

Cabinet – 16 December 2009

Comprehensive Area Assessment Results

Portfolio:	Councillor Arif, Business support services
Service:	Corporate Performance Management
Wards:	All
Key decision:	No
Forward plan:	No

1. Summary of report

This report sets out the results of Walsall's first Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), including the area judgement, the scores for the Council's specific organisational assessment and the ratings for Adults social care and Children's services. The results have been provided as separate appendices as they are under embargo until 10 December 2009 and will be distributed after this date.

Appendix One -	Summary of findings
Appendix Two -	Area Assessment
Appendix Three -	Walsall Council Organisational Assessment
Appendix Four -	Care Quality Commission judgement of Adults Social Care
Appendix Five -	Ofsted Judgement of Children's Services

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the results of the CAA
- 2.2 That Cabinet welcomes the successes highlighted in the published results and the contributions of Council and Partner staff in delivery of this
- 2.3 That Cabinet acknowledges the improvement areas identified by the findings and commits to working with partners to deliver those improvements

3. Background information

- 3.1 CAA is the national performance framework which came into force from 1 April 2009 which looks at how well local services are working together to improve the quality of life for local people. The CAA is formed of two key elements

Area assessment – how well local public services are delivering better outcomes and how likely they are to improve in the future

Organisational assessment – of individual public bodies within Walsall

- 3.2 The area judgement is formed by combining the perspectives of the 6 inspectorates (Audit Commission, Care Quality Commission, Ofsted, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Probation). The judgement is published as a narrative on the OnePlace website and can include the award of Red Flags (highlight areas where current arrangements are inadequate) or Green Flags (highlight exceptional performance or innovative practice). It is important to note however that these flags are only awarded for extremes of performance and that the absence of red flags does not mean there are no areas of improvement and nor does absence of green flags mean there are no areas of strong performance.
- 3.3 The Organisational Assessment for Walsall Council is formed of two elements- Use of Resources (how well the Council manages its finances, manages its resources and governs its business) and Managing Performance (how well the Council delivers its priority services and the leadership and capacity to deliver future improvements). These two elements are each scored on a rating of 1-4 and the results are then combined to give an overall judgement statement. The Use of Resources Element was led by Grant Thornton on behalf of the Audit Commission and the Managing Performance Theme by the Audit Commission themselves.
- 3.4 In addition there are two specific judgements formed for Adult Social Care (led by Care Quality Commission) and Children's Services (led by Ofsted). Both of these receive individual published scores but the judgements also help support the findings for both the Area Assessment and the managing performance theme of the Organisational Assessment.
- 3.5 The annual Adult Social Care Services performance assessment process requires the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to publish an annual report identifying performance strengths, recommendations for further improvement, an overall grade for delivering outcomes with a separate grade for each of seven outcome areas and a commentary on the two domains of leadership and Use of resources/Commissioning. The CQC judgement is the one area of the new inspection which has remained similar enough to the previous regime to allow useful comparisons of performance to be made.
- 3.6 Ofsted previously formed their rating of Children's Services from the Annual Performance Assessment (based on performance data) and the Joint Area Review (JAR.) Both of these ended with the introduction of CAA but Ofsted still publish an annual rating for Children's Service. This judgement is largely based on the results of statutory inspections of specific services (e.g. children's homes or fostering) and so is a different methodology on which previous judgements have been based.

4. Resource considerations

- 4.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report though the published results and in particular the improvements areas identified, may influence Council and partner resource allocation decisions in the future.

5. Citizen impact

There is no direct citizen impact resulting from this report, though the results themselves are reflective of the impact the Council and its partners have had on improving citizen outcomes to date and offers areas where this could be improved. In addition the published results will impact on citizen perceptions of the Council and the partnership.

6. Community safety

There are no direct community safety implications resulting from this report, though as community safety is an area and Council priority it does form part of the judgements made by the joint inspectorates.

7. Environmental impact

There are no direct environmental implications resulting from this report, though as the environment is an area and Council priority it does form part of the judgements made by the joint inspectorates.

8. Performance and risk management issues

- 8.1 **Risk:** The Council's approach to risk management is assessed through the use of resources element of the organisational assessment. The Corporate Risk register contains risks relating to external inspection and the council's reputation as a result of these judgements. It is anticipated that as a consequence of this report further risks will be identified and managed at an operational level.
- 8.2 **Performance management:** The CAA is the national performance framework and as such helps shape how we manage performance locally. Performance Indicators (in particular those contained in the Local Area Agreement) are used by inspectors to help form their judgements. The CAA provides an opportunity for the Council and its partners to reflect on performance and address areas of concern.

9. Equality implications

There are no direct equality implications resulting from this report though equalities is a core theme running throughout the inspectorates judgements and so has been assessed as part of this process.

10. Consultation

Councillors, managers and partners have been consulted throughout the CAA process by inspectors in informing their judgements. A communications plan to share the results of the CAA with the public and staff has also been developed by officers and will be delivered once the embargo is lifted.

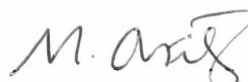
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Rory Borealis
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7 December 2009



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7 December 2009

CAA Summary of Findings

Area Assessment:

No red or green flags were identified for Walsall. However as pointed out in the main body of this report this does not mean that no areas of strong performance were found nor does it mean there are no areas in which outcomes need to improve. Rather it only means that outcomes were not found to be at either extreme end of performance to meet the threshold for a flag.

The narrative at **appendix two** summarises the inspectorate's key findings which contains a number of positives as well as highlighting some important learning for future improvement.

Organisational Assessment:

A copy of the full judgement for the organisational assessment is attached at **appendix three**, but the scores are summarised below:

Overall Walsall MBC	Performs adequately
Managing performance	2 out of 4
Use of Resources	2 out of 4
<i>Managing finances</i>	<i>3 out of 4</i>
<i>Governing the business</i>	<i>2 out of 4</i>
<i>Managing resources</i>	<i>2 out of 4</i>

The overall rating of 'performs adequately' is based on the combination of the two scores for Managing Performance and Use of Resources. Within the managing performance score, whilst inspectors felt performance was good in most areas, the impact of the Ofsted score (see below) and the overall levels of public satisfaction as highlighted in the place survey meant they felt unable to award a score higher than 'adequate' overall and within the Use of Resources judgement we fell just short of achieving a score of three based on the individual scores for the three elements.

Care Quality Commission judgement of Adult Social Care

A copy of the CQC judgement can be found at **Appendix Four**, but the table below summaries performance against each identified outcome and includes a comparison with previous years performance (NB changes to the system of inspection prevent meaningful comparisons with previous performance in any other area of this report)

Appendix One

OUTCOME DOMAINS	Comparisons		
	2007-8	2008-9	Change
Improved health and emotional well-being	Good	Well	Same
Improved quality of life	Adequate	Adequately	Same
Making a positive contribution	Adequate	Well	Up
Increased choice and control	Adequate	Adequately	Same
Freedom from discrimination and harassment	Adequate	Well	Up
Economic well-being	Good	Well	Same
Maintaining personal dignity and respect	Good	Well	Same
Overall Delivering Outcomes	Adequate	Well	UP

As can be seen from the table there is measured improvement in: *Improved quality of life* and *Freedom from* discrimination and harassment. This leads to an overall improvement from 'performing adequately' to 'performing well' which is an excellent good news story for the Council and is a result of sustained improvement work over previous years by the service. **Appendix Four** contains a copy of the CQC judgement which further details areas of strength. There are of course a number of improvement areas remaining and these are also highlighted in the report. An Improvement plan to address these and other improvement areas will be agreed with CQC, jointly reviewed in February 2010 and considered as part of the spring self assessment submission and the summer 2010 annual review meeting.

Ofsted Judgement of Children's Services

Ofsted have judged Children's Services in Walsall to be **performing adequately**. Under the previous system of inspection Walsall was judged to be 'performing well' with regard to children's services which would seem to indicate a deterioration in performance, however as mentioned in the main body of the report, changes to the way in which these judgements are formed make any comparisons misleading. The CAA area assessment confirms that there is little or no evidence of a decline in performance since our last rating was awarded and in indeed the Council was able to evidence strong improvement in some key areas.

However the performing adequately label has had a significant impact on our overall organisational assessment score, with the joint inspectorates feeling there were not able to award a 3 for managing performance given the Ofsted rating.

Appendix Five contains the letter from Ofsted summarising their findings including areas where improvement is needed.

Walsall

Area Assessment (Summary version)

Pre-publication version dated 03 December 2009

Provided under embargo



for an independent overview
of local public services

Walsall at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Walsall. 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

No green flags have been identified for Walsall

Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

No red flags have been identified for Walsall

The local area

Walsall is an industrial area with a population of 254,500. Some areas are densely populated around its larger towns, and despite recent decline, the population is now increasing. Walsall is among the most diverse areas in the country with a growing black and minority ethnic community. There are fewer people of working age with an above average proportion of people in the under 15 and over 65s age groups. There are differences between places in Walsall, with people in the west of the borough experiencing more health problems and deprivation than the east which is more affluent and where people can expect to live longer. Unemployment is rising and the number of people claiming out of work benefits is above average. Generally people experience poor health and the area is the 45th most deprived area in the country.

Walsall's public services have agreed the following challenges that they need to tackle:

- PEOPLE: Creating opportunity and potential
- PEOPLE: Improving Health
- PEOPLE: Reducing Crime and Feeling Safe

PLACES: Improving housing choice

PEOPLE: Developing strong and dynamic communities

PLACES: Improving the quality of our environment

PROSPERITY: Increasing enterprise

PROSPERITY: Reducing worklessness

PEOPLE: Children & Young People

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

How is Walsall doing?

PEOPLE: Creating opportunity and potential

Relatively few local people think they can influence decisions affecting their local area. Satisfaction with the area is broadly the same as the average for similar areas and lower than the national average of 81 per cent. However despite this, Walsall has made it easier for local people to access services for instance getting in touch with the Council. Its 'First Stop Shop', provides a single point of contact for customers. This has been enhanced by the 'First Stop Express' a customer service bus which provides a mobile First Stop Shop, which allows people from district centres across the borough to contact the Council.

PEOPLE: Improving Health

People in Walsall are less healthy than the average for England and children face a number conditions that have a adverse effect on their health. Working with other local organisations the Council and NHS Walsall have set up services to improve people's health. There is a big difference in how healthy people are across Walsall, with people who live in the east being generally healthier than people who live in the west. Walsall Council's adult social care services perform well.

PEOPLE: Reducing Crime and Feeling Safe

Crime has reduced in Walsall and the Police and partners are working hard to maintain this. They have made a big difference in bringing down the overall volume of crime which is now about the same as in similar areas. Progress in reducing crime levels has been sustained over several years now. Less progress has been made in tackling reports of serious violence including burglary and theft, and hate crime where rates remain higher than in similar areas. Although most residents say they feel safe where they live, the proportion is below the national average. The fall in crime is thus not

recognised by people's views on crime and safety. One in five people agree the police and other local public services are successfully dealing with antisocial behaviour and crime in their local area, this is below average. In Walsall less people than average feel safe after dark or during the day. More people than average think teenagers hanging around, graffiti or people using or dealing drugs are a problem in their local area.

Local public services are taking action to reduce crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. Partners are taking action to reduce crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. Partnership working is well established and delivers good results, even if these are to date results the public is not noticing. There is still thus a long way to go to improve public perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour, so that they are more in line with similar areas in the country. Approaches such as the Borough Tasking Group, Walsall Persistent Offender Programme and Bottle Watch are designed to cut crime and help people feel safer in their community.

PLACES: Improving housing choice

For some time, Walsall has provided more new homes than it was asked to. Partners are clear on the importance of good housing. It is improving housing choice by preventing homelessness, increasing affordable homes, improving the standard of homes and enabling people to live independently. Key targets agreed with government cover extra homes and fuel poverty. Walsall has good information on its need for affordable housing, and good plans that are designed to provide more affordable homes. However it has not met all need so far. Walsall is successfully tackling homelessness issues across the area. Walsall is making progress in tackling fuel poverty, but many private tenants on low incomes are living in homes which are not fuel efficient and therefore expensive and difficult to heat.

PEOPLE: Developing strong and dynamic communities

Despite good work with local communities the percentage of local people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together is below the national average. Residents do not feel safe where they live and satisfaction levels are lower than in other similar parts of the country. Although local services are becoming more accessible and improving, people have not noticed improvements.

Walsall has a diverse population and marked differences in health and poverty across the borough. Local public services are encouraging discussion across communities to help tackle problems, including racism and inequalities. Partners are supporting local communities and tackling the inequalities and differences in these communities. Local Neighbourhood Partnerships have provided a good way to reach out and talk to local people and these are currently being looked at make them better.

PLACES: Improving the quality of our

environment

Overall satisfaction with the area and with parks and open spaces is in the worst 25 per cent of similar areas, although overall satisfaction has increased since 2006/07. According to residents, the state of the roads and streets remain areas for improvement. More waste is recycled or composted through a new household waste collection scheme. The Council has met its statutory target and is above average on recycling and satisfaction with recycling is in the best 25 per cent. Walsall has introduced various energy efficiency measures to try to reduce energy consumption, and is making good progress in reducing the environmental impact of waste buried in landfill sites.

PROSPERITY: Increasing enterprise

Partners are effectively regenerating the area through a series of important physical developments. Walsall's regeneration plan "Prospectus for Growth" sets out a clear scheme for regenerating the borough. This aims to create over 5,500 jobs and 1,500 new homes, aiming to meet the future needs of local people. The new Walsall College opened in September, with work having just started on the old college site for a Tesco Superstore. The new Manor hospital is under construction and the first phase of the scheme for the St Matthews Quarter regeneration has been completed.

The Council is working to help local business deal with the effects of the recession, which has had a major impact on Walsall businesses because of the area's focus on manufacturing. For example, it set up an Enterprise and Business Support team, which helped 106 Walsall businesses during 2008/09.

PROSPERITY: Reducing worklessness

Local public services have worked well together and had some success in helping local people into employment or training. One stop shops that cater to people needing work have proved particularly successful in some of the more deprived areas. The programme focuses on vulnerable groups and those who find it most difficult to get jobs. The recession has meant that individual projects and programmes have not made enough of an impact on the total jobless and targets to reduce unemployment in Walsall have not been met. Walsall is now joining forces with the other six West Midlands areas and others to work more effectively, on a larger scale. This is happening through a "Multi-area agreement".

PEOPLE: Children & Young People

Walsall has an above average rate of child poverty and a below average rate of improvement. This is due to the deteriorating economy and presents substantial challenges to improving outcomes for children. Some children in Walsall do not have as healthy a start in life as others. Local public services are working together to reduce infant mortality by tackling smoking in pregnancy, increasing breastfeeding rates and reducing maternal obesity levels. Children in Walsall are kept safe in the places and services they go to

and use. By the end of their primary and their secondary education children's achievement continues to be the same as that nationally and in other similar areas. Although the overall proportion of schools judged good or better in inspection has improved, primary school performance is uneven with under half judged good or better in inspection, compared with two thirds of secondary schools. Results for young people aged 16 achieving five or more A* to C including English and mathematics have improved with the gap closing slightly with similar councils over the last four years. Provisional and unvalidated data for 2009 show that standards are continuing to rise.

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

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Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Organisational Assessment

Pre-publication version dated 03 December 2009

Provided under embargo



for an independent overview
of local public services

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Overall, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council performs adequately

Managing performance	2 out of 4
Use of resources	2 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	2 out of 4
Managing resources	2 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council is performing adequately. It is making progress in areas that are important to local people, such as improving local housing and increasing the opportunity for gaining employment. However, people in Walsall are generally less satisfied with the area as a place to live compared to other areas.

The Council is working with its partners to improve people's health in Walsall. For example, through schemes such as promoting better eating in schools and fitness schemes for overweight children to address issues like childhood obesity. However, although it has improved some areas of poor health, many areas are still poorer than national averages. There are significant health inequalities, people who live in east Walsall are generally healthier than people who live in the west.

Overall crime has fallen following action by partners. But less progress is being made in tackling most serious violence and hate crime where rates remain about the same as in similar areas. The Safer Walsall Partnership is taking action to reduce crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. Partnership working is well established and delivers good results, even if these are to date results the public is not noticing.

The Council is working to help local business deal with the effects of the recession, which has had a major impact on Walsall businesses because of the area's historic focus on manufacturing. Using information collected from the local Business Needs Survey, it offers joint business visits with Job Centre Plus to support people affected by redundancy and help companies.

Walsall Council's adult services are improving and are now performing well. Overall leadership of adult services is effective. Services work well with other local organisations, are committed to listening to local people and involve them in decisions about services.

Walsall Council's children's services perform adequately. Services for vulnerable children and young people are mixed. Children receive a good start to their care and education from childminders and nurseries but that trend does not continue as they enter school. Provision in primary and secondary schools is variable with fewer being judged good or outstanding than in similar areas and nationally.

The Council works well with its partners to improve local housing. It is improving housing choice by preventing homelessness, increasing affordable homes, improving the standard of homes and enabling people to live independently. Walsall's performance on addressing homelessness is good.

The Council scores 2 out of 4 for Use of Resources, which is adequate. It has sound arrangements to achieve value for money, but cannot show that this has delivered better outcomes for local people. Walsall Council links its planning to the money it has to spend and understands costs and how they compare with others. It uses this information to set its budget. Walsall understands what it does well and what needs to be improved and has used this to modernise and improve key services. It is taking steps to manage its use of natural resources. The Council has put in place a number of energy efficiency measures to try to reduce energy use, and is using monitoring software to record CO2 emissions and water consumption.

The amount of waste recycled or composted has increased significantly and the Council has met its statutory target. Walsall has an above average recycling and composting rate and satisfaction with recycling is in the best 25 per cent. The amount of waste collected and satisfaction with waste collection is above average and improving. Changes in refuse collection made in early 2009 are likely to deliver further improvements.

Walsall has made it easier for local people to get in touch with the Council. Its 'First Stop Shop', provides a single point of contact for customers. This has been enhanced by 'First Stop Express' a customer service bus which provides a mobile First Stop Shop.

About Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Walsall is an industrial area with a population of 254,500. Some areas are densely populated particularly around its larger towns, and despite a period of decline the population is now increasing. Walsall is among the most diverse areas in the Country with a growing black and minority ethnic community. Generally there are fewer people of working age with an above average proportion of people in the under 15 and over 65s age groups. There are differences between places in Walsall with people in the west of the borough experiencing more health problems and deprivation than the east which is more affluent and people can expect to live longer. Generally people

experience poor health and the area is the 45th most deprived area in the country.

Although there are differences across the area, generally people that both live and work in Walsall have below average wages and many people leave school with no or few qualifications. A higher than expected proportion of people claim out of work benefits and unemployment is rising. The health of people in Walsall is generally worse than the England average, however injury and death experienced on Walsall's roads are lower than national rates. Walsall Council has 60 elected councillors. There are 34 Conservative, 17 Labour, 6 Liberal Democrat, 1 Democrat Labour and 2 independent councillors. This means that overall control of the Council is with the Conservative party.

Walsall Council has developed the Walsall Outcomes Framework, comprising seven citizen or customer outcomes, and three internal drivers, these are:

Seven citizen outcomes:

- Healthy
- Safe and secure
- Aspiring and achieving
- Enjoying a high quality of life - clean, green, and mobile
- Active - contributing to their communities
- Financially and materially secure - achieving economic wellbeing
- Free from discrimination or harassment

Three internal drivers:

- Effective use of resources
- Delivering quality services and meeting customer expectations
- Taking forward the transformation agenda

Organisational assessment

Citizen Outcomes:

Healthy ~ Safe and Secure ~ Active ~ contributing to their communities

The Council is working with partners to improve people's health in Walsall. For example, through schemes such as promoting better eating in schools and healthy walks programmes, the Council and the Primary Care Trust are

working together to help local people live healthier lifestyles. The Council understands that it needs to work with its partners to address the differences in health. It has, for example, produced a strategy to address the differences in health across Walsall.

Key measures of poor health such as; heart disease, cancer and childhood deaths are worse than the national averages. Similarly, people in Walsall die younger than the national average. There is a big difference in how healthy people are across Walsall. People who live in the east of Walsall are generally healthier than people who live in the west. However, it is known that health is closely related to living in poverty and when this is taken into account Walsall is better than would be expected for many outcomes.

Crime has reduced in Walsall the Council is working with the Police and other partners to sustain this. They have made a big difference in bringing down the overall volume of crime which is now about the same as in similar areas. Progress in reducing crime levels has been sustained over several years now. But less progress is being made in tackling most serious violence where rates remain higher than in similar areas. The Safer Walsall Partnership⁸ involving the Council, the police, other agencies and voluntary organisations has set up several initiatives to tackle criminal behaviour, such as the Walsall Persistent Offender Programme. Offenders with six convictions or more in the last two years undergo bespoke programmes of supervision and support designed to help them change their behaviour.

Partners are taking action to reduce crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. Partnership working is well established and delivers good results, even if these are to date results the public is not noticing. There is still a long way to go to improve public perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour, so that they are more in line with similar areas in the country. Projects such as the Borough Tasking Group and Bottle Watch are designed to cut crime and help people feel safer in their community. The Borough Tasking Group, chaired by the Council, includes key local organisation, such as; police, fire, housing, youth services and voluntary organisations. The police and partners are targeting areas of the borough where crime and antisocial behaviour is worst to increase safety measures. The group share information on crime and antisocial behaviour to identify trends, incidents and hot spots and allocate tasks to group members to address particular problems.

Walsall Council's adult services are improving and now perform well. Overall leadership of adult services is effective and services work well with other local organisations. Adult services are committed to listening to what local people say and involve local people in the decisions about services. It is improving care homes in Walsall, but the Council should consider out of borough placements with a view as to how they can influence improvements to services. Mechanisms are now in place to ensure that the quality of services is reviewed from diverse information sources. Walsall's adult services work with local people to help them remain active and contribute to their communities. For example it has given support to frail older people to help them live on their own at home by providing equipment to ensure they are safe within their own homes.

Aspiring and Achieving ~ Financially and Materially Secure⁹ achieving economic wellbeing

Walsall Council's children's services perform adequately. Services for vulnerable children and young people are mixed. Children receive a good start to their care and education from childminders and nurseries but that trend does not continue as they enter school. Provision in primary and secondary schools is variable with fewer being judged good or outstanding than in similar areas and nationally. Inspection outcomes are good or better in too few services. One of the two secondary schools judged inadequate by Ofsted has recently re-opened as an academy. Judgements for staying safe and enjoy and achieve are above or in line with those in similar areas across the majority of inspected and regulated services or settings. Provision in the Council's special schools is good and its fostering and adoption services are adequate, but private fostering needs to be improved.

Performance against most national indicators is in line with similar areas. The gap in achievement between those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their peers is in line with similar areas.

Walsall Music Service provides facilities for learners, schools and the community at the Forest Arts Centre. It has been praised for the breadth of knowledge and experience within the service management and that the teaching teams suggest the service has excellent capacity to both sustain and improve its provision in the future.

The Council is working to help local business deal with the effects of the recession, a recession that has had a bigger impact on Walsall businesses because of the area's focus on manufacturing. For example, it set up an Enterprise and Business Support team, which helped 106 Walsall businesses during 2008/2009. Using information collected from the local Business Needs Survey, it offers joint business visits with Job Centre Plus to support people affected by redundancy and help the companies plan for change.

Partners worked with the Learning and Skills Council and the college to help local people be more successful in gaining employment. For example, a group went through an ASDA recruitment course to find out how the company recruited its staff. It then set up a training programme to help local people understand how to get a job. Training took place in local communities and now 99 people on the worklessness register have jobs at ASDA. The Council intends to repeat the process with Tesco in Walsall town centre and Brownhills and Morrisons in Willenhall.

Walsall's regeneration plan "Prospectus for Growth" sets out a clear scheme for the physical regeneration of the central area of the borough. The plans draw together different strands of development into an overall plan. For example, the new Walsall College building opened at the start of September and work on demolishing the old college site for a Tesco Superstore has commenced. The new Manor hospital is under construction and the first phase of the scheme for the St Matthews Quarter regeneration has been completed.

Enjoying a High Quality of Life – clean, green and mobile

People in Walsall are generally less satisfied with the area as a place to live compared to other areas. Overall satisfaction with the area and with parks and open spaces, although improved, is in the worst 25 per cent of similar council's. Cleanliness standards are good for graffiti and fly posting, satisfactory for litter, but unsatisfactory for levels of rubbish on some land, though this is in line with the national average. However, Walsall is taking action to overcome the issue, for example, through 'Cracking Environmental Crime' which targets "hotspots" where there is a particular problem.

The amount of waste recycled or composted has increased significantly and the Council has met its statutory target. Walsall has an above average recycling and composting rate and satisfaction with recycling is in the best 25 per cent. The amount of waste collected and satisfaction with waste collection is about average and improving. Changes in refuse collection made in early 2009 are likely to deliver more improvements. The Council is implementing plans that have helped it to improve its service. For example, it is moving forward on heat from waste⁵ it is a partner in the Staffordshire W2R Residual Waste Treatment Facility, a PFI project for which a contract is expected to be let early in 2010 and piloted kitchen waste last year, which it intends to expand to the whole Borough.

Walsall Council works well with its partners to improve local housing. It understands that housing is a key issue for the area as there is too little housing within the area and prices are higher than some local people can afford. The Council has estimated the likely demand for particular types of housing and understands what needs to be done. It is improving housing choice by preventing homelessness, increasing affordable homes, improving the standard of homes and enabling people to live independently. Walsall's performance on addressing homelessness is good.

The Court Desk Scheme to avoid repossessions facilitated by the Council's Supported Housing team working closely with Citizen Advice Bureau to help households avoid repossession or eviction. Since the scheme began it has assisted 112 households in avoiding repossession or eviction and directly helped improve the financial situation of 170 households. The scheme has been extended for another 12 months.

The condition of private sector housing in Walsall is generally poor. The Council is taking action. It has set up a "Health Through Warmth Scheme", which is used to provide improvements such as new heating systems. The scheme also trains key workers to recognise the links between certain types of ill health and cold/damp living conditions so they can identify people who need assistance and refer them to the scheme.

Free from Discrimination or Harassment

Walsall has been awarded Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Diversity Peer Challenge Team, who assessed the Council, found that officers acting as Equalities Champions were effective in getting their message across. Good information is helping the Council to understand the needs of people from different backgrounds or with different lifestyles. A range of services are culturally sensitive and tailored to need.

Despite good work with local communities only 71 per cent of local people

believe people from different backgrounds get on well together. It is also among the worst areas for hate crime. This is a key area for improvement as Walsall is a multicultural borough which attracts new communities as well as refugees and asylum seekers. The Council is working with partners to encourage discussion and help tackle problems, including: racism, inequalities and the threat of violent extremism and is actively working on the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda. For example it has set up; Imam Training, a Borough wide extremism drama produced and delivered by young Muslims, Islam awareness training and a Young People Islam Awareness event.

Internal Drivers:

Effective Use of Resources

The Council scores 2 out of 4 for the use of resources - which is an adequate rating. Walsall Council links its planning to the money it has to spend. Managing the money is a high priority, and all managers with responsibility for managing budgets have to undertake "vital skills financial training". The Council understands its costs and how they compare with others, and uses this information to set its budget.

The Council has sound arrangements to achieve value for money, but cannot show that this has delivered better outcomes for local people. Walsall understands what it does well and what needs to be improved and has used this to modernise and improve key services. It is taking steps to manage its use of natural resources. The Council has put in place a number of energy efficiency measures to try to reduce energy use, and is using monitoring software to record CO2 emissions and water consumption.

Delivering Quality Services and Meeting Customer Expectations

Walsall has made it easier for local people to get in touch with the Council. Its 'First Stop Shop', provides a single point of contact for customers. This has been enhanced by the 'First Stop Express' a customer service bus which provides a mobile First Stop Shop, which allows people from district centres across the borough to contact the Council. The Council listened to what local people had to say when it planned First Stop Express and designed the services to meet their requirements.

The Council has a Consultation and Engagement Strategy that provides a framework to get views from local people, other organisations it is working with, and other people who use council services. The Council use 'Walsall Viewfinder', a database that can easily be viewed through the Council's web site, to record its consultations. This allows Walsall Council to spot gaps in its knowledge, see opportunities for linking work and makes sharing information easier.

Involvement in making decisions about the local area is about average. However, only one fifth of local people agree they can influence decisions affecting their local area, while just under one third are satisfied with the way Walsall Council is run. Just over one third are positive about the way local

public services act on residents concerns. While clean streets and crime remain residents top priorities the extent to which people think these are in need of improvement has reduced since 2007.

Taking Forward the Transformation Agenda

Walsall aims to change the way it delivers its services through its “Transformation Agenda”. However, although the Council has started to make changes, it is difficult to see, at this stage, how successful the impact will be. Walsall Council’s senior managers have identified key issues and pressures facing the Council and used this information to classify three key areas for improvement; Customer Experience, Adaptive Working, and People and Change.

The Council is looking at what it does to see if it can be done in a better or more efficient way. It is using a ‘Lean Systems’ approach to make improvements in the Council. Walsall has, for example, established more than 30 Business Improvement Projects, which have freed up more than £0.5 Million for the Council to use to improve other services. Walsall Council understands that while it has the basic tools to deliver its “Transformational Agenda”, this won’t make sure the change will continue. It accepts the need for a change in culture. It has therefore setting up an “organisation development programme” to support the change process with the aim of coordinating the activities that are needed to maintain change.

The Council has adequate arrangements to ensure that it has a workforce that has the right skills. It has policies to help it meet its workforce needs both now and in the future. An example of this is the work is the Business Support Division. The division was formed by bringing together into a single support service 460 administrative, clerical and support staff. This has made it possible to enhance service at a lower cost and has saved £1.2m. It is looking at all its services and plans to reorganise its senior management. The Council’s political leadership has decided to protect frontline public services as much as possible from budget cuts reducing the costs of senior management to do so.

Walsall has successfully retained full charter status for our Member Development Service. In the recent report West Midland Leaders Board stated “There is clear evidence that Walsall provides members with a high degree of learning and development opportunities, and its member development programme has contributed significantly to improve the services it provides to the community.

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/>



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Appendix Four



David Martin
Executive Director Social Care and
Inclusion
Civic Centre
Darwell Street
Walsall
WS1 2RG

Care Quality Commission
West Midlands Region
77 Paradise Circus
Queensway
Birmingham
B1 2DT

Monday 12th October 2009 – 08.00am.

Embargoed

Dear Mr Martin

Annual Performance Assessment of Adult Social Care for Walsall council 2008/9

Introduction

The annual performance assessment report outlines the findings of the 2009 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your council. Thank you for the information you provided to support this process, and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

With this letter is the final copy of the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) report. Also attached are:

- The Performance Assessment Notebook (PAN), which you have already had an opportunity to comment on for factual accuracy following the Annual Review Meeting and
- The Quality Assurance & Moderation summary, which provides a record of the process of consideration by CQC from which the APA report is derived.

The grades outlined in the APA report are an overall grade for delivering outcomes and a separate grade for each of seven outcomes. The commentary on the two domains of leadership, use of resources and commissioning will be directly transferred to the Comprehensive Area Assessment from the APA report.

