Solihull Community Housing

Shaping our neighbourhoods

Public Sector Equality Duty Report – March 2025

Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to our Public Sector Equality Duty Report for 2025, the year in which we celebrated 20 years in existence as the largest social housing provider in Solihull.

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. The 'Public Sector Equality Duty' requires public bodies 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 disproportionally low.

d. **Annually publish relevant and proportionate information** demonstrating compliance with the Equality Duty.

This report provides a summary of our actions and achievements in 2024 to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Fiona Hughes, Chief Executive

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, emergency accommodation and administering the Housing Register.

We are governed by a Board of ten Non-Executive Directors and employ around 300 people. As an Arm's Length Management Organisation, we manage social housing stock on behalf of Solihull Council. As a registered social landlord, the Council is required to meet the Consumer Standards set by the Regulator of Housing and to operate by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code. In managing the social housing stock, we operate in accordance with the Standards, the Code and relevant legislation. As an employer we ensure we meet all relevant employment legislation.

More information about us can be found here: https://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at SCH

Equality is part of the way we work and deliver services to ensure that everyone is treated fairly, and that diversity is valued. We take pride in setting out how we champion equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in everything we do: the way we work, deliver homes and services, and work with our tenants, leaseholders and other customers. This report highlights our achievements in fostering a culture where everyone contributes to meet our vision to **create better homes and thriving communities** and to fully support Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's (SMBC) vision of ensuring **equal opportunities for all residents to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous**. The principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion are embedded in our strategies, policies and procedures. We do not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment. We routinely check the accessibility of our services, homes and jobs and tailor services to meet individual circumstances whenever possible.

We positively embrace and celebrate diversity and promote an inclusive culture. Everyone at SCH and partners with whom we work are expected to abide by our EDI Policy.

Our EDI Policy was last reviewed in 2022 and is undergoing a refresh in 2025. The Policy is supported by an Annual EDI Action Plan that is aligned to our organisational Annual Delivery Plan. Progress against the EDI Action Plan is monitored by the Executive Leadership Team and reported to the Human Resources and Equalities Committee that reports to the Board.

Solihull's diverse population

The 2021 Census data shows that Solihull's population has become more diverse since the previous census. The 2021 Census shows that:

- The proportion of those aged over 65 is higher than the England average. 2023 population estimates found that 21.3% of residents are aged 65+. The median age of the local population is 43 years compared with 40 years across the West Midlands and England. The number of peopled aged 50-64 rose by 9.2% in the last 10 years.
- Ethnic minority households have increased from 11% to 18% in the last 10 years. 11% identified their ethnicity as 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 82% as White, and 1.8% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African.
- Solihull's residents report very good, good or fair health, compared with 94.9% residents in England and 94.3% in the West Midlands. 13% of the Solihull working age population claim Universal Credit compared to 15% for England and 17% for the West Midlands. 14% of Solihull children aged 0-15 years live in a low-income household compared to 20% for England and 27% for the West Midlands.
- 14% of households live in social housing, 13% live in privately rented homes. 7% of Solihull households are occupied by a lone parent family with dependent children, with the proportion rising to 16% in North Solihull. The majority of our homes are in North Solihull.

More information about Solihull's population can be found on SMBC's website: Census

About our residents

In December 2024 we had 10,834 tenants and joint tenants whose diversity profile was:

Age	**Number**	**Percentage**
16 to 24	346	3.2
25 to 34	1478	13.6
35 to 44	2012	18.6
45 to 54	1711	15.8
55 to 64	2070	19.1
65+	3089	28.5
Not known	128	1.2
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Female	6773	62.5
Male	4038	37.3

Not known	23	0.2
Disability/vulnerability	**Number**	**Percentage**
No	8326	76.9
Yes	2508	23.1
Do not wish to say	0	0
Not known	0	0
Ethnicity	**Number**	**Percentage**
BAME	911	8.4
White British/Irish	8818	81.4
Do not wish to say	92	0.8
Not known	1013	9.4
Religion	**Number**	**Percentage**
Christian	2713	25.0
None	1774	16.4
Other	329	3.0
Do not wish to say	1349	12.5
Not known	4669	43.1
Sexual orientation	**Number**	**Percentage**
Bisexual	36	0.3
Gay man	29	0.3
Gay woman/lesbian	34	0.3
Heterosexual/straight	5613	51.8
Other	15	0.1
Do not wish to say	817	7.5
Not known	4290	39.6

Between January and December 2024, we let 721 properties. Information collected about tenants and joint tenants shows that:

Age	**Number**	**Percentage**
16 to 24	113	15.7
25 to 34	164	22.7
35 to 44	156	21.6
45 to 54	103	14.3
55 to 64	119	16.5
65+	62	8.6
Not known	4	0.6
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Female	432	59.9
Male	287	39.8
Not known	2	0.3
Disability/vulnerability	**Number**	**Percentage**
No	571	79.2
Yes	150	20.8
Do not wish to say	0	0
Not known	0	0
Ethnicity	**Number**	**Percentage**
BAME	109	15.1
White British/Irish	529	73.4
Do not wish to say	1	0.1
Not known	82	11.4
Religion	**Number**	**Percentage**
Christian	116	16.1
None	161	22.3
Other	60	8.3

Do not wish to say	240	33.3
Not known	144	20.0
Sexual orientation	**Number**	**Percentage**
LGBTQ+	13	1.8
Heterosexual/straight	479	66.4
Do not wish to say	134	18.6
Not known	95	13.2

Tenants on the SCHape Panel challenge and scrutinise our services. Their profile is:

Age	**Number**	**Percentage**
25 to 34	1	9
35 to 44	1	9
45 to 54	2	18
55 to 64	2	18
65+	5	45
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Female	8	72.7
Male	3	27.3
Disability/vulnerability	**Number**	**Percentage**

No	6	55
Yes	5	45
Ethnicity	**Number**	**Percentage**
BAME	2	18.2
White British/Irish	7	63.6
Do not wish to say/not known	2	18.2

Our VIP Panel of residents has 473 members. Their profile is:

Age	**Number**	**Percentage**
18 to 24	10	2
25 to 34	50	11
35 to 44	68	13
45 to 54	74	16
55 to 64	86	18
65+	186	39
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Female	318	67.2
Male	155	32.8
Disability/vulnerability	**Number**	**Percentage**
No	301	67.2
Yes	172	32.8
Ethnicity	**Number**	**Percentage**
BAME	39	8.2
White British/Irish	391	82.7
Do not wish to say/not known	45	9.1

Considering all available data about all joint tenants and joint tenants, and engaged residents, the over conclusions are:

- The proportion of older residents living across our homes is higher than Solihull. This is explained by a number of factors, including we have longstanding residents, we offer homes that are dedicated for older residents in the form of low-rise blocks and bungalows, and tenants who are older, frailer, vulnerable or disabled can access our Wellbeing Services.
- Younger adults under 18 are usually care-leavers who are supported to sustain tenancies. Other younger adults are directed for specialist housing and support services from local organisations such as St Basils.
- One in five residents are disabled. We offer a Home Improvement Service through which households can have their properties adapted to suit individual needs.
- Current and newer tenants' profiles broadly match with the ethnicity of Solihull's residents. However, the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic residents engaged via our VIP panel is low. We are developing initiatives to capture the views of minority residents through other means.
- Younger adults and residents who are in the working age brackets are under-represented in formal resident engagement. We have developed a range of initiatives to do dedicated outreach work to get their views and options.

Promoting EDI in operational services

1. Continued to remove barriers for people who need communications in alternative languages and formats.
2. Ensured that our website remains accessible for people with diverse needs through text-rise, read-aloud and automatic translation of webpages into alternative languages.
3. Introduced the 'Everyone Matters' campaign to build on the knowledge we have about our tenants so that we can tailor services to meet individual needs and preferences whenever possible. The campaign is currently underway. 152 tenants have responded to a survey, of whom 145 people have provided updated information about their needs. The initiative will be used to develop our Inclusive Services Register and inform our One SCH project that will deliver new IT solutions to help us to deliver services effectively, seamlessly and efficiently and enhance the overall customer experience.
4. Delivered the quarterly SCH News, a newsletter for residents, to keep them informed about services we and other organisations provide. The magazine

focusses on issues that are most important to residents and are designed to convey our ethos of fairness, equality and valuing diversity.

5. Developed a dedicated High Rise Newsletter and Building Safety Agreements that are targeted for residents living in our high-rise apartments and continued to do weekly inspections of communal areas to ensure resident safety.
6. Engaged with diverse customers via dedicated roadshows to hear their views about our services and get ideas for service improvements. SCH's Voice of the Customer Framework is designed to ensure that we continue to hear the voices of diverse customers through the VIP Panel, Building Safety Advocates, Empty Homes Inspectors, Block Advocates and the SCH magazine Editorial Group.
7. Continued to ensure that our customer complaints policy and procedures remain accessible for all residents and that reasonable adjustments are made on request. We accept complaints in a variety of ways and via a range of residents' chosen advocates. Our dedicated Reasonable Adjustments policy makes it easier for vulnerable customers to complain.
8. Enhanced our work with local partners to prevent and deal with anti-social behaviour, including taking legal action against perpetrators. From January to December 2024 we handled 301 complaints, of which the most serious ones related to exploitation, domestic abuse and hate crime.
9. Ensured that our Home Adaptations Service remains accessible and effective to enable disabled residents to live independently.
10. Continued to offer a dedicated Money Advice Service to help with tenants with debt management and avoid evictions.
11. Continued to deliver the Wellbeing Service to support older, vulnerable and disabled residents to live safely.
12. Supported tenants and others to reduce debt and fuel poverty and introduced a furniture recycling project.
13. Worked with 956 vulnerable tenants with arrears, of which 876 people are managing their rent accounts as expected.

Promoting EDI through decision-making

1. Ensured that authors for all Board and Committee papers reflected impact of proposals and performance on EDI issues.
2. Ensured that the voices of diverse customers are heard through our transactional and the regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures surveys.
3. Adopted the use of SMBC's Safeguarding Portal that provides a platform for internal sharing of relevant information to protect children, adults, people suffering from domestic abuse and exploitation.
4. Revised our Electrical Safety Policy to ensure that it continues to reflect current legislation and good practice.
5. Conducted a Fair Treatment Assessment in partnership with SMBC on the Home Assistance Policy that supports disabled residents across the borough to live safely and interpedently in their current homes.
6. Developed a revised Tenancy Policy with SMBC to ensure that tenants are offered greater security of tenure from the outset and to help us make best use of all homes.
7. Worked with SMBC to revise the Allocations Policy to help to let empty homes to people who are in highest need.
8. Adopted the guidance developed by the West Midlands Regional Adult Safeguarding Leads when working with victims of domestic abuse.
9. In partnership with SMBC completed the Regeneration of the Kingshurst Regeneration Scheme where SCH has developed 25 new homes.
10. Supported SCHape (customer scrutiny panel) to scrutinise our services. Members of the SCHape Panel represent diverse views and have received relevant induction and ongoing training so that they can reflect fairness, inclusion and diversity in scrutiny process.
11. Took part in activities arranged by the Solihull Domestic Abuse Partnership Board that provides strategic guidance and governance to prevent, reduce and deal with people suffering from domestic abuse and violence. Survivors are provided with specialist community accommodation and other support such as crisis intervention, advocacy, safety planning and emotional support via a range of agencies, including the Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid.
12. Developed the Unreasonable Communications Policy to deal with unacceptable behaviour from residents or their representatives when pursuing complaints. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that our regulatory complaints policy and procedures are not compromised, manage customer expectations and enable staff resources to be used effectively and efficiently.

Valuing diversity in the workplace

1. Human Resources colleagues from SMBC who routinely review HR policies and processes to ensure they meet changes in legislation, national guidance and reflect good practice. Documents are ‘equality checked’ and, where appropriate, detailed Fair Treatment Assessments (FTAs) are conducted to consider the impact on people with protected characteristics and factors such as employees who have caring and family responsibilities and their health and wellbeing. In 2024 we reviewed:
    - Adoption Policy
    - Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy
    - Carer Policy
    - Career Break guidance
    - Casual Worker guidance
    - Leave of absence
    - Menopause Policy
    - Ordinary Parental Leave & Shared Parental Leave
    - Supporting employees with cancer guidance
2. 65 managers who undertake recruitment and selection activities were trained in the revised policies and processes, which covered our Disability Confident Scheme accreditation.
3. All new staff undergo induction training that covers EDI. Staff complete a range of mandatory EDI training and gain other relevant knowledge and skills, such as complaints handling, anti-social behaviour and safeguarding. In 2024, 102 employees undertook EDI training and 62 people attended training to understand neurodiverse conditions.
4. Staff can access career development opportunities through secondments and dedicated management development training available via SMBC.
5. Supporting and promoting the EDI remains a top priority. Staff can voice their thoughts and make a real difference through the EDI Employee Network and the Staff Engagement Group. The links between the two groups are well-established and effective to influence positive changes. The groups have led on:
    - Commenting on the revised arrangements and staff guidance on the Disability Reasonable Adjustments arrangements to support and value disabled staff.
    - Arrangements for recognising and rewarding staff with long service awards.

- Delivering the ‘Seasonal Stars’ awards designed to recognise staff who ‘go the extra mile’ in their duty.
- Celebrating and marking special events such as LGBTQ+ Pride Month.

6. Employee health and well-being remains a top priority for SCH. We want a healthy, happy and thriving workforce. We work with SMBC to prioritise employee mental health and supporting people to work flexibly and remotely whenever possible. Our Resolution Contacts deliver speedy and appropriate responses to dispute resolution in the workplace.

Celebrating diversity

SCH staff have access to a calendar of key religious, cultural and commemorative events that assisted in planning ahead for events and raising awareness internally to staff.

Below are examples of events that we marked throughout 2024 to raise awareness, support learning and enable diverse needs to be considered for employees. Information was communicated to employees and managers through our intranet, staff briefings, internal magazines and, where appropriate, via dedicated events, reading materials and exhibitions.

- Alcohol Awareness Week
- Autism Awareness Week
- Black History Month
- Carers Week
- Dementia Action Week
- Disability Pride Month
- Diwali
- Easter
- Eid-al-Udha
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- Hong Kong Mid-Autum Festival
- International Day for Persons with Disabilities
- Menopause Healthwatch Study
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Neurodiversity Celebration Week
- International Women’s Day

- LGBTQ+ History Month
- Lunar New Year
- Pride Month
- Purple Day (Epilepsy Awareness)
- Ramadan Awareness
- Refugee Week
- Southeast Asian Heritage Month
- Windrush Day
- World Elder Abuse Day
- World Hijab Day
- Vaisakhi

Employee profile

Age	Number	Percentage
16 to 24	9	3.0
25 to 34	35	11.7
35 to 44	53	17.7
45 to 54	83	27.8
55 to 64	99	33.1
65+	20	6.7
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Female	169	56.5
Male	130	43.5
Disability	**Number**	**Percentage**
No	226	75.6
Yes	14	4.7
Do not wish to say	1	0.3
Not known	58	19.4

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
BAME	33	11.04
White British/Irish	248	82.94
Do not wish to say	5	1.67
Not known	13	4.35
Religion	**Number**	**Percentage**
Christian	136	45.5
None	73	24.4
Other	19	6.4
Do not wish to say	32	10.7
Not known	39	13.0
Sexual orientation	**Number**	**Percentage**
LGBTQ+	2	0.7
Heterosexual/straight	223	74.6
Other	1	0.3
Do not wish to say	35	11.7
Not known	38	12.7

Of the 15 employees who receive the highest pay, 60% are male and 40% are female, 87% are White and 13% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. None have declared a disability. The majority are Christian and Heterosexual.

The average age of the 10 new employees who started work between October and December 2024 is 42 years. 70% are male and 30% are female. 10% have declared a disability. 80% are White and 20% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. 60% of staff have no religion, 20% are Christian and 20% belong to other minority religions.

80% are heterosexual and 20% are from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and other (LGBTQ+) groups.

Examples of actions planned for 2025/2026

We will continue to deliver our EDI objectives to:

1. Nurture and strengthen EDI leadership to create a culture of safety and trust where people feel valued and heard and EDI remains central to decision-making.
2. Know our residents and communities so that we can shape services that meet their needs and ensure that diverse customers are satisfied.
3. Ensure our employees are representative of our locality and region, strengthening employees' appreciation and understanding of the equality and diversity agenda.
4. Enable diverse customers to give views and opinions and enable diverse voices to shape and improve services.
5. Continue to publish EDI objectives and achievements annually and celebrate diversity.

The Equality and Diversity Plan is directly linked to SCH's strategic priorities and the annual Delivery Plan. Key priorities to build on:

1. Ensuring that the governing body is diverse and that members reflect thought diversity in behaviors and decision-making.
2. Reflecting EDI in strategic decision-making and performance management.
3. Continuing to support and build capacity for the Staff EDI Network
4. Identifying outcomes of the results of the Everyone Matters Project and continue to update tenants' information and new tenants.
5. Removing any communication barriers for customers
6. Ensuring our employees are representative of our locality and region, strengthening employees' appreciation and understanding of the equality and diversity agenda.
7. Reviewing arrangements for staff retention and career development
8. Delivering coaching and mentoring opportunities for under-represented staff
9. Identifying service improvements from hearing diverse voices
10. Reviewing arrangements for SCHAPE Pan
11. Hearing the voice of diverse customers
12. Demonstrating public accountability for EDI
13. Celebrating diversity

More information

If you would like more information about our work or how we practice and promote equality, diversity and inclusion, there are a number of ways to contact us. Please click here to contact us via our website, or to send an email. You can also call us on 0121 717 1515 or write to us at Endeavour House, Meriden Drive, Solihull, B37 6BX.