



Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on: **Thursday 18th March 2021 AT 6.00 p.m.**

Meeting to be held via: **Microsoft Teams**

Public access to meeting via: <https://youtu.be/letEF8GRuV4>

MEMBERSHIP:

Chair: Councillor M. Statham
Vice Chair: Councillor T. Jukes
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor H. Bashir
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor L. Jeavons
Councillor M. Follows
Councillor S. Neville
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham
Councillor S. Wade

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor T. Wilson.

Note: Walsall Council encourages the public to exercise their right to attend meetings of Council, Cabinet and Committees. Agendas and reports are available for inspection from the Council's Democratic Services Team at the Council House, Walsall (Telephone 01922 654767) or on our website www.walsall.gov.uk.

AGENDA

1.	Apologies To receive apologies for absence from Members of the Committee.	
2.	Substitutions To receive notice of any substitutions for a Member of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.	
3.	Declarations of interest and party whip To receive declarations of interest or the party whip from Members in respect of items on the agenda.	
4.	Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda (if applicable).	
5.	Minutes of the previous meeting To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting that took place on 14 th January 2021.	<u>Enclosed</u>
<u>Scrutiny</u>		
6.	Partnership update – exploitation To discuss the partnership response to Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation (including County Lines).	<u>Enclosed</u>
7.	Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019-20 An annual overview of the partnership performance in relation to safeguarding children and young people.	<u>Enclosed</u>
8.	The Black Country Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC) Programme: The First Five Months The report provides an update on the FDAC programme over its first five months of service.	<u>Enclosed</u>
<u>Overview</u>		
9.	Forward plans To receive the Forward Plan of Key Decisions from Cabinet and the Black Country Executive Joint Committee, to identify any further matters, which Members feel, may benefit from scrutiny.	<u>Enclosed</u>
10.	Date of next meeting To be agreed at Annual Council.	

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 14TH JANUARY 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Councils Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Present:

Councillor M. Statham (Chair)
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor H. Bashir
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor M. Follows
Councillor C. Statham

Officers

Helen Billings	Family Safeguarding Lead
Mark Halliwell	Assurance Lead Officer
Helena Kucharczyk	Head of Performance Improvement and Quality
Colleen Male	Director (Children's Social Work)
Andrea Potts	Director (Commissioning & Early Help)
Antony Schaffarczyk	Principal Social Worker

Portfolio Holder

Councillor T. Wilson

Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

Members confirmed that they could both see and hear the proceedings.

78/20

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor L. Jeavons and Councillor T. Jukes for the duration of the meeting.

79/20

Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

80/20

Declarations of Interest and party whip

There were no declarations of interest for the duration of the meeting

81/20

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

82/20

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th November 2020 were considered by the Committee.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2020 be approved, subject to the inclusion of Councillor T. Wilson and Councillor C. Statham as in attendance.

83/20

Recruitment and retention of social workers

The Principal Social Worker introduced the report and highlighted the salient points. An overview of social worker staffing in Children's Social Care was provided, and an outline of activity undertaken over the last year to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Workers. The stability of the worker force and consistency of staff was noted as essential to provide a foundation for all work in children's social care. The positive direction of travel was highlighted, although there was further work to be carried out.

The Committee were advised that in the previous two years staff turnover, vacancy rates, and the use of agency staff had reduced. It was noted that the recruitment of experienced social workers was a challenge (both regionally and nationally). Therefore, focus had also been placed on staff retention, through individual progression and consultation with staff to better understand their experiences of working in Walsall. A staff wellbeing strategy had been developed to support staff. The Family Safeguarding model had assisted Walsall to stand out as an employer as it allowed good social work practice and attracted staff to work for Walsall. Incentive payments used to attract and retain staff were described.

In response to a question from a Member, Officers described the importance of the support received from Managers. A stable and consistent group of group managers was important. It was also noted

that as well as access to high quality management support it was also necessary for staff to have access to specialist support, when required, which allows staff to process emotions and to reflect on difficult situations. It was confirmed that this is a corporate offer, which allowed staff to access counselling if needed.

A Member asked how inequalities were being addressed; the committee were informed that discussions were held with staff from minority groups to consider their development and how this could be supported. The Principal Social Worker explained that progression into management and leadership roles was evident and this would be further developed to consider the Authority's leadership offer.

Members discussed how staff were kept safe, and they were reassured that where necessary police support was provided.

A Member asked if there were internal targets for recruitment; however, Members were informed that Officers were continually attempting to reduce vacancy rates and staff turnover. The Committee were reassured that the focus was on outcomes for families and children. The Portfolio Holder stated that this was regularly reviewed by the Senior Management Team in Children's Services.

A Member asked for the reasons that the absenteeism rate of staff had reduced, Officers suggested that the importance of a stable team could help as staff felt more supported. However further work needed to be completed to understand this.

Members considered caseloads, and Officers stated that the direction of travel had been positive with an average 14 children per social worker. The Portfolio Holder stated a briefing note on this would be sent to Members on this outside of the meeting.

Resolved that:

- 1. The recruitment and retention of social workers report be noted.**
- 2. A briefing note on social worker caseloads would be distributed to Committee Members outside of the meeting.**

84/20

Family Safeguarding: the first four months

The Family Safeguarding Lead presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Committee were informed that the aim of the Family Safeguarding model was to keep families together wherever possible. It was a Department for Education funded partnership model, developed in Hertfordshire, which supported families with children aged 12 years and under where parents have issues of substance abuse, mental ill-health or domestic violence, and the child(ren) were subject to Child in Need or Child Protection Plans.

The programme went live on 1st September 2020, and virtually launched on 20th October 2020. Staff felt that this was a positive way to practise social work.

The Committee were informed that in order to achieve sustainability, data was being collected to evidence the model's effectiveness. A Member questioned how this approach was tailored to communities in each locality. The Family Safeguarding Lead stated that teams were working in localities and local relationships were developing. Data would be analysed to indicate and resource locality needs.

The Portfolio Holder stated that Walsall had been analysed to determine if this programme would work in the area and had been successful in achieving funding. The Director stated that there was confidence that this would work across the whole of Walsall; however, the demand for different types of adult workers may be different in particular communities. The Director stated that locality working allowed the authority to understand and respond to local need. This need could be profiled to provide help and support at the earliest point and responses tailored to the locality.

In response to a question from Members, Officers explained that the Covid-19 pandemic had delayed the programme from going live, this had created staffing costs (for those already recruited). This would be part of an ongoing conversation with the DfE and it had been identified as a Covid-19 cost. Officers were confident that this would be recouped.

A Member asked for reassurance that this approach was focused on individual family needs. Officers confirmed that this was the case, and stressed that it was needs based and tailored to families.

Resolved that

To note the implementation of the Family Safeguarding model and to give thanks to the staff involved in its establishment.

85/20

Annual complaints report

The Assurance Lead Officer presented the annual complaints report (annexed), and informed Members that it covered the period 1 April 2019 through to 31 March 2020 and reported on complaints made by, or on behalf of children and young people who received services from Children's Social Care in Walsall.

The key headlines were highlighted to the Committee, which included both complaints and compliments received.

It was noted that there was a continuing trend for fewer complaints, in comparison to other West Midlands Authorities; Walsall appeared to have received a lower number of complaints. Complaints that had

progressed through the complaints procedure and had been referred to the Local Government Ombudsman had increased, however a limited number of these complaints had been upheld with the number in line with national figures.

A Member asked for further information on the number of complaints referred to the Local Ombudsman. It was noted that this number had increased, however it was in line with national averages. It was agreed that further detail on these complaints, and the outcomes would be provided to Members of the Committee. In addition, data from the last 4-5 years for statistic comparison was requested.

The Portfolio Holder stated that each complaint and compliment provided the opportunity for the Team to learn.

A Member asked how much longer complainants who waited longer than 10 days for a response wait. It was agreed that this information would be provided to the Committee outside of the meeting. In response to discussions, the Committee were advised that the complaints procedure was easily accessible to the public.

Resolved that:

- 1. The annual complaints report was noted.**
- 2. A briefing note be provided to Committee Members on:**
 - **Data relating to complaints from the last 4-5 years,**
 - **Further detail on timescales for those complainants who waited longer than 10 days for a response to their complaint.**

2019-20 Children's Services Performance and Outcomes

The Head of Performance Improvement and Quality presented an overview of the outturn data for 2019-20 with some benchmarking data. It was noted that there were high levels of poverty in the Borough, and Walsall was the 19th most deprived Local Authority in the country. The application of the 'Right Help Right Time' guidance had impacted on the indicators that were derived from the statutory returns submitted to the DfE. The salient points from the presentation were:

- The number of children open to statutory services reduced, and continued to reduce.
- There was a reduction in requests for support from children's social care.
- There had been an improvement in the timeliness of assessments.
- Child protection investigations were reducing (and were timely when they took place).
- The number of children were subject to a care protection plan was reducing.

- The number of children in care was increasing (due to delays as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic).
- There were more children placed in foster care than comparators and fewer placed at a distance from home.

The Committee were informed that in 2019-20 the main reason children were the subject of child protection plan was for emotional abuse followed by neglect. This was different to previous years and comparators where neglect was the main category of abuse.

It was noted that there had not been a significant increase in referrals when children returned to school in September 2020. This gave confidence that children who needed referring into children's social care were picked up by other organisations. The Covid-19 pandemic had affected elements of performance such as children placed at distance, a reduction of care leaves in education, employment and training, and a reduction in the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation.

A Member questioned what had contributed to the improved performance of completing child and family assessments in a timely manner. Officers explained that work had been completed to ensure stability of workforce and also the reduction in referrals (as a result of new guidance), this was a consistent trend and suggested this was embedded.

In response to a question from a Member, Officers informed the Committee that care leavers were supported up to the age of 25 years of age, although often many care leavers kept in contact with the social care team after this age. The level of contact was determined by the needs of young people. Members challenged if the Council attempted to maintain contact with young people who were in crisis. Officers confirmed that they would, and often referred young people to other professionals and organisations. The Portfolio Holder reassured the Committee that care leaver support was substantial and was monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board.

Resolved

That the 2019-20 Children's Services Performance and Outcomes be noted.

The Director spoke to the report to highlight the salient points (annexed). The Committee were informed that at a previous meeting, the Committee discussed draft revenue budget proposals and the feedback was included in the draft report that went to Cabinet in December 2020. This report focused on the draft capital programme, there was one proposal within the remit of this committee, which related to the children's locality model. The four locality buildings had now been identified and a schedule of necessary works compiled,

which includes additional security measures. Initial costings of £0.270m costings have not yet been finalised. Some aspects of this work had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and it was stressed that staff would only move into the buildings when it was safe to do so.

Resolved that

1. The Committee fully support the draft capital budget proposal that relates to the remit of this committee, that being the completion of works to the 4 designated locality buildings.

2. The Committee note that consultation continues on all revenue policy proposals previously reported and that feedback will be presented to Cabinet on 10 February 2021, along with further revenue options to close the gap to ensure a balanced budget was set for 2021/22.

86/20 **Areas of Focus**

The draft areas of focus 2020/21 was considered.

Resolved

That the draft areas of focus 2020/21 was noted.

87/20 **Forward Plans**

The forward plans were noted.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 8.15 p.m.

18th March 2021

Children at Risk of Exploitation – including children at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Wilson, Children’s Services

Executive Summary:

This report provides an overview of the issues relating to child exploitation including child sexual exploitation (CSE) and criminal exploitation; including children involved in the supply of drugs “county lines”. It also makes reference to the national and regional responses to these issues which are priorities for the Council and the wider partnership and the response to these issues in Walsall, led by the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership (formerly the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board).

Reason for Scrutiny:

This report was requested by the Chair of Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on current partnership activity relating to Child Exploitation, to enable Members of the Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Panel to fulfil their key responsibility and duties in holding the Council and its Partners to account for its work in preventing and protecting children and young people from harm through child exploitation in Walsall. This report builds on previous reports on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Exploitation (CE) presented to Scrutiny in October 2014, April 2015, November 2016, January 2017, January 2018, September 2018, September 2019 and January 2020.

Recommendations:

That:

1. Scrutiny notes and supports the contents of the report and the current activity to protect Walsall children and young people from the risk of exploitation, to pursue perpetrators and to disrupt their activities, including through prosecution.
2. Scrutiny challenges the partnership on the outcomes for children and young people in Walsall in relation to preventing and protecting against child exploitation.

Background papers:

The following reports provide an overview into the issues of child exploitation nationally and regionally:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, 2018
- 'If only someone had listened': the Office of the Children's Commissioner inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups report, November 2013
- The Jay Report: Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham August 2014
- The Sexual Exploitation of Children: It Couldn't Happen Here, Could It? A thematic report by Ofsted, November 2014
- The Louise Casey Report of an Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, February 2015
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation across the West Midlands Assessment, 18 March 2015
- Tackling Child Exploitation Her Majesty's Government March 2015
- Time to Listen – a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children September 2016
- Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance, Home Office 2017
- National Crime Agency Intelligence Assessments, NCA 2017

Resource and legal considerations:

Responding to children at risk of significant harm is a statutory duty placed on local authority Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, Strategic Partnership Chairs and senior managers within organisations who commission and provide services for children and families, including social workers and professionals from health services, adult services, the police, Academy Trusts, education and the voluntary and community sector who have contact with children and families.

The resources required to respond to this statutory requirement come from within the existing resources across the partnership of organisations working in Walsall to protect vulnerable children and those at risk of harm.

Citizen impact:

The effective delivery of high quality services to protect children and young people from significant harm, including the risk of child exploitation has a direct impact on the welfare and well-being of children and young people in Walsall. It directly links to the corporate priority to Improve Health and Wellbeing and the Children's Services objective that all children in Walsall are safe and supported.

Environmental impact:

There is no environmental impact

Performance management:

The Walsall Safeguarding Partnership monitors the performance of the partnership in successfully supporting children and young people at risk of exploitation, prosecuting offenders and the promotion of disruption activity.

Equality Implications:

The co-ordinated provision of services designed to address the protection of children and the disruption and prosecution of activities by adults provides specific support for those children and young people who are at risk of significant harm. This includes those protected characteristics of gender, disability, race and religion.

Consultation:

There is consultation and feedback with partners through the Safeguarding Partnership and the Criminal Exploitation sub group (CMET). Young people are consulted and their opinions and views are obtained through the Return Home Interview process and Children in Care Council.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The two main forms of child exploitation are sexual and criminal exploitation, which may both occur at the same time for the same child. This report provides an overview of the issues involved, the partnership response and suggests areas where the committee may like to seek further information in understanding the issues and the response to child exploitation.

1.2 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is when people use the power they have over young people to sexually abuse them. In February 2017 the Department for Education issued a new definition of CSE:

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual.” (Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners Department for Education February 2017). Walsall Safeguarding Partnership has adopted this definition of sexual exploitation of children and young people under the age of 18years.

1.3 Children in exploitative situations and relationships are groomed; they may receive gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed and exploited online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs.

1.4 Young people often trust their abuser and do not understand or recognise that they are being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what is happening. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact and can happen online. Sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and trafficking is complex. However, the responsibility for the exploitation of children lies with the perpetrator.

1.5 The most common form of child criminal exploitation is “county lines”. The National Crime Agency defines county lines as:

“a term used when drug gangs from big cities expand their operations to smaller towns, often using violence to drive out local dealers and exploiting children and vulnerable people to sell drugs. These dealers will use dedicated mobile phone

lines, known as ‘deal lines’ to take orders from drug users. Heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine are the most common drugs being supplied and ordered. In most instances, the users or customers will live in a different area to where the dealers and networks are based, so drug runners are needed to transport the drugs and collect payment”.

This is facilitated by a group who may not necessarily be affiliated as a gang, but who have developed networks across geographical boundaries to access and exploit existing drugs markets in these areas.

- 1.6 Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes.
- 1.7 Child exploitation is most often identified when young people go missing from home or care either regularly or for significant periods of time. It may also be detected when a child’s behaviour changes or if they acquire new possessions or money without an obvious explanation.

2. Know

The Local Response

Governance

- 2.1 Following on from the development work commenced by the Partnership in November 2019, the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership has now moved to an All Age approach to Exploitation with the Exploitation Sub-Group, jointly chaired by West Midlands Police and Adult Social Care expected to commence under new arrangements in April 2021.
- 2.2 The membership of this multi-agency group includes Children’s Social Care, Adult Social Care, Education, Licensing, Youth Offending Services, West Midlands Police, voluntary organisations, and partners from health.
- 2.3 Over the last 12 months, the partnership have worked together to develop an All Age Exploitation Pathway and All Age Exploitation Assessment which was launched in September 2020. An All Age Exploitation Strategy is being led by the Community Safety Partnership with the intention of providing a strategic overview of the wider partnership response to exploitation. The multi-agency partnership will ensure that safeguarding responses and procedures are put into place to safeguard, protect and prevent young people from exploitation. The strategy will be reviewed by the Exploitation Sub Group and the Safeguarding Partnership.

3. Operational Practice

- 3.1 The 2017 Ofsted inspection report recommended that Children Services: *“Improve the response to all children at risk of child sexual exploitation, making*

sure that all assessments, safety plans and interventions are of a consistently good quality”.

- 3.2 The Principal Exploitation Reduction Officer (PERO) role is now well established, with a key focus on strengthening partnership responses to missing and exploited children, young people and vulnerable adults in Walsall. The development of the exploitation delivery groups has been key in bringing partners together and strengthening multi-agency relationships, to enable a clear and robust exploitation pathway to be developed and agreed across the partnership.
- 3.3 The delivery group continues to focus on key areas such as improving knowledge and practice across the partnership, strengthening and developing effective systems and process and working towards a multi-agency co-located exploitation hub, developing a partnership training programme as well as delivery of awareness raising sessions within the community and strengthening the collation of data and data reports.
- 3.4 The importance of an integrated approach to exploitation through multiagency working is well recognised. A multi-agency Daily Missing and Exploitation Triage has been developed which brings together a range of practitioners who work in partnership to provide a clear, consistent and coordinated response to preventing, identifying and responding to children, young people and adults at risk of exploitation, trafficking and missing in Walsall.
- 3.5 The daily triage initially commenced in January 2021 with a focus on missing children and was facilitated by a LOCATE officer from West Midlands Police and the Principal Exploitation Reduction Officer (PERO) for Children’s Social Care. In line with the development of the all age exploitation assessment and all age exploitation pathway that launched in September 2020, the daily triage became a multi-agency triage for missing and exploited children, young people and vulnerable adults and although has taken some time to become established, it now includes police from all sectors of West Midlands Police Force (Force CID, Neighbourhood Police Unit, LOCATE, PPU), Children’s Social Care (exploitation team), Youth Justice Service, Turning Point, Adult Social Care and Street Teams. Triage will shortly be strengthened by attendance from an education. It is intended that health colleagues will join daily triage by May 2021.
- 3.6 All missing children notifications from police and all exploitation assessments for children, young people and adults, are discussed at the daily triage within 24 hours of receiving them in the Exploitation Team. This ensures a coordinated and timely response to information received and allows for appropriate intervention and support to be identified and implemented at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.7 The key objectives of the daily missing and exploitation triage are:

- To provide a coordinated multi-agency response to missing and exploitation concerns for children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- To share information about children and young people who are currently missing and discuss and agree actions, interventions and lines of enquiry required to locate them. Agree to the requirement of a strategy meeting for children and young people missing over 72 hours.
- To share information and intelligence in relation to children and young people who have returned from a missing episode and consider the number and frequency of missing episodes (multiple missing episodes within 3 months or less). To discuss at triage within 24 hours of a found notification being received and agree any required actions, i.e RHI to be offered, use of appropriate police notices, missing intervention meeting to be convened.
- To reduce risk of exploitation and missing episodes within the community through early identification and intervention i.e. low risk exploitation concerns, signposting to community and voluntary provisions for preventative intervention.
- Review and discuss updated exploitation assessments for open children, young people and adults which are completed and submitted following a change in circumstances or new concern arising and collectively agree level of risk/harm in collaboration with the allocated worker.
- To share information and intelligence to support appropriate decision making and identification of risk level in relation to children, young people and adults who are being exploitation or are at risk of exploitation.
- To ensure information or actions are appropriately disseminated within own agency/department/team and with partners as relevant. To include inputting of appropriate exploitation and/or missing flags/markers on individual agency ICT systems.
- All practitioners have a key role to play in identifying and supporting victims by sharing information and intelligence, tackling exploitation and targeting disruption.
- Multi-agency sharing of information in relation to exploitation perpetrators that present a threat, risk or harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults, for a range of disruption opportunities to be considered.
- Identification of emerging themes, which are to be shared with exploitation panel on a monthly basis.

3.8 The supervisors/managers of the partners within daily triage meet on a weekly basis to discuss any emerging themes or commonalities identified in relation to exploitation victims, perpetrators and locations of concern and any identified connections, any barriers or resource concerns in relation to disruption and any intervention/actions required to address the identified need. These discussions form part of the agenda/updates for the monthly exploitation panel.

3.9 The Exploitation Panel meets on a monthly basis and reports to the Exploitation Sub Group of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership. The panel is co-chaired by a Children's Social Care Head of Service and Super-intendant Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) and it replaces the previous Children's Missing Operations Group and Multi Agency Risk and Vulnerability panel meetings. The exploitation panel is a multi-agency panel where information, Intel and disruptive actions with regard to perpetrators of exploitation are shared, key locations used to exploit children, young people and adults are understood and disruption responses agreed, trends, networks and connections between victims, perpetrators and locations is understood and multi-agency actions are agreed to disrupt and manage key locations and perpetrators.

3.10 At the last meeting in February a new approach to managing threat, harm and risk was discussed. As a result, an overarching risk register is being developed to provide a framework for on-going self-assessment and continuous improvement. This will ensure that actions and learning from exploitation cases is implemented quickly and progress is monitored more effectively.

4 Respond

The challenge in Walsall

4.7 Sexual Exploitation

As at 31 December 2020, 42 children were assessed as being at risk of sexual exploitation. Of these:

- 5 children are assessed as being at serious risk (high). This is a reduction of 3 children on the previous year
- 8 children are assessed as being at significant risk (Medium). This is a reduction of 1 child on the previous year
- 29 children are assessed as being at risk (low). This is a reduction of 32 children on the previous year

4.8 Comparatively, the data shows a significant decrease in terms of lower levels of CSE concern. This is mostly due to regular auditing and review of those children open to support services. Auditing of low risk children and young people takes place every three months to ensure the right support is being offered to the right children, at the right time for the right amount of time. Where CSE concern is not evident or risks have not been highlighted during this period (i.e. missing episodes), the low risk marker is removed.

4.9 Children in Walsall have previously been identified as low risk of sexual exploitation if vulnerability features exist, even if there were no links to grooming or sexual harm, for example, if a child is known to smoke cannabis or have friendship links with other known children, risk levels could be considered as low risk using the previous CSE screening tool which did not give room for

practitioners professional opinion linked to each area. The new Exploitation Assessment looks at vulnerabilities more specifically linked to exploitation and that are evidenced based, which is likely to lead to lower number of children and young people being identified as vulnerable or at low risk of exploitation, however a more accurate number.

4.10 All exploitation assessments are reviewed and discussed within the missing and exploitation daily triage within 24 hours of receiving them and these includes children, young people and vulnerable adults, some of which are known to social care and have an existing plan and allocated worker and some are new children, young people and adults that are not previously known or not currently open to Social Care or Early Help.

4.11 The multi-agency triage of exploitation assessments enables the timely sharing of information and intelligence from partner agencies to support appropriate decision making and identification of risk level in relation to children, young people and adults who are being exploited or are at risk of exploitation. It supports early identification and intervention for children, young people where there are low risk exploitation concerns by signposting to community and voluntary provisions for preventative intervention and it benefits from multi-agency agreed actions and interventions required to reduce harm in relation to children, young people and adults identified as being exploited or are at risk of exploitation. All practitioners have a key role to play in identifying and supporting victims by sharing information and intelligence, tackling exploitation and targeting disruption.

5 Criminal Exploitation

5.7 As at 31 December 2020, 56 children were identified as being at risk of or being criminally exploited in Walsall. Of these:

- 5 children are assessed as being at serious risk (high). This is a reduction of 3 on the previous year
- 11 are assessed as being at significant risk (medium). This is a reduction of 9 children on the previous year
- 40 are assessed as being at risk (low). This is an increase of 2 children on the previous year

5.2 The number of children and young people identified as being at risk of or being criminally exploited in Walsall is currently higher than the number of children and young people at risk of or being sexually exploited. Criminally exploited children and young people are sometimes mistaken or 'labelled' as perpetrators when they are victims who are groomed and exploited to commit crimes on behalf of their groomer/perpetrator.

5.3 There are no longer separate panels/meetings for children and young people being criminally exploited. The discussion; decision-making; risk assessment

and identification of appropriate intervention to support, safeguard and disrupt criminal exploitation is via the daily missing and exploitation triage. The child or young person's existing plans and reviews discuss disruption activity in the same way that sexual exploitation is managed. The benefits of having one forum for these initial discussions and decision making is that connections and themes can be identified as there can often be associations or links between young people who are criminally exploited and young people who are sexually exploited. This allows for more holistic planning and decision-making and we would expect to see more disruption moving forward. The presence of the youth justice service within the daily missing and exploitation triage is extremely valuable.

- 5.4 It is worrying that a number of victims of criminal exploitation continue to be criminalised for crime committed on behalf of their groomer, whilst a number of them have a positive NRM in place. Further awareness and understanding is required of criminal exploitation across the partnership and wider community. The partnership have utilised the current county lines and criminal exploitation intensification week to share webinars, resources and links to Barnardos and St Giles, to increase aware of criminal exploitation and understanding of NRM's. This remains a key focus of development moving forward.
- 5.5 Recent data collation in relation to children and young people who are exploited or at risk of exploitation indicates a high number of these children and young people are missing from education, are subject to managed moves or there is a risk of exclusion. We have a secured a recent offer from the virtual school to partake in daily missing and exploitation triage which will enable access to educational information and timely identification of any additional vulnerabilities that need to be considered when reviewing risk levels and appropriate intervention.
- 5.6 Preliminary discussions have taken place with the Education Delivery Manager in the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit. The VRU is currently working with two educational establishments in Walsall (Blue Coat School and Walsall College).

The role of the Education Team within the Violence Reduction Unit:

- Working in schools to deliver trauma – informed training, which promotes resilience and reduces risks to vulnerable children and young people who experience violence in their lives.
- Supporting the training and development of education staff to promote a whole school approach to children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, with a focus on behaviour as a communication.
- Helping schools adopt tried and tested methods to prevent young people being drawn into activities that may lead to violence.
- Linking the support offered by schools, partners and communities to ensure all children get the support and opportunity they need to fulfil their potential and stay in mainstream education.

- a) Bringing together experts within education so they can share, develop and influence educational approaches that support social, emotional and mental health of young people at risk or affected by violence.

We are in discussion to consolidate and further develop collaboration between education, the VRU and the wider partnership to ensure we can mitigate against the risk of school exclusions. Research has clearly and repeatedly shown that when children fall through the gaps in a system, such as attending an alternative education provision, then they become more vulnerable.

- 5.7 In addition, a high proportion of victims of exploitation have a diagnosis or display traits of ADHD or Autism, which in turn can increase their vulnerability. There is an identified need for health input in triage; however, lack of resource is restricting this currently. A proposed timeframe provided by health colleague's state is that they will be able to join triage from May 2021. Walsall Health Trust are committed to working in partnership in the provision of a response to exploited children. The Trust have recognised in their training that exploited children often become exploited adults as is reflected in the daily triage meetings. In September 2020 the Trust safeguarding team took part in a multi-agency audit on the transitions exploitation protocol; learning from this audit has been shared with WHT staff in daily communications briefings, training events and also with all members of the Trust's internal Safeguarding Committee who are expected to circulate to their teams. .
- 5.8 Two of the WHT Safeguarding Children Team staff have attended a University of Bedfordshire course entitled "Understanding Child Sexual Exploitation, Associated Forms of Harm and Contextual Safeguarding". This has proved useful in informing their day-to-day work in the Trust; they will also be utilising their new knowledge to deliver level 3 exploitation training, which could also be shared as a multi-agency training event.
- 5.9 The Trust are currently working with our informatics and performance teams to develop coding that will capture those patients who attend our emergency department (ED) and in whom indicators of exploitation may have been recognised.

6.The Clinical Commissioning Group

- 6.1 Walsall CCG recognise that Safeguarding has remained business critical during the COVID-19 Lockdown. Walsall CCG acknowledge and support the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership priority of responding to the Exploitation of Children, Young People and Adults. Walsall CCG fully support and engage with the development of the all age Exploitation Strategy.

The Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults along with a Police representative co-chair the Strategic Exploitation meeting.

- 6.2 Walsall CCG has set up the Health Exploitation Group. The purpose of the Health Exploitation Group is to provide a structure in facilitating and embedding learning within the member health organisations to support systems in preventing abuse of children and adults at risk of exploitation. The group employ joint working to consider the impacts on all critical areas of business in protecting and recognising children and adults from exploitation and organised criminality. These arrangements seek to ensure each health partner/organisation will safeguard their stakeholders and promote the welfare of children and young people, vulnerable adults and protect the public in Walsall.
- 6.3 The Designated Nurse for Looked after Children is an active member of the NHSE/I Regional Tackling Serious Violence Forum. In addition, the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults is an active member of the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network. Information from these strategic meetings are then feed in at a local level.
- 6.4 The CCG has assisted with the co-ordination of the health response at a strategic and an operational level, ensuring there is correct representation at appropriate meetings from CCG and Provider Organisations including the planned health response to the Exploitation Hub.

The CCG has been a key agency in the delivery of the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Work that Walsall has been fortunate to undertake following a successful bid submitted by the previous Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children.

7. **Missing Children**

- 7.1 In December 2020, 71 notifications of missing were received in respect of 51 children. Of these notification, 35 Return home interviews were completed (49%). Of the 36 not completed:
- 23 were declined (return interviews were offered, by either telephone or face-to-face visit). It has been noted that more return home interviews have been declined during the third COVID lockdown, some schools have not been accepting visitors and parents have not wanted missing officers visiting their home during lockdown or over the festive period.
 - 12 appointments were made but the child went missing again within 72 hours and the RHI therefore was not completed.
 - 1 young person remained missing at the end of December therefore RHI would count in January figures.
- 7.2 Missing data continues to be scrutinised on a monthly basis. There have been fluctuations in missing children through the ongoing periods of national/local lockdown. There have been fewer children missing during these periods, although this could be due to none reporting to police at this time.
- The social care missing officers continue to offer RHI's for all young people who have been missing and complete interviews with young people in a

timely way. More creative ways of completing RHI's has been offered during the period of local and national lockdown, offering virtual visits through teams, WhatsApp calls, face to face meetings outdoors in open spaces and virtual meeting through schools. The number of return home interviews that aren't completed due to children and young people going missing again within 72 hours, remains higher than is liked and further work is required to understand this cohort of children and young people, the frequency of missing episodes and time missing and ensure that missing trigger plans are in place and missing intervention meetings are held where required to try and reduce frequency of episodes. This will continue to be monitored through regularly audits.

- Our highest risk young people who go missing are our children in care – this is a national/regional issue and one in which a lot of work is currently being focused around. A partnership meeting was held with Police (Locate) Children's Social care and commissioning to review the draft 'Best Practice Guidance for Children missing from Care' formulated by the NPCC. It was agreed that the draft guidance would be used to advise supported accommodation providers and care home providers to explore the use of missing trigger plans and ensure that children and young people are appropriately reported missing. The Police are now leading on work to develop a care provider's forum, with multi agency training and workshops to implement the latest guidance making sure that everyone is clear on roles and responsibilities. Next steps will look at involving looked after children and young people in writing a young person's charter that will sit alongside guidance for professionals.
- There have been concerns during 2020 that police notifications of missing episodes were often delayed, sometimes by several days and this would impact significantly on the timeliness and uptake of 'return home interviews'. Whilst this has improved and the timeliness of receiving notifications is much more appropriate, there are concerns that at times, notifications are not being received from police in a small number of situations and children's social care are notified of a missing episode by the care provider for the child in care. This is something that police are continuing to look into to understand why the compact notification is not sent through and it appears to link to situations where the young person has not returned at the time they have indicated and notification to police of the young person being missing is sometimes sent prematurely and they return before the compact is actioned. Whilst this is concerning and needs to be address, it is reassuring that the use of the multi-agency missing and exploitation triage daily assists in identifying such situations quickly, escalating and resolving these, whilst ensuring that the child or young person's needs continue to be appropriately met in a timely way and that RHI 's are offered.
- The daily triage supports in identifying preventative work around missing, focusing on those children where exploitation is a potential feature. There

is also a particular focus on those children who are first time missing and what work can be done to prevent future missing episodes.

8. Trafficking

8.1 Information relating to children who are accepted as having been trafficked are obtained from the National Crime Agency. This includes foreign nationals trafficked into the country as well as Walsall children who are trafficked internally within the UK. Social Care can only currently report on the number of National Referral Mechanism's submitted by social care that return positive, as there is no central collation of data currently available. Police are sharing monthly figures and local police recognise that a positive NRM places a responsibility on FCID to investigate the exploitation concern for the child or young person, and the exploitation police Sgt is keen to promote awareness of NRM's and encourage submission across the partnership.

8.2 Further work is being undertaken by the Exploitation Delivery Group is being undertaken to increase understanding and awareness of NRM's. NRM (National Referral Mechanism) usage has increased in Walsall during 2021. More victims are being referred through the All Age Exploitation Pathway and are being recognised as victims of trafficking, as well as victims of exploitation. The NRM is a form of legislation that actively highlights a victim of trafficking for exploitation purposes. The rising number of the NRM notices is due to ongoing training for First Responders (Police, Social Workers and Barnardos) to identify those victims that are trafficked in a timely way and Police colleagues who are starting to use the NRM to escalate crimes that need to be investigated further.

Trafficking notices and NRM use remain a priority for 2021-2022 and further work with Police colleagues and the Trafficking Service provided by Barnardos is planned. More recently, there have been cannabis farm raids within the local area that have uncovered children who have been trafficked here internationally to grow and distribute drugs. This is the type of exploitative crime that as awareness is raised, so too will referral rates.

9. Impact of COVID 19

9.1 COVID-19 restrictions hamper the ability of frontline agencies to risk-assess child exploitation, and exacerbate the potential for young people to be exploited and harm to remain hidden. Ongoing concerns include:

- Safeguarding capacity - reduced contact with young people due to lack of resources; doorstep/telephone communication replacing face-to-face interaction; and victims of exploitation falling through the net due to school closures.

- Evolving County Lines supply methods - increased levels of cuckooing with young people remaining in trap houses for longer; greater use of local children involved in transporting drugs; perpetrators claiming to have COVID19 in order to avoid being stopped, questioned and arrested; and use of supermarket car parks to co-locate with customer shopping routines.
- Heightened risk of exploitation due to greater social media and internet use; feelings of isolation, and greater substance misuse among children residing away from family members.

9.2 The pandemic has created challenges for child protection services. Lockdown has meant many organisations have not undertaken for face to-face safeguarding and risk assessment, fuelling concerns over online harms and grooming while young people were confined to their homes. School closures further exacerbates risks to vulnerable young people. However, Children's services frontline staff continue to undertake direct face-to-face visiting and intervention to children and young people who require safeguarding owing to exploitation concerns.

9.3 There has been a reduction in missing notifications during the most recent lockdown. This trend was seen during the first lockdown with numbers increasing as restrictions lifted. There has also been reduction in the uptake of return home interviews though Walsall's performance is higher than regional neighbours.

9.4 On a positive note, some real traction has been made in relation to the development and implementation of the all age exploitation pathway, all age exploitation assessment and the missing and exploitation triage, during the COVID pandemic, despite predominately-remote working for many partners currently.

9.5 Children and young people who are open to children's social care due to medium or high-risk exploitation concerns have continued to be seen regularly and in line with the COVID practice guidance. RAG rating is in place to ensure that visits are planned in accordance with level of need, frequency required and whether this should continue to be face-to-face visits.

10. **Next Steps**

10 The exploitation of children is complex for which there is no quick fix solution. As a partnership we know that we must tackle those that perpetrate abuse and seek to do this through disruption and prosecution of perpetrators, which we hope will deter others.

10.1 Following the development work which commenced in November 2019 the Partnership has developed and implemented the following actions:

- Agreed an all age pathway to tackle the identification of exploitation
- Implemented an all age Exploitation Assessment

- Daily Missing and Exploitation Triage has been developed which provide the granular detail about what is happening on the ground (including the hotspots of activity and perpetrators) and; identify the gaps (who **isn't** being reached; where referrals **aren't** coming from) which can inform strategic planning and decision-making.
- Coordinate information in order to develop safety planning with young people.
- Weekly meetings to discuss themes, connections etc.
- Exploitation Panel has been implemented. This has supported in the development of local strategic partnerships and improved information sharing.
- Children and adult exploitation delivery groups.
- The development of process and practice to complex investigations.
- Development of multi-agency partnership training and awareness raising.
- All age Exploitation Strategy is being developed.
- Greater links with the wider partnership, which has enabled more creative disruption activity.

11 Development of the Exploitation Hub:

- 11.1 As a Partnership we have also agreed to move forward with creating an Exploitation Hub to make best use of the existing specialist capacity within West Midlands Police and Children's Services in respect of CSE and CE. Work is ongoing to reach agreement in respect of the remit of this unit and the staffing resources that will be required. The hub will build on strategic partnerships locally improving information sharing so that offender and victim profiles are more complete and feed into effective disruption and early intervention techniques.
- 11.2 It is hoped that the Hub will serve to build on the progress of Exploitation Triage and provide an integrated response to Complex Safeguarding concerns, sharing information efficiently and in a timely manner and within agreed protocols to protect and safeguard our children, young people and vulnerable adults. The aim is that key partners will be joined by a variety of multi-agency partners to ensure a targeted response across need and risk for vulnerable people so they can be supported to mitigate against the harm of exploitation.
- 11.2 Through the Delivery Group, we will direct our efforts into working hard to ensure that all communities, families in Walsall are aware of what exploitation is and how to report concerns. Through a joined up partnership awareness raising campaign in Walsall we will improve early identification and our responses to children at risk before risk escalates.
- 11.3 We know that for some children who suffer exploitation in childhood this does not end just because they reach the age of 18. We know that those that suffer abuse as a child can continue to be exploited as an adult and can go on to endure chronic mental health issues throughout their lives. We continue to work closely with colleagues in Adult Services in Walsall, as well as Street Teams to ensure support is available to vulnerable adults post 18 years of age.

11.4 As a partnership, we will continue to work with all professionals to develop a model for children to build positive trusted relationships with a professional of their choice, knowing that this encourages them to have the confidence to recognise and / or disclose their experiences.

11.5 We will undertake a review of the Missing service to ensure that it has sufficient capacity and the right processes to be able to offer RHIs to the appropriate children

11.6 As a partnership, we will continue to work to better understand and to develop our response to all forms of criminal exploitation. Both local and national reviews have identified the need to ensure that children who are being exploited are in school. There is focussed work being undertaken in this respect that is looking at the local offer across the wider partnership.

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Name
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Agenda
Item No.

18th March, 2021

7.

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019-20

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Children's Services and Education

1. Aim

Children who need help and protection deserve high quality and effective support as soon as a need is identified.

We want a system that responds to the needs and interests of children and families and not the other way around. In such a system, practitioners will be clear about what is required of them individually, and how they need to work together in partnership with others.

Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found; section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services in local authorities are the key points of professional and political accountability, with responsibility for the effective delivery of these functions.

These duties placed on the local authority can only be discharged with the full cooperation of other partners, many of whom have individual duties when carrying out their functions under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (see chapter 2).

Under section 10 of the same Act, the local authority is under a duty to make arrangements to promote cooperation between itself and organisations and agencies to improve the wellbeing of local children (see chapter 1). This co-operation should exist and be effective at all levels of an organisation, from strategic level through to operational delivery.

(Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018, pg 6)

2. Recommendations

Consider if this report gives the committee the assurance they require regarding the partnership activity in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people.

3. Report detail – know

In the year, and in response to changes to statutory guidance, significant changes were made to strategic safeguarding partnership arrangements for children and young people; the details of these changes are set out in the report. Learning from ‘early adopter’ sites was used to inform the development of the arrangements in Walsall and the shared ambition of statutory partners for children and young people to become the 4th partner in the local arrangements is an indicator of the commitment to listen to and learn from children. A review of the new partnership arrangements will be completed in 2020-21 and this will provide an opportunity to evaluate the impact of the changes.

Walsall Council’s Children’s Social Care has during this period operationalised a locality based delivery model that has been informed by the views of parents/carers and is designed to promote stronger multi-agency working whilst at the same time, making best use of the community based assets including schools and the voluntary sector.

West Midlands Police have made changes in the year to the way they deliver their public protection services; these changes were designed to be more responsive to children who are victims of child abuse. The Clinical Commissioning Group has continued to work with primary care and other health providers in relation to a wide range of safeguarding issues. An example is the ‘Our Voices, Our Shoes’ conference that was co-produced and facilitated by young people and professionals. The Conference covered issues of substance misuse, gangs and exploitation, domestic abuse and living with mental health issues.

In support of the shared ambition to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families, Walsall Council made a successful application to the Department for Education to secure funding to implement the Family Safeguarding Model in Walsall. Family Safeguarding is one of three innovation projects within the Department for Education Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. The model will enable specialist services to work more collaboratively with parents/carers on the issues that impact most on their parenting capacity and so support children to be cared for in their family.

Statutory partners made the decision that the governance of the Family Safeguarding Model would sit with the Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership and an external evaluation of the Local Authority and Partnership’s readiness to implement Family Safeguarding Model resulted in Walsall being selected as the first area in the country to implement the model.

In this report, partners provide an overview of work completed to progress locally agreed priorities supported by their analysis of the impact of this work. Data shows that the work to implement a revised “right help, right time” framework has had a positive impact on children and families as more families who receive early help support are stepping down to universal level of need due to positive outcomes being achieved at the early help level of need. In addition, there is evidence of a better understanding and

application of statutory thresholds in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); there is however, further work to do to ensure that partner agencies are referring those children who require a statutory safeguarding service to the MASH. There has also been a significant reduction in the number of child protection enquiries completed bringing Walsall much more in line with national comparative data. In addition, a focused inspection visit by Ofsted during this period found that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was providing a timely and appropriate response to those children who require a statutory social work service.

Audit activity carried out during the year evidences the positive impact of multi-agency working for children and families however, partners have identified that, whilst there has been good progress over the last two years in relation to strengthening the quality of multi-agency working, there is further work to do to ensure that all children and families consistently receive a good and joined up safeguarding response.

The last few weeks of the period covered by this report saw the country go into national lockdown because of a global pandemic thus creating unprecedented circumstances for services as well as children and families. Partner agencies rose to the challenge of sustaining safeguarding services, whilst at the same time, responding to emerging need. Agencies worked together to risk assess and determine who was best placed to respond to the most vulnerable children and arrangements were put in place for partners to regularly meet to share information about the delivery of safeguarding services. Another strength of the Partnership's response to the pandemic was the arrangements put in place to communicate key messages to front line practitioners, supported by a comprehensive virtual learning and development offer.

Developing the response to neglect is a priority for the Partnership and to support the delivery of the aims of the neglect strategy, a discussion took place at the inaugural meeting of the Safeguarding Children Partnership in October 2019. This identified the need to review membership of the Neglect Steering Group, clarify the role/responsibilities of Neglect Champions and review the local learning and development offer. Progress has been made in developing a tiered training offer, a Neglect Champions Group has been established and the NSPCC have been involved in work to plan a local awareness campaign. Given much of the work that has taken place during the year has been developmental, there is yet limited evidence of the tangible impact of the Neglect Strategy on practice and outcomes for children and families and this is a recognised priority for 2020-21.

Like other partnerships, Walsall has recognised the need to respond to all forms of child exploitation and arrangements to discuss, on a multi-agency basis, children being criminally exploited were piloted in the year. In recognition of the need to strengthen the oversight and implementation of the Child Exploitation Strategy Delivery Plan, a focused set of actions were agreed in November 2019, including the development of a child exploitation pathway; the agreed actions were to be completed by end of March 2020. Whilst not completed by the end of March 2020, a child exploitation pathway is now in place. One of the challenges in safeguarding children who are being criminally exploited is to respond to them as *victims* of abuse; this can be complicated by the fact that these children can be coerced into criminal activity. Providing a victim/child centred response, along with improving the response to children who go missing from home/care, are areas of ongoing focus for partner agencies.

The statutory safeguarding partners have implemented the revised statutory arrangements to review and learn from serious child safeguarding incidents and an overview of the work completed is included in the report. Feedback from the National Panel has been used to refine the approach to completing Rapid Reviews. Whilst some of the learning from serious incidents lends itself to a specific action e.g. amending multi-agency procedures, much of the learning requires a continuous programme of practice or service development e.g. the Family Safeguarding Model will promote a “think family” approach between services that work with children and those that work with adults who are parents/carers. In future reports, partners will have the opportunity to more fully describe the impact of actions taken in response to the learning from serious child safeguarding incidents.

As required by statutory guidance, the report details the work carried out by young people to influence service provision. To use young people to “inspect” services brought an additional element of scrutiny to the partnership arrangements and this is to be commended, as are the young people who completed this work.

The report concludes with an evaluation of:

- how safe children are in Walsall
- the strength of partnership working and
- the extent to which the partnership is operating as a learning system.

This is an open and transparent evaluation and appropriately identifies the progress made as well as the ongoing areas of development in relation to either practice/service development or the partnership’s delivery of its statutory functions.

4. Financial information

The safeguarding partners agreed their funding contributions for 2019/20. This funding contributed to the costs associated with the implementation and ongoing development of the safeguarding partnership, including the arrangements for independent scrutiny and business support functions.

5. Reducing Inequalities

The co-ordinated provision of services, designed to address the protection of children and provides specific support for those who are at risk of significant harm.

6. Decide

1. Do you have any questions in relation to the content of the report or require any additional information?
2. Do you wish to receive the 2020-21 annual report once available?

7. Respond

This Annual Report is available on the partnership website and has been shared with the executives and chief officers of the statutory partners.

8. Review

The 2020-21 annual report will consider progress against the 2019-20 report.

In year, there is also a quarterly meeting of the performance and quality assurance subgroup, with additional quality review activities such as Multi Agency File Audits. The Practice Review Subgroup also meets to review cases of serious safeguarding incidents or those of local significance to draw out and disseminate learning for the safeguarding system. This is then reported within the annual report.

Background papers

Additional information is available via the Safeguarding Partnership website <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/walsall-safeguarding-partnership/>

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Presented by Liz Murphy, Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Partnership

Walsall Safeguarding Children Board



and

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership



ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 2020

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Foreword by the Independent Chair – Liz Murphy

Thank you for taking the time to read Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report which covers the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

The report is published by the 3 statutory partners: Walsall Council, West Midlands Police and Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group. These agencies are jointly and equally responsible for putting in place effective arrangements to support the co-ordination, quality assurance and continuous improvement of activity to safeguard children in the borough.

In the year, and in response to changes to statutory guidance, significant changes were made to strategic safeguarding partnership arrangements for children and young people; the details of these changes are set out in the report. Learning from ‘early adopter’ sites was used to inform the development of the arrangements in Walsall and the shared ambition of statutory partners for children and young people to become the 4th partner in the local arrangements is an indicator of the commitment to listen to and learn from children. A review of the new partnership arrangements will be completed in 2020-21 and this will provide an opportunity to evaluate the impact of the changes.

Walsall Council’s Children’s Social Care has during this period operationalised a locality based delivery model that has been informed by the views of parents/carers and is designed to promote stronger multi-agency working whilst at the same time, making best use of the community based assets including schools and the voluntary sector. West Midlands Police have made changes in the year to the way they deliver their public protection services; these changes were designed to be more responsive to children who are victims of child abuse. The Clinical Commissioning Group has continued to work with primary care and other health providers in relation to a wide range of safeguarding issues. An example is the ‘Our Voices, Our Shoes’ conference that was co-produced and facilitated by young people and professionals. The Conference covered issues of substance misuse, gangs and exploitation, domestic abuse and living with mental health issues.

In support of the shared ambition to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families, Walsall Council made a successful application to the Department for Education to secure funding to implement the Family Safeguarding Model in Walsall. Family Safeguarding is one of three innovation projects within the Department for Education Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. The model will enable specialist services to work more collaboratively with parents/carers on the issues that impact most on their parenting capacity and so support children to be cared for in their family.

Statutory partners made the decision that the governance of the Family Safeguarding Model would sit with the Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership and an external evaluation of the Local Authority and Partnership’s readiness to implement Family Safeguarding Model resulted in Walsall being selected as the first area in the country to implement the model.

In this report, partners provide an overview of work completed to progress locally agreed priorities supported by their analysis of the impact of this work. Data shows that the work to implement a revised “right help, right time” framework has had a positive impact on children and families as

more families who receive early help support are stepping down to universal level of need due to positive outcomes being achieved at the early help level of need. In addition, there is evidence of a better understanding and application of statutory thresholds in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); there is however, further work to do to ensure that partner agencies are referring those children who require a statutory safeguarding service to the MASH. There has also been a significant reduction in the number of child protection enquiries completed bringing Walsall much more in line with national comparative data. In addition, a focused inspection visit by Ofsted during this period found that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was providing a timely and appropriate response to those children who require a statutory social work service.

Audit activity carried out during the year evidences the positive impact of multi-agency working for children and families however, partners have identified that, whilst there has been good progress over the last two years in relation to strengthening the quality of multi-agency working, there is further work to do to ensure that all children and families consistently receive a good and joined up safeguarding response.

The last few weeks of the period covered by this report saw the country go into national lockdown because of a global pandemic thus creating unprecedented circumstances for services as well as children and families. Partner agencies rose to the challenge of sustaining safeguarding services, whilst at the same time, responding to emerging need. Agencies worked together to risk assess and determine who was best placed to respond to the most vulnerable children and arrangements were put in place for partners to regularly meet to share information about the delivery of safeguarding services. Another strength of the Partnership's response to the pandemic was the arrangements put in place to communicate key messages to front line practitioners, supported by a comprehensive virtual learning and development offer.

Developing the response to neglect is a priority for the Partnership and to support the delivery of the aims of the neglect strategy, a discussion took place at the inaugural meeting of the Safeguarding Children Partnership in October 2019. This identified the need to review membership of the Neglect Steering Group, clarify the role/responsibilities of Neglect Champions and review the local learning and development offer. Progress has been made in developing a tiered training offer, a Neglect Champions Group has been established and the NSPCC have been involved in work to plan a local awareness campaign. Given much of the work that has taken place during the year has been developmental, there is yet limited evidence of the tangible impact of the Neglect Strategy on practice and outcomes for children and families and this is a recognised priority for 2020-21.

Like other partnerships, Walsall has recognised the need to respond to all forms of child exploitation and arrangements to discuss, on a multi-agency basis, children being criminally exploited were piloted in the year. In recognition of the need to strengthen the oversight and implementation of the Child Exploitation Strategy Delivery Plan, a focused set of actions were agreed in November 2019, including the development of a child exploitation pathway; the agreed actions were to be completed by end of March 2020. Whilst not completed by the end of March 2020, a child exploitation pathway is now in place. One of the challenges in safeguarding children who are being criminally exploited is to respond to them as *victims* of abuse; this can be complicated by the fact that these children can be coerced into criminal activity. Providing a victim/child centred response, along with improving the response to children who go missing from home/care, are areas of ongoing focus for partner agencies.

The statutory safeguarding partners have implemented the revised statutory arrangements to review and learn from serious child safeguarding incidents and an overview of the work completed is

included in the report. Feedback from the National Panel has been used to refine the approach to completing Rapid Reviews. Whilst some of the learning from serious incidents lends itself to a specific action e.g. amending multi-agency procedures, much of the learning requires a continuous programme of practice or service development e.g. the Family Safeguarding Model will promote a “think family” approach between services that work with children and those that work with adults who are parents/carers. In future reports, partners will have the opportunity to more fully describe the impact of actions taken in response to the learning from serious child safeguarding incidents.

As required by statutory guidance, the report details the work carried out by young people to influence service provision. To use young people to “inspect” services brought an additional element of scrutiny to the partnership arrangements and this is to be commended, as are the young people who completed this work.

The report concludes with an evaluation of:

- how safe children are in Walsall
- the strength of partnership working and
- the extent to which the partnership is operating as a learning system.

This is an open and transparent evaluation and appropriately identifies the progress made as well as the ongoing areas of development in relation to either practice/service development or the partnership’s delivery of its statutory functions.

I will close by recognising the work of the committed professionals who either, work directly with children and their families, or who have a specialist role in safeguarding in partner agencies; thank you for the work you have done and continue to do to safeguard children in Walsall and for your swift and creative response to the safeguarding challenges brought by the pandemic.

1. Introduction

This report covers safeguarding children activity in Walsall for 2019-20. The strategic governance arrangements for this year took 2 separate forms. For the first part of the year the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) was in place as the statutory body with responsibility for quality assuring local practice. Following the publication of Working Together 2018, partner agencies began to develop plans to establish Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and published their plans on 1st September 2019, launching the new Walsall Safeguarding Partnership. Further information on the detail of these arrangements can be found [here](#) and additional information in Appendix 4.

2. Local Context / Our Year in Figures

Infant mortality rate has increased from 6.2 (last year) per 1,000 live births to 9.4. Compared to 3.9 nationally.

4.16% of all births in Walsall are considered Low birth weight, compared to 2.86 nationally.

Under 18 conception rates per 1,000 girls (15-17) has increased from 27 in 2018-19 to 30 in 2019-20.

31% of children in the Borough are from BME Backgrounds.

24% of primary school children have English as an Additional Language (EAL)

21% of secondary school children have EAL

26% of children are overweight in Reception, this rises to 40% in Yr. 6

27% of Primary school children are entitled to free school meals (up from 23%)

29% of children live in low-income families (up from 26% in 2018-19).

Ofsted rated 80% of Walsall schools as 'Good' or better

Headlines:

On 31st March 2020, there were:

- 1,265 'Children in Need' ¹
- 240 Child Protection Plans were open
- 671 children in care.

Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020:

- The number of child protection plans started within 2019-20 has decreased from 2018-19. The rate of 65 per 10,000 is in line with our statistical neighbours (64) but significantly higher than the England rate of 56.
- The number of children who have started a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time has increased this year from 19% in 2018-19 to 24% in 2019-20 taking us above both statistical neighbours and England (18% & 21% respectively).
- 10,178 contacts were made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), resulting in 4,368 referrals to social care. This is a 17.6% decrease from 2018-19.
- 4,392 Child and Family Assessments were completed. This is a 17.1% decrease from 2018-19. At the time of writing there was no published comparator data.
- 1,257 Section 47 enquiries were held (an investigation carried out when a child is thought to be suffering significant harm).
- The number of children who had a missing incident during the year has tripled due to changes in police recording. Approximately 100 episodes per month were recorded in 2019-20.
- 10% of looked after children went missing in 2019-20. Compared to 7% that went missing in 2018-19.
- West Midlands Police recorded 1,331 crimes with a category of child abuse, with an additional 1,312 child abuse incidents which were deemed to be non-crimes (safeguarding concerns)

Early Help (EH)

Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020:

- There were 4,531 requests for Early Help – a 0.4% decrease compared to 2018-19. Of these requests for help:

¹ The Children Act, 1989 states a child will be in need if:

- they are unlikely to achieve or maintain or to have the opportunity to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without provision of services from the Local Authority;
- their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services from the Local Authority;
- they have a disability.

- 59.1% were via the Early Help Hub
- 25.3% were via MASH
- 10.2% were via step-down from social care assessment
- 5.4% were stepped down from children in need review.
- 285 requests for support (6.3%) were repeat requests for families who had previously received support within the last 12 months. This is a decrease from 8.4% in 2018-19.
- The three main reasons for support were:
 - Challenging behaviour concerning the child (10.8%)
 - Domestic violence concerning the parent/carer (9.8%)
 - Mental Health (parent/carer) (7.2%).
- Outcomes for children, young people and families receiving Early Help support are improving following support and intervention.
 - 77% felt that there had been a positive outcome for them, this is an increase of 12% pts compared with 65% 2018-19.
 - 4.2% had a neutral closure (where the case is closed due to the family moving out of borough or the child turning 18) - compared to 6.3% the previous year.
 - 18.5% of families receiving support had a negative closure (where the case is stepped up to social care, the family disengages or refuses to consent to support) – a decrease, compared with 27.4% in 2018-19.

Referrals to Social Care

- The Rate of referrals per 10,000 is 641 which is a decrease from 753 (2018-19). It remains significantly higher than the England averages (545) and slightly higher than the statistical neighbour average (614).
- There were 4,368 Referrals in 2019-20 which is a 17.6% decrease from 2018-19 (5,135 Referrals).
- Concerns about a lack of appropriate application of thresholds led to a revision and relaunch of the Right Help, Right Time (Threshold) Multi Agency Continuum of Need Guidance in September 2019.
- The number of referrals per 10,000 resulting in no further action (7 per 10,000) has reduced – this is the lower than both England and statistical neighbour averages (8 per 10,000).

Factors identified at assessment

- Domestic Violence continues as the main factor (56%) and has increased by 12% from 2018-19.
- Neglect has decreased the most, down from 30% (2018-19) to 15% (2019-20).

Section 47 Enquiries

- The rate of Section 47 enquiries has seen a significant decrease in 2019-20 and is at 184 per 10,000. Which brings Walsall below the statistical neighbours (195) but higher than the England averages of 168.

Child Protection

- 93% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) were completed within 15 working days of a strategy discussion – an improvement on 88% in 2018-19 and significantly better performance than our statistical neighbours (81%) and national performance (79%).
- The rate of ICPCs in the year has significantly decreased from 99 per 10,000 in 2018-19 to 69 per 10,000 in 2019-20 and is now lower than our statistical neighbours (75) and more in line with England average (65). The reduction is in line with the decrease in Section 47 enquiries.
 - This reduction in the number of children being discussed at ICPC reflects the work done across the service to change culture in the way we work with families in preparing for the implementation of Family Safeguarding. Children's Services have undertaken a number of themed audits in respect of children discussed at a strategy meeting who did not then progress to an ICPC to assure ourselves that the application of the threshold was correct.
 - There has also been a focus on delivery of Right Help Right Time training to assist partners in the correct application of the threshold for referral. The October 2019 Ofsted inspection of our Front Door arrangements confirmed that most children received an appropriate response in a timely manner.
- ICPC Attendance:
 - Police attended 70% of ICPCs and submitted reports to 93% of meetings.
 - Relevant health practitioners (predominately school nurses and health visitors) attended 82% of those meetings applicable and submitted reports to 83%.
 - GP engagement in ICPCs remains low and further work will be carried out in 2020/21 to better understand the reasons for this and to work with GPs to improve engagement.
 - Education attended 73% of applicable ICPCs, and submitted reports to 77%.
 - Allocated Social Workers attended 95% of meetings and provided reports to parents (at least one day prior to the ICPC) in 90% of cases.
- The number of child protection plans started within 2019-20 has decreased to 65 per 10,000 population aged 0-17 from 86 per 10,000 in 2018-19, however, this remains higher than statistical neighbours (64 per 10,000) and the national rate (56 per 10,000).
- The proportion of children who have become subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time has increased from 19% in 2018-19 to 24% in 2019-20. However, in Walsall this remains lower than statistical neighbours (20%) West Midlands (20.6%) and England (21%).
- 93% of children have their views represented at the Initial Child Protection Conference compared to 87% last year.

Categories of Abuse (as listed in Child Protection plans)

- Neglect and emotional abuse continue to be the largest categories recorded on child protection plans (45% and 44% respectively).
- The proportion of children who are subject of plans due to emotional abuse is higher than the proportion nationally (35%) and among statistical neighbours (32%) averages. However, this is likely to be linked to high rates of domestic violence as this is the category of abuse that would be used for children who are subject of a plan due to living in a household with domestic violence when that is the over-riding reason for the plan.
- We have seen some shifts in categorisations for the reason children are on a plan with fewer children being categorised under neglect and an increase in the proportion of children categorised as being subject of a plan for emotional abuse. This is due to a refinement in the use of the definitions resulting in some children who previously would have been categorised as neglected when living in a home where domestic violence was present, now being recognised as children who are living in emotionally abusive households.
- The number of child protection plans ending this year has decreased from 606 in 2018-19 to 535 in 2019-20.
- The number of child protection plans reviewed in the timescale has decreased slightly to 95.3% from 98.2% in 2018-19 but performance remains consistently above the comparator rates.

Children in Care

- The number of children in care has increased from 614 as at 31st March 2019 to 671 as at 31st March 2020
- 78.2% of children in care were living in foster placements, an increase from 75.6% the previous year.
- 31% of the children becoming looked after in the year were aged 10-15.
- 81% of children became looked after due to abuse, neglect, or family dysfunction.
- 9.7% of children in care went missing from their placement on at least one occasion, an increase compared with 6.9% the previous year. Despite the increase we are in line with statistical neighbours (10%) but remain lower than the national percentage (11%).
- 2018-19 saw a significant reduction in the number of looked after children starting to be looked after. The number of new starters returned to more expected levels in 2019-20; the overall increase is broadly in line with regional neighbours, who also saw an increase in the number of looked after children.

Private Fostering

- Numbers of children being identified as privately fostered remain low. In 2019-20 between two and seven children per quarter were identified as privately fostered.

Health Services

- The number of children attending A&E due to self-harm continues to increase with 179 children attending in 2019-20 compared with 161 in 2018-19 and 132 in 2017/18.
- There was one child admitted to an adult mental health bed in 2019-20. There were none in 2018-19.

MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

- Overall MARAC referrals reduced by 12% compared to 2018-19, which contrasts with the increase in DA referrals to MASH.
- Repeat notifications increased by 4%.

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – allegations against staff

Sector	Number of contacts 2019- 20	Percentage of contacts 2019-20	No of contacts change from 2018	No and % of contacts progressing to a Position Of Trust meeting
Education	64	40.5%	-101	22 (34%)
Foster Care	31	19%	-3	16 (51%)
Walsall Local Authority carers	7	4%	-11	
Independent foster carers	22	11%	+7	
Other Local Authority carers living in Walsall	2	1%	+1	
Early Years	11	7%	- 13	3 (27%)
Residential care	14	9%	-8	8 (57%)
Walsall Local Authority	6	3%	+2	
Independent	8	3%	-8	
Health	12	7%	-	3 (25%)

Faith	5	3%	-3	0
Social Care	7	4%	-	2 (28%)
Transport	2	1%	-3	0
Others	10	6%	-	0
Voluntary sector	2		-1	
Sports	2		+2	
Supported accommodation	0		-3	
Police	0		-2	
Other	6		+4	

There were 60 Position of Trust meetings held during 2019/20, meaning that 38% of the contacts accepted progressed to a Position of Trust meeting. This compares to just 17% in the previous year.

Of these, 29 were held and found to be Unsubstantiated; 17 were Substantiated and 5 were felt to be Malicious.

A change in recording practice was made at the beginning of 2019/20 following advice from the National LADO network. As a result, records are no longer created in respect of individuals where the employer is seeking advice regarding issues that relate to contractual matters or matters relating to employee behaviour that does not impact on care provided to children by the employee and where there is no safeguarding concern. Whilst these discussions will still take place it has impacted on the recorded numbers of 'contacts' and explains the significant drop in referrals from education and associated reduction in referrals from other agencies.

3. Progress against Our Priorities

Priority 1: To support the local and professional community to ensure that children and families receive the **right help at the right time (RHRT)**

Intention: what we wanted to achieve during 2019-2021

- Relaunch the Threshold / Right Help, Right Time Guidance
- Revise the multi-agency training strategy and programme (including the RHRT training)
- Launch the multi-agency CSA Strategy
- Effective communications strategy to deliver key messages
- Further develop and embed the process for working with children and young people as our 4th partner
- Effective functioning of the MASH and revise the MASH operating protocol

Still to do during 2020-2021

- Embed a Child Exploitation Pathway (including a performance monitoring framework)
- Ensure appropriate police referrals to MASH in relation to Domestic Abuse
- Launch and embed the Family Safeguarding Model
- Ensure Early Years and Health practitioners are accessing the multi-agency training
- Response to Ofsted Focused Inspection:
 - the timeliness of early help assessments and interventions
 - the consistency, timeliness, and quality of return home interviews
 - the prompt availability of health information in the MASH.

Implementation:

- The partnership agreed its strategy for Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse.
- 14 Right Help Right Time training sessions were facilitated and a launch event held to promote the new [Continuum of Need document](#). These were attended by 437 practitioners.
- In addition to the training sessions, a Practice Reflection Workshop, focused on RHRT was attended by a further 20 practitioners.
- IRIS is a General Practice based domestic abuse support and referral programme. During 2019, 130 patients accessed support via telephone, email and 1 to 1 support through IRIS. Of these, 16% were either pregnant or caring for a child up to the age of 6 months old. 45% of all those referred to IRIS were caring for a child under eighteen. As a result, there were 7 referrals to MASH and 1 to Early Help via IRIS.

- The availability of health information when screening new contacts sometimes led to delays in responding quickly to children's needs (Ofsted Focused Inspection).
- Staff within the Access Service in Access and Achievement have worked to refine the Local Authority's tracking and enquiry systems in relation to those children and young people that are resident in Walsall but that are currently missing education. This process has led to the development and implementation of a RAG rated tracking system for all those children that are open to the Local Authority as children missing education. The Access Service has begun to utilise this RAG rating to identify the most appropriate actions or interventions that may be required in order to ensure that the correct support is provided to these children and young people at the most appropriate time.
- A week of activities took place in October 2019 to remind children and parents about the key messages of the NSPCC PANTS campaign. The programme has been delivered in Walsall for 3 years and this was an opportunity to run a week of events to raise the profile once again. Sharing messages about 'Privates are Private, Your body belongs to You and Talk about Secrets that Upset You'. Social media and local news channels reported on the school assemblies, library events, stalls in local Matalan stores and visits from 'Pantosaurus'.



- PANTS films were also shown during October at Walsall Arena & Arts Centre, during the trailers and intervals of films being shown to the public.
- The Early Help Locality Team continues to provide training, help and support to ensure all practitioners are confident and competent in the Lead Professional role.
- There has been an improvement in the number of Early Help children, young people and their families being supported by Health Services, where Health Practitioners are acting as Lead Professional within the Early Help Partnership. School Health have recently received Lead Professional training and this partnership has been and continues to be strengthened.
- In 2019 Walsall police launched the Police Cadet Programme locally. Police Cadets had been trialled in other areas in WMP and based on the success and uptake has now been expanded. There is one cadet unit in Walsall based in a secondary school. This involves volunteer cadet leaders – both police officers/staff and volunteers from outside of policing – running a youth support

programme for 13-17 year olds with a focus on policing and public service. Any child can be referred into the programme, including young people with additional safeguarding needs or subject to Early Help. There are plans to expand into a second cadets unit in the next financial year. The Walsall Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) commander has now taken on the role of Police Cadet Lead for the force and the Walsall Child Protection Lead provides the safeguarding training for the cadet leaders.

- WMP have 4 Police Community Support Officers embedded with the Early Help Hubs to ensure there is information sharing and police contribution to the Early Help agenda where required.

Impact:

- The number of referrals to social care decreased by 15% from 5,135 in 2018-19 to 4,368 referrals in 2019-20. This indicates that the right thresholds are being applied to contacts received by the MASH more consistently; however, the number of contacts to the MASH remain high and increased from 9,760 in 2018-19 to 10,178 in 2019-20. This suggests that while Right Help, Right Time is being applied within the MASH, there is still work to do to embed an understanding of thresholds within partner organisations who continue to make contacts which do not result in a referral to social care.
- Despite the reduction in referrals, the proportion of referrals resulting in no further action has increased from 3% in 2018-19 to 7% which indicates that there is also further work to do to embed children's social care thresholds in MASH decision making.
- October 2019 Ofsted Focused Inspection found the quality of work in responding effectively to contacts has improved since the last inspection in 2017.
 - children and families receive a timely response to initial identified needs and concerns
 - the local authority response to most children at risk of harm or in need of help is appropriate, although, for some children, consideration of Early Help support could be given sooner by referring agencies
- The availability of health information when screening new contacts sometimes leads to delays in responding quickly to children's needs (Ofsted Focused Inspection)
- At least 2 children were safeguarded from sexual abuse following a PANTS assembly at school
- 618 children were considered as part of Safety Plans following MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

Comments from a practitioner (teacher):

"I attended the Practice Reflection Workshop on RHRT to gain a better understanding of multi-agency understanding and to allow myself time to reflect and learn from others, I intended to use the training initially by having more professional curiosity and asking more in-depth questions, also to be more aware of the family as a whole rather than just the child. I have shared the training with my team members and encouraged them to attend as part of a team meeting. I feel from attending my practice has improved as I have increased confidence and

knowledge, I have an increased awareness of pathways and process which reduces delay and improved workflow when I have supported families, now I am fully aware of them.”

Case Study

Following an NSPCC PANTS assembly, a child realised that what was happening to her was not ok and she wanted it to stop. She later refused to go to the house of the perpetrator, which led to a disclosure of sexual abuse. The police and children’s services became involved and the child and her sister were safeguarded.

Priority 2: To support the local and professional community to recognise and respond to neglect in a child centred way

Intention: what we wanted to achieve and the actions underpinning this priority:

- Neglect is identified and assessed consistently well across the system
- Neglect is tackled holistically via a whole family approach
- Increased professional challenge and curiosity
- Families are enabled and empowered to make positive and timely change and to identify support where possible from their own networks
- Professional practice supports timely and effective interventions to reduce risk and promote positive change within families
- Assessment, intervention, decision-making, and recording is focused on the lived experience of the child
- Launch the Look, Say, Sing, Play campaign (NSPCC)

Still to do during 2020-2021:

- Implement the Family Safeguarding Model (FSM)
- Pilot of the NSPCC pre-birth assessment tool
- Measure and evidence impact

Implementation:

- Rebecca Claybrook (Social Worker) won an NSPCC ‘Elephant Practitioner Award’ which acknowledges the motivation, enthusiasm and effectiveness of practitioners using the GCP2. Becky is leading by example and spreading the message in Walsall about the benefits of GCP2.
- A 3 Tier training model and competency framework is now in place for Neglect.

Neglect Training Model



- 49 practitioners completed the Basic Neglect Training – eLearning
- 46 practitioners completed the Understanding Neglect Training
- 122 practitioners completed Graded Care Profile 2 Training
- A Practice Reflection workshop took place in January 2020 and was attended by 22 practitioners from across the partnership, including Walsall Healthcare Trust, Police, One Walsall, Walsall Housing Group, Schools, The Beacon, Dudley and Walsall Mental Healthcare Trust, Early Help Localities, Troubled Families, Department of Work and Pensions, Walsall College and Occupational Therapy.
- Newsletters and poster were produced and circulated across the Partnership to provide information and raise awareness.
- Look, Say, Sing, Play is an NSPCC campaign aimed at parents and carers of children under two, to help them have higher quality interactions with their baby throughout their daily routines; by giving them the understanding, tools, and confidence they need to make this happen. Ultimately helping parents give their child the best start in life – both by building their brain and strengthening the bond between parent and child. This was launched in Walsall in July 2019 and attended by 50 professionals. A subsequent parent session at the Art Gallery was attended by 100 parents.
- The Early Help School Ready Team staff delivered a number of engaging workshops and activities to parents showing how fun and simple building brains can be as well as signposting them to all the free online resources and tips.
- After the success of the launch a number of Look, Say, Sing, Play briefing sessions were delivered to professionals in the localities and roadshows at a number of Lidl stores to reach out to the public. Children centres have started to deliver the session plans with families to help parents feel confident in using the tools and tips and to date all sessions have been well received with parents responding positively to the information shared, including during the lockdown period when virtual sessions were accessed.



- A multi-agency neglect audit was undertaken in quarter 4 but has not yet been formally reported on due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Neglect Champions were identified across the partnership to drive improvements in practice and met once before lockdown. The aims of the Champion role are to:
 - receive and disseminate information about neglect to staff;
 - ensure that staff are aware of the neglect training available from the partnership;
 - signpost practitioners to appropriate help and advice;
 - report back to their agency on how well neglect is being addressed in their team/service area.
- The successful bid to implement the Family Safeguarding Model in Walsall should see a positive impact on some of the most vulnerable children suffering from neglect.

Impact:

- The neglect strategy has yet to deliver the positive outcomes which were hoped for and demonstrating impact is not yet possible.
- The strategy will be revised in 2020-21; however as partners we need to do more in relation to the use of GCP2 and tackling neglect prior to it becoming a child protection concern.
- It is acknowledged that we also need to capture the impact of our work on this across the partnership.
- Many practitioners who complete the GCP2 training do not yet go on to complete the tool in practice. Feedback from practitioners, post training, indicates a mixture of reasons for this including not seeing this as their role to lead on. Therefore, there is work to do on organisational 'sign up'.
- The only agency currently able to record completed GCP2 tools is Children's Social Care, which in part contributes to the point above about evidencing impact.
- The percentage of Child Protections for Neglect has changed from 50% to 42%; this reflects refinement in the use of the categories.
- West Midlands Police recorded 192 crimes of 'Wilful Neglect' in Walsall in 2019/20, which was an increase from 134 the year previously – a 43% increase. This in part was due to changes in recording following feedback from a HMIC inspection.

Practitioners' feedback after Neglect training:

- *"It has increased my confidence and general understanding of issues affecting other teams and improving joint working when working with children where I feel neglect is present"*
- *"I now have an increased awareness of what services can support, and how the GCP2 can support the identification of neglect, since completing the workshop I have contributed to a GCP2 and am confident to do this, understanding why my contributions were so important"*

Parents who attended Look, Say, Sing, Play sessions said:

- *"Really enjoyed the singing session"*
- *"Simple & easy ideas"*
- *"I will now try and talk to my child more during activities and use different language"*
- *"Like the idea of what I already have at home and not having to buy new or expensive toys"*

Case Study

Sam (social worker) worked with a health visitor in relation to the Jones family. The health visitor had formed a good relationship with both parents who were initially reluctant to engage with professionals. The health visitor had a good understanding of the neglect and the concerns raised and worked with Sam to complete the GCP2.

Sam stated that without the GCP2, the parents would not have fully understood the concerns about their parenting. The GCP2 assisted in breaking down the concerns and allowing the parents to understand the impact of their behaviour on their child; it allowed the father in particular to reflect on the situation. It also allowed the parents to feel 'in control' as they were involved in grading themselves which helped to engage them in the assessment. The GCP2 assessment identified that although there were concerns, these were at a level which could be supported by universal services and family members without the need for social work intervention.

Priority 3: To gain assurance regarding transition arrangements for agreed vulnerable groups between children and adult services.

Intention: What we want to achieve and the actions underpinning this priority

- An all-age exploitation strategy
- Effective transition between services provided to children and those working with adults (e.g. disabilities teams, Mental Health)
- Embed in practice the Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation Transition Strategy
- Delivery of multi-agency exploitation training (including transition planning)

- Embed our approach to 'Think Family / A Whole Family Approach', including further developing our multi-agency training to reflect this priority
- Ensure seamless transition between Youth Offending Service and Probation (following SCR W10)
- Implementation of an all-age Exploitation Hub

Implementation:

- The Youth Offending Service 'T2A' transition process was reviewed across the Black Country cluster in June 2019 to ensure compliance with the national protocol for transitions and the Youth Justice Board's 'standards for children in the youth justice system 2019'- standard number 5 'transition and resettlement'.

The new 12 stage 'T2A' (Transition 2 Adulthood) process ensures that the seconded Probation Officers to each of the Black Country Youth Offending Services' work closely with both the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company to identify young people at the earliest and most appropriate opportunity to transition them from youth justice services to adult services.

- 2 Practice Reflection Workshops were facilitated for practitioners on Transition and SEND Transition.
These were attended by 18 Adult social care staff, West Midlands Fire Service, Children's Services, Walsall Community Health, Police, One Walsall, Walsall Housing Group, Schools, The Beacon, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust, Early Help Localities, Troubled Families, Department of work and Pensions, Walsall College and Occupational Therapy staff
- Walsall has engaged with WMEmployers and the Game Changer Partnership to facilitate a 3 day 'Impactful Partnership Programme'. The focus of this being Exploitation, with an opportunity to reflect on how the partnership works together to deliver on this agenda and begin to develop an all-age exploitation strategy.

Impact:

- Walsall's HMIP inspection in youth offending identified partnerships as a strength of the service and found good evidence of the close working relationships with Social Care. These partnerships have contributed to the findings that outstanding desistance work occurred for children and young people in Walsall, supported by excellent (lower) re-offending rates.
- Practitioner comment following the Practice Reflection Workshop:
"Now I have an increased knowledge base, I am able to ensure there is a smooth transition for children into adulthood by looking at this earlier and knowing what services are available to support."

Case Study

A is a 21 year old young person. A has a number of co-morbidities including learning difficulties, Autism, ADHD, Epilepsy and Encephalopathy, A attended a state funded Special School throughout childhood and has been under a number of health services through their life. Following a number of safeguarding concerns, A became subject to a Child protection plan in 2008 and again in 2009. A became a Looked After Child in 2013 and remained under the care of the local authority until their 18th Birthday whereby A transitioned to Local authority Adult services.

During the time A was a Looked After child they continued to access secondary health care services for their health care needs and received annual looked after children health assessments.

Due to A having a significant learning disability and being non –verbal, the Looked After Children’s nursing team liaised with the Special school A attended to ensure they remained at the centre of the care they received, this was made possible by working in partnership with education and A to produce a pictorial health assessment.

For continuity, the Looked After Children Nurse ensured A remained on their caseload. This enabled the therapeutic relationship to be maintained. The nurse attended Looked After Children’s reviews with the local authority and supported the foster carer to support A’s transition to adult services. Both social care and adult health services were well planned to ensure that no delay occurred for A. The pictorial health assessment was shared to support A while under the care of secondary adult services for ENT, Clinical Physiology and Orthopaedics. A received a health history document, elements of which are pictorial to enable A to understand their healthcare needs as they move into adult services.

Priority 4: To tackle exploitation and supporting those children and adults who are victims of exploitation and/or go missing

Intention: what we wanted to achieve and the actions underpinning this priority:

- Increase our understanding of children and young people who go missing from home or care
- Understand how children are exploited in Walsall
- Increase awareness of trafficking
- Use trauma informed practice and thinking to respond to vulnerable children
- Ensure young people at risk/being exploited are supported
- Disrupt and prosecute offenders

Implementation:

- Carrying a knife is associated with criminal exploitation and young people within the youth justice system are more likely to be involved in County Lines drug running. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) have continued their

partnership with the Street Doctors charity to teach young people basic First Aid to help save the lives of their friends if they are the victim of violence. This is a powerful intervention which challenges the young person's perception of stabbing and being stabbed whilst teaching them a potentially lifesaving skill.

- The YJS has also formed partnerships with the James Brindley Foundation and the St. Giles Trust to add different dimensions to their work to address knife crime. The YJS are working with the Foundation to utilise the 'Full Circle Knife Crime Programme' with young people on the periphery of the youth justice system. St. Giles Trust have supported the YJS with knife crime workshops to provide 'lived experience' mentoring, to help young people understand the personal consequences for carrying a knife and engaging in violent crime.
- Walsall has engaged with WMEmployers and the Game Changer Partnership to facilitate a 3 day 'Impactful Partnership Programme'. The focus of this being Exploitation, with an opportunity to reflect on how the partnership works together to deliver on this agenda.
- The Designated Nurse for Safeguarding led a partnership group which successfully submitted a bid to be part of the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme. This programme is an investment by the Department for Education and aims to support local areas to develop an effective strategic response to child exploitation and threats from outside the family home, including child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, including county lines drug trafficking. The bespoke support programme will begin in Walsall in 2020 and have a focus on community engagement and resilience.
- The Exploitation Subgroup has developed a data scorecard to better understand the local trends and picture of exploitation. Various agencies report into this scorecard to track activity, outcomes, and the information flow in relation to victims, locations, and perpetrators for all types of exploitation.
- As part of ongoing partnership work, a daily triage has been established and now takes place to discuss the most at risk victims. This triage meeting is attended by the Children's Services Exploitation Team, Return Home Interview Officers and police representatives from FCID, PPU, Locate and Neighbourhood Policing. Discussions have taken place to bring in additional partners including Adult Social Care, Street Teams, Early Help, and health colleagues. This is a real opportunity to advance contextual safeguarding to support victims and identify perpetrators of exploitation. It is also an early opportunity to identify new victims and supports safety planning for children, identification of locations of concern and identifies any gaps in intelligence sharing.
- Street Teams supported 107 young people (60 female and 47 male) over a continued period of time, which includes support provided to 55 young people affected by CSE, 27 young people affected by Criminal Exploitation, 18 service users in transition, 14 young people affected by gangs and 3 young people displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour. Additionally, there were 10 young people (all male) who were on the waiting list for support.

- Street Teams also supported 21 families (78 individuals including parents and siblings) affected by CSE.
- Street Teams provided 126 education and prevention programmes to over 7,000 school children / pupil referral units to raise awareness of the risks of exploitation and delivered 55 training sessions to 2,128 professionals, parents, and volunteers.
- There was an overall reduction in the number of crimes recorded by the police where CSE was included as a marker. In 2018/19 there were 45 crimes as well as 122 CSE incidents recorded which were not deemed a crime. In 2019/20 this reduced to 38 and 62 respectively. The sharp decrease in non-crime matters reflects a reduction in young people who are deemed medium or high risk of CSE and subject to MASE meetings as each referral will usually result in a non-crime record being created.
- In 2018/19 the most frequent CSE offence type recorded was online child sexual exploitation (15) or rape offences (7). In 2019/20 the most commonly recorded CSE offences were online exploitation (10) and Trafficking (8). Almost all Trafficking offences were recorded due to a young person being referred to the National Referral Mechanism. The reduction in rape offences, and the increase in NRM-driven Trafficking recording, is a positive step in reducing harm to young people and increasing safeguarding measures through appropriate referrals.
- In acknowledgement of the need to strengthen the focus on children at risk of exploitation, the Healthcare Trust invested in sending two nurses from its safeguarding children service to a five day course on contextual safeguarding at the University of Bedfordshire. It is expected that they will use their knowledge in this field to support the Partnership as well as the Trust.

