

Birmingham

Area Assessment

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for an independent overview
of local public services

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Birmingham at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Birmingham. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from

-  Green flag: Tackling climate change and reducing CO2 emissions
-  Green flag: Working in partnership to meet housing need

Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

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The local area

Birmingham is the largest city outside London. It has a population of over a million people. Located at the heart of the West Midlands, it is at the centre of England's road, rail and air networks. Over the last few years the City centre has been transformed into a thriving commercial and cultural centre. It's also a green city with 3,400 hectares of park and open space and many miles of canals.

Birmingham's economy has undergone a significant change over the past three decades with the service sector replacing manufacturing as the principal source of employment. Manufacturing continues to be a key element of the city's economy though, with an increasing focus on high-technology production.

Birmingham has some of the most deprived areas in England, unemployment is high and people's health is quite poor.

After years of population decrease, linked to the decline in manufacturing

industries, Birmingham is growing again. The population is becoming increasingly diverse. More than a third of the population is now from black and minority ethnic communities, and by 2026 it is expected that no single ethnic group will form most of the city's population. Birmingham is a comparatively young city - in 2006, almost half of the population was under 30. But the over-85s age group is expected to increase significantly.

The next section tells you how Birmingham's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Birmingham doing?

Be healthy - enjoy long and healthy lives

The health of most of the people of Birmingham is worse than the England average. Infant mortality and life expectancy are significantly worse.

Across the City there are also stark contrasts. Men from the most well-off areas can expect to live 9.5 years longer than those in the more deprived areas. For women, this difference is nearly 8 years. The Council and its partners know how serious health inequalities are and are working hard to improve them. Fewer babies are dying before their first birthday than in recent years. The figure is still too high and is among the highest in the country. Infant mortality is part of the reason life expectancy figures are so poor.

The partners working to tackle health problems have some big challenges to face because of the scale and diversity of the City. However they do need to work better together to start to make faster progress.

Enjoy a high quality of life - benefit from good housing and renowned cultural and leisure opportunities

Over half of Birmingham's population live in areas that are classed as the most deprived in England. In common with many large cities, poor quality housing has been a long standing problem in Birmingham. The links between poor housing and health inequality and reduced life chances have long been understood by the partners. Not only are they working hard to improve the existing poor quality housing, they are also tackling some specific challenges in the future. Partners are making significant progress in tackling high levels of homelessness.

Social housing in the city is on target to be brought up to the decent homes standard by 2010. The partners are working hard to ensure more housing is built in the city. The Council has secured extra money to build new homes and beat its affordable housing targets this year. Given the economic downturn this has been a significant achievement made possible through good joint working with the Council, housing associations and housing developers.

As well as good housing the partners also see that providing renowned cultural and leisure opportunities are a priority to improve the quality of life in Birmingham. Over the past 15 years new investment, private and public, has transformed the centre, boosting Birmingham's reputation as a cultural, service and commercial centre. Visitor numbers are up and leisure and tourism now contributes an estimated £4.4 billion to the local economy. The challenge for the partners is to ensure that the leisure and cultural opportunities are taken up by the more disadvantaged communities, who could benefit more from them than they do now.

Make a contribution - value one another and play an active part in the community.

This priority is about the people of Birmingham valuing one another and actively contributing to the community. The percentage of residents who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area is high. The proportion is among the highest across the country. However the number of residents who usually vote in local elections is very low and Birmingham has one of the lowest voting rates in the UK.

Strengthening community cohesion and integration among and between residents of different communities is a priority for the partners. The partners have set an objective of being the most cohesive city in the UK. At the last survey fewer people in the City believe people from different backgrounds get on well together than in most other places. Similarly a very low proportion of people surveyed said they felt they belonged to their neighbourhood. The 'Be Birmingham' partnership which brings public, private and community organisations together is taking extra steps now to find better ways of understanding and measuring cohesion. It is developing a community cohesion index for the City which will look at how well different needs are being met and what more has to be done. We will watch with interest as to how this develops next year.

Partners work well with voluntary groups and they make a key contribution to the life of the City. The Council also recognises and values the role of carers and the vital contribution they make to supporting and improving the quality of life of some of the most vulnerable people.

Stay safe in a clean, green city - living in safe and clean neighbourhoods

Compared with the other big cities, Birmingham is a safe place. Total crime is down by 33 per cent over the last five years and last year had the lowest crime rate of the eight big cities of England. The numbers of violent crimes in the city fell by seven per cent last year.

Although there have been some recent improvements following concerted action from the Council, procedures for protecting the most vulnerable children in Birmingham are not yet good enough.

The city now has a specific partnership leading on tackling climate change and has made some real progress. There have been big reductions in carbon dioxide emissions. Whilst there have been some improvements in the level of street cleaning and fewer problems with graffiti local people still think there is much room for improvement. The Council has been aiming to reduce the amount of waste it needs to collect and dispose of in the city by encouraging people to recycle more and throw away less. The amount recycled has increased but it is still well below the rate that the best performing areas are achieving and the total amount of waste produced is still high in comparison to other towns and cities.

Succeed economically - benefit from education, training, jobs and investment

Birmingham is the regional centre for the West Midlands and it has a vital role in securing the future of the region. The regional economy is driven by what happens in Birmingham and the area's leadership role is critical to the prosperity and well being of the region.

Partners have worked well together and have good plans to face the challenges of achieving economic success. The recession has made the task all the more difficult. They have responded well and put in place some good schemes and initiatives to support people who are losing their jobs and help businesses to survive.

Levels of unemployment are very high in Birmingham, higher than similar cities. Birmingham has a smaller proportion of people who have higher level skills and qualifications than nationally. During the past year the unemployment rate of people without qualifications has risen twice as fast as those with qualifications. Given the importance of this issue to the economic success of the city, more needs to be done to create more jobs and ensure people in Birmingham have the skills to get them.

Good progress has been made in some areas of educational attainment. Standards at the end of primary school, while in line with similar areas, are below those nationally. The attainment of Birmingham pupils has been rising at GCSE level and the significant gap that used to exist for pupils achieving five good GCSEs (including English and Maths) between Birmingham and the national average is closing. But the city still faces a big problem with an overall lack of skills in the workforce, making it harder for people to get jobs and for the city to grow and attract new business.

The recession has hit the West Midlands hard and the city now needs to work better across the region with other areas to tackle the problems that are standing in the way of achieving economic success.

About Birmingham

A recent survey shows that in Birmingham 71 per cent of people are satisfied with their immediate local area as a place to live. This is broadly the same as the average for similar areas and lower than the national average of 81 per

cent.

Birmingham is the largest city outside London, covering 267.8 square kilometres. It has a population of over a million residents living within 400,000 households. It's a city with 50,000 businesses and 32 million visitors a year. It is at the centre of England's rail, road and air networks. It's the central part of the West Midlands region and three million people live within daily commuting distance. The success and wealth of the entire region depends on the city and the city itself contributes £18 billion a year to the total market value of all the goods produced by the UK.

Over the past 15 years new investment, private and public, has transformed the centre, boosting Birmingham's reputation as a cultural, service and commercial centre. The city has world-class places, including the Symphony Hall, International Convention Centre, the Drum and the Town Hall; it's home to the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Birmingham Royal Ballet and other world-class companies. It's a green city with 3,400 hectares of park and open space and many miles of canals.

After tens of years of population decrease, linked to the decline in manufacturing industries, Birmingham is growing again. We expect 100,000 more people to be living here by 2026. The population is also becoming increasingly diverse; more than 30 per cent of the population is now from black and minority ethnic communities. By 2026 we think that no single ethnic group will form most of the city's population. By 2026, the city is likely to have 228,300 more people belonging to black and minority ethnic groups and 128,200 fewer white people.

Birmingham is a comparatively young city. In 2006, 45 per cent of the population was under 30, with 24,000 more under 18 year olds probably living here in 2026.

Birmingham's reliance on manufacturing work meant it was hit harder than many other cities when this declined in the 20th century. Birmingham's economy has grown over the last ten years, but not as fast as the rest of the country. Birmingham has some of the most deprived areas in England, and worklessness and poverty remain challenging.

In the housing boom of 2000-2007, prices rose by 131 per cent, higher than both the national and West Midlands' averages. But Birmingham is also a poor place. Four out of 10 households don't own a car. Some 61 per cent of children live in low-income households, compared with the West Midlands average of 55 per cent and the average across England of 40 per cent. A third of Birmingham's children live in households below the official poverty line.

Unemployment is high in Birmingham with above national rates of people claiming job seekers allowance and not being able to get a job. A higher than average part of the population has no qualifications. Wages levels are below average. People have a severe need for social housing especially in the inner-city area. The health of people in Birmingham is quite poor.

Be Birmingham, which brings together business, the City Council, and other public bodies, voluntary, and religious groups into a local strategic partnership, makes the plans for the city's future. By 2026 it envisages "the first

sustainable global city in modern Britain". Birmingham is to become "a great place to live, learn, work and visit: a global city with a local heart". The five results the City Council (and its partners) has agreed to work towards are:

Succeed Economically

Stay Safe in a Clean, Green City

Be Healthy

Enjoy a High-Quality of Life

Making a Contribution

How well do priorities for Birmingham express community needs and aspirations?

Partners in Birmingham understand what is important for the future of the city and people who live and work there. They know that they have to tackle child poverty. They have to make sure that people from different backgrounds or with different lifestyles have a successful life in the community. They need to make sure that people have the right skills and the right jobs, and there is enough housing for everyone. The BeBirmingham partnership brings public, private and community organisations together to try to make a difference to these issues. The partners are clear about what they want to achieve and have set targets to help them get there.

With a population of over one million, Birmingham's is made up of many groups of people with different needs. A plan called the sustainable community strategy recognises this. The partners wrote it after talking to around 500 groups of specific people in the city. These are groups or individual people who may find it difficult (or who are unable) to take an active part in their local community. Partners take their decisions carefully to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to use and to benefit from services.

The partners write a report called the State of the City. This has up-to-date facts and figures about Birmingham: the people who live here, the jobs they do, their health and education, and their views about their city. These facts and figures show them what is important and what needs to change and improve. The sustainable community strategy and the local area agreement show how the partners will take these priorities forward.

With a community of over 20 per cent of people from Asian backgrounds and a Black community of nearly 7 per cent, Birmingham's ethnic population makes up a higher than average proportion for an English city. By 2026 there will be no single ethnic majority group. Within all these ethnic groups, people originate from many different countries. In recent years increasing numbers have come from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Of course people's needs vary. Partners recognise this and change their approaches as necessary.

The city also has a higher than average percentage of people who are under 30. This looks set to continue to be the case as the older population - that's people aged over 50 - is expected to increase much more slowly than elsewhere in England. However, partners recognise the older population faces some particular challenges and has an older person's strategy or plan to help them to tackle these. The local area agreement shows how partners aim to support vulnerable people and make the most of their independence, especially if they have long-term health conditions. It also recognises the need for support for their carers.

Birmingham has significant health needs, some of which are worse for certain groups. For example in some parts of the city men can expect to live more than nine years less and women nearly eight years less than in other parts of the city. And for the whole city the figures are three years below the national average. More than half of the adult population is overweight and 18 per cent are clinically obese, especially in particular parts of the city. The city has more early death rates from heart disease, stroke and cancer than elsewhere. Tackling this is a priority for public sector partners.

Babies are almost twice as likely to die in their first year as in the rest of England, especially in some ethnic communities, and when mothers are under 18. This is better than it used to be, though. The rate of teenage pregnancies is also well above the national average. A quarter of city children aged five to 15 are overweight and another 12.5 per cent are clinically obese. But children's overall physical health is as good as that for children in England as a whole. Birmingham is one of the first local authorities to study the well-being of its children. It consulted over 6,000 children and 500 families in 2007. This has helped to identify where to target its work. Partners agreed a five-year strategy to improve the physical and mental health, social and behavioural issues, literacy and numeracy of Birmingham's children.

Health partners are working with some specific communities to find ways of sorting the particular health problems in some neighbourhoods. This way of working is just beginning but is already involving and learning from patients and the public. Partners are also trying to understand better why and how people smoke. They found that 25 per cent of adults in Birmingham smoke, which is 4 per cent higher than the national average. Helping people to give up and improve their health is an important part of what partners want to do.

Partners are working well together to make sure that every community has the health support it most needs. But the picture is constantly changing and more up-to-date information is needed. The Health and Well-being Partnership is reassessing health needs across the city to make sure that information is up-to-date and that support is in the best place.

Partners work well with local communities. The City is made up of neighbourhoods and each can have a very different make up of people. As well as this, the areas can vary strongly economically. Some are among the least deprived in England, but over a third are among the ten per cent most deprived. Although the situation in Birmingham as a whole is improving, areas which were already deprived got worse from 2004 to 2007. Particular problems include housing and poverty. More neighbourhood managers are now being employed to respond to the different needs of areas.

The public sector partners are also working closely with the voluntary sector.

They are investing in it to help it to strengthen its ability to deliver services which support local communities.

A high proportion of the population has no formal qualifications. And the numbers of people claiming benefits because they are unemployed is double the English average rate. Low qualification and skill levels often link to unemployment. Partners know this and are trying to improve what people can do. They are focusing on communities where over a quarter of people are out of work.

It is important that people feel safe, and people in Birmingham say that reducing crime is important to them. Partners have brought together in one place all the information they have about how safe each part of the city's population feels, and what level and type of crime is taking place.

Birmingham is focusing attention on improving housing in Lozells, Soho and Birchfield through the Urban Living housing market renewal pathfinder. The aim is to make the neighbourhoods into good places to live linked to good opportunities for work. Partners are using local neighbourhood forums and community groups to consult with local people.

Working with schools so all pupils achieve the best results they can is a priority for the city's partners. The Council's provisional data for 2009 shows that pupils in Birmingham now achieve better at age 16 for five good GCSEs than they do in other similar parts of the country.

Be healthy - enjoy long and healthy lives

Red flag: Returning home after a stay in hospital

In an average week, about 150 Birmingham people are still in hospital when they could have been discharged. Some have been there for over three months longer than they needed to have been. They could be at home with families and friends or in a more appropriate setting getting on with their lives. Doctors have said that they are ready to go home but local services are not working well enough to get them discharged. This has been a problem in Birmingham for many years. Work has been done to try and solve the problem but it is not working. Local targets are not being met. New plans have been put in place but they suggest that public services still don't understand the best way to make sure people go home from hospital as soon as they can. More needs to be done to make sure that there is a range of services to keep people out of hospital or if they are admitted, discharged as soon as possible. Local partners don't seem to have a clear picture about how these all services should work together. They don't seem to know the best way to fill some of the gaps in services which have been known about for many years. They also need to work better together to make sure that people aren't held up while people argue over who pays for care. We need to see local services getting to grips with this problem and making some real progress.

What's being done in response?

The health and well being partnership which is a sub-group of Be Birmingham has already identified this issue as a priority for improvement and plans have

been in place for some time to address the problem. The plans have recently been reviewed and revised and there is now a very strong focus on making the improvements needed. We will monitor the improvements taking place throughout the year and hope to see faster progress soon.

Be healthy - enjoy long and healthy lives

The ambulance service is getting more emergency calls each year, now at the highest level ever in the West Midlands. In parts of Birmingham the national response time targets for the most serious emergencies are not being met, and the trend has been getting worse. The West Midlands Ambulance Service needs to work closely with the health partners to make sure this vital service responds fast enough to emergency calls. We will watch closely to see whether this improves next year.

The health of many people in Birmingham is worse than the England average. Infant mortality and life expectancy are significantly worse.

Across the City there are also stark contrasts. Men from the most well-off areas can expect to live 9.5 years longer than those in the more deprived areas. For women, this difference is nearly 8 years. The Council and its partners know how serious health inequalities are and are working hard to improve them.

Early death rates from heart disease, stroke and cancer have fallen over the past ten years, particularly among the most disadvantaged groups. However they remain higher than the England average and the gap is not closing fast enough. The mortality rate from all cancers in females is worse than it was in 2006. Figures showing why people die in Birmingham, and this includes death from all cancers and all circulatory disease, are all but one in the worst group when compared with England.

Fewer babies are dying before their first birthday than there were in recent years. The figure is still too high and is among the highest in the country. Infant mortality is part of the reason life expectancy figures are so poor. The highest proportions of infant deaths occur in the most deprived neighbourhoods and amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. The Council and its partners have recognised that this is a serious problem that needs to improve. They have put great effort into making sure there is an improvement. Much work has been done using existing staff and resources, but more can and should be done to redirect and make better use of the existing resources if the necessary improvements are to be achieved.

Rates of children's tooth decay are better than England. Fewer children of reception age are obese than last year, but the number of children aged 10-11 who are obese has increased. The number of physically active children is in line with similar areas and nationally. More people have stopped smoking than did last year. The rates of women who smoke during pregnancy are low and significantly better than the region and England average

Although the latest teenage pregnancy figures show a reduction for Birmingham, the rates are still higher than the England average. In general teenage parents do less well in later life, having less opportunity to achieve their full potential. The children of teenage parents also have fewer life

chances. All the partners in the City need to do more work to reduce the number.

The people of Birmingham report their overall health and well-being lower than the average for all England councils and fall into the worst group.

Fewer adults in Birmingham take part in sport and active recreation than do people in other parts of England. The recently agreed city wide BeActive scheme aims to get 23,000 more people to be more active at levels that will benefit health. They plan substantial increases in the use of pools and centres through sustainable behaviour change. As a result they expect to reduce treatment costs for the NHS. We hope to see what difference this has made next year.

Enjoy a high quality of life - benefit from good housing and renowned cultural and leisure opportunities

Green flag: Working in partnership to meet housing need

Birmingham is working well to raise the quality of housing and widen the choice of homes available across the city. Housing services for vulnerable people, including those who are homeless, have also been improved. Many of these improvements are a result of the success of Birmingham's City Housing Partnership. The partnership is helping many different organisations work better together. For example, the Council supports two housing associations to deliver an innovative project to meet the long-term housing needs and ambitions of young people. St Basil's and Family Housing Association's Trinity Court project helps young people, who have been homeless, save up to buy a place to live. Support is given to help tenants start work and then to be part of a contributory savings plan. St Basil's contributes £10 each week of their rent into a savings fund. At the end of the three years, the young person has a lump sum which they can use as a deposit to buy a home. As well as increasing housing choice, this approach is helping young people to break out of the cycle of homelessness and unemployment.

Enjoy a high quality of life - benefit from good housing and renowned cultural and leisure opportunities

Birmingham has some very wealthy residential areas, with high quality, attractive environments. In the housing boom of 2000-2007, house prices rose by 131 per cent across the city, higher than both the national and West Midlands averages. But Birmingham is also a poor place. Four out of ten households don't own a car. Some 62 per cent of its children live in low-income households, with a third living in households below the official poverty line. Over half of Birmingham's population live in areas that are classed as the most deprived in England.

The links between poor housing and health inequality and reduced life chances have long been understood by the partners. Not only is the city dealing with the existing poor quality housing, it also faces some specific challenges in the future. Not least is the projected population growth, a significant proportion of whom will be over-85. There is and will increasingly be a high demand for housing which is not matched with appropriate supply. The lack of affordable homes is a particular problem, especially for families requiring larger houses. Poor housing is most likely to impact most on vulnerable people.

The partners are working hard to ensure more housing is built in the city. The Council has secured extra funding to build new homes on its land and beat its affordable housing targets of 600 new homes for 2008/09 with 975 new homes built. Given the economic downturn this has been a significant achievement made possible through good joint working with the Council, housing associations and affordable housing providers. So far, little of this has been within the Urban Living neighbourhood. However, Birmingham's bids to develop new affordable housing will increasingly help in the delivery of more homes in the pathfinder area.

The City Housing Partnership is working well. The Council as the key partner has recognised it has a vital role to play in solving the problems. It has notably improved its strategic approach to housing. It scored 'good' with 'excellent prospects for improvement' in its most recent inspection. Partners have showed a sound understanding of a complex range of housing and housing related issues that affect the city's population. This knowledge is used to inform priorities within the current housing plan, for example, tackling overcrowding within black and minority ethnic communities, and a flexible support service for Gypsies and Travellers. This helps to plan for meeting the needs of the increasingly diverse population of the city.

Partners are making significant progress in tackling high levels of homelessness. The number of rough sleepers has reduced from 56 to 4 and the Council's 'home options' approach is successfully preventing large numbers of people becoming homeless. It has significantly reduced the overall number of people in temporary accommodation although there are still too many 16-25 year olds in temporary accommodation and for too long. This is a priority area for the partners and a project funded by the Working Neighbourhoods Fund is supporting 16-25 year old singles to move to longer term, more suitable housing.

The supporting people service user involvement team aims to get the people who use their service involved in it as much as possible. So it developed what is known as the lay assessor scheme. This scheme allows individuals with experience of the service to shape future provision, specifically from a service user view.

The service has recruited 45 people willing to be trained as lay assessors. A unique accredited course has been set up, with Birmingham's Fircroft College. This encourages attendance and provides participants with a sense of achievement from receiving a recognised qualification.

Social housing in the city is on target to be brought up to the decent homes standard by 2010. Decent homes are important for the health and well-being of those living in them. Poor housing helps an area to get a bad reputation.

That makes it an unpopular place to live, which in turn may lead to the breakdown of communities. Decent homes are a key part of any thriving, sustainable community. To be decent a home should be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. Housing associations in Birmingham achieved 95 per cent reaching this standard at the end of 2007/08 and 90 per cent of Council housing (65,000 homes) are now also at this standard.

Birmingham's first Eco Village, Family Housing Association, won the 2008 National Energy Efficiency Award.

As well as good housing the partners also see that providing renowned cultural and leisure opportunities are a priority to improve the quality of life in Birmingham. It is a priority because this can contribute to improved health and well-being, better community feeling, better quality of life altogether. It also improves the city's image. Over the past 15 years new investment, private and public, has transformed the centre, boosting Birmingham's reputation as a cultural, service and commercial centre. The city has world class venues, including the Symphony Hall, International Convention Centre, the Drum and the Town Hall; it's home to the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Birmingham Royal Ballet and other world-class companies.

The ambitious plan for the new Library of Birmingham is a good example of investing in new, high quality, cultural facilities for the future. The site is on Centenary Square between the Birmingham Repertory Theatre (The REP) and Baskerville House. It is a major regeneration project. The Council is using the development itself to create 250 new jobs including 25 apprenticeships. The Council will work with the contractor and make sure that local people who are most likely not to find jobs in the current labour market are taken on for the building of the new culture centre.

Visitor numbers have been increasing significantly and there were 32 million visits to the city last year. Tourism now generates an estimated £4.4 billion every year. It is less clear to what extent people in the poorest areas are benefiting from either the cultural facilities or the wealth created from tourism.

Nearly three quarters of the population are within a 20 minute walk from a range of three different sports facilities. However some leisure facilities outside of the city centre are in need of modernisation. The use of leisure and cultural facilities is low. Only 17.2 per cent of adults in Birmingham are taking part in active sport and leisure in Birmingham, this is amongst the lowest proportion in the country. This figure is much lower in some areas and for some groups, for example older people and people with disabilities. The three primary care trusts recognise the value of increasing participation in physical activity in leading to better health and have joined forces with the Council and other partners to put in over £9 million to enable the Council to offer free gym use and free swimming to everyone in the City, in return for weekly attendance. This scheme is a good example of partners working together to tackle poor health. It has just received a top national public services award.

The challenge for the partners is to ensure that all leisure and cultural opportunities are taken up by the more disadvantaged communities, who could benefit more from them than they do now. Plans are in place for marketing and targeted activities at specific people in specific places. Participation in arts and sports is low and varies across the city. The Council is

and its partners are focusing on four particular neighbourhoods to see what works best in getting people more involved in what is on offer. The specific constituencies are Erdington, Hodge Hill, Ladywood and Perry Barr.

Make a contribution - value one another and play an active part in the community.

The percentage of residents who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area is high. The proportion is among the highest across the country. However the number of residents who usually vote in local elections is very low and Birmingham has one of the lowest voting rates of any European city.

The latest survey of Birmingham people's views on life in the city showed that the lowest proportion in the country (at just under 17 per cent) said they regularly participated in volunteering. However the use of the Volunteers Centres services in Birmingham has increased by 74 per cent in the past year.

Strengthening community cohesion and integration among and between residents of different communities is a priority. The partners who make up Be Birmingham regard this as a vital element of all that they do. Measuring how successful they are in achieving this is difficult. Community cohesion in the local area agreement is measured using the national place survey with the question whether people from different backgrounds get on well together. Currently 72.2 per cent of people say they do. While this is an improvement on the last survey in Birmingham two years ago, it still compares badly with what people are saying in other parts of the country. The partners have set an objective of being the most cohesive city in the UK, with a target to increase the percentage of people saying that people from different communities get on well together to 84 per cent by 2026, and this is in line with the performance in the best cities now.

Similarly a very low proportion of people surveyed said they felt they belonged to their neighbourhood. Be Birmingham is taking extra steps now to find better ways of understanding and measuring cohesion. It is developing a community cohesion index for the City which will look at how well different needs are being met and what more has to be done. We will watch with interest as to how this develops next year.

Because Birmingham is such a big and complex city with over one million residents from very different backgrounds, making sure people can contribute as much as they would like to is extremely difficult. The City Council organises its services at a more local level by splitting the City up into its ten separate parliamentary constituencies. This allows a much more local approach to understanding and meeting needs. It also allows local people an easier route through which they can get involved in decisions that affect their neighbourhood. This may explain why more people in Birmingham say they can influence what happens in their local area than in other areas.


Birmingham has a thriving third sector. This includes a range of groups representing local communities, such as voluntary organisations, community groups, tenants and residents groups, faith groups, co-operatives and social

enterprises. This sector is actively contributing to a range of initiatives to improve the quality of life for local people particularly the most vulnerable. This is encapsulated in the Birmingham Compact, an innovative approach to better working relationships. The compact provides a framework within which the relationship between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors in the city can be developed and strengthened. It also very clearly places community cohesion and anti-racism at the heart of the relationship.

All partners recognise the key role that voluntary groups can play in understanding the needs of communities. They also recognise that these voluntary groups are set up in the right place and have the right people to deliver some very valued services for vulnerable groups. The partnership has supported the setting up of the 'Third Sector Assembly' which brings together key voluntary groups and gives them a strong position from which to influence public services and the future of the city. People from the Assembly are given a place and a voice in the strategic partnership and have the right to be equal members of all the theme partnerships of Be Birmingham alongside public services and businesses. The improved partnership working with the voluntary sector has led to a range of better results in tackling some of the most complex issues in the city. For example, the Council's successful work with St Basils to tackle homelessness amongst young people. Another example is the Rover Community Action Trust, a partnership response to the community needs arising from the mass redundancies at Rover in Longbridge. This showed the Council's recognition that people in the community were best placed to identify solutions for themselves. The success of the compact and improved working relationship has been nationally recognised by the award of Beacon status to the City Council and its partners in 2007.

The Council recognises and values the role of carers in the city and the vital contribution they make to supporting and improving the quality of life of some of the most vulnerable people in the city. It has placed a high priority on providing better links with carers and people who use social services. The development of the carers centre in the city centre continues to promote this work with increased information, advice and support leading to improved quality of life for the carers and those being cared for. The recently opened care centres are also providing support and advice for carers. The council provides a high number of breaks for carers and this is set to increase further with the increased use of direct payments. There has been an increase in the number of carers from black and minority ethnic communities also engaging with the city council, again a high number of people from these communities have taken up direct payments, which are ensuring that services can be better tailored to suit individual needs

Stay safe in a clean, green city - living in safe and clean neighbourhoods

 **Green flag: Tackling climate change and reducing CO2 emissions**

Birmingham has recognised that in common with many cities in developed countries, its people are consuming more than their fair share of the earth's resources and producing more waste and pollution than they should. The city

now has a specific partnership leading on tackling climate change and has made some real progress. Few areas have set out reasonable long-term strategies and targets so Birmingham stands out with a handful of other areas. What is important is not seeing CO2 reduction as the only aim but as an integral part of other activities. Birmingham has done this and has looked at it as it relates to regeneration and economic opportunities for local people. Given Birmingham's size its contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions can make a big difference nationally. Birmingham's efforts are having a bigger impact than those of many other areas. The reasons for this include:

They have a long-term vision. Be Birmingham, the local strategic partnership for Birmingham, launched its climate change strategy and action plan in 2008. The partnership aims to reduce carbon emissions in Birmingham by 60 per cent from 1990 levels by 2026. The strategy sets three-yearly targets as part of the local area agreement (LAA). They have exceeded their target to reduce carbon emissions by 100,000 tonnes during 2009 through several initiatives. Two thirds of the decrease came from reducing carbon emissions from homes in the city. The government's report on climate change in July 2009 praised the city as an example of successful practice.

15,000 tonnes of CO2 were saved by cutting household waste and increasing recycling (reducing the amount of rubbish needing to be incinerated).

Partners are supporting behaviour change with for example funding for a faith and climate change coordinator. This person is looking at climate change with faith communities. Birmingham has a large number of its population belonging to a faith, and it was thought to be too big a group not to help with combating climate change. The programme has now been replicated across the UK - looking at climate change in terms of values regardless of faith. One result was a group of young Muslim men from Small Heath installing a solar water heater in the Friends Meeting House in Bournville. Looking at climate change has brought these communities together.

They are learning about cost-effectiveness. Family Housing used Sheffield Hallam University to evaluate the Summerfield eco village. As a result they have chosen solar thermal energy rather than wind turbines, and recommended more assistance and education for householders. A programme in South Lozells aims to help home owners to reduce heating bills by making use of environmental improvements and activities. 'Green doctors' will be visiting home owners to discuss their circumstances and look at their needs and requirements. It is estimated that through the simple application of a range of energy saving measures home owners can save up to 35 per cent on their fuel bills'

They are using information to target action. The Council has mapped domestic emissions and then overlaid this with data about people's attitudes to the environment, to understand how to get the message across better.

They are doing area based work on domestic energy in for example the Northfield Energy Efficiency Partnership (Birmingham City Council and Warm Zones).

They are using new developments as opportunities to promote economic and skills development through work on domestic energy. Work on the Summerfield EcoVillage in Birmingham was carried out by a West Midlands

firm that provided 3,000 hours of training to job seekers referred by local community groups. One of these job seekers now works permanently for the installation firm.

Another example is the community heating scheme. Partners have got extra money for the area from the Low Carbon Infrastructure (LCI) funding through the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) of £780,000. The funding is to connect homes in two 13-storey tower blocks off Newbury Road to a new biomass combined heat and power (CHP) system which is to be installed at the neighbouring new Holte School building. The scheme will provide a more efficient heating source to the homes, and has the potential for more new homes planned for the area to be connected to the same system in the future. The project is the second scheme in Birmingham to be approved for LCI funding, after the Cambridge and Crescent Towers city centre development, to run heating systems in the flats from residual energy produced by the International Convention Centre, was approved July 2009. This scheme should not only reduce the carbon footprint of the existing buildings but also benefit residents through cheaper energy bills.

Stay safe in a clean, green city - living in safe and clean neighbourhoods

Compared with the other big cities, Birmingham is a safe place. Total crime is down by 33 per cent over the last five years (that's 46,000 fewer reported crimes) and in 2008-2009 it had the lowest crime rate of the eight big cities of England. But levels of certain types of offence are still high, higher even than in similar cities, for example crime aggravated by race or religion. The police and their partners have taken a strong line on 'hate crimes' and realised that too many of crimes of this type were going unreported. They have been encouraging more people to report hate crime so that they can tackle the problem. This may have contributed to the increase in numbers we are seeing. Despite a fall last year the first half of this year has seen a small increase in some types of crime such robbery compared to the same period last year. Violent crime continues to reduce, it is currently 6 per cent lower than this time last year. However low level violence is starting to increase in the outer parts of the City, which historically have the lowest rates of violence. People in Birmingham have some of the highest levels in England of concern about anti-social behaviour. But there is by contrast the highest proportion of people who think police and others are successfully dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour.

The number of people who think that local parents take responsibility for the behaviour of their children is lower than average in Birmingham.

Fewer White, Black, Black British and Chinese young offenders are involved with Youth Justice than in 2007/08. But more young people who are Mixed, Asian and Asian British are involved.

Since 2008/09 young offenders have had improved access to suitable accommodation. Engagement with young offenders in suitable education training and employment has also improved since 2007/08.

Since 2007/08 not as many adults and children were killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. Birmingham is in the second-best group of English

councils for this. Traffic congestion in the City has reduced, although it is still seen as a problem around the busy motorway network surrounding Birmingham. Slightly fewer people of working age can get to their employment by public transport than could in 2007 but this is a small decrease.

Provision for ensuring that children are safe is mixed. Most inspected services are good or better in helping children and young people stay safe. The service for children who are adopted is good with strong management. The impact of work to combat bullying, harassment and discrimination is also good with fewer children and young people in Birmingham saying that they have been bullied than in other parts of the country. However, Ofsted's assessment of children's services in this year has judged that they are performing poorly, because there are still weaknesses in the arrangements for keeping vulnerable children safe. The overall effectiveness of the majority of the local authority's inspected and regulated services and settings is adequate. However, there are significant weaknesses in some areas of social care provision: the number of children's homes judged to be inadequate is an ongoing concern and a high number of serious incidences affecting children have led to a decision to convene a serious case review. These two weaknesses have played a pivotal role in determining the children's service rating.

Because of concerns, the children's minister issued an improvement notice to the Councils' children's services early in 2009. An improvement plan has been developed and additional resources targeted at the child protection services. There has been a strong focus on improvement and there have been improvements in arrangements for safeguarding children. There are early signs that the improvements are starting to make a difference. Ofsted's inspections of children's homes in Birmingham still show that too many are judged as inadequate. A recent review of the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (May 2009), commissioned by the Department for children, schools and families (DCSF) and the Council, identified four areas where improvements are needed. These include improving procedures for conducting serious case reviews (SCRs). Of the eight SCRs conducted since April 2007 four were inadequate. These have since been revised and the judged as meeting required standards. The most recent were conducted adequately.

Partners have been working better together to improve the safeguarding of vulnerable adults during the last year. But more work is still needed by the safeguarding board to develop quality assurance processes and make sure they learn from what works.

Although Birmingham is a densely populated city at the heart of the west midlands; it is also a green city with 3,400 hectares of park and open space and more miles of canal than Venice. Sutton Park National Nature Reserve is the largest urban nature reserve in Europe.

In the last survey of Birmingham residents', street cleanliness was among the top three things that needed improving in the city. There have been improvements in the level of street cleaning and good progress made. There are now fewer problems of graffiti and litter. Birmingham was hailed as the 'cleanest city in the UK' in a recent award by the British Cleansing Council. But local people still think there is much room for improvement. In the recent survey only 48 per cent of residents were satisfied that the Council kept their area clear of litter and rubbish.

The Council has been aiming to reduce the amount of waste it needs to collect and dispose of in the city by encouraging people to recycle more and throw away less. The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting has continued to increase in Birmingham and is now at over 30 per cent. But this still represents below the average nationally, with the best performing councils recycling over 60 per cent. The quantity of other household waste collected is high at 760 Kg per household and puts the Council in the worst performing category nationally. The best performing councils are collecting only half this amount. In the survey over 70 per cent of residents were satisfied with their waste collection service although most areas achieve higher levels of satisfaction than this. The partners recognise that they need to do more with businesses in the city to encourage them to reduce the amount of waste produced. Business waste represents the majority of total waste in the city (85 per cent). They also need to make sure that all regeneration activity and growth in the economy is managed in such a way that it provides low waste and low carbon solutions and does not store up more problems for future generations.

Succeed economically - benefit from education, training, jobs and investment

Birmingham is the regional centre for the West Midlands and around three million people live in its travel to work area. Birmingham is also an important national transport hub for road, rail and air travel, and has the central role in securing the future of the West Midlands region. The regional economy is driven by what happens in Birmingham and the area's leadership role is critical to the prosperity and well being of the region.

Innovative partnerships between the City Council and the private sector have led to substantial investment and infrastructure development in Birmingham over the last 15 years, resulting in a major transformation of the city centre. The city's reputation as a cultural, service and commercial centre has improved significantly, and these sectors have an increasingly important role to play in the local economy.

Birmingham's heavy reliance on manufacturing meant it was hit harder than many other cities when this sector suffered massive decline during the last quarter of the 20th century. Nearly 200,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in the City from the late 1970s to the turn of the century. Birmingham's economy has grown over the last decade, but not as fast as the national average.

Birmingham has some of the most deprived areas of the country. Sixty two per cent of children in Birmingham live in households on low income. This means they live in a household that receives worklessness benefits (33 per cent) or working tax credit or child tax credit (30 per cent). This is more than the West Midlands average of 55 per cent and the England average of 40 per cent. In 2007 31.5 per cent of children in Birmingham were categorised as living in poverty. Disadvantages from childhood continue through to reduced life opportunities, health inequalities and social exclusion in adulthood, and are a major barrier to succeeding economically.

A key challenge for the City is to achieve economic growth and create more and better jobs. At the same time it has to make sure that local people are not locked out of the opportunity to benefit from this growth and better jobs. Having an educated and skilled workforce is particularly important, not only to increase the city's attractiveness to business growth and new investment but also to raise the aspirations of the city's young people and ensure that more of the jobs created go to Birmingham residents. The percentage of Birmingham's working age population with no formal qualifications, although reducing, is high at 21 per cent, and was above similar areas and among the worst nationally in 2007. During the past year the unemployment rate of people without qualifications has risen twice as fast as those with qualifications. As elsewhere in the country, the impact of the recession is being felt severely in Birmingham. It's feared that unemployment will at least double over the next two years from the pre-recession levels. This is a major worry: everyone in the city will know someone who has lost their job as a result of the recession.

Partners have worked well together and have good plans to face the challenges of achieving economic success. The recession has made the task all the more difficult. They have responded well and put in place some good schemes and initiatives to support people who are losing their jobs and to help businesses to survive. For example, the 'credit crunch hotline' gives money and business advice.

Good progress has been made in some areas of educational attainment. The attainment of Birmingham pupils has been rising at GCSE level. In 2008 the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades was 66.6 per cent compared to 61.8 per cent in 2007. Every school achieved the 2008 national minimum target of at least 30 per cent getting five or more 5 A* to C GCSEs. The significant gap between Birmingham and the national average has closed. Birmingham's performance is now above the England average of 65.3 per cent. The provisional results for 2009 show the proportion of pupils getting five or more A*-C grades has continued to improve. Attainment of the more challenging target of five or more A* to C grades including English and maths is also increasing and is in line with the national average. Birmingham does better than other large cities. Within the city these achievements mask under-achievement amongst some groups of pupils. Levels of attainment for poorer white boys and African-Caribbean boys are below average. The five A* to C improvement rates for these groups over the last five years have been above the local authority average, so the gap is closing although a significant gap remains. Children in care are also leaving school with significantly worse exam results than the city average, although again there have been improvements over the last five years. More needs to be done by the partnership to ensure that these groups of young people do not start their adult lives at such a disadvantage

Primary schools in the city are still not giving children the best start. Children start with low literacy, personal and social skills (as shown in assessments made in the first year of schooling). At the end of primary school Birmingham's children are still achieving below the national average results, with some disadvantaged groups doing especially badly. However, the proportion of children achieving the majority of the Early Learning Goals by the age of five is improving and the gap between the lowest performing 20 per cent of children and their peers has narrowed. Provisional results for 2009 show that there has been an improvement in performance for seven year olds but a reduction in

pupils achieving well in English at age 11. Birmingham is not currently on track to achieve the level of improvement at age 11 it set in the local area agreement and some other areas have improved more than Birmingham. Unless pupils achieve well at primary school they are unlikely to make the most of what secondary schools offer.

Inspectors have judged that provision in two thirds of the city's secondary schools is good or better, and standards have continued to improve in line with the national trend. It is particularly encouraging to see that the gap between the achievement of vulnerable children in schools and the rest of the pupils is reducing. But there are still some groups who do not do as well as in other areas, for example some children with special educational needs and children who are in care. Most young people behave well at school and absence rates are falling.

The provisional results for 2009 show the proportion of pupils getting five grades A* to C at GCSE (not including English and maths) is at a record high for the City. Local data shows that Birmingham achieves above the national average, and better than the other eight big cities like Manchester and Liverpool. Some groups of pupils do not achieve what they could; especially white boys from poor families and African-Caribbean pupils. The number of schoolchildren from black and minority ethnic families achieving well at GCSE level has improved.

Too many young people in Birmingham leave school without going on to further education, training or into jobs. In 2008/09 the figure stood at 8.1 per cent, this was higher than last year's figure but is not as high as in similar cities. Once again there are particular areas of the city where the headline figure masks hot spots. For example there are less than one in fifty young people in areas of Sutton but nearly one in seven in Bartley Green. Of real concern is that there are specific groups of 16 - 18 year olds who are among the most vulnerable and more likely to fall into this category and who are a clear focus of Birmingham's strategy and work. These include young people with learning disabilities, young offenders, teenage parents, young pregnant girls. As an example, nearly half of all young people in Council care are leaving school without going on to work or education and training. Strong joint working between the partners, particularly Job Centre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, schools and the City Council is in place in tackling this and ensuring that young people and particularly vulnerable young people are supported in the transition from school to work or meaningful training. This work which has already made a positive impact on groups such as young offenders is supported by good sharing of information and data between agencies. Further work is planned on contact with parents and carers and better monitoring of the quality of advice that young people receive.

The city has a long history of welcoming new communities from other countries. These communities have a lot to offer the city, but some may be unskilled. For many migrants there is also the added problem of not having English as a first language. This makes it more difficult to get the skills and qualifications to get jobs. This is a challenge also in schools. Partners have made sure that training and support is available so that people can make the best of their abilities.

The skill level of the Birmingham population is a concern. Recently there has been an increase in the number of people gaining skills. The number of 19-

year olds who have achieved NVQ and equivalent at level 2 and 3 has increased and the proportions are now similar to the national average. This is still lower than in some other key large cities such as Bristol, Leeds, or Liverpool. Those qualified to degree level is also low compared to other British cities. Although there are three universities in Birmingham, it has been less successful than other similar areas in retaining graduates in the city after they leave university.

Partners understand the value of the growing links between the universities and businesses. Birmingham was designated as a 'Science City' in 2005, and there are some exciting projects in place creating new market opportunities and encouraging business growth in new technologies. In Birmingham the number of working age people claiming out of work benefits has improved. And so has the number of people claiming out of work benefits from the worst performing neighbourhoods. Birmingham has seen one of the smallest rates on increase in the number of people claiming job seekers allowance in the three years to March 2009.

Looking at the range of earnings of employees in Birmingham, the mid-point for people working there is £470.60 each week. This has improved since 2007/08.

There are more new businesses starting up. But the percentage of small businesses showing employment growth has declined. Both measures put Birmingham below the average compared to the rest of England.

Partners have worked well together and had some success in helping local people into employment or training. They have focused especially on vulnerable groups and those who find it most difficult to get jobs. The successes that have been achieved through the Aston Pride project demonstrate what can be done when partners work together and pool their resources. However, the numbers of people being reached are small relative to the size of the problem. The individual projects and programmes have not made enough of an impact on the total jobless situation and partners are falling far short of the target to reduce unemployment in Birmingham. Partners have worked well together to get a large sum of money from the government's 'Future Jobs Fund' for the city. This will help to create many more new jobs for local businesses. We will watch the progress and report on this next year.

Birmingham City Council is joining forces with the other six west midlands councils and other organisations such as Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council to work more effectively and on a larger scale. This is happening through a "Multi-area agreement". This joint plan to improve employment and skills in the West Midlands has been agreed and will be implemented from April 2010. Year 2 of CAA will assess progress in this area.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>



for an independent overview
of local public services

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Telephone: 0844 798 1212

Fax: 0844 798 2945

Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

www.audit-commission.gov.uk