The grades we use are:

Grade	Descriptor
Grade 4: (Performing excellently) People who use services find that services deliver well above minimum requirements	A service that overall delivers well above minimum requirements for people, is highly cost-effective and fully contributes to the achievement of wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 3: (Performing well) People who use services find that services consistently deliver above minimum requirements	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for people is cost-effective and makes contributions to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 2: (Performing adequately) People who use services find that services deliver only minimum requirements	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for people, but is not consistently cost-effective nor contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 1: (Performing poorly) People who use services find that services do not deliver minimum (performing adequately) requirements	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for people, is not cost-effective and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community.

The DASS Director of Adult Social Services is expected to take the report to an open meeting of the relevant executive committee of the council by 31st January 2010 and to inform us of the date this will take place. The council should make the report available to members of the public at the same time and they must copy this grading letter and report to the council's appointed auditor.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE JUDGMENTS FOR 2008/09 – Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Overall Grade Awarded for Delivery of Outcomes	Well
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Delivering Outcomes	Grade Awarded
Improved health and well-being	Well
Improved quality of life	Adequately
Making a positive contribution	Well
Increased choice and control	Adequately
Freedom from discrimination or harassment	Well
Economic well-being	Well
Maintaining personal dignity and respect	Well

The attached APA report sets out progress about areas of good performance, areas of improvement over the last year, areas which are priorities for improvement and where appropriate, and identifies any follow up action CQC will take.

Full details of the written representation process are available on our website at www.cqc.org.uk

The timescales are as follows:

- Councils have until 12 noon on Wed 14th Oct to inform us of their intention to make a written representation.
- Councils send in their full written representation by 12 noon on Monday 19th Oct 2009.

Any intention must be sent to: Louise Guss, Representations Officer, c/o the Representations Administrator Jenny Wright, either by email to jenny.wright@cqc.org.uk or by fax to 01484 770 420.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Gordon
Regional Director
Care Quality Commission

Council Name: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

This report is a summary of the performance of how the council promotes adult social care outcomes for people in the council area.

The overall grade for performance is combined from the grades given for the individual outcomes.

There is a brief description below – see Grading for Adult Social Care Outcomes 2008/09 in the Performance Assessment Guide web address below, for more detail.

Poorly performing – not delivering the minimum requirements for people

Performing adequately – only delivering the minimum requirements for people

Performing well – consistently delivering above the minimum requirements for people

Performing excellently- overall delivering well above the minimum requirements for people

We also make a written assessment about

Leadership and

Commissioning and use of resources

Information on these additional areas can be found in the outcomes framework

To see the outcomes framework please go to our web site: [Outcomes framework](#)

You will also find an explanation of terms used in the report in the glossary on the web site.

Delivering Outcomes Assessment

Overall Walsall council is performing:

Well

Outcome 1:

[Improved health and well-being](#)

The council is performing:

Well

Outcome 2:

[Improved quality of life](#)

The council is performing:

Adequately

Outcome 3:

[Making a positive contribution](#)

The council is performing:

Well

Outcome 4:

[Increased choice and control](#)

The council is performing:

Adequately

Outcome 5:

[Freedom from discrimination and harassment](#)

The council is performing:

Well

Outcome 6:

[Economic well-being](#)

The council is performing: **Well**

Outcome 7:

[Maintaining personal dignity and respect](#)

The council is performing: **Well**

Click on titles above to view a text summary of the outcome.

Assessment of Leadership and Commissioning and use of resources

Leadership

People of Walsall have continued to experience an improving service during the year. The council benefits from good and effective overall leadership and direction and there are clear strategic intentions within social care. The council has good plans to support the strategies and monitors improvements to continually strive for better care for the people of Walsall. The council has mature relationships with its partners and this assists them in delivering consistent and interconnected services.

The council has a strong commitment to gaining the views of the people of Walsall and this is ratified by people and carers who say they are well supported to shape priorities and influence service developments. The council has a strong commitment to improving advice, information and care management from new access services. The increases in usage of initiatives such as direct payments have assisted this individualised care support.

There is a more robust system of corporate performance management which is well supported by elected members. Performance is measured and evaluated to ensure that outcomes are delivered and that services meet the needs of the people of Walsall. The council has a self awareness of the potential risks for its leadership team and has adopted early warning systems including better communication and information channels in order that these are averted. These systems will need to be constantly reviewed in order that Walsall Council continues to deliver improving services to the people of Walsall.

Commissioning and use of resources

The people of Walsall can be assured that they receive improving quality of services from providers of care through the council's work with providers. The council has retendered the provision of domiciliary care services and this has resulted in the people of Walsall being able to access better quality of services. Care homes within Walsall are improving, but the council should consider out of borough placements with a view as to how they can influence improvements to services. A number of mechanisms are now in place to ensure that the quality of services is reviewed from diverse information sources.

The council involves local people in the decisions around the provision and commissioning of services in a number of ways including events, workshops and invitation to join specific committees. Examples of where the council has worked in partnership with the people of Walsall include the multi faith centre and the gym at the Dorothy Pattison hospital.

The council has invested in improved information flows in order that it can make swift and better decisions around services. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment core data set has been used

to improve information to commissioners and outcomes such as additional attention given to tackling fuel poverty are positive outcomes of this approach.

Summary of Performance

People in Walsall are benefiting from the council's approach to provision of information and the utilisation of the feedback it receives from its people in the provision of services. This has led to improved outcomes for the people of Walsall. The council has consolidated and improved upon the progress it has made in recent years with regard to the outcomes for people. The council works well with key stakeholders and partners to deliver comprehensive and holistic packages of care and to address areas of need.

The council has reviewed the directorate structure and has put in place systems which it believes will enhance the experience of the people who use services and their carers. The performance management infrastructure has been improved to ensure greater communication and early warning of when issues may need review. There is clear evidence of a strong leadership who have an understanding of the direction of travel for the council. This in turn is cascaded throughout the organisation. The council has a good understanding of the needs of the people of Walsall and through regular engagement; services are developed and reviewed to meet these needs. This enables the council to continue to learn and adapt services to ensure positive outcomes for the people it serves.

People are kept safe through improving safeguarding procedures and through increases in equipment designed to ensure that people are safe in their own homes. The council has closed 3 of the campus type accommodation for people with learning disabilities. The re-provision of these services has been achieved through independent or supportive living. For others in the borough, safety in the home schemes including bogus caller alarms have been utilised so that everyone feels safer within their own home. The council has also enabled people to take part in community life through a number of initiatives to support people in accessing community services to improve their health and well being. These include travel trainers, increased direct payments, access to leisure services and increased volunteering opportunities.

The council has continued to deliver improving positive outcomes for the people of Walsall despite some significant challenges and changes within its own organisation and within those of its key partners. However partnership working has continued and matured so that partners are comfortable about their roles within projects. This forms a solid base from which to continue to improve outcomes for people who use services and their carers.

Outcome 1: Improved health and well-being

The council is performing: **Well**

What the council does well.

People in Walsall have good information available to help them to stay healthy and improve their wellbeing. The council has provided this through a number of initiatives including: Healthy Walks programmes, health trainer service for people with a learning disability, review of information leaflets by the readers group and newsletters. A number of services are delivered to all communities in languages that meet their needs. People in Walsall are able to have their say in the way in which services for health promotion are delivered through the SUE the Service User Empowerment group. Feedback from people in Walsall shows that they appreciate the time taken by the council staff to listen in person to feedback.

People who have been admitted to hospital care have experienced fewer delays in their discharge into social care through initiatives such as the multi agency discharge team and moving into social care prior to formal agreement of funding of care via the funding panel. People who receive a meal service are satisfied or more than satisfied with the meals provided to them and these are found to be culturally appropriate, with staff increasingly sensitive to the individuals' needs.

What the council needs to improve.

Whilst the council provides a significant amount of information to the people of Walsall regarding how to maintain a healthy life, further work needs to be done with key partners to ensure that the health inequalities within Walsall improve. People who suffer from a substance misuse problem also require improvements to services to ensure that they remain in programmes of care and that treatment outcome profiles and drug intervention programmes are increased to become more in line with trends in England.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of referrals made to the intermediate care service. Walsall Council has reviewed the provision and is looking to provide services which are more appropriate to the care needs of those being discharged from hospital, in order that the intermediate care service sees only appropriate referrals. The council will need to monitor and review the effectiveness of this strategy. The council needs to review the services for people who are at the end of life in order that they are afforded choice and control of treatment pathways.

Outcome 2: Improved quality of life

The council is performing: **Adequately**

What the council does well.

Older people in Walsall have been increasingly assisted to live independently at home. There have been significant increases in the use of Telecare equipment to ensure that people are safe within their own homes. The council provides a number of services available for people with mental health issues which facilitate early intervention. These include: ease of access to specialist advice and information, the Mental Health Support Time and Recovery Role, the falls

programme and the Walsall Mental Health Carers Support Service. People with sensory needs have been enabled to live more independent lives through undertaking a self assessment for environmental aids. The council has facilitated a number of projects in order that fewer people are admitted to hospital. These include: joint working with health colleagues on the falls service, intensive home care for people with complex needs and the crisis resolution home treatment team.

People who care for people who use services have experienced increased support from Walsall Council during 2008/09. Carers are working with the council to improve services through representation at partnership boards and other groups such as the People First group. Carers' knowledge about the person for whom they care is respected and appreciated by Walsall Council. The council use carers as experts and their input is used when care planning and reviews are undertaken. Carers have access to a wide range of activities such as complementary therapy, specialist exercise, domestic support, Tai Chi classes, and an information pack containing details of support agencies and help lines. There is a dedicated carers centre which provides information and support.

What the council needs to improve.

Whilst the council has improved the numbers of people receiving minor adaptations, the length of time waiting for major adaptations has increased. This is due to the council's focus on the clearing the waiting list for occupational therapy assessment and the year on year increase in referrals. However the council anticipates that increased staffing, new IT systems and revised criteria will assist in the reduction of waiting times. The council will need to monitor and review this in order that the people of Walsall are assisted to live independently.

The council plans to develop a respite policy for carers in Walsall and this will assist in more carers accessing support of this kind. However the council will need to monitor this to ensure equity of access to respite care. In order to ensure that people with a learning disability are able to be as independent as possible the council needs to ensure that work undertaken to move accommodation from campus to supported living environments continues in a timely manner.

Outcome 3: Making a positive contribution

The council is performing: **Well**

What the council does well.

The people in Walsall have access to widespread opportunities and support to take part in community life. The council undertakes consultation on its plans through a number of forums and events including: representation on the Walsall multi-faith forum; feedback from a borough wide Citizen's Panel; a pilot project of mystery shopping for council services. The diverse population is assisted in having its say through the use of a translation service. There is significant evidence of how people who use services or their carers have impacted on the delivery and design of the services they receive.

The council undertook over 1000 interviews, nearly half of which were with people who were over the age of 55 years, in order to ensure that the people of Walsall were able to identify and feed into the priorities for the council. Engagement in the placing of the Pelsall centre and the facilities and services provided is one example of the feedback received from the people of Walsall and how it is used in the delivery of services.

What the council needs to improve.

The council undertakes a user experience survey and this highlighted that a small number of people were concerned about some aspects of the service such as changes to visits, length of visits and continuity of carers. Remedial action needs to be taken to address these concerns and the proposed benchmarking exercise will enhance this.

The council needs to continue to develop robust systems to ensure that the voluntary organisations are thriving and accessible in order to support and involve people who use services and carers. The council should ensure that this approach is linked to wider policies within the council. The council needs to increase awareness of the personalisation agenda for black and minority ethnic groups to ensure equality of access to services.

Outcome 4: Increased choice and control

The council is performing: **Adequately**

What the council does well.

People in Walsall who use services and their carers are supported in exercising control of personal support and can choose from an increased range of local support and information. People who require assessments have also seen an increase in the timeliness of this service. Over 80% of most people receive an assessment within 4 weeks, which compares favourably with the national average. These assessments are available to the person using services and their carers in formats that are appropriate to their needs and focused on the outcomes for the individual. People receiving assessments have experienced an increase in a review of the care package received to ensure that it continues to meet their needs. The council has developed a single assessment process jointly with health partners and it is anticipated that this will further enhance assessment and delivery of appropriate services.

People of Walsall can access information in a variety of ways and in a variety of different settings. People who are new to services can choose to receive direct payments which offer them a choice of services. The numbers of direct payments to all people has increased in 2008/09. The council has put in place a number of advocacy arrangements in order that people who may have difficulty in expressing themselves are supported in their choices of services. Walsall Council has undertaken a number of events in order that they may improve access to services from their culturally diverse population. An example of an impact on services has been the addition of a social worker within a GP surgery which serves an area that has a high black and ethnic minority population. This provides easier access to services and assessments.

What the council needs to improve.

Whilst the council has implemented a single assessment process it is currently refining this to support the electronic single assessment process. The council will need to ensure that this is done in a timely manner in order that information is captured and stored so that changes in need can be addressed promptly. The council's performance on new assessments for people with a learning disability is below the average for England and action should be taken to ensure that assessments are undertaken so that services can be provided that meet their needs.

The brokerage system currently in operation in domiciliary care services for older people is being rolled out across all teams. The council will need to ensure that this service is accessible to all people within Walsall so that people who use services have increased control of their personal

support and that they can choose from a wide range of reputable providers. The council is in the process of implementing the personalisation agenda. The council needs to ensure that it can demonstrate that initiatives are delivered on time in order to have a positive impact on people's lives.

Outcome 5: Freedom from discrimination and harassment

The council is performing: **Well**

What the council does well.

People who use services and their carers have information regarding fair access to services, which is produced in a variety of formats and languages. This leaflet explains the eligibility criteria for receiving care. The council reports that challenges to the access to services are rare and form less than 1% of all complaints. People in Walsall can be assured that they are treated equally as the council has achieved level 3 in the equality standards framework set by local government. The council undertakes equality impact assessments on changes to services so that people in Walsall can be assured that access to services is fair.

People in Walsall can feel safer in their own homes due to a number of schemes run by the council. These include: promoting safe neighbourhoods, the over 50's forum, a security survey report, a community alarm service and fitting bogus caller devices. People with dementia and their carers are assisted to feel safe and reassured through the fitting of exit sensors to their houses. Over twenty of these devices have been fitted to houses in the borough.

Following a major review of respect, courtesy and fairness in older peoples services the council needs to ensure that the behaviour of staff is monitored and any issues highlighted are addressed.

What the council needs to improve.

Advocacy services have been reviewed and improved but the council needs to ensure that this service is available to all minority ethnic groups. This includes monitoring and review of advocacy services for people with mental health needs so that they can access the Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy Service.

The council needs to ensure that the recommendations from the needs analysis undertaken in the year assessed are implemented so that culturally related inequalities are addressed. The council currently has achieved level 3 in the equality standards framework set for local government and is progressing work towards excellent.

During 2008/09 the council has refined their racist incident procedure to include all types of incidents. This was launched in April 2009 and it is anticipated that this will assist the council in identification of areas in which action can be taken to reduce the incidence of harassment.

Outcome 6: Economic well – being

The council is performing: **Well**

What the council does well.

People who use services in Walsall are increasingly supported by the council to ensure that they have an income to meet living and support costs. People who are assessed for support also have their finances discussed to ensure that they are receiving all benefits that are available to them. The council provides a number of opportunities for all communities within Walsall to access information on financial assessment and benefit maximisation. These include welfare officers, advice sessions in local centres and other venues in local communities. During 2008/09 the first phase of brokerage support became available, which provides information and support to self funders or recipients of direct payments in order that they find appropriate services to meet their care needs.

People who use services in Walsall are supported in finding or training for employment through a number of projects run by the council. These include: recruitment events, a positive action scheme and through the council's strategic recruitment team. People with a range of care needs are supported to gain training to equip them with skills to increase their work opportunities through projects directed at their specific needs and abilities. These training opportunities have demonstrated a number of positive outcomes for those undertaking them. Sixteen people have gained employment as a result of this work.

What the council needs to improve.

The council whilst improving access to benefits, will need to ensure that those who are traditionally disadvantaged have increased support to ensure that they have an opportunity to access the employment market. The work undertaken with Job Centre Plus will need to be reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of those accessing the service, as will the work with local enterprises partnerships. The activities that the council is undertaking with regard to increasing opportunities for carers through access to education will also need to be reviewed and evaluated with regard to the tangible outcomes for carers accessing these services.

Outcome 7: Maintaining personal dignity and respect

The council is performing: **Well**

What the council does well.

People can be assured of the ease of referral to the adult safeguarding team at Walsall Council. The numbers of safeguarding referrals are increasing and these are received from diverse sources. This is indicative of the ease of access and the increased awareness promoted by the council. People in Walsall benefit from the partnership approach by the council with the police and health colleagues when responding to safeguarding concerns. This joint working ensures that timely action can be taken to make sure that people who are vulnerable are kept safe. People in Walsall are kept safe through the widespread training the council provides to both internal and external staff. The council ensures that this training assists in embedding a culture of safety through monitoring and review of behaviours and practice of those who have received training.

People in Walsall are supported by the council to ensure that their environment preserves dignity and respect through a number of initiatives in place. These include: supporting people commissioning providers to deliver housing related support; community alarms; care and repair service commissioned from the Black Country Home Improvement Agency; the handyperson service and 'Spadeworks' a preventative support scheme which promotes fuel efficiency, visits and help with shopping.

What the council needs to improve.

The council has reviewed safeguarding procedures and is implementing some of the learning from the Baby P case review. The council is increasing the numbers of staff who deal with cases and working with partners to ensure that all stakeholders are involved. This work will need to be reviewed and monitored to ensure that it produces positive outcomes and that changes are implemented in a robust and timely manner. The council will need to ensure that all people of Walsall have access to the referral systems in place through monitoring. The council needs to take action to address areas where referral rates are found to be low.

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9 December 2009

Ms Pauline Pilkington
Executive Director for Children's Services
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Room 39, The Council House
Lichfield Street
Walsall WS1 1TW

Dear Ms Pilkington

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs adequately (2)
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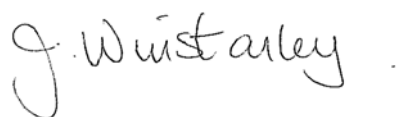
Children's services in Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected and regulated services and settings in Walsall is adequate. Inspection outcomes are good or better in too few services. Children receive a good start to their care and education in childminder and nursery settings but that trend does not continue as they enter school. Provision in primary and secondary schools is variable with a smaller proportion being judged good or outstanding than in similar areas and found nationally. One of the two secondary schools judged to be inadequate by Ofsted has recently re-opened as an academy. Judgements for staying safe and enjoy and achieve are in line with or above those in similar areas across the majority of inspected and regulated services or settings.

The quality of provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is mixed and adequate overall. Provision in the local authority's seven special schools is good, all having been judged to be at least good in their most recent inspection. While one of the three pupil referral units is outstanding, another is inadequate, as are the private fostering arrangements. The local authority fostering and adoption services are adequate. All five children's homes have improved in the last two years, with three homes now judged to be good and none inadequate.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving is in line with similar areas and performance nationally. The gap in achievement between those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their peers is in line with similar areas. Children and young people responding report higher levels of good emotional health than in similar areas or nationally.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA