opportunity for SCH to publicise and promote our services to participants and carers. Our staff also help individuals to take part in the activities.

Another way that we enable communities to connect and enable residents to work together is Spring Cleaning and Keep Britain Tidy initiatives. We recognise the importance of cleaner and greener environments for the well-being of residents. Examples of work done by residents is to litter pick, help tidy up green areas and remove debris.



We also support healthy eating initiatives. The local Real Junk Food Project is designed and run by volunteers and supported by local supermarkets who donate food. The food provides for different dietary needs such as vegans and vegetarians.

The café is, adjacent to a church, in the heart of the community where the local police hold surgeries and volunteers provide free first aid training and gardening courses.



Small Change, Big Impact

As part of the National Occupational Therapy Week in November 2019, we took part in an event at the Better Living Centre where Occupational Therapists and staff from relevant work streams came together to learn from each other. They considered real life examples

to promote greater independence and personal dignity for people with disabilities. The outcomes will help us to improve the service and make bigger impact on outcomes for service users.

We will use the learning from best practice to plan our response to an ageing population.

Adding social value

Our Corporate Social Responsibility recognises that value of providing employment for local residents and offering opportunities for work experience, training and apprenticeships. We welcomed five new apprentices who are on a two-year programme. During their time with us, they will learn a range of new skills and gain knowledge in a variety of work streams.



Our contractor, Wates, hosted a two-week Employment and Skills initiative in Chelmsley Wood. 17 candidates, including two SCH tenants, joined the work experience scheme. Each person was awarded a Construction Skills Certificate at the end of the course.

Being part of SCH

Briefing new Board Members and employees about our values and equality ethos helps to reinforce that equality and diversity are everyone's responsibility.

We assist our employees to look after themselves. Health benefits include the 'Thrive at Work' initiative, developed by the West Midlands Combined Authority, which enables employees to focus on mental, musculoskeletal and physical health and living healthier lives.

Free health checks, flu jabs, access to physiotherapy and a specialist Occupational Health Service are available to staff.

Our Menopause Policy is designed to support women facing challenges due to hormonal changes.

The Staff Award Scheme recognises the invaluable work done by all staff and highlights people who go the 'extra mile'.

Employee development is encouraged. For example, four members of staff are studying NVQs.

Staff are encouraged to volunteer for community initiatives. This includes Phil who works in our Stores, helping to redecorate the Kingshurst Youth Centre and sharing his skills with other volunteers



5 Inequalities, challenges and aspirations

Our residents

We will be renewing and refreshing arrangements for collecting, recording and updating customer profiling data over the next year.

However, overall, the data we have suggests that:

- Our overall tenant profile matches that of the Borough except that we house more older people, disabled people and those who are the most vulnerable in society who are unlikely to get suitable and affordable accommodation elsewhere and less likely to be able to afford to buy their own property.
- Customers who approach us for advice for homelessness and those who we house in temporary accommodation are diverse.
- New customers who join us when we re-let empty homes and let newly built properties are diverse.
- Opportunities to transfer within SCH managed homes and to carry out mutual exchanges are equally accessible for all tenants.

Solihull communities

We work with SMBC to understand our communities and work jointly to develop responses to meet unmet and emerging needs. Sources ranging from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), internal strategies such as the Market Position Statement 2019-2022 on Adult and Care Support and reports produced by the Solihull Observatory show that:

a. Population growth

In 2018, Solihull had 215,000 residents. In the ten years between 2008 and 2018, the population has grown by 5%. This represents a need for more housing.

b. Ageing population

Solihull has above average residents who are aged 65+ compared with 18% in England and 20% across the West Midlands.

- Estimates show that in 2017 there were 738 adults aged 18-64 with severe hearing loss and 79 people with a serious visual impairment across the Borough. Up to 30,000 residents are believed to have some hearing or sight loss across Solihull.
- 23% of the Solihull 65+ age group have a severely restricted long-term illness or disability. This proportion rises to 62% for people aged 85+.
- Around 19% of 65+ year olds are unable to manage at least one mobility activity. The number of Solihull older people predicted to be unable to manage at least one mobility activity is projected to increase by 32% between 2017 and 2030 (+2,680 individuals). The number of people aged 85 unable to manage a mobility activity is likely to double over this period, affecting an extra 1,480 people. This is consistent with the high levels of projected growth in the older population in Solihull
- In Solihull the 75+ age group accounted for 30% of hospital episodes in 2016/17.

- Emergency admissions for falls is above the national average. The rate for people aged 80+ is more than 5 times than that of the 75-79 age group.
- Projections suggest that the number of hospital admissions due to falls among Solihull people aged 65+ is predicted to increase by 32% between 2017 and 2030 (+311 individuals). The majority of this is due to an increase in emergency admissions among those 75 and over.
- In 2017/18, residents aged 65+ accounted for 80% of all new requests for Adult Social Care support. 66% of all new requests were for someone aged 75+.
- More than 50% of winter deaths involved people aged 85+, with respiratory and circulatory diseases being the most common causes.
- Around 3,300 older people have Dementia, representing 7% of those aged 65+. The number of Solihull older people predicted to have dementia is projected to increase by 39% between 2017 and 2030. The number of people aged 85+ with dementia is expected to increase by 48% over this period. This is consistent with the high levels of projected growth in the older population in Solihull.

c. Disability-related health problems

Around 4,000 residents have a learning disability.

- More than 1,600 residents use assistive technology to enable them to live independently. I

- It is estimated that in 2017 there were 1,195 adults aged 18-64 with Autism in Solihull.
- Around 25,000 people regularly provide unpaid care and support to family members, friend or neighbours. One-third of this group give over 20 hours of care per week.

d. Gender inequalities

There is a higher proportion of women (23%) compared with men (19%) amongst the 65+ age group. Life expectancy of men is 80 years and for women it is 84 years.

e. Child poverty

- 15% of children are found in low-income families, compared with the UK average of 17% and West Midlands average of 20%.
- 73% of Solihull children in low-income families live in lone-parent households.
- In 2017, 16% of Looked-After Children were Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) compared with the England average of 6%, showing Solihull having one of the highest UASC rates outside of London.

f. Needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups

In 2011, 11% of Solihull residents were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups compared with neighbouring Local Authorities for Birmingham and Coventry where BAME populations are 42% and 26% respectively. In December 2017,

Solihull's overall employment rate for 16-64 aged group was 77%, compared with the England average of 75%. The employment rates in Solihull for BAME groups is 73% compared with 78% for White communities.

g. Locality inequalities

North Solihull has several challenges:

- Poverty is concentrated in the North Regeneration areas where in 1 in 3 households have child-poverty, 1 in 25 adults are not in employment and home-ownership levels are the lowest.
- 16% of the Solihull population live in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods in England, including 11% in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods.
- Emergency hospital admissions in Chelmsley Wood are 40% above the England average.
- Hospital stays for alcohol-related harm in Chelmsley Wood are 40% above the England average.
- Premature mortality ratio is three times higher in Chelmsley Wood compared with other parts of Solihull.
- Carers in more deprived parts of the borough are more likely to provide care for 50+ hours per week than elsewhere. 30% of carers in North Solihull provide 50+

hours of care per week compared to 18% elsewhere in the borough.

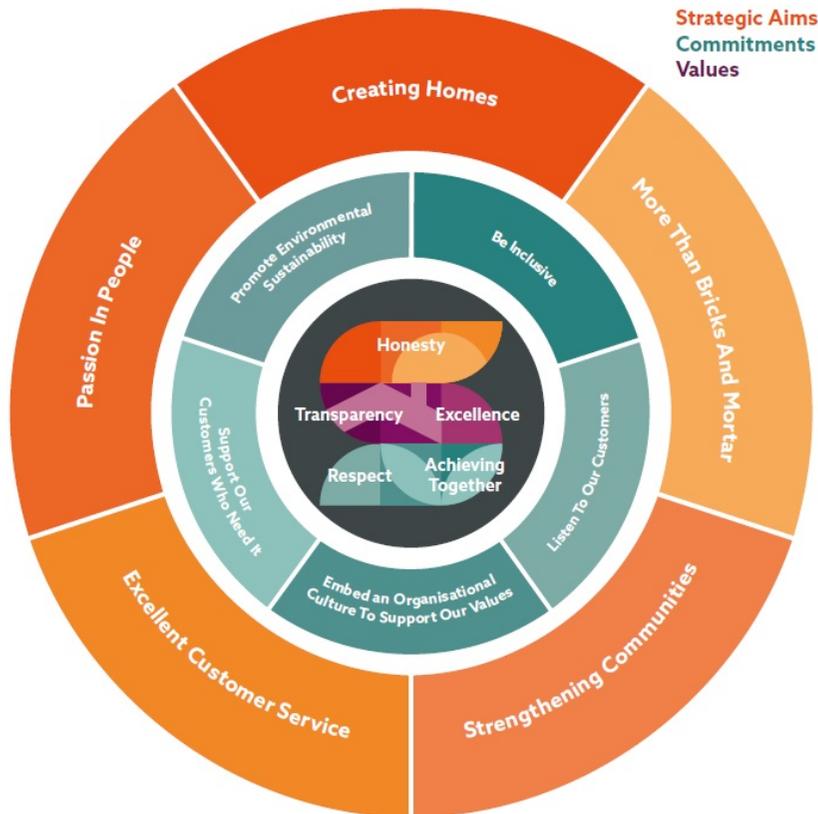
- Single parent, women-headed households are in greater numbers in the North Solihull Regeneration area compared with the rest of the Borough.



6 Delivery Plan 2020/2021

Our values

At SCH, we take pride in being concerned with not just what we do but how we do it by placing our values at the heart of everything we do. The links between our values and strategic aims are demonstrated by the following:



Strategic aims and objectives

Fairness and inclusion are embedded in the way we will deliver the following strategic aims and objectives between April 2020 and March 2021.

Strategic Aims	Strategic Objectives
Creating Homes	Growth in social housing in partnership with Solihull Council
	Provide an efficient and effective repairs service
	Ensure our homes are safe
	Data driven green approach to our managed portfolio
More than Bricks and Mortar	Enhance service offers to support our wider customer base to achieve positive outcomes
	Reducing homelessness and risk of homelessness across the borough
	Delivering excellent core housing management services that are integrated and highly visible
Strengthening Communities	Working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to create resilient and thriving communities
	Implement a Community Engagement roadmap to empower customers and involve them in the heart of decision making
Excellent Customer Services	Embedding a clear approach to supporting vulnerable customers across all SCH services
	Continuously improving services and processes through customer insight
	Delivering services for customers in the way they want and reduce customer effort
Passion In People	Supporting and developing our staff



Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods

