

# **Shropshire Council**

## **Annual Service User Diversity Report for 2025**

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## **1. Our county and its people**

### **Geography and demography**

If you are looking for Shropshire on a map of the United Kingdom, you will need to look to the middle of England on the map, and then to the far west of Birmingham, just next to the middle of Wales. For our communities and businesses, travel to work patterns across our porous borders indicate large numbers travelling for work to the West Midlands, to the South and East, and North and North West, to Cheshire, Staffordshire and Manchester and beyond, as well as into Wales.

Shropshire is the second largest inland rural county in England, after Wiltshire, and one of the most sparsely populated. Shropshire is approximately ten times the size of all the Inner London Boroughs put together (31,929 hectares), with a terrain covering 319,736 hectares. An additional dynamic is that, unlike for example Cumbria, the population is dispersed across the entire county, rather than there being any areas where no one lives at all.

Based on the mid-year population estimates published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the population of Shropshire has grown by 8.2% from 307,100 at mid-2011 to 332,400 at mid-2024. This compares with 10.4% growth for England. The ONS 2022 sub-national population projections, estimate Shropshire's population will rise by 10.8%, reaching 368,400 by 2038.

Shropshire has a population density of 1 person per hectare (319,730 hectares), compared to 4.4 persons per hectare nationally (13,027,843 hectares). Shropshire is one of the most sparsely populated local authorities in the country with approximately 540 hamlets, villages and market towns widely dispersed across the County. The 2021 Census revealed only six settlements had a population of over 10,000 people (Whitchurch – 10,100, Shrewsbury – 76,800, Oswestry – 17,500, Ludlow – 10,000, Bridgnorth – 11,900 and Market Drayton – 12,600).

The 2021 Census showed 97.7% of Shropshire's population lived in 139,581 households and 2.3% lived in communal establishments. The number of households in Shropshire has grown by 7.6% since 2011. Household growth in Shropshire has largely been driven by a significant rise in single person households and couple households with no children, a reflection of Shropshire's ageing population. These household types make up 62.7% of all households in Shropshire.

### **Rural and Urban Classification in Shropshire**

The Rural/Urban classification was introduced in 2004 and defines the rurality of very small geographies. The classification has since been updated in 2011 and again in 2021 to account for the changes in the population identified in the 2011 and 2021 Censuses. The most recently updated classification identifies six settlement types at Census Output Area geographies with "nearer to a major town or city" and "further from a major town or city" replacing the "sparsity" classification that was used in 2011.

Most of the population in Shropshire live in rural locations, at 57.39% of the total. Of the 42.61% of the population that live in urban areas, most live in “Urban: Nearer to a major town or city”. In this context, with a population of more than 75,000, Shrewsbury is classified as a major town. Other than Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Market Drayton, Broseley, Bridgnorth and Ludlow are the main urban centres<sup>1</sup>. Ludlow and parts of Oswestry are classed as “further from a major town or city” as they are not within a 30-minute journey by road of either Shrewsbury or an alternative non-Shropshire major town or city.

More Shropshire residents live in the most rural areas (“Smaller Rural”) than in the more densely populated rural areas (“Larger Rural”), and 60% of all those living rurally are classed as living “nearer to a major town or city”.

### **Breakdown of Shropshire Population based on Rural Urban Classification**

	<b>% of Population</b>
Urban: Nearer to a major town or city	33.90%
Urban: Further from a major town or city	8.71%
<b>Total Urban</b>	<b>42.61%</b>
Larger Rural: Nearer to a major town or city	11.55%
Larger Rural: Further from a major town or city	10.69%
Smaller Rural: Nearer to a major town or city	22.94%
Smaller Rural: Further from a major town or city	12.21%
<b>Total Rural</b>	<b>57.39%</b>

Source: Rural Urban Classification 2021, ONS Mid-year population estimates 2022

Note: Major town or city defined as a built-up area with at least 75,000 usual residents

“Nearer to a major town or city” – residents of an Output Area can access within 30 minutes of travel by road

“Further from a major town or city” – residents of an Output Area cannot access within 30 minutes of travel by road

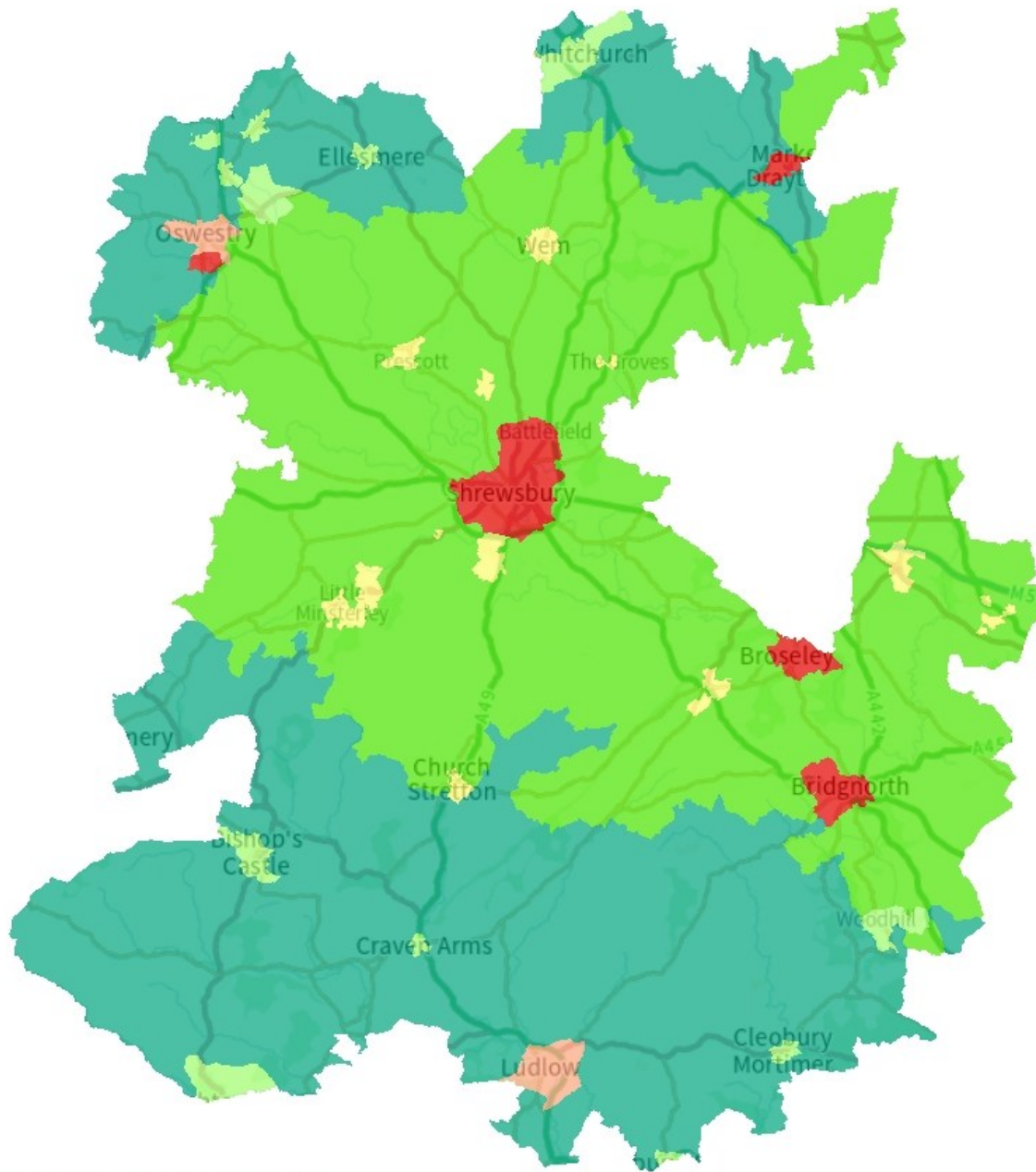
The RUC 2021 classifies local authorities according to eight classifications:

- Urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
- Urban: Majority further from a major town or city
- Intermediate urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
- Intermediate urban: Majority further from a major town or city
- Intermediate rural: Majority nearer to a major town or city
- Intermediate rural: Majority further from a major town or city
- Majority rural: Majority nearer to a major town or city
- Majority rural: Majority further from a major town or city

**Shropshire is classified as “Majority rural: Majority nearer to a major town or city”.**

<sup>1</sup> Defined as a built-up area with a population of at least 10,000

# Shropshire Rural Urban Classification (2021)



## Rural Urban Classification 2021

- Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city
- Smaller rural: Nearer to a major town or city
- Larger rural: Further from a major town or city
- Larger rural: Nearer to a major town or city
- Urban: Further from a major town or city
- Urban: Nearer to a major town or city

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Source: Rural Urban Classification 2021 ONS Census Map based on Output Areas

## **Challenges and approaches**

An emphasis on inequalities within society and within communities, including access to decent and energy efficient housing, healthcare, education and employment, whether by public or private transport or via digital means, should also include better national recognition of geographical and societal interdependencies rather than a separation out of different strands of policy.

Being an inland county brings its own challenges. There is dependency on a limited number of key arterial transport routes, for trade and supply including freight through the county to Wales and Ireland, or up to the North West, as well as for everyday transport for local communities and businesses. It is also exposed to extreme weather conditions, with roads that are liable to flooding, and a lack of viable alternatives leading to congestion and lengthy diversions. The physical terrain poses practical challenges for digital and physical infrastructure, as well as the high service delivery costs and access issues associated with a dispersed and ageing population.

It is within this geographical context of cross border travel patterns, for residents, visitors, and businesses, that we develop and deliver services with and for our diverse communities. The exigencies of adjusting to external factors of climate change and political change, including energy costs, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and conflicts around the world, are allied to the challenges of preserving and maximising our natural capital, enhancing the local social mobility prospects for our young people and seeking to address cost of living worries for all.

These external factors provide further context to our local strategic and collaborative approaches, which continue to be towards meeting rural and community needs, and in so doing achieving economic recovery and moving towards stability and growth.

## **Engaging with communities**

The dominant theme in feedback from our communities, gained through public consultation exercises, is rural inequality and concerns about the impact of service changes on older people, people with disabilities and/or/limited mobility and people on low incomes. With rural issues to the fore of the minds of respondents, this indicates that the Council's ongoing efforts as a rural authority to seek equity of funding are not misplaced. Additionally, in seeking to factor social inclusion and socio-economic considerations into decision-making processes, the Council's endeavours again appear to align to community needs and aspirations as well.

Complementary to community feedback, councillors involved in health overview and scrutiny committee work highlighted concerns about rurality and access to health and care services through their work. It was subsequently recommended that rurality and the accessibility factors that are associated with it becomes a key consideration for Shropshire's health and care system (including Shropshire Council) when adapting or introducing a new service or policy, including recommendation to utilise a Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit to achieve this. At Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024, Shropshire Council accepted the recommendation to adopt the Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit written by Rural England CIC, with input from the Nuffield Trust. It was a joint commission with the National Centre for Rural Health & Care.

## **The quest for equity**

It is a fact that the Council has been significantly underfunded under successive governments when compared to urban areas. This is an equity issue. The Council joins with other rural local authorities to campaign through channels such as the Rural Services Network (RSN), the Britain's Leading Edge (BLE) grouping of rural and coastal local authorities, and the County Councils Network (CCN), for a fairer distribution of the funds which the Government decides to allocate to support local government services, so that historical imbalances do not continue.

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Rural Affairs is also a very useful additional mechanism through which to engage and communicate with national Government. It includes our local MPs, who are also involved in other APPGs.

Through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process, Shropshire Council is committed to a more localised understanding of need and intelligence gathering, which links well into ongoing and draft equality actions around analysing data in ways that are consistent and coherent.

In addition, the Council continues to work with research partners, including universities and other rural authorities, and regional partners, to explore opportunities to enhance research in this area. One such example is work with the University of Leicester and the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) covering the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin local authority areas, where partners are working jointly on health and care services. This research is detailed further on in this report, in regard to tackling rural racism.

Our collegiate and collaborative approach is to collect and share evidence about community needs and how we are tackling them, with other local authorities, and with NHS partners, at sub regional, regional and national level. Sometimes this will be through collective responses through the RSN and CCN, eg on transport challenges and on digital connectivity and digital inclusion.

We also submit responses directly to Government Departments and through such opportunities as present themselves, for example consultation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on updates to the Code of Practice to then be presented to the Government's Minister for Women and Equalities.

The quest for equity is thus also a quest to ensure that we are as well placed as possible to assist in and shape the development of national policy that will be of benefit to our local communities and to communities across the West Midlands.

## **Understanding disparities and tackling discrimination: rural racism**

Alongside collecting and sharing evidence, we also keep abreast of national research that may assist us all as local authorities in developing local and regional policy here and across the region.

A significant piece of research came out in the summer of 2025, from the University of Leicester: *"The Rural Racism Project: Towards an Inclusive Countryside"*.

The following is taken from the researchers' executive summary:

*“The English countryside is often romanticised as a space of timeless beauty, peace, cultural heritage, and imagined community. Yet this landscape also holds histories of exclusion, routes of displacement, and enduring systems of inequality. Drawing on close collaboration with 20 community research partners and using creative writing, arts-informed methods and participant interviews we investigated how racism is embedded in heritage practices, the built environment, cultural memory, and everyday human encounters. These creative investigations also surfaced expressions of resistance: acts of reimagining and reclaiming that speak to the possibility of more inclusive rural futures.*”

*“This report responds to a series of myths about the English countryside that our study found to be widely expressed. These myths shape public assumptions about who belongs, whose histories are acknowledged, what kinds of relationships are seen as legitimate, and how rural life is imagined. They are not simply misunderstandings. They function as cultural narratives that uphold exclusion and invisibility. Our community research partners and participants, through their creative expressions and interview testimonies, present a challenge to these enduring myths.”*

In posing the question “**Why does this research matter**”, the researchers have said that: *“Racism in the UK is often portrayed as an urban issue. As a result, the specific ways it manifests within rural spaces are frequently overlooked, minimised, or denied. However, the countryside can be a site of deep racial exclusion and symbolic contestation, despite the enduring but misleading imagery typically used to convey idyllic, problem-free rural environments.”*

In concurring, we said:

### **It matters to Shropshire because:**

We do have some local data to draw upon, but it is only part of the picture. It is from a small scale qualitative piece of work funded by the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin ICS back in 2022/2023. This was carried out by the University of Wolverhampton. Its focus was upon racism towards healthcare and social care professionals, and it aimed to draw out experiences by local authority colleagues such as social workers, as well as experiences of healthcare professionals. In practice, the majority of respondents were in fact nurses and healthcare professionals, notably international nurses sharing their experiences of racism encountered within hospital settings.

This local data helped to build foundations for a major ICS campaign: “**Everyone Belongs Here**”. The ICS campaign links to our own continuing efforts as a local authority, set out in our strategic equality objectives action plan for 2024-2028, as we all seek to make progress on the three national equality aims. It aims to support staff across all settings, and we are linking it to our internal work on Dignity and Respect documentation for our staff and those we contract eg homecare workers.

The approach taken by the University of Leicester of drawing upon use of poetry, story-telling and reflections is very much one that we use here for our staff in progressing the aim to foster good relations. By way of illustration, we have shared Afghan women's poetry, during South Asian Heritage Month. We also held an online poetry event during Race Equality Matters week in 2024, in which we watched videos of Benjamin Zephaniah reading his poetry and that of Dylan Thomas, and we talked about racism through the lens of poetry.

We requested and were given permission to use a film that the researchers had produced, during Hate Crime Week in Black History Month last October 2025. At this screening, in which we were joined by regional equality officers from across the West Midlands and by ICS colleagues, we watched the film, along with screenings of Benjamin Zephaniah reading his poem "Faceless" plus "Do not go gentle into that good night" by Dylan Thomas. These provided opportunity to then discuss the myths and stereotypes and ongoing racism identified by the researchers in their report.

