

## **EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**9 JANUARY 2020 AT 6.00 PM AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE, WALSALL**

**Committee Members present:** Councillor Lee Jeavons (Chair)  
Councillor Sarah Jane Cooper (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Gazanfer Ali  
Councillor Daniel Barker  
Councillor Rose Burley  
Councillor Brian Douglas-Maul  
Councillor Sat Johal  
Councillor Pard Kaur  
Councillor Farhana Mazhar  
Councillor Saiqa Nasreen  
Councillor Lorna Rattigan

**Portfolio Holders present:** Councillor Chris Towe - Education & Skills

**Non-elected non-voting Members present:** Ms Sharon Guy - Primary Teacher Representative

**Officers present:** Mrs Sharon Kelly, Assistant Director - Access & Achievement  
Mr John Edwards, Interim Head of Service - Access  
Mr Mohammed Irfan, Lead Accountant  
Dr Emma Thornbery, Interim Lead for SEND  
Dr Paul Fantom, Democratic Services Officer

### **1/20 WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair welcomed all members of the Committee.

The Chair noted that some questions had been received from a member of the public and, as it had not been possible to include them on the agenda for this meeting, the questions and the written responses from officers would be appended to the Minutes of the meeting.

### **2/20 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Ms Wendy Duffus and Mrs Philomena Mullins.

### **3/20 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions.

#### 4/20     **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

#### 5/20     **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)**

There were no agenda items that required the exclusion of the public.

#### 6/20     **MINUTES**

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019 was submitted [Annexed].

#### **Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

#### 7/20     **CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that items 8, 7 and 6 respectively would be considered as the next items of business by the Committee.

#### 8/20     **UPDATE ON THE SEND LOCAL AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME AND ON EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLANS**

A report was submitted to provide the Committee with an update on how the SEND Local Area Partnership Programme was addressing the areas of concern identified by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in the SEND Local Area inspection carried out in February 2019. [Annexed].

The Interim Lead for SEND, Dr Emma Thornbery, provided an overview for the Committee that made reference to the improvements being delivered through the Written Statement of Action (WSoA), including the actions to improve the quality and timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). She noted that for monitoring, reports were being made to the monthly meetings of the Local Area Improvement Board (LAIB). Key actions taken were that agency workers had been employed to increase capacity, and that following the successful conclusion of the recruitment process, there was now a full complement of staff in the SEN team. This ensured that notable progress was being made to deal with the backlogs in processing EHCPs and annual reviews, it being noted that as the statutory process had a twenty week timescale some of the delays had occurred during the summer holiday period when schools were closed. As the data was showing that there were significant issues in relation to the process timeline, work had also been carried out to undertake detailed tracking via the milestones in the process.

The Assistant Director – Access and Achievement, Mrs Sharon Kelly, informed the Committee that in relation to the monitoring through the LAIB meetings, all the main milestones were on track and that an audit for the high needs funding review had been carried out in which key areas of work had been highlighted. She noted that in February, a LAIB meeting was to be held with an advisor from DfE in attendance and that a report from the DfE on this would be made and the Committee advised on its contents in due course. Also reiterated was the point that a new staffing structure was in place and that the full complement of staff had now been recruited, even allowing for problems in the recruitment of education psychologists being a national issue. With reference to the statutory timescales, and in relation to Health and CAMHS related matters, it was reported that whilst there were still some delays, these were being dealt with.

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Chris Towe, commented that he was satisfied that the progress being made on these matters was in line with the WSoA, and would be tested by the DfE in February, and that no risk with any of the nine work streams had been identified.

With reference to a question from Councillor Kaur regarding how long it would take to clear the 12 month backlog, Mrs Kelly informed the Committee that the work to achieve this was being done and that the trend for each month could now be extrapolated to determine where it should be. Data concerning this was due to be presented to the next meeting of the LAIB and could be circulated to the Committee in due course. Councillor Towe added that he was pleased with the steps being taken to address these matters.

#### **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

### **9/20 SCHOOL AND PUPIL PLACE PLANNING**

A report was submitted to the Committee to provide an overview on pupil place planning in the Borough [Annexed].

The Interim Head of Service – Access, Mr John Edwards, reported on aspects of the pupil planning process. Reference was made to the following issues:

- That more schools gained academy status, and that it would be necessary to work closer with all schools on such matters in future.
- Whilst there was a statutory duty on local authorities to provide a school place for a child, there was an important distinction to be made between parental choice and parental preference.
- With reference to the forecasted Published Admission Number (PAN) for schools, it was necessary for the Council to have discussions with the schools in order for them to take additional pupils above the PAN.
- The cross-border movement of pupils residing in other local authority areas but being educated in Walsall schools, and vice versa. It was noted that in the current year, there was anticipated to be 1658 spare school places, but there had been a net gain of 58 pupils as a consequence of cross-border movement.
- That as the physical capacity of a number of schools was limited, it was not possible to continually seek to expand them.

During the discussion by the Committee, Councillor Burley highlighted the recurring issues for those parents who were unable to send their children to a particular school despite their siblings being educated there, and the problems that they then faced due to transport difficulties so that these parents felt they were being penalised. Councillor Nasreen emphasised that as well as building more houses, there was a need for more school places to be made available. Councillor Douglas-Maul also noted similarities in other parts of the Borough, and he pointed out the difficulties that councillors encountered when attempting to deal with residents who were parents seeking to have their children attend the school of their choice.

Councillor Towe emphasised that the Council was constrained by Government legislation and that it must take a view of the total number of available places across the Borough. He pointed out that should the Council's actions be contrary to such statutory requirements, the consequence could result in penalisation with regard to future funding.

Mrs Kelly also referred to the Council's duties under the School Admissions Code to ensure that there were enough school places for the children in the Borough and that for the majority of Walsall's children and parents, this worked well. Reference was also made by Mrs Kelly and Mr Edwards to the School Admissions Code's requirements, the statutory limits on walking distances to schools for children of different ages, the operation of the school admission appeals process, and it was pointed out that academies were their own admissions authority and operated their own procedures. The role played by head teachers and the flexibility and support offered to parents by schools in doing what they could to accommodate individual circumstances, was also noted, as were the range of factors involved, including the difficulties in providing school places for those children who were mid-year admissions.

Councillor Towe informed the Committee that to ensure sufficient school places were available in an area, careful consideration was given by the Council to the planning areas, and these were shown in detail in the report, with there being eleven planning areas for the primary schools in the Borough. He suggested that in order for there to be a clearer understanding of how decisions on school admissions were made and the choices available to parents, a copy of the criteria could be made available to elected Members.

In response to a question from Councillor Ali concerning whether parents are provided with guidance when they apply for a school place, Mrs Kelly confirmed that the information was online and that the Council employed dedicated parent counsellors who are able to support parents through the admissions process.

Further to a question from the Chair on the possible establishment of a Free School in the Borough, Mrs Kelly reported that the policy of the DfE had now been changed and consequently it had to be shown that for such a school to be established, it would have to be in an area of need. Therefore, the application had been withdrawn.

During the discussion, the possibility a briefing on school admissions being arranged for the Committee was supported by Members.

## **Resolved:**

1. That the report be noted;
2. That arrangements be made for either a briefing session or special meeting of the Committee to enable Members to receive further information on the schools admissions process.

## **10/20 SCHOOLS FUNDING**

A report was submitted to provide the Committee with an update regarding schools funding and to inform Members about the financial system that the Council and the schools in Walsall operate within in relation to education funding [Annexed].

The Lead Accountant, Mr Mohammed Irfan, reported that to fund the provision of education in the Borough, each year the Council received the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which was comprised of four 'blocks'. The Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) supported the statutory services that local authorities are required to provide to all schools, and in 2019/20 this equated to £1.375m. The Schools Block is provided to local authorities to fund mainstream education, and in 2019/20 this equated to £209.028m. The Early Years Block is provided to local authorities to fund early education, whether this is in private/voluntary or independent settings, with childminders, in nursery schools or nursery classes in primary schools, and in 2019/20 it equated to £21.221m. The High Needs Block is provided to local authorities to fund support to children with additional needs, whether provided in mainstream schools, additionally resources provision, special schools, pupil referral units, independent schools or alternative provision, and in 2019/20 equated to £33.140m. In each case, an explanation of the financial issues concerning each block was provided, with the exception of the High Need Block on which a separate report had been made to the Committee at its meeting on 19 November 2019 (Minute 76/19 refers).

Further to a question from Councillor Burley regarding the funding and governance arrangements for nurseries, Mrs Kelly confirmed that there was no strategic plan to close nurseries and that the Council was working to support all of the nursery schools in the Borough. She pointed out that it was the duty of Boards of Governors to ensure that their schools had a viable financial plan and that if there were issues of financial viability, the Council would provide support and assist with the preparation of a financial impact plan.

Councillor Barker raised several questions concerning the problems being faced with respect to school funding. These included the issues for those parents whose income was just above the poverty line, that some schools appeared unaware of the existence of the High Needs Block and, in relation to the Early Years Block, that a number of schools were unable to take 2 year-old children because of a lack of space. In response to this, Councillor Towe requested that Councillor Barker make the relevant information available to Mrs Kelly and to him on these matters.

Having regard to a point made by Councillor Barker that should a school set aside funding from its budget for expansion purposes, then it should not be penalised for doing so, Mrs Kelly advised the Committee of the responsibilities of School Governors regarding financial sustained provision, and that if a school did take such action in order to finance a capital

project where there was no need for it, then this would be challenged by the Council. With regard to deficit budget, as Portfolio Holder, Councillor Towe requested that if Members were aware that there was an issue with a school or schools having a deficit budget then they should share this information with him.

Councillor Douglas-Maul stated that in view of the reduction in the ability to service the schools in the Borough and the requirement for additional financial resources, consideration should be given to requesting that the Local Government Association lobby the Government for a change in policy. In response to this point, Councillor Towe made reference to the Government's commitment to increase funding in schools to £7.1bn by 2022/23, which was £4.6bn above inflation, with the levels in 2021 and 2022 being £2.6bn and £4.8bn respectively. In relation to pupil funding in Walsall's primary schools, this would increase from £3,500 per child in 2019/20 to £4,000 by 2021/22, and for secondary schools this would increase from £4,800 to £5,000 per child during the same period.

In relation to a question raised by Ms Guy concerning teacher pay awards, pension costs and the retention of good qualified teachers in Walsall, and who further observed that should teachers be unable to achieve pay progression it was probable that they would seek positions with neighbouring authorities, Mrs Kelly emphasised the importance of ensuring funding for workforce development. She also pointed out that the Council had its own recruitment pool for Newly Qualified Teachers and that support and training was provided to ensure the retention and development of teachers in Walsall.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**11/20 WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

Members received and considered the Committee's Work Programme [Annexed].

Further to Minute 9/20, it was also noted that a special meeting of the Committee would be arranged to enable Members to receive further information on the schools admissions process. The date and time for this would be arranged by the Chair and relevant officers.

**Resolved:**

That the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

**12/20 FORWARD PLANS**

Members received and considered the Forward Plans of the Council and the Black Country Executive Joint Committee [Annexed].

**Resolved:**

That the Forward Plans be noted.

13/20 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 13 February 2020.

The meeting terminated at 7.25 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....

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**From:** Patricia White  
**Sent:** Monday, January 6, 2020 8:36:07 PM  
**To:** Sharon Kelly <Sharon.Kelly@walsall.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Education Scrutiny

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the council. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.**

Dear Sharon,

I am writing to you to ask for some information regarding Early Years education in Walsall. I regularly attend the Education Scrutiny meetings with my husband and so have been following discussions since June 2019.

Part of the last two scrutiny meetings have involved discussing reception aged children not being 'school ready' and several councillors seem to hold the view that this problem is largely due to inadequate parenting, particularly for those children still wearing nappies. Therefore my questions concern information around this topic.

1. How many Reception aged children started school in September 2019?
2. How many of those entered with identified SEND?
3. How many of these children came through nurseries attached to schools?
4. How many children came through other provision i.e straight from home, Childminders, Private Day Nursery?
5. How many children entered school in nappies?
6. Which areas of Walsall have the highest numbers of deprivation?
7. What evidence based parenting programmes does the council offer and in which areas?
8. What is the uptake by parents?
9. Is there any data on the success of these programmes?
10. What evidence do you have that children are entering school not 'school ready'?

I understand you may not be able to provide all the information I have requested by the 9th January but I would be grateful to receive any information ahead of the meeting and any remaining information by email when possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Kind Regards





### Request

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6. Which areas of Walsall have the highest numbers of deprivation?
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8. What is the uptake by parents?
9. Is there any data on the success of these programmes?
10. What evidence do you have that children are entering school not 'school ready'?

### Response

1. **How many Reception aged children started school in September 2019?**

There were 3,804 reception aged children that started school in September 2019.

2. **How many of those entered with identified SEND?**

41 children had an Education, Health and Care Plan and 279 had an identified need of SEN Support.

3. **How many of these children came through nurseries attached to schools?**

2,517 children have entered reception through nurseries attached to schools.

4. **How many children came through other provision i.e straight from home, Childminders, Private Day Nursery?**

We do not hold this information.

5. **How many children entered school in nappies?**

The LA is not expected to collect assessment evidence from schools on entry in reception. The first time we see child assessment data is at the end of reception.

Children are assessed in their Physical Development which includes the age related expectation of: *'They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.'* On entry into school they may be developmentally at 16-29 months: *'Shows some awareness of bladder and bowel urges'* or at 22-36 months: *'Clearly communicates their need for potty or toilet' and 'beginning to be independent in self-care', but still often needs adult support'*. Developmentally their age appropriate milestone is emerging or developing at 40-60 months: *'Usually dry and clean during the day'*.

6. **Which areas of Walsall have the highest numbers of deprivation?**

The Indices of Deprivation was updated in 2019 (collated by Government) and has been incorporated into the Walsall Intelligence website:

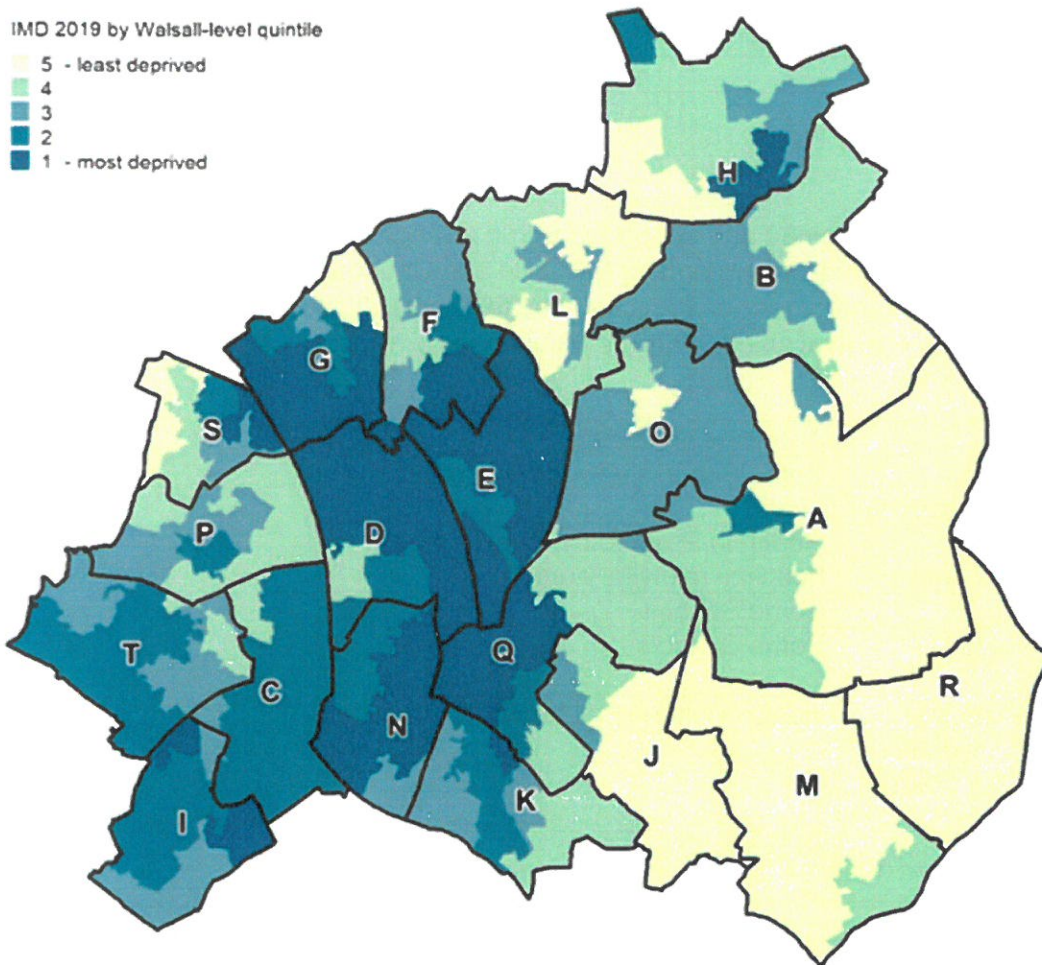
The website allows users to search for individual or postcodes and see information related to them. It also allows for comparisons with previous versions of the Indices of Deprivation. The attached document is an extract from that webpage showing the levels of deprivation by ward.

## Ward-level deprivation

**Table 6: Ward-level summary measures for Walsall**

Ward	2019 Rank	Av. IMD Score	Eng. Decile	2015 Rank	2010 Rank	Map Key
Blakenall	1	53.6	1	1	1	E
Birchills Leamore	2	48.9	1	2	2	D
Pleck	3	45.3	1	3	3	N
Bloxwich East	4	42.1	1	4	4	F
Darlaston South	5	40.8	1	5	5	I
Bentley & Darlaston North	6	39.2	1	7	7	C
Willenhall South	7	38.3	1	9	9	T
St Matthew's	8	38.2	1	6	8	Q
Palfrey	9	36.9	1	8	6	K
Bloxwich West	10	36.8	1	10	10	G
Brownhills	11	28.0	3	11	11	H
Short Heath	12	26.2	3	12	13	P
Willenhall North	13	26.0	3	13	14	S
Rushall-Shelfield	14	25.7	3	14	12	O
Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	15	19.4	4	15	15	B
Pelsall	16	18.8	5	16	16	L
Aldridge Central & South	17	15.0	6	17	17	A
Paddock	18	14.6	6	18	18	J
Pheasey Park Farm	19	12.8	7	19	19	M
Streetly	20	6.2	10	20	20	R





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## 7. What evidence based parenting programmes does the council offer and in which areas?

We provide a range of Parenting Programmes across the whole borough, all the programmes are evidence informed or evidence based. The offer also includes an Autism specific programme (Barnardos Cygnet), a programme to support parents in unhealthy relationships and a programme to support parents with identifying and managing the risks of child sexual exploitation (PACE). Early Help also provides the specialist full day Mellow programmes for parents and children involved in child protection. In 2019 73 Parenting Programmes were delivered.

Programme	Delivered by
Understanding My Child-Solihull Approach	Early Help Family Support – Parenting Group facilitators
Managing Teenage Behaviour – (from Teen Triple P)	Early Help Family Support – Parenting Group facilitators
Healthy Relationship Workshop (from Freedom Domestic Abuse)	Early Help Family Support – Parenting Group facilitators
Cygnet Parenting Programme (Autism Programme-Barnardos)	Early Help – Family Support – SEN workers
PACE Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE UK)	Early Help Family Support – Parenting Group facilitators
Mellow Mums Group (Mellow Parenting.org)	Early Help Parenting Practitioner

Mellow Dads Group (Mellow Parenting.org)	Early Help Parenting Practitioner

### Other Services

Other services are also trained and supported to run a range of programmes: Cygnet Autism, Mellow Bumps, PACE and Understanding My Child and Understanding Me (disability focused) programmes. These other agencies (schools, health visitors, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector) have run 37 groups in 2019 which have been made available to parents within their own settings to parents accessing their setting or service.

Programme	Agencies delivering
Cygnet Autism Parenting Programme	Some Schools, Mencap, School health
Mellow Bumps (preparing for baby)	Health in Pregnancy Team – Manor hospital/ midwifery unit
PACE	Some Schools
Understanding My Child	Some Schools
Understanding Me (parents of children with disability- Solihull Approach)	Health Visitors – all health centres
Triple P Teen	Grace Academy

### Online Offer

There is also available a suite of online parenting programmes (Solihull Approach Online) funded by Early Help on offer across Walsall, these universal programmes are available to any parent, carers, grandparents or others involved with a pregnancy, a baby, a child or teenager. These online programmes are available in a range of languages.

Programme
Understanding My Child- Solihull Approach
Managing Teenage Behaviour – (from Teen Triple P)
Healthy Relationship Workshop (from Freedom Domestic Abuse)
*You and Me Mum
Cygnet Parenting Programme (Barnardos Autism Programme)
PACE Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE UK)
*limited data available
Understanding Me (disability)
Mellow Mums Group (Mellow Parenting)
Mellow Dads Group (Mellow Parenting)
Mellow Bumps
Online Parenting
<b>Programme</b>
Online Understanding Your Child
Online Understanding Your Baby
Online Understanding Your Pregnancy
Online Understanding Your Teenager's brain

Delivery of programmes is broad across all four locality areas.



In addition, to the above, Public Health offer:

School Nurses offer Cygnet, Triple P and Understanding your Child. These are delivered in all localities as part of the EHWP pathway. Parent resilience and parent workshops are also offered. Health Visitors promote online Solihull and offer MELLOW Bumps. The teenage pregnancy service offers Teens and Toddlers.

## **8. What is the uptake by parents?**

The number of families accessing and completing parenting groups is 609. Currently we are only able to provide numbers of families from MOSAIC and Cygnet groups; we are unable to provide figures on number of parents attending for most of the 37 programmes run by other services. Families accessing online programme is 539. In total we can report a minimum of 1,148 families have taken up and completed a parenting programme in 2019.

## **9. Is there any data on the success of these programmes?**

### Understanding Your Child, Cygnet, Healthy Relationships and Managing Teenage Behaviour

From a sample size of 271 parents 219 reported the group 'helped a lot' with 52 reporting 'helped a bit'. No parent reported it did not help. The majority of change is seen in parent's wellbeing post attending the group with 80% (sample size of 184) reporting an increase in confidence, wellbeing, optimism and feeling good about their families future, 20% had a reduction in wellbeing post the group.

Parents have expressed verbatim to group facilitators the following:

Parents post the group have been able to identify the changes made by using a positive approach when communicating with their children and by using positive praise wherever possible. Parents have stated that they have learnt to pick their arguments and are able to manage behaviour before it escalates. Parent's post the group express the importance of play, stimulation and to be in tune with their children's needs. Parents have stated that Understanding Your Child has given them the skills to divide their attention and the importance of giving each of the children individual time depending on their age and stage of development. Parents attending Healthy Relationships often stated that they were unaware of the different categories of abuse and had not realised that they were or had been emotionally and financially abused as well as physically. Parents have highlighted via evaluation forms that they have a clearer understanding that their children are at risk of being caught up in the cross fire and that domestic abuse has a detrimental effect to their health and wellbeing even when they are out of sight from the violence. Parents have expressed how attending a group has helped them to realise they are not alone and that other parents suffer the same difficulties.

PACE UK – impact data currently unavailable.

### Specialist Mellow Mums and Mellow Dads groups

Over 50% parents report a positive behaviour change in both themselves and their children's behaviour post the group, parents also have significant reduction in negative problems (problems around confidence, wellbeing, relationships and managing and understanding their children) post the group.

### Evaluation of 4 Mellow Groups 2018 / 2019

- 50% of parents show a step down status post the group
- At 6 month follow up 40% of parents had retained a Universal or Early Help level status
- At 6-month follow up 40% of parents, show a step down status even further to universal support levels.
- Parent's feedback shows that 54% of parents report a behaviour change post Mellow

- 62% of parents say their children's behaviour is better at the last Mellow session.
- Parents reported high problems in wellbeing, relationships and behaviour in all of the four groups, these problems saw a 72% decrease at the last session of Mellow.
- 89% of parents report the group has helped them
- Many parents verbatim report positive change to confidence, relationships, and managing children in caring and sensitive ways.

#### Online

Parents rate the online programmes well, with Understanding Your Child and Understanding Pregnancy being the highest rated online programmes (+90 % found helpful and 80% would recommend).

### **10. What evidence do you have that children are entering school not 'school ready'?**

By the end of Reception Class 68% of our Walsall children are 'School Ready', which is the term used for when children start their National Curriculum in Year 1. It is measured as children's 'Good Level of Development'. This is 4% below National which is 72%.

In terms of children being at age related milestones when they enter school at 2, 3 or 4 years old, most schools report that children are below or well below, particularly in Communication and Language, Literacy and Maths.

Councillor Chris Towe has now visited the majority of Primary and Infants Schools in the Borough and without exception, when asked, Head Teachers inform Councillor Towe they have significant concerns in this area, with many suggesting children are entering into Reception 1 to 2 years behind in their development.