



**Equality and Diversity
Annual Report
March 2019**

Introduction

This Annual Report shows how Solihull Community Housing (SCH) values diversity and promotes equality of opportunity. We describe how we meet our moral and legal responsibilities to be fair and inclusive, have due regard to equality, actively promote opportunities for all and eliminate unfair discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The principles of equality and diversity underpin our vision to **‘provide homes, improve wellbeing and strengthen communities’** and support Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council’s vision that **‘Everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous’**.

Equality and diversity are reflected in our Annual Delivery Plan and form part of our everyday work to help provide accessible and good quality services to tenants, leaseholders and others, and to make employees feel valued. Our Equality and Diversity Policy was reviewed in 2017 and sets out the following principles and objectives:

| Principle | Objectives 2017-2022 |
|--|---|
| Treat everyone fairly, with dignity and respect | Policies, procedures and working practices are free from discrimination |
| Promote equality of opportunity for access to our homes and services | Deliver appropriate, accessible and flexible services |
| Value diversity and talents of all individuals | Create a diverse workforce and inclusive workplace |
| Take positive action to promote equality | Pro-actively identify barriers to employment opportunities, access to homes and delivering services |
| Challenge prejudice, discrimination and harassment | Work with partners to prevent and reduce discrimination |

This report concentrates on key statistics and practical examples of fairness, diversity and inclusion in our day-to-day business. Numbers are rounded up where appropriate and information is presented in a way that protects individual identity. Customer and workforce statistics are based on the level of information provided by tenants and staff on a voluntary basis.

We welcome your views and suggestions

Please let us know if you want more information about SCH. We will be happy to provide this document in large print or audio and explain the contents in alternative formats or languages. We also welcome your views about this report. Please contact us by [clicking here](#).



Richard Hyde
Chair, SCH Board



Jenny Fletcher
Chair, Human Resources Committee

Solihull Community Housing – the company

We are the largest provider of affordable housing in the Borough. Since 2004, we have been managing over 10,000 homes and garages owned by Solihull Council. Our role is to provide a range of landlord services to Council tenants and leaseholders.

Day to day services provided to tenants and leaseholders include:

- Collecting rent and service charges
- Ensuring that homes and estates are safe and well-maintained.
- Enforcing tenancy agreements and leases.
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour and other breaches of tenancies and leases.
- Re-letting homes when tenancies and licenses end.
- Listening to and learning from tenants and leaseholders through tenant engagement and tenant-led scrutiny.
- Preventing homelessness by supporting people to remain in their current home.
- Dealing with homeless people, providing emergency accommodation and maintaining the Council's Housing Register.

SCH is governed by a Board of 12 members who give strategic direction, approve policies and monitor performance.

We employ 260 people, led by the Chief Executive who is supported by three Executive Directors: Asset Management & Development, Housing & Communities and Customer & Corporate Services.

Customer contact is mainly by telephone. Customers can call us between 8am and 6pm each weekday. Electronic methods include email and some interactive services available via our website and social media. Face to face liaison methods include accessing services via Solihull Connect local offices across the Borough and home visits.

Where we work

Solihull is close to Birmingham, Coventry and Warwick and lies at the heart of the West Midlands motorway network with excellent transport connections via Birmingham International Railway Station and Birmingham International Airport. Around 85,000 workers are employed across Birmingham Airport, the National Exhibition complex, Land Rover car plant, Birmingham & Blyth Valley Business Parks and Solihull town centre.

Solihull is a broadly affluent Borough in both regional and national contexts, characterised by above-average levels of income and home ownership. However, there is a significant prosperity gap in the three main areas where we work: Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge and Smith's Wood where approximately half of the Borough's socially rented housing is found. Other differentiating characteristics include less green space per head, relatively higher population density and below average income levels. The impact of this is felt across a broad range of outcomes, including educational attainment, employment, crime and health. Outside of these three areas, we have some homes in relatively less advantaged locations such as the Lyndon and Elmdon Wards and in Shirley, Castle Bromwich and Olton.



The diversity of Solihull residents

Latest information about Solihull's population is summarised as:

- Between 2011 and 2017 the number of people living in Solihull has increased by 3.5% from 206,674 to 213,900.
- The ratio of women and men is 51:49. There are more women amongst the 85+ group.
- In 2011 the average age of the Borough's population was 42, the highest compared with other West Midlands Authorities. The 2017 mid year statistics demonstrate a significant and growing challenge in terms of health and social care because 21% of residents are aged 65+ compared with 18% across England and 18.4% in the West Midlands.
- Solihull is less diverse than neighbouring Birmingham and Coventry where the proportion of Black and Asian Minority (BAME) populations are 42% and 25% respectively, although the size of the BAME community has more than doubled to 11% since 2011. The largest BAME group in Solihull (60% of all BAME residents and 6.6% of the total population) is Asian or Asian British followed by mixed race (4,400), and Black or Black British (3,200). There are also 70 gypsy or Irish Travellers living in Solihull. Most BAME populations in Solihull are found in Silhill, Shirley East and Olton and the smallest populations are in Dorridge & Hockley Heath, Knowle and Meriden.
- In 2011 12% of people in Solihull provided unpaid care to a family member, close relative or friend.
- 66% of people in Solihull describe themselves as Christian and 22% have no religion. Relatively small numbers of people describe themselves as Muslim (2.5%), Hindu (1.8%), Sikh (1.7%); Jewish (0.2%) and Buddhist (0.2%).

Other key factors

- 55% of Solihull children living in poverty live in the three North Solihull regeneration wards.

- In the 2011 census, 82% of people in Solihull described their health as either good or very good and overall the health of people in Solihull is generally better than the average in England. However, nearly 37,000 people said that their day to day activities are limited.
- Estimated levels of adult smokers and smoking related deaths are lower than average for England.
- Rates of sexually transmitted infections and TB are lower than average.
- People killed and seriously injured on roads and early deaths from cardiovascular diseases are better than average.
- However, rates of new cases of malignant melanoma are worse than average.
- Rates of violent crime and drug misuse are lower than average.

Housing factors

- 75% of households in Solihull live in owner-occupied homes.
- 15% of residents live in social housing. 56% of socially rented homes are found in North Solihull Regeneration wards.
- 10% of households live in privately rented properties. This tenure is more common in areas outside of North Solihull.
- In 2011, there were 86,100 households in Solihull. This is expected to rise to 97,000 by 2026 and to 103,000 by 2039, with a sharp increase in households with people aged 65 and over.
- Between 2013 and 2017 average house prices in Solihull increased by 27% (£55,000), in excess of the England (+24%) and West Midlands (+20%) averages.
- In 2018, there were over 5,100 Solihull households on the Housing Register who were in housing need. Almost 50% of these were people living in the North Regeneration wards.
- Meeting housing needs is increasingly difficult given the relatively high and rising house prices coupled with the increase in demand.

The diversity of our tenants

We have just fewer than 10,000 tenants. Based on the information provided by tenants on a voluntary basis, their overall profile as at December 2018, showed the following characteristics:

| TENANT PROFILE | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| | December 2017 | December 2018 |
| Age | % | % |
| 18-25 | 6 | 5 |
| 26-45 | 31 | 30 |
| 46-55 | 19 | 19 |
| 56-65 | 16 | 17 |
| 66-74 | 15 | 15 |
| 75 and over | 13 | 14 |
| Disability | % | % |
| Yes | 29 | 39 |
| No/ prefer not to say / don't know | 71 | 61 |
| Race / Ethnicity | % | % |
| Asian / Asian British / Indian / Pakistani | 1 | Less than 1 |
| Black / Black British / Caribbean / African | 3 | 3 |
| Chinese / Other ethnic group | 1 | Less than 1 |
| Irish | 2 | 2 |
| Mixed | 2 | 2 |
| White British / English / Scottish / Welsh | 82 | 84 |
| Prefer not to say / don't know | 9 | 8 |
| Sex / Gender | % | % |
| Female | 61 | 62 |
| Male | 39 | 38 |
| Religion | % | % |
| Buddhist | Less than 1% | Less than 1% |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Christian | 30 | 29 |
| Hindu | Less than 1% | Less than 1% |
| Jewish | Less than 1% | Less than 1% |
| Muslim | Less than 1% | 1 |
| Sikh | Less than 1% | Less than 1% |
| No religion | 15 | 14 |
| Other | 2 | 2 |
| Prefer not to say | 5 | 5 |
| Unknown / Not collected | 46 | 49 |
| Sexual Orientation | % | % |
| Heterosexual | 45 | 30 |
| LGBT | Less than 1% | Less than 1% |
| Other / prefer not to say/unknown | 54 | 70 |

The above statistics present the following picture:

- There is an overall increase of 2% in tenants aged 56+. The increase is due to higher proportions of tenants aged between 56 and 65 and people aged 75 and over.
- There is a significant growth of 10% of tenants classifying themselves as having a disability. 39% of our tenants say that they have at least one form of impairment. The most common physical disabilities are mobility, hearing, eyesight and learning impairments.
- The proportion of people identifying themselves as White British/English/Scottish/Welsh has increased by 2%.
- The proportion of female tenants has increased by 1%. This appears to be linked to population trends of older age. In addition, there is a higher proportion of single parent families living in our homes, the majority of which are headed by women.
- Fewer residents are prepared to reveal their sexual orientation identity.
- 9% of our tenants are BAME compared with 11% across the Borough. We believe that the lower number is linked to the higher levels of owner-occupation generally found in the Asian community, the largest ethnic group in the Borough.

Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

- We review our Equality and Diversity Policy and Strategy at least every three years to ensure that they remain up-to-date.
- The work we do on safeguarding adults and children reflects our legal and moral duties and is closely aligned to work done by Solihull Council.
- Equality implications for meeting our obligations as a landlord and employer are considered, for example when meeting Health and Safety Regulations.
- Fair Treatment Assessments are completed when relevant, for example when developing new policies or introducing operational changes that have an impact on customer-facing services.
- Board members and employees are required to understand their specific roles and responsibilities under our Equality and Diversity Policy and attend training courses when requested. All training courses and other events reflect equality principles.
- Board and committee papers include equality and diversity implications where appropriate.
- Contractors, consultants and suppliers are required to sign up to our Equality Statement and abide by all relevant legislation, statutory codes of practice and consider the diverse needs of customers, tenants, leaseholders and employees.
- Our Tenancy and License Agreements prohibit tenants, members of their household and visitors from causing nuisance, annoyance, harassment or victimization to anyone else.
- We work in partnership with the Police and other agencies to meet our obligations under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Case studies

Domestic Abuse

We worked with several agencies to support Ms A, a victim of domestic abuse. The work involved:

- Liaison with the Police to investigate serious criminal behaviour by the perpetrator. The nature of the crimes included threats to kill, physical attacks to person and property and mental abuse.
- Taking out injunctions to stop perpetrators abusing her and people who witnessed abusive behaviour.
- Moving the victim to protect her and her children from further harm and abuse.
- Working with Social Workers and Women's Aid to safeguard children.

More widely, SCH manages the Sanctuary Scheme, which provides target hardening measures to enable some households to remain at home (those who choose to and for whom it is safe to do so). The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) launched its 'Make a Stand' pledge on domestic abuse last year and SCH has 'signed up' to the pledge. This involves delivering on four focused commitments by September 2019:

1. Put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse
2. Make information about national and local domestic support services available on the website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and staff
3. Put in place a HR policy, or amend an existing policy, to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse
4. Appoint a champion at a senior level in the organisation to own the activity being done to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

Advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The Equality Act safeguards people from discrimination on the following 'protected characteristics':

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion/Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Tenants can have a say in the way we deliver services. Everyone is welcome to give their views. Examples include taking part in routine and annual satisfaction surveys, and giving us feedback through complaints. We offer reasonable expenses such as travel and childcare for residents who take part in formal meetings.

326 tenants and leaseholders regularly take part in tenant engagement activities. Their profile is:

- 84% are tenants and 16% are leaseholders
- 80% classify themselves as disabled
- 13% are from a Black and Minority Ethnic background
- 68% are female and 32% are male
- 52% are aged between 56 and 75; 27% are aged between 18 and 55; and 19% are over 75.

Our Street and Block Champions are residents who act as our eyes and ears to help monitor estates and report issues and concerns about services such as communal cleaning, grounds maintenance, dumped rubbish and communal repairs.

Our service provision for resident involvement and participation includes:

- Always using accessible venues for meetings;
- Ensuring that we find out about individual needs when arranging meetings so that we can:
 - Provide portable hearing loops
 - Print information in large print and in the colour that meets someone's visual needs
 - Order saloon cars where people might find it difficult to get in and out of 'people carriers'
 - Ensure that the taxi firms we use instruct their drivers to assist residents who need help to get in and out of cars
 - Inform taxi firms about allowing extra time when collecting people with mobility impairments
 - Meet dietary needs when providing refreshments
 - Making arrangements for seating so that people with particular needs, such as using oxygen tanks and needing to be near the door, are comfortable and safe

Case study

We were able to make contact with approximately 700 customers during the period September to December 2018 as part of a high profile and organisation wide 'Join the Conversation' campaign to get tenants' views about our services to support service improvements. The initiative was widely publicised via leaflets and social media. Staff met residents living at 37 high rise blocks through a door-knocking exercise and informal meetings.



Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics and taking steps to meet the needs of different groups

Examples of how we minimise disadvantage and tailor our services to meet diverse needs:

Communicating effectively

- Offering information in alternative formats and explained in different languages
- Ensuring that our website is accessible for people who have eyesight and literacy impairments
- Using the principles set by the Plain English Campaign to make information accessible for everyone
- Considering the use of Easy Read format where this is requested
- Making greater use of digital technology such as email, text messaging and online tools to offer greater choices for customers to access services
- Setting up Facebook and Twitter accounts to maintain communications between us and residents and between different customers
- Automatically sending routine information such as rent statements and newsletters in appropriate formats where we know the needs of individual tenants.



Making services accessible

- Ensuring that our customer-facing offices are accessible for people with mobility impairments, offer hearing loops, have wheelchair and family-friendly facilities.
- Continuing to be responsive to less mobile customers by offering home visits.
- Signposting older, vulnerable and disabled residents to our Wellbeing Services to enable them to live independently.
- Making it easier for people to pay rent via, direct debit, the Rent Payments Hotline and payment kiosks in reception areas.

Tailoring services

- Offering repairs appointments to avoid school-run times for non-urgent repairs and fast tracking and prioritising repairs where appropriate, for example households with young children.
- Installing flashing lights, vibrating alarms and handrails for tenants with physical disabilities.
- Offering a Handyperson Support Service at nominal charges to enable independent living, such as putting up curtain rails, changing light bulbs, fitting police-approved key safes, moving furniture within the home and assembling flat pack furniture.
- Offering Home Hazards Safety checks to avoid trips and falls in and around the home and carrying out energy efficiency checks to reduce fuel poverty.
- Supporting young people aged 16-24 years to sustain their tenancies through help to develop skills such as running a home and budgeting.
- Contacting people who have not reported repairs or used our services for some time to ensure their safety and well-being.
- Going the extra mile during inclement weather by contacting vulnerable tenants to ensure their safety and to ensure that they are well, safe, warm and have access to medication and essentials.

Supporting independent living

We completed the development of an extra care housing scheme, Saxon Court, in 2018. The scheme will provide self-contained homes for 51 people aged 55+. Residents will be able to live independently in a safe and secure environment and use a range of facilities such as beauty, therapy and leisure. The flats will be offered to people who are in housing need and will benefit from trained staff who will provide support tailored to meet individual needs.

Our Wellbeing Service offers a range of services to residents to enable them to live independently and access repairs and maintenance services at affordable costs. The services are targeted for people who are house-bound, at high risk of falls, people who are dependent on a non-living-in carer, vulnerable people who live alone or have life threatening medical conditions and people who have been victims of serious crime such as domestic abuse. Several members of the Wellbeing Team are trained 'Dementia Friends'. They raise awareness of the condition and its impact on sufferers and their families and raise funds for further research and support for organisations such as the Alzheimer's Society.

Our scheme at Ipswich House provides short-term housing for 25 residents who receive support, advice and guidance from our partners, P3.



Preventing homelessness

Increasing the range of prevention and alternative housing options is a priority area for development. Last year, SCH launched the Solihome scheme which aims to assist households with good quality privately rented accommodation. Not all households are in a position to access such accommodation but, as at the end of December 2018, the scheme had assisted 25 households. We aim to assist 40 households with suitable private sector accommodation in 2019/20.

Our dedicated Money Advice staff offer help and support to tenants who get into rent arrears. The range of work done includes budgeting, debt management, liaison with lenders and working with home-owners who get into difficulty with mortgage payments. We also help tenants to open bank accounts and access cheaper fuel.



Between January and December 2018 we helped 626 people with Money Advice. The top five subjects related to rent arrears, financial help for people living in temporary accommodation, help with prioritizing multiple debts, welfare benefit claims and people being unable to afford private sector rents. 76% of people taking up the Money Advice Service are White British/English/Welsh/Other White, 9% are BAME and others did not provide their ethnicity data.

Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life

SCH is governed by a Board of 12 members comprising an equal split of tenants, Councillors nominated by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and independents. Their profile is as follows:

- All Tenant members are female. 75% of Council nominees are male and 100% of Independent members are male.
- The age range is between 35 and 70: 50% are aged between 35 and 55; 30% are aged between 56 and 65 and 20% are aged 66 and over.
- 90% describe themselves as White British and 10% as White Other.
- 10% have a disability.

The formal induction programme for Board members includes equalities and diversity, supplemented by annual refresher training and supported by the Governance Code of Conduct. No complaints about discrimination, bullying or harassment by Board members have ever been made and no complaints have been made by Board members about such treatment from others.



Case studies

Mr F, a wheelchair user, and drives a specially adapted vehicle for work. He became homeless and took up an offer of a suitably sized property. Our specialist staff, including Occupational Therapists, Surveyors and Maintenance Team worked together to redesign the home to provide a safe and user-friendly kitchen and an accessible bathroom. As a result, Mr F continues to work, carries out his own personal and domestic care and lives independently. The approach should avoid risks of Mr F having to be frequently hospitalized.

During 2018, we recruited our new Chair, Richard Hyde. The post was widely advertised and all Board members were involved in the selection process and making the appointment decision. The recruitment process was based on fair competition principles and overseen by external consultants.

The Scrutiny Panel has 12 tenants and leaseholders who meet 4 times each year to review our performance and consider trends arising from customer complaints.

- 66% of members are female and 33% are male.
- Members' age ranges between 51 and 81: 8% are aged between 35 and 55; 42% are aged between 56 and 65 and 50% are aged 66+.
- 92% are White British and 8% are Black Caribbean.
- 32% have a disability.

Employment

The total number of people employed in December 2018 is 276. Employee profile is shown in the following table.

| EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY | |
|--|----------|
| Age | % |
| 16-24 | 2 |
| 25-34 | 14 |
| 35-44 | 17 |
| 45-54 | 34 |
| 55-64 | 29 |
| 65 and over | 4 |
| Disability | % |
| Yes | 3 |
| No / Not specified | 97 |
| Race / Ethnicity | % |
| Black and Minority Ethnic | 8 |
| White British / English / Scottish / Welsh | 85 |
| Not known / Prefer not to say | 7 |
| Sex / Gender | % |
| Female | 56 |
| Male | 44 |

| Religion | % |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Christian | 48 |
| Hindu | Less than 1% |
| Muslim | 1 |
| No religion | 17 |
| Other | 2 |
| Sikh | 2 |
| Not known / Prefer not to say | 29 |
| Sexual Orientation | % |
| Heterosexual | 68 |
| LGBT | 0 |
| Other / prefer not to say/Not known | 32 |

- More than half of employees are female.
- An increase of 1% of staff aged 55 and over.
- A quarter of staff work part-time.
- We do not use zero-hour contracts.
- Almost half of our workforce has been with us for more than 10 years.
- One in 5 people have been in service for between 5 and 10 years.

The range of measures to reflect fairness and inclusion in recruitment and selection include:

- Using the 'Positive About Disability' symbol to encourage applications from people with disabilities, guaranteeing interviews to disabled applicants who meet the minimum job criteria and making reasonable adjustments as necessary.
- Considering religious requirements of shortlisted candidates where we are notified in advance.

Our human resource management practices are designed to:

- Provide support and make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, for example re-designing work stations and reviewing working patterns.
- Support staff to deal with unexpected personal emergency matters.
- Support people to return to work following long term absence, such as phased and flexible working.
- Regular training for managers helps to achieve consistency of approach and enable sharing and learning.



Want to know more?

[Click here](#) to contact us by internet or send an email. Telephone 0121 717 1515 or write to us at Endeavour House, Meriden Drive, Solihull, B37 6BX