Chiming with what the researchers had recorded, the experience here of rural racism is felt by people who are from a rich variety of backgrounds: Afghanistan; countries in Africa, where to be Nigerian is to not be Zimbabwean; countries in Europe, where to be Bulgarian is to not be Polish; and people who are from different cultural and national heritages who were born here and/or who currently live or work here, including members of the Gypsy, Roma and traveller community and people of Arab, African, African-Caribbean and South Asian and East Asian heritage.

The researchers invited us to be partners along with the ICS for the next stage of the project, in which the researchers were successful in getting funding. We welcomed this important and timely initiative. The Rural Racism Project has already shed light on how racism is both experienced and challenged within rural communities, generating insights of direct relevance to local government and public services across rural England. This further stage of impact-focused policy activities provides a valuable opportunity to translate the research into practical action.

The next steps are outlined below, and will be reported upon accordingly next time.

#### Advancing Anti Racism in rural policy and practice: University of Leicester research

This work builds directly on the Rural Racism Project. It aims to generate lasting, practical impact by embedding anti-racist principles into rural policy frameworks. It's a collaborative effort, with input from the three onboard key partners to shape outputs that are both meaningful and sustainable. The partners are Cornwall Council, Natural England, and Shropshire Council.

#### Key outcomes

- Co-developing an Anti-Racist Policy / Statement of Intent for rural organisations:
- Producing a National Anti-Racist Policy Briefing Paper:
  - Co-authored with the University of Leicester's Institute for Policy, using key partners as case studies.
- Delivering a National Policy Webinar (Autumn 2026):

- Open-access online event showcasing the outputs (policy framework and briefing paper) with contributions from partners.
- Aimed at sharing good practice, lessons learned and future opportunities

## **Understanding the English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (IoD25) and IMD25**

We said last year that we were anticipating that the next update of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) would come out in late 2025, and would be reported upon in more detail in this year's annual service user diversity report. The following is an extract from a fuller report on the IMD.

The English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (IoD25) is a set of indicators designed to assess and compare relative levels of deprivation across small areas in England, known as Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). These small areas are on average around 1,700 residents and 640 households.

The **IoD25** was published on **31 October 2025** by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This up-dates the 2019 index. However, caution is advised when comparing across years due to changes in geographies and indicators.

**IoD25** refers to the broader family of deprivation indices, comprising seven separate domains or indices of deprivation. These indices are combined and weighted to create the **Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD25)**. This is the most widely used index and serves as the official measure of deprivation in England, providing a single, composite measure by combining multiple domains.

There are sub domains for: Education, Skills and Training (Children and Adults), Barriers to Housing and Services (Geographical and Wider Barriers) and for the Living Environment (Indoor and Outdoor). There are also two supplementary indices, income deprivation affecting children (IDACI) and income deprivation affecting older people (IDAOP1).

There are 55 indicators in the 2025 IOD compared to 39 in 2019.

- **New Indicators:** 20 new indicators have been introduced.
- **Modified Indicators:** 14 indicators have been significantly modified.
- **Updated Indicators:** 21 indicators have been updated to more recent timepoints.
- **Removed Indicators:** 3 indicators from the 2019 suite were removed.

The IoD25 is primarily used to:

- Identify the most deprived neighbourhoods in England. By identifying areas with the greatest levels of deprivation, resources can be allocated more effectively to tackle inequality and provide services where they are most needed.
- Compare deprivation levels between different areas.
- Explore specific domains of deprivation.

- Compare larger administrative areas, such as local authority districts or Electoral Divisions.
- Make snapshot comparisons over time, with appropriate caveats due to changes in geography, population, and indicators.

However, IoD25 cannot:

- Quantify exactly how deprived a neighbourhood is.
- Identify individual deprived people or levels of affluence.
- Compare small areas in other UK countries.
- Measure absolute changes in deprivation over time.
- Capture all deprivation.

### Shropshire Deprivation Overview (IMD 2025)

#### Key facts

**Shropshire ranks 154<sup>th</sup> out of 296 lower tier local authorities (rank of average rank)** *Note: although Shropshire has increased in relative rankings, this does not mean Shropshire is more absolutely deprived than in 2019, only that other local authorities have become relatively less deprived on this measure. In addition, the total number of authorities has reduced since 2019 which may account for some differences.*

- Overall, 2 LSOA's in Shropshire are within the 10% most deprived nationally and 9 are in the 20% most deprived nationally
- 1% of the Shropshire population are living in neighbourhoods ranked within the 10% most deprived nationally. (England 10%).
- 16.8% of the population are living in neighbourhoods which are classed as income deprived (England 23%).
- 29% of children aged 0-15 are living in income deprived families in Shropshire (36% England)
- 12% of Older People aged 60+ are classed as income deprived in Shropshire (18.6% England).
- Shropshire is relatively more deprived compared to most local authorities for Barriers to Services, ranking 37<sup>th</sup> most deprived. 63 LSOAs are within the 10% most deprived nationally. This is driven mainly by geographical barriers.
- Shropshire is relatively more deprived for the living environment domain (housing) this is largely driven by the indoor living environment. Shropshire ranks 75<sup>th</sup> most deprived for this domain.
- The most deprived electoral ward in Shropshire is Harlescott, Shrewsbury.

MHCLG designed a set of summary measures to help users understand deprivation patterns at high level areas, such as local authorities. No single summary measure is the 'best' measure as each highlight different aspects of deprivation.

## General Pattern

Overall, deprivation in Shropshire is relatively low compared to the national picture. However, there are pockets of significant deprivation within certain areas and domains. Shropshire is much more deprived in the barriers to services domain and the living environment domain. Some very small, particularly rural, neighbourhoods with high deprivation may be hidden in the data as deprivation in rural areas tends to be more dispersed.

Also, in some cases people can be asset rich but cash poor, do not want to claim benefits or know what they are entitled to. For example, in our older population, many of whom are asset rich, some may still struggle to afford to heat their homes and afford the increasing cost of food. The costs of rural living can push people into poverty even if their incomes are above thresholds to claim benefits.

## Table to show Shropshire ranking comparisons

<b>Ranking Explanation</b>	<b>2019 Rank</b>	<b>2025 Rank</b>
Local authorities with the highest proportion of LSOAs in the most deprived 10 percent of LSOAs nationally. Local authorities may not appear to be so deprived relative to others if they contain zero or few of the most deprived neighbourhoods.	198	184
<b>Rank of Average Rank:</b> The rank for the average level of deprivation across an area, based on the population-weighted ranks of all the neighbourhoods within it. An area that is more uniformly deprived will tend to rank higher on this measure compared to other measures.	175	154
<b>Rank of Average Score:</b> Summarises the average level of deprivation across an area, based on the scores of all the neighbourhoods contained within. Highly polarised local authorities will tend to score higher on the average score measure than on the average rank.	174	166

In the three main summary measures Shropshire's ranking has increased.

## National Ranking – Rank of Average Rank:

Shropshire is ranked 154th out of 296 lower-tier local authorities in England for deprivation (where 1 is the most deprived). This is a decline from 175th out of 317 in 2019, indicating a slight increase in relative deprivation. For context, Blackpool is the most deprived, while Hart (Surrey) is the least deprived local authority in England.

## Concentration of Deprivation:

In terms of the proportion of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% nationally, Shropshire ranks 184th out of 296., the most deprived being Middlesbrough and least deprived Hart (Surrey). For the extent measure (proportion of the population in the 30% most deprived LSOAs), Shropshire ranks 189th.

### Trends Over Time:

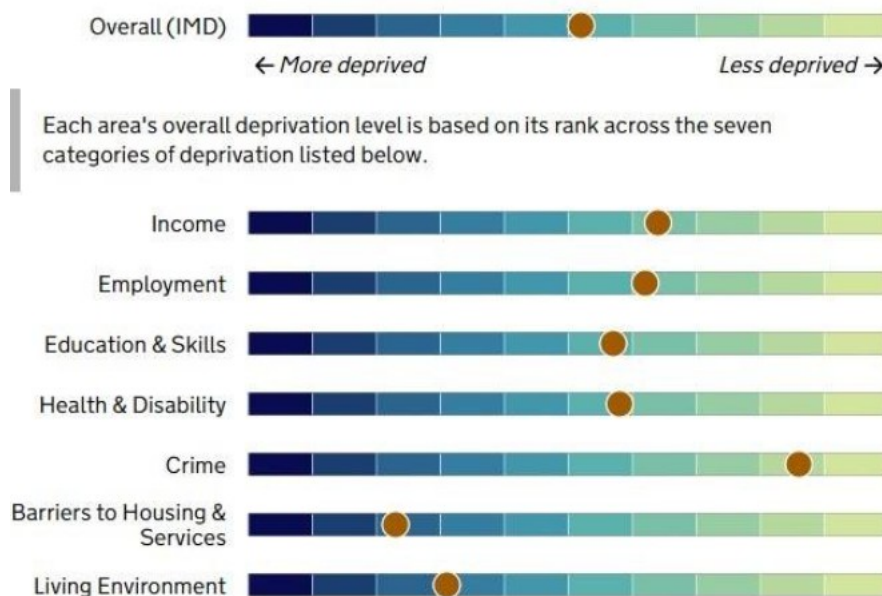
Shropshire has become marginally more deprived between 2015 and 2025, but it remains less deprived than 52% of local authorities in England. The average deprivation score has risen to 17.6 (from 17.2 in 2019 and 16.7 in 2015), which is still below the England average of 21.6.

### Domain Differences Shropshire Compared to England:

Chart 2 compares Shropshire with England for the Overall IMD and each of the seven domains. Shropshire has different levels of deprivation within each domain.

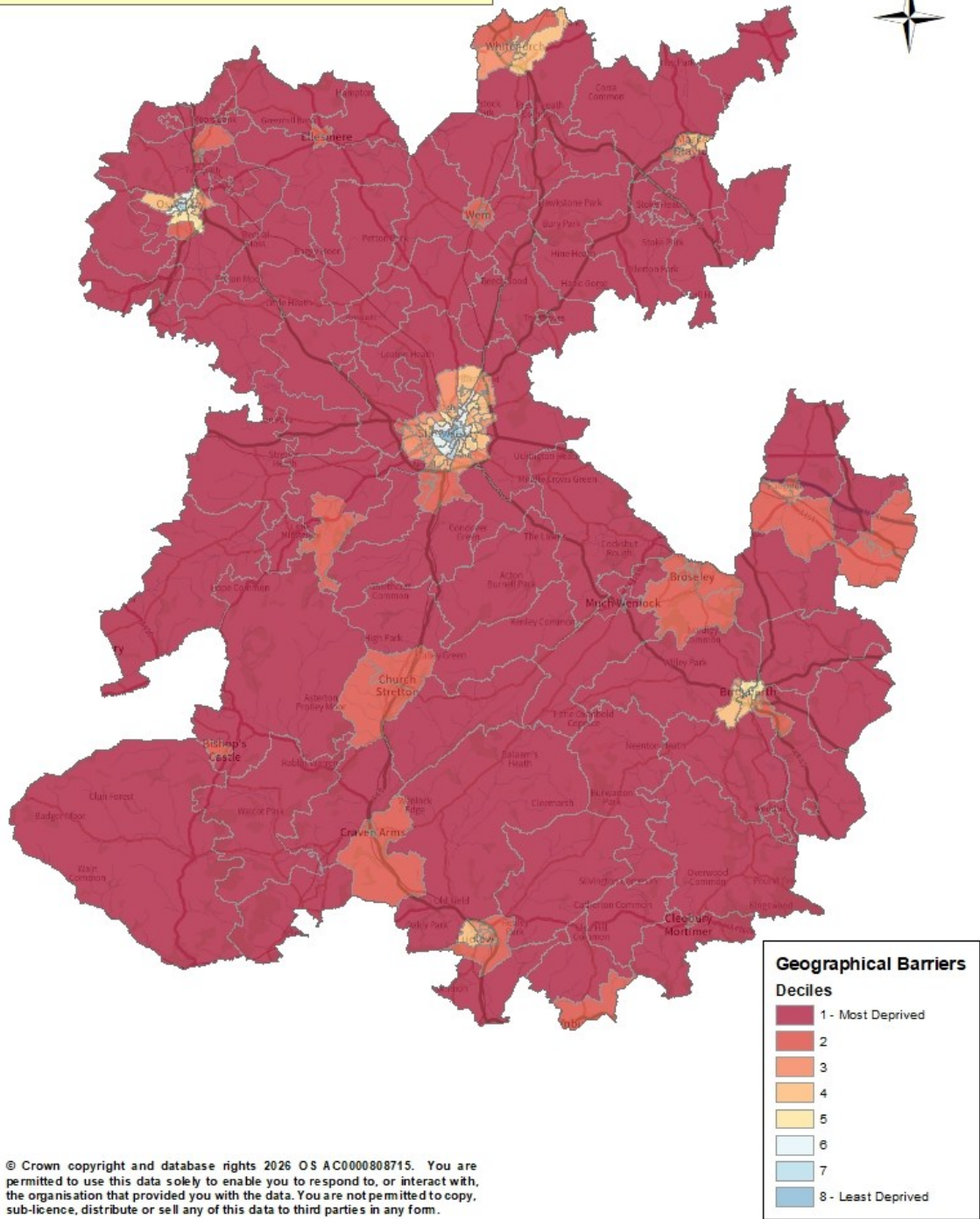
- **Barriers to Housing and Services:** Shropshire is more deprived than 77% of local authorities, mainly due to geographical barriers that make it difficult for rural residents to access services.
- **Living Environment:** Shropshire is more deprived than 69% of local authorities, largely because of poor housing conditions and lower energy performance, which are common in rural areas.
- **Crime:** Shropshire is much less deprived than most areas, ranking better than 86% of local authorities.
- **Income, Employment, Health, and Education:** Shropshire is less deprived than many local authorities in these domains (less deprived than 64% for income, 62% for employment, 58% for health and disability, and 57% for education and skills).

### Chart to show Shropshire compared with England



# Map to show Geographical Barriers to Services in Shropshire

## Geographical Barriers to Services Domain



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**Shropshire Council**

Scale : 1:266,497

## 2. The legislative framework in which we operate

### Complying with guidance and legislation

The **Equality Act 2010**, together with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, forms a framework of protection for equality, diversity, social inclusion and human rights.

Shropshire Council seeks to ensure that, like other public authorities, it is compliant with the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**. Guidance on this was updated by Government in December 2023 and issued to all local authorities.

This **Duty**, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, may be described as the duty on a public authority, when carrying out its functions, to have what is called **due regard** to three equality aims.

These equality aims are listed below.

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advancing equality of opportunity;
- Fostering good relations.

As a local authority, we must comply with both a general equality duty and with specific duties, as set out in the Act.

### **The general equality duty**

To demonstrate full compliance with the **general duty**, we are required to publish annual information about our workforce and service user diversity.

In terms of meeting the **general duty**, our annual diversity reports are published on the Council website, with reports from previous years retained as well as the most current ones. These are published on the website every year, enabling progress to be charted against the three national aims and our own local objectives.

The legislation specifies that a listed authority must publish its equality information and equality objectives in a manner which is accessible to the public and may publish this information within another published document. To not meet our legal obligations would be to risk intervention by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

### **Specific duties**

To demonstrate full compliance with the **specific duties**, we are required to publish one or more equality objectives which we think we should achieve.

The frequency for these objectives to be published is a minimum of every four years.

In terms of meeting our **specific duties**, we have previously published the equality objectives action plans for 2016 to 2020 and for 2020 to 2024. As with the annual diversity reports, these documents are on the [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk) website, in the section on “equality, diversity and social inclusion”, along with further background and complementary information about this policy area. Please see below for more information about the current plan.

### **Current Strategic Equality Objectives Action Plan 2024 to 2028**

The Strategic Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2024 to 2028 was presented to Cabinet in November 2024 by the Leader of the Council, at which time it was approved with support across political parties.

Publication of the Strategic Equality Objectives Action Plan is a legal requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) set out in the Equality Act 2010. Its production enabled the Council to not only frame our proposed actions for the next four years but also record and reflect upon progress made in the last four years. This is being achieved despite financial constraints, with a focus upon joint working and best use of resources within the Council and across organisational boundaries.

The Action Plan serves to continue to demonstrate our commitment to tackling racism and other forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to fostering good relations across communities, and to advancing equality of opportunity, through our actions as a Council and in partnership with others.

This includes support to our workforce as well as to communities, with examples given in the annual service user diversity reports and workforce diversity reports that are also published as per PSED requirements. The Gender Pay Gap reports sit alongside these, with the sets of reports serving to aid trend analysis over time.

Further information and practical guidance is also available for our workforce on our staff intranet, including an EDI Workforce Policy, which was produced with HR colleagues during 2024.

Publication of an approved Equality Objectives Action Plan 2024 to 2028 thus enables up to date positioning of the Council to assist in efforts to meet its PSED. It is also facilitating timely links with other local and national policy and strategy developments in the arena of equality, diversity, and social inclusion.

### **Describing Protected Characteristics**

The Equality Act describes nine **Protected Characteristics** groupings ie characteristics that people may share.

Local authorities such as ourselves and other public sector organisations are obliged under the Public Sector Equality Duty to have ‘due regard’ to the needs of people in these groupings in our decision making processes. The nine groups are, in alphabetical order:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion and belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation.

There is intersectionality across the Protected Characteristic groupings as well as for the additional groupings we consider in Shropshire. This term indicates that a person will inevitably belong to at least three groupings, ie Age and Race, and the biological sex to which they were assigned at birth; and that during the course of their lives they may then describe themselves as belonging at one time or another to one or more other groupings as well, eg Religion or Belief eg Marriage or Civil Partnership.

Within the Disability grouping, conscious efforts are being made for ESHIAs in regard to service change proposals to consider the likely impacts for people with sensory disabilities, people with neurodiverse conditions, and those with hidden physical disabilities including Crohn's disease.

We also consider the projected neutral, negative or positive impact for those individuals and households that we may consider to be vulnerable by virtue of their circumstances. Whilst these are not defined as Protected Characteristics within equality legislation, it has been a matter of good practice in Shropshire for us to consider their needs as well, within a tenth grouping termed **Social Inclusion**. This includes low income households, households in rural areas, and young people leaving care.

When we introduced this tenth category, back in 2014, it was with the recognition that whilst it did not carry the legal weight applied to the nine Protected Characteristics, it was one that we very much wanted to introduce to complement our considerations about individuals, wherever they may live in our rural and sparsely populated county.

Social inclusion reflects the circumstances in which individuals and households may find themselves, whether that is households living in rural isolation or in market towns; those living in fuel poverty or on low incomes; veterans or serving members of the armed forces and their families; and people we define as being vulnerable, such as rough sleepers, refugees, and people at risk of homelessness. This then picks up on economic factors and environmental considerations as well, at local and national level, enabling us to for example think about the impacts in our local area of the national cost of living crisis.

The category of **young people leaving care** is now considered as a local protected characteristic grouping by the Council, as is the case in Telford and Wrekin.

As with Telford and Wrekin, the Council considers those in the grouping of **veterans and serving members of the armed force and their families**, in a separate grouping, in order to visibly demonstrate that ‘due regard’ is being given to people in this grouping, as per the requirements of the Armed Forces Act 2021.

**Carers** of all ages are also now a local protected characteristic grouping to whom to give ‘due regard’ in our decision making processes. This follows agreement at Full Council on this during 2025, with ongoing member support for national efforts by Carers UK to encourage Government to add this grouping to the nine groupings set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Please note that carers have formed part of our own decision making for some years now, within our wider local grouping of social inclusion, as this category helps us all to think about people who we may regard as vulnerable by virtue of their household circumstances.

It is worth again emphasising that there is intersectionality across groupings, and with this that anyone may be a carer, at different life stages and across groupings, notably Age, Disability, Sex, and Pregnancy and Maternity.

Government guidance states the following:

**“Having due regard”** means properly considering the 3 aims identified in the act, and how they relate to the function you are exercising, and then deciding what weight to give them.

*“It is not a duty to achieve a particular outcome. The level of “due regard” considered sufficient in any particular context depends on the facts.*

*“A proportionate approach should be taken to the resources spent on duty compliance, depending on the circumstances of the case and the seriousness of the potential equality impacts on those with protected characteristics.*

*“When assessing the equality impacts of a decision, organisations should consider the positive and negative impacts, not just the negative. For example, policies designed to support integration and community cohesion may have a positive impact across a population, even if not targeted at any one group in particular.*

**“Eliminating unlawful conduct prohibited by the act”** means eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation, failure to make reasonable adjustments and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the act.

**“Advancing equality of opportunity”** means having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- *remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their relevant protected characteristics*
- *take steps to meet the different needs of people who share a relevant “protected characteristic*

- *encourage participation in public life or any other activity by underrepresented groups*
- *take steps to meet the different needs of disabled persons*

*“Considering people’s different needs and taking steps to meet those needs can be relevant to avoiding indirect discrimination. There are specific provisions in the act about making reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities.*

*“It is important to note here that the duty to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity is not a duty to put in place positive action measures. Positive action means measures permitted under the act that aim to alleviate disadvantage or under-representation, or to meet the particular needs of those who share a protected characteristic. It may be appropriate to consider positive action as part of the second aim of the duty, where adverse impacts have been identified. However, the duty is not a positive action programme and the use of positive action is voluntary.*

*“Positive action must balance the seriousness of the disadvantage suffered, or the extent to which people with a protected characteristic are under-represented, against the impact that the proposed action may have on other people.*

**“Fostering good relations”** *means having regard to the need to deal with prejudice and support understanding.*

*“For example, some decisions have the power to bring divided groups together and to support their mutual understanding. Other decisions may inadvertently cause people with one protected characteristic to blame people with another for a social problem.*

*“Unless there is a clear correlation with a protected characteristic, considering demographics that are not protected characteristics will not help you to comply with the duty. In fact, it could obscure compliance in your supporting records. Examples of demographics that are not protected characteristics include:*

- *class*
- *gender*
- *gender identity*
- *caring responsibilities*
- *single parenthood*

*Depending on context, some of them may be linked to race, sex, or gender reassignment.”*

### **Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments**

It is a legal requirement, laid upon us as a public sector body through the Equality Act 2010, for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services.

Carrying out impact assessments helps us as a public authority to ensure that, as far as possible, we are taking actions to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, and to thus demonstrate that the three national equality aims are integral to our decision making processes.

As reinforced in Government guidance updated in November 2023, it is up to us as an authority to decide what form our equality impact assessment may take. By way of illustration, some local authorities focus more overtly upon human rights; some include safeguarding. It is about what is considered to be needed in a local authority's area, in line with local factors such as demography and strategic objectives as well as with the national legislative imperatives.

We need to be in a position to be able to demonstrate to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) that we have made every effort to carry out our equality impact screenings, and that we have done so at every stage where it would be appropriate to do so.

In Shropshire, the tool that we use to do this work is referred to as an **Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)**

This is a single screening template, usually presented as an appendix to a committee report, either to Cabinet or to the Strategic Licensing Committee. ESHIAs thus form part of the committee paper documentation for elected members to consider in decision making processes: and are a crucial component within such considerations as well as demonstrating our open and transparent approach. Our ESHIA screening sets out to ensure that "due regard" is being given to equality, equity, social inclusion and health and wellbeing.

For us, this is about maximising the opportunity of a legal requirement in relation to considering impacts for the nine Protected Characteristic groupings to augment it with our own extra efforts as a council.

As well as considering impacts for the nine Protected Characteristic groupings, our ESHIA screenings therefore set out to ensure that "due regard" is being given to equality, equity, social inclusion and health and wellbeing, in line with our local aspirations and policies as well as our national legal obligations.

The screening template was updated in December 2025 to reflect the addition of Carers as a local grouping, and to incorporate extra depth in regard to health inequalities and health equity, and in regard to collaborative working with town and parish councils and partner organisations.

There continue to be guidance notes within each box of the template and in further contextual guidance at the end. The new template came into use 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026.

### **Using appropriate and inclusive terminology**

It can be tricky to keep on top of terminology and acronyms with regard to equality, equity and diversity. However, the recommendation would always be to ask a person

with whom you are interacting, either as a member of the public or as a colleague in an organisation, how they would like to describe themselves.

Standard descriptions, such as those used in the Census 2021, are extremely helpful in providing consistency and therefore aiding comparability.

However, these do not and could not pick up on differences and diversities such as the changing needs of someone with a mental health issue, or the range of ethnic origins of people living or working in Shropshire.

Umbrella terms like 'B.A.M.E.' (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) and 'Eastern European' should be avoided. They are at best lazy and at worse unhelpful, to us and to the diverse communities that we seek to serve.

They do not help because in grouping people together as persons of colour without sufficient thought to their heritage, or by geographical region without sufficient thought to country, we are making generalisations rather than making genuine efforts to work with all our communities, including those represented in our own workforce.

The advice we give is either to be specific about a particular grouping, or to use the term 'ethnic minority' as a preferred term if there is a need to extend this to a wider grouping, and to explain why.

This advice, issued here in 2022 after due reference to national research, has been strengthened through the issuing of Government guidance in this regard.

(<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity/>)

[extract below]

### ***BAME and BME***

*We do not use the terms BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) and BME (Black and minority ethnic) because they emphasise certain ethnic minority groups (Asian and Black) and exclude others (Mixed, Other and White ethnic minority groups). The terms can also mask disparities between different ethnic groups and create misleading interpretations of data. In March 2021, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities [recommended that the government stop using the term BAME](#). One of the recommendations in the [final report on COVID-19 disparities](#), published in December 2021, was to refer to ethnic minority groups individually, rather than as a single group. This was supported by research commissioned by the Race Disparity Unit (RDU), which found that people from ethnic minorities were 3 times more likely to agree than disagree that the term 'BAME' was unhelpful.*

[extract ends]

Our approach enables us to be inclusive and respectful, whether we are for example talking about Black people of African heritage, where to be Nigerian is to not be Zimbabwean, or White people from Eastern European countries, where to be Bulgarian is to not be Polish.

We are a county of diverse communities, however small, and each is due respect. Sometimes, for example if talking about health inequalities, we may need to use a broader term than a single country due to commonalities across ethnic minorities; sometimes we will want to recognise dual heritage and mixed heritage. And sometimes we will want to celebrate a shared heritage across a region, as with South Asian Heritage Month. Again, to be South Asian could be that a person identifies as being from any of a number of countries across the region.

With a workforce drawn from the communities that we seek to serve, our efforts include helping them to be seen and celebrated, and helping to demonstrate that if a commemoration or observation is important to them and their communities, it is important to Shropshire Council as well.

### **Progress made across our strategic action areas for 2024 to 2028**

For 2024 to 2028, the strategic action areas were recast to the following:

- Publish information in ways that are visible and accessible
- Analyse and utilise data in ways that are consistent and coherent
- Work together in ways that are collaborative and cost efficient

For 2025, highlights have included:

#### **A. Publish information in ways that are visible and accessible**

Activity ongoing:

Maintain online resource materials on equalities, diversity and social inclusion in one location on the external website at [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

Utilising one main location has enabled information to be presented as logically and visibly as possible, with links to further external material that may be helpful, including the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Use of these pages has facilitated ready links to be made to press releases and resources elsewhere on the website, including committee papers, and to other related websites including Shropshire Archives.

We ensure that there are timely publications of press releases, news stories, and digital materials to mark celebrations and commemorations, and to raise awareness and understanding amongst the community and amongst the workforce of what these events and dates mean to different groupings.

This has included material to mark religious festivals and dates, such as around Bodhi Day for Buddhists, Chinese New Year, Christmas, Diwali, Easter, Hanukkah, Ramadhan and Vaisakhi.

The Council has also publicised the efforts of Community Pride volunteers during Pride Month, commemorated Africa Day and Stephen Lawrence Day, promoted UN International Women's Day and UN International Day for People with Disabilities, and used payslips to promote Show Racism the Red Card Day and the White Ribbon campaign against domestic violence.

The annual service user and workforce diversity reports required to be published as part of our PSED are added to the website each year. These provide extra depth and layers of information about not only the needs of people across and within groupings but also the heritage and cultures of diverse communities in Shropshire, including amongst our workforce. We also publish our Gender Pay Gap reports in the same place, which as with the above reports then facilitates trend analysis over time.

#### Activity ongoing:

The following is an example of a press release that we have published in the last year, against a national backdrop of a rise in hate crime. Our endeavours are around doing what we can at local level to foster good relations across communities.

#### *Press release 07/10/2025: Shropshire stands firm against religious hatred*

*Members of the South Shropshire Interfaith Forum and the Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum have come together with Shropshire Council to make the following joint statement, after the attack on the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in Manchester on Thursday 2 October 2025, and the arson attack at the Peacehaven Mosque in East Sussex.*

*They said:*

*"We are shocked and saddened at the deadly attack on Jewish worshippers in Manchester. This, together with recent attacks on people of Sikh faith in nearby Wolverhampton, and the increased need for security at places of worship such as gurdwaras and mosques as well as at synagogues across the country, are signs to us that it has never been more important to foster good relations between people of all faiths and people of none. The arson attack on the Peacehaven mosque over the weekend is a further sign that we need to act now in showing mutual kindness and respect across communities.*

*"People of faith should feel safe in their places of worship and in their observations and commemorations of their faiths. They should be able to go about their daily lives without the fear that others are defining them by their religion or by their colour, or by what they are wearing in accordance with their faith. As representatives of diverse religions, and as a local council representing our diverse communities, we now call upon people in Shropshire to stand with us in respect for the beliefs of others.*

*"We urge anyone witnessing or experiencing religious hatred, just as they would do in witnessing or experiencing racial hatred, to report this to the police immediately. We will ourselves continue to challenge misinformation, to foster good relations through our own example and that of others, and to celebrate the range of faiths in Shropshire and the contributions that everyone brings. Everyone belongs here."*

## Reporting a hate crime

*In Shropshire, agencies and organisations tackle hate crime and hate incidents through partnership working. People can report hate incidents either by directly contacting the police or by completing the reporting form. This is part of a countywide approach that supports third party reporting. This is when a victim of a hate crime or hate incident, or a witness to one, prefers not to report it directly to the police, but still wants action to be taken and reports it to a non-police organisation.*

*Any information gathered from these reports helps agencies and organisations establish whether there are spikes in hate incidents and crimes or whether specific groups or areas are suffering from more incidents than others. Even if there's no requirement for the incident to be investigated it allows agencies and organisations to assess the number of incidents that are occurring and the locations.*

[release ends]

We similarly supported partners with content for a statement after the Bondi beach attacks in December 2025: the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) published the following on their website.

### Press release 15/12/2025: Everyone Belongs Here: Standing Together During Hanukkah and Beyond

#### Hanukkah begins: the eight-day Jewish festival of lights 15 December 2025 to 23 December 2025

*As part of NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin's 'Everyone Belongs Here' campaign, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering an inclusive, respectful and supportive environment for all communities across our health and care system.*

*At this special time of Hanukkah, we reflect on its enduring message of hope and light, recognising the importance of standing together against hate and supporting one another, regardless of background or belief.*

*Following the deadly attack at a Bondi Beach celebration of the start of Hanukkah this year, we remind ourselves here in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin that the theme of Hanukkah is of bringing light into the darkness.*

*At this time of shock across the world, we join with Jewish colleagues and the wider Jewish community in the United Kingdom and across the world to mourn the loss of life, and to dedicate ourselves to the continued challenge of tackling antisemitism and all forms of religious hatred, remembering that the word 'Hanukkah' actually means 'dedication'.*

*And we remind ourselves of the following messages from members of the South Shropshire Interfaith Forum and the Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum:*

*"People of faith should feel safe in their places of worship and in their observations and commemorations of their faiths.*

*“They should be able to go about their daily lives without the fear that others are defining them by their religion or by their colour, or by what they are wearing in accordance with their faith. As representatives of diverse religions, and as a local council representing our diverse communities, we now call upon people in Shropshire to stand with us in respect for the beliefs of others.*

*“We urge anyone witnessing or experiencing religious hatred, just as they would do in witnessing or experiencing racial hatred, to report this to the police immediately. We will ourselves continue to challenge misinformation, to foster good relations through our own example and that of others, and to celebrate the range of faiths in Shropshire and the contributions that everyone brings. Everyone belongs here.”*

[Read more about the ‘Everyone Belongs Here’ campaign.](#)

## **B. Analyse and utilise data in ways that are consistent and coherent**

### Activity ongoing:

Analyse and present contextual equality and health and well being information in a range of ways and through local and national opportunities that arise, in order to strengthen collective understanding about issues and needs, and optimise use to be made in partnership, Council and service area policy and strategy development of all opportunities to aid understanding of equality, diversity and social inclusion issues.

This is an ongoing action involving use of a wider range of in depth analyses published on the website, including Census 2021 analyses and public health data. There is also a greater awareness of the complexities of health inequalities for different groupings, including those which emerged during the pandemic; and those which remain for people we may describe as vulnerable. This includes people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families; and young people leaving care.

### Action completed:

2025 has seen the further assessment of inequalities (both health and otherwise) through the embedding of select aspects of the Health Equity Assessment Tool within the ESHIA process. The template was revised accordingly, to reflect the addition of Carers as a local grouping, and to incorporate the extra depth in regard to health inequalities and health equity, and in regard to collaborative working with town and parish councils and partner organisations

Our additional efforts to consider impacts of decisions through the screenings that we undertake involve considerations around social inclusion, around health and well being, linked to health impact considerations; around environmental impacts, linked to climate change considerations; and around economic impacts.

None of these are currently legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010. Together, they add value or at least ensure that the Council is visibly seeking to take an holistic view of impacts. This also means that we are supporting our service areas in taking a proportionate and time efficient way in which to do so through use of a single template.

We are also seeking to make sure we are prepared for the anticipated enactment of the socio-economic duty set out in the Equality Act 2010, as Government are committed to bringing this element of the legislation into force.

#### Action completed:

##### Census 2031 preparation

In February 2026, the Council submitted a detailed response to the national Census 2031 topic consultation by ONS, a summary of which is below.

##### Summary of Shropshire Council Response to the Census Topic Consultation

Shropshire Council strongly supports the continued collection of a **comprehensive, decennial Census** for England and Wales, emphasising its critical role in enabling **evidence-based policy, service planning, statutory compliance and fair funding** for a large, predominantly rural local authority.

Across all topic areas, the Council highlights that **Census data remains the most robust and reliable source** of population intelligence, particularly at **small geographies** (including wards, electoral divisions and parishes), where alternative administrative or survey data are either unavailable, insufficiently granular, or lack comparability.

##### Core themes and priorities

- **Strategic planning and resource allocation**  
Census data underpins key corporate and statutory functions, including the Corporate Plan, Medium-Term Financial Strategy, Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, Local Plan, housing strategies, transport planning, economic growth strategies and school place planning.
- **Understanding rurality and spatial inequality**  
The Council stresses the importance of granular data to reflect Shropshire's dispersed settlement pattern, ageing population, transport challenges, fuel poverty risks and access to services in rural communities.
- **Equality, inclusion and statutory duties**  
Census data is central to meeting the **Public Sector Equality Duty** and obligations under the **Armed Forces Act**, supporting Equality Impact Assessments, workforce and service user diversity reporting, and targeted action to tackle discrimination, hate crime and exclusion.
- **Small populations and vulnerable groups**  
The response repeatedly emphasises the value of Census data in identifying and supporting small or vulnerable population groups, including disabled people, unpaid carers, veterans, refugees, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, LGBTQ+ residents, people with long-term health conditions, and low-income households.
- **Time-series and multivariate analysis**  
The Council highlights the importance of continuity with previous censuses to track change over time, forecast demand and understand complex

interactions between variables (for example age, health, housing, employment, income and travel patterns).

### Topic coverage

Shropshire Council supports the continued inclusion of all existing topic groups, including:

- Demographics and household composition
- Housing
- Migration and citizenship
- Ethnicity, religion and language
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Health, disability and unpaid care
- Education, labour market and travel to work
- Armed forces veterans

The Council also supports the **potential inclusion of new topics**, particularly:

- **Income**, to improve understanding of affordability and deprivation without reliance on costly commercial data
- **Type of health condition or impairment**, to strengthen needs assessment and service planning
- **Digital skills and access**, to support digital inclusion and service design

### Consequences of non-collection

The response consistently warns that removal of Census topics would:

- Weaken the evidence base for decision-making
- Undermine statutory duties and equality compliance
- Reduce the ability to target services and funding effectively
- Require costly, less reliable local surveys or commercial data purchases

## **C. Work together in ways that are collaborative and cost efficient**

### Activity ongoing:

The Council is growing a county-wide cherry tree orchard of remembrance to mark the Holocaust and other genocides, in partnership with inter faith forums, local primary schools, and local elected members as community leaders.

This orchard is being grown in different locations across our rural county, with a new tree planted each year since 2015. This includes the planting of a Remembering Srebrenica tree in 2021 by the Armed Forces memorial outside Shirehall, to remember the humanitarian role of the local armed forces in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and in genocides since that time.

For 2026, the theme was 'Bridging generations', and the school chosen was Whitchurch Juniors, after we planted in the south in Ludlow in January 2025.

Shropshire Council and Whitchurch Town Council have thanked children from Whitchurch Juniors for planting what is now the 21<sup>st</sup> cherry tree in the memorial orchard being grown across Shropshire.

A full school assembly was held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026, Holocaust Memorial Day, with the schoolchildren. This involved members of Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum, South Shropshire Interfaith Forum, local vicars, Shropshire Council representatives, and the Mayor of Whitchurch Town Council.

Children read their own poetry, listened to faith leaders sharing reflections and perspectives with them around the HMD theme of “Bridging generations”, and joined in prayers and candle lighting to mark the occasion.

The tree was donated by Whitchurch Town Council, for whom the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Rose Hall, addressed the assembly before the tree was then planted outside by several of the children.

The children were also working towards making an artwork flame, linked to the theme. On the day, visitors were able to see that each child in school had created a handprint which was then mounted into the flame design. The flames are filled with names of family members.



*Partners involved in planting the HMD tree*

In follow up, Mrs Lois Dale, for the Council, the Mayor of Whitchurch Town Council, Councillor Mrs Rose Hall, and representatives of world faiths, added to the artwork.

In this way, there is now a collective piece that brings the theme to life, like the tree, and provides a fitting way for everyone in Shropshire to commemorate the planting of the 21<sup>st</sup> tree. Pictures will be shared with the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

The Council's efforts on Holocaust and genocide commemoration work with children continue to be recognised by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, and the national Remembering Srebrenica charity, with whom we share our work. These are not only around ensuring that the Holocaust and other genocides are never forgotten but also around providing opportunities for children to work with representatives of a range of faith communities and grow their own understanding of world faiths.



Activity ongoing:

Work with local NHS organisations and Telford and Wrekin Council through the Integrated Care System, on the following areas:

For the workforce: equip managers with the confidence and competencies to recognise and tackle racism and other forms of discrimination, including sexism and misogyny, through targeted training and briefing, and equip all employees to act as allies.

For service users and the community: implement communication campaigns to address misinformation and raise awareness of how to recognise and report hate

crime in all its forms, allied to communications about standards of respectful behaviour and language towards the workforce.

Action completed:

During Hate Crime Awareness Week, which was in the week leading up to Show Racism the Red Card Day on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October, Shropshire Council launched documentation including a statement of commitment to support staff across all settings against racism and discrimination.

The documentation is called “Dignity and respect towards staff across settings”. Council officers have worked with employee engagement groups and with internal providers to produce this document. It was published on the external website in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion pages as a resource for ready access and usage, and as public demonstration of the Council’s commitment towards tackling racism and other forms of discrimination.

The documentation sets out the local partnership context in which we operate as a member of the ICS. The ICS, or Integrated Care System, comprises all the organisations enabling, commissioning or delivering health and social care functions across Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. It therefore includes the two local authorities plus NHS organisations, primary care, and healthcare providers.

The workforce across the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin area is diverse, with a range of different ethnic minorities represented. Staff may unfortunately encounter racist or discriminatory abuse or threatening behaviour from those they care for, or for whom they are arranging or delivering a service. Tackling racism has been agreed as a priority area for action across the ICS, with further actions to follow around all manifestations of discrimination towards staff. This includes against those who have disabilities, and those experiencing misogyny, religious hatred, and other forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The Council's stance seeks to create a safe and respectful environment not only for health and social care staff and care providers, but also for all staff members, within a robust framework to protect everyone, and to foster an inclusive and supportive workplace for all employees.

The documentation includes the statement of commitment that we make to employees; the ways in which we will support employees, through listening; supporting; acting; reporting; and reviewing; and the three stage reporting process that we have tested with internal providers, in regard to customers of our services.

Actions may involve use of a three stage process utilising the football process of yellow cards and red cards. This links to our ongoing actions to Show Racism the Red Card and utilising an approach that will have familiarity across a range of audiences.

- Stage One: Verbal Conversation
- Stage Two: Written Warning (yellow card)
- Stage Three: Formal Letter (red card)

A formal letter would confirm any restrictions imposed on services provided to the customer, the reasons for these restrictions and the time period for these restrictions to be reviewed.

The yellow card should in no way be seen as indicative of a minor offence; it is intended to show our own intention to act to support staff if the behaviour of the customer does not improve. If it is necessary, due to the severity of an offence, the decision may be taken to issue a straight red card.

If a customer wishes to challenge the Council's decisions to apply sanctions or restrictions or the way they have been treated by council employees they can raise these concerns through the Council's Corporate Complaints Process. Further information is available on the Council's website.

It is seen as important to act in the first instance in ways that will increase understanding and be positive, rather than ways that are directive and potentially punitive. The documentation includes behavioural agreement template and letter templates accordingly, as well as a page signposting the workforce to a range of other resources.

This completed action also links to the other two action areas, ie to:

A. Publish information in ways that are visible and accessible

B. Analyse and utilise data in ways that are consistent and coherent

This is because implementation of the documentation will help the Council and partners to achieve consistency in application across the ICS, through communicating the existing guidelines, encouraging greater reporting and consistently monitoring reports and outcomes from incidents.

It is recognised that the actions that we take need to be timely and targeted, depending upon the nature of the threat, including discrimination, bullying and harassment. For our own workforce, and for our elected members, the request is being made that incidents need to be recorded on our internal system, the ERP, as well as ideally being reported to the Police. This is in order that we may start to build a more complete picture not only of the range and type and extent of such incidents but also the action taken as a result of these incidents, thereby demonstrating ongoing support at leadership level across the workforce and our councillor body.

This threads into the shared commitment across the ICS to record and act against incidents of racism and all forms of discrimination, including hate crime against people because of their religion or beliefs.

In so doing, it links with the ongoing ICS "Everyone belongs here" campaign. Launched on World Day for Cultural Diversity, on Wednesday 21 May 2025, the '[Everyone Belongs Here](#)' campaign is a bold step forward in celebrating the rich diversity of our workforce and community, and in standing firmly against discrimination in all its forms.

Developed by colleagues from the NHS, local councils, and wider health and care partners, the campaign builds on ongoing efforts to strengthen the reporting of discriminatory incidents and to ensure consistent monitoring of these reports. 'Everyone Belongs Here' reflects the shared values of respect, inclusion, and compassion held within the local health and care system. It shines a light on the contributions of every individual working across the system, from frontline care to leadership roles.

Vanessa Whatley, Executive Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Chief Nursing Officer at NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS, said:

*"Everyone Belongs Here' is grounded in our values. It champions kindness, celebrates difference, and recognises the vital role every member of our team plays.*

*"We believe in inclusion. We are proud to have a workforce that reflects many backgrounds and cultures – among our colleagues, hundreds bring with them heritage and experience from outside the UK. Their diverse perspectives enrich the care we provide every day."*



#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

The message that 'Everyone belongs here' is as good a way to conclude this report and re-emphasise our own commitments as any.

Equality legislation necessitates compliance but also provides opportunity for reflection on local progress and recalibration towards where we want to go in addressing inequalities and in achieving equity of opportunity for all our communities, whether they live in rural areas or in our market towns.

The Strategic Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2024-2028, which is online at [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk), sets out to make the most of the feedback we gain from communities, allied to local and national digital resources, and emerging intelligence and data on inequalities. We will continue to utilise events, celebrations and commemorations through which to address misinformation and above all raise awareness of the rich diversity of our communities.

Along with our partners, and through our workforce, we are in a position to continue to deliver on our strategic actions during this four year period in ways that will utilise the data and evidence that we already hold about groupings and their needs, analyse and use it effectively in decision making processes, and do all that is possible to engage with and support our communities. This will help us all to adapt to anticipated and unexpected changes, whether these are at local, national or international level, and to maximise efficient use of resources.

In so doing, we may make more local progress with regard to the three national equality aims, as well as improving the health and well being of the communities that we all serve.

The workforce of the Council is a key target group in the Council's equality endeavours, as are the elected Members of the Council. The assistance of all staff across all service areas, in taking account of equality considerations in their everyday actions and in applying such considerations to planned changes to services, will help the Council to proactively meet its PSED as well as mitigate against any risks of non-compliance. Members elected in the countywide elections during 2025 were also offered briefings about our statutory obligations and about local good practice, with guidance and advice continuing to be made available to them as community leaders.

We will continue to publish information in ways that are visible and accessible, seek to take due regard of needs, in particular recognising intersectionality between groupings, and target efforts at finding out where there may be barriers to accessing particular services, and how this might be addressed in ways that will promote health and well being. This will continue to be reported upon in the annual Service User and Workforce Diversity Reports published online.

We hope that you have found this annual service user diversity report, which draws upon the Action Plan, to be interesting and useful. We look forward to taking this and other opportunities to continue to report on progress in meeting our local equality objectives, and in so doing serving to aid achievement of the national equality aims. Please also take the time to look at the sister report on workforce diversity as well.

## Appendix I

### **Table one: this is a table to show the nine groupings of people as defined in the Equality Act 2010**

*Main definitions source: Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)*

<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Age	Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).
Disability	A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Gender reassignment	The process of transitioning from one gender to another. The Supreme Court ruling made in 2025 does not change the protection trans people are afforded under the Protected Characteristic of 'gender reassignment', as well as other provisions under the Equality Act 2010.
Marriage and civil partnership	In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. [1]. This is also true in Scotland where relevant legislation has been brought into force. [2]. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race	Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
Religion and belief	Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition. This grouping therefore includes Veganism.
Sex	A man or a woman. The Supreme Court ruling made in 2025 clarified that the Sex grouping relates to the biological sex of the person as recorded at birth.
Sexual orientation	Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

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[1] Section 1, Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013; [2] Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014.

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