Still to do during 2020-2021

- Develop an all-age exploitation strategy
- Further develop and embed the Exploitation Hub.
- Launch an Exploitation Screening Tool and Pathway.
- Expand CMOG and MARVP into an Exploitation Panel (as part of the pathway) to direct operational activity in relation to all forms of child exploitation and not just CSE.

Impact:

- Despite some positive steps across the partnership, such as the TCE bid and Impactful Partnership Programme the progress on the all-age Exploitation agenda has been slower than intended.
- The Exploitation Delivery Group did not meet for a period of time, the delivery plan against the strategy was not in place for a prolonged period and there was a delay in establishing a shared pathway.

- A meeting was held in November 2019 to agree on the partnership priority tasks for the next 6 months however these were not completed in the agreed timescale.
- Due to a change in West Midlands Police reporting procedures in the categorisation of missing episodes, the number of children reported missing was 5 times higher this year compared to 2018-19. Previously no notifications were made for children deemed at no apparent risk or “absent” with the change in procedures all children previously deemed absent or no risk will be placed on the missing person system and referred to the local authority. These referrals will then result in Return Home Interviews. The impact is that a large number of children who previously would not have received this RHI will now receive one and have chance to share information and receive support.
- The number of individual’s reported missing to MASH increased in 2019-20, from 129 in 2018-19 to 350 in 2019-20.
- 49% of young people received a Return Home Interview, the same figure as the previous year, however it was positive that this was sustained given the huge increase in numbers. 51% of young people did not receive a Return Home Interview, with the main reason (74%) being either they declined the interview or had gone missing again with the following 72 hr period.
- Of the services users engaged with Street Teams (in relation to CSE), by the end of the intervention:
 - 71% Made safer choices
 - 61% Improved their safety and security
 - 46% Reduced their drugs and alcohol use
 - 56% Improved their health and well-being (including sexual health)
 - 66% Improved their safety online
 - 62% Improved their safe relationships
 - 56% Improved their relationships with their family and other adults
 - 60% Improved their education/learning attendance

The number of young people considered at ‘serious’ risk of CSE reduced by 50% (some of this was related to data cleansing).

Case Study:

From a Street Teams service user:

'I just wanted to say a big thank you for all your help and support for both my daughter and myself. Without Street Teams I don't know what I would have done trying to deal with and understand the complexity of CSE. We need more people like you in the world who genuinely care about these young girls. It's clear you put 100% effort into your job and want to see them overcome the trauma and dilemmas they're faced with. Just know that you made a big difference to [my daughters] life and I know she will forever feel grateful that you were a shoulder for her to lean on in a time of her struggle. God Bless.'

J is a child in care; he has been in care for a long time and lives with other children in a local care home and often goes missing. He has an older brother who has also been in care and is vulnerable to exploitation when he goes missing. A lot of local practitioners from partnership agencies know J and his brother – mostly as young people who have been involved in anti-social behaviour. Over the last few months, J has gone missing on a regular basis, often because he is bored and does not like to be at the children's home, although sometimes he goes missing to spend time with his family members and friends.

J will often accept his Return Home Interview and has built an open and engaging relationship with the worker, R, who has been able to meet him and talk about any potential concerns that J has. She has also supported him to understand how risky the community can be for vulnerable children. R has built a relationship with J and his care home, his Social Worker and his Youth Justice worker ensuring that valuable information can be shared across J's professional network, without the need for him to keep telling different workers what has been going on or happening in his life, something that J has struggled with previously.

There is now a solid safety net for J when he goes missing, sharing information with others to enable risk assessments and missing trigger plans to be updated and in a timely way. J recently moved placements after a period of missing and asked to speak to R about how he feels about the new placement. He outlined that he felt comfortable having R as his worker when he goes missing and understands the concerns that his social worker has for him and his safety whilst out in community. R will continue to work with him when he does goes missing even if he does live out of the local borough.

4. Our 4th Partner – Children, Young People and Adults

In 2019/20, the partnership created a Joint Engagement Strategy (2020-2022). This strategy is aimed at all organisations within Walsall whose staff and volunteers provide services to children, young people and adults with care and support needs. The aim of the strategy is to help the partnership achieve the vision of having children, young people and adults as equal partners alongside the Local Authority, Health and Police in shaping the work of the Safeguarding Partnership. The strategy outlines 4 key steps to achieve engagement: consultation, representation, decision-sharing and co-production.

Youth Safeguarding Partners (YSP)

The Youth Safeguarding Partners group was established at the end of 2018/19. YSP have continued to be engaged with the Partnership, meeting 12 times during 2019/20. These meetings take place approximately every month for 2 hours. The work plan is flexible depending on YSP members' interests however it has mainly focused on establishing the group identity and purpose, expanding membership, completing safeguarding assurance and check and challenge for various pieces of work.

Section 11 visits

The largest engagement activity in 2019/20 was part of the Section 11 Audit. YSP members expressed a willingness to 'inspect' services they may be in contact with and see how they create an environment that is suitable for young people. Keeping to the safeguarding agenda, the Section 11 Audit process provided a perfect opportunity for our young people to complete this activity and contribute the findings to a wider assurance event with all key partners involved.

YSP members devised some questions they felt were important to ask every agency e.g. "how do you ensure you are listening to me and not just my parent/carer?" "What would you do if I told you I hadn't been fed for two days?"

Further questions were asked which were specific to each agency, depending on how services rated themselves within the Section 11 Audit. During the visits, the young people also received a tour of the building and gave notes on how they felt the spaces could be improved. The young people gave feedback on the day but also wrote notes that could be triangulated with the audit responses and the practitioner survey.



- 7 visits across 6 organisations took place by YSP (Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust, National Probation Service, Walsall Children’s Social Care, Walsall Healthcare Trust, Walsall Youth Justice Service and West Midlands Police).
- 17 feedback forms were completed by YSP in total, across the 7 visits.
- Specific follow-up from DWMHT found that CAMHS had implemented improvements suggested by YSP to their waiting rooms.
- Walsall Healthcare Trust invited YSP to be involved in future engagement activities for the new A+E building.



Other activities within the year:

- Children, young people and professionals were brought together from across the 4 areas within the Black Country, to work in partnership and co-produce an innovative and unique conference, funded by NHSE - ‘Our Voices, Our Shoes’ which saw young people supporting and facilitating the event, which covered issues of alcohol and substance misuse, gangs and exploitation, domestic abuse and living with mental health issues.

The conference saw 157 children, young people and professionals jointly exploring how health services can be delivered more effectively. 127 pledges were made by the delegates of ways that the learning and messages they had been given on the day, were going to be taken in to their daily personal and working lives, in order to make changes and support this vulnerable group.

- YSP held a re-launch event to attract new members with presentations to the Independent Chair and Head of Safeguarding from Local Authority Children’s Services.
- In May 2019, a new Anti-Knife Crime Project was launched. It is a partnership between various voluntary and community sector organisations being led by One Walsall. ‘At the cutting edge’ held a special production event to showcase the skills and talents of young people in Walsall in facing up to concerns around the prevalence of knife crimes across the borough.
- This event was part of a wider project looking to:
 - reduce the number of incidents of knives being carried to school
 - reduce the number of injuries received from use of knives
 - change perceptions about personal safety and the need to carry a knife.
- Other work has also included membership of a regional engagement group to share ideas and progress the engagement agenda for both children and adults:
 - mapping existing engagement activity and opportunities for next year for both children and adults

- establishing a network of schools participating in the School Nurse Champions programme with the aim to add Safeguarding priorities as part of this offer.

Areas of work for 2020/2021

- Increased engagement for adults with care and support needs
- Embed engagement of safeguarding into existing School Nurse Champions to increase young people's engagement and expand YSP membership
- Seek opportunities to maximise the Partnership's involvement in existing engagement opportunities' (e.g. votes for schools, Street Teams, the work being undertaken as part of the TCE bid)
- Gathering feedback from children and young people on their experience of safeguarding services
- Invest in resource for Engagement within the Safeguarding Partnership, exploring options of either a job role or commissioning a service.

5. Serious Case Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Walsall launched its new arrangements in September 2019. Therefore, half of the financial year the Board was working to Working Together 2015 guidance in relation to Serious Case Reviews and then moved to Working Together 2018 in September for Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Within the period of this annual report the partnership:

- commenced SCR W12
- have completed 3 reviews – SCR W9, W10 and W11,
- have published – 0 reviews (W10 and W11 are delayed due to ongoing criminal proceedings)
- once SCR 9 had been completed and all the information had been gathered a decision was taken by the Leadership Group and agreed by the National Panel that the SCR criteria was not met. Therefore, this SCR will not be published primarily because of the impact on the family. However, the learning has been shared and acted upon as relevant.
- have contributed to 2 out of Borough SCR's.
- have undertaken 1 Rapid Review

Other Reviews:

- Undertaken 2 Learning Reviews.

Once completed, reviews are published on our Safeguarding Partnership [website](#). Multi-agency action plans are in place for all reviews and are monitored via the Practice Review Subgroup.

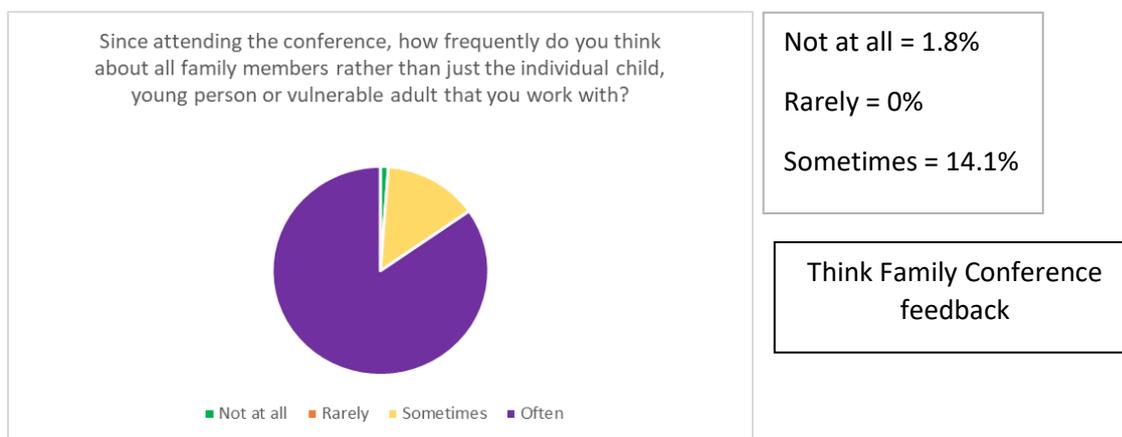
Key learning and themes have been identified and include:

- Professional curiosity about apparently 'absent' fathers.
- The need to harness the Third Sector when working with families who appear 'hard to engage' with statutory services.

- The need to ensure full understanding of a parent’s history, including their childhood or time in care, when undertaking assessments of their current parenting capacity.
- Information sharing between agencies about risk, including risky adults and offenders.
- Understanding the motivation for connected carers to foster children from within the family and the pressure they may be under and how this may differ from the motivation and pressures of those who become career foster carers.
- Learning of national interest was shared with the National Panel and Ministry of Justice about the lack of community supervision for violent offenders who have served their full sentence but do not meet the threshold for MAPPA.

Learning has been shared via newsletters, 7 minute briefings (e.g. neglect, domestic abuse), updated multi-agency training programmes (including face to face, online courses and practice reflection workshops), on the Partnership website and a large multi-agency briefing session took place in June 2019. Policies and procedures have also been changed as a result of learning from the above.

In January 2020, the partnership hosted a Think Family conference to promote a joined-up approach across services, supporting practitioners to think about all the needs of all individuals within a family or household. The conference was attended by 198 professionals across two, half day events.



Practitioner Comments:

“We are currently working with a young person and their behaviour is impacting on the rest of the family. By using the whole family approach, we are trying to ensure that the whole family is supported.”

“When discussing cases I am more able to advocate for children and families due to improved knowledge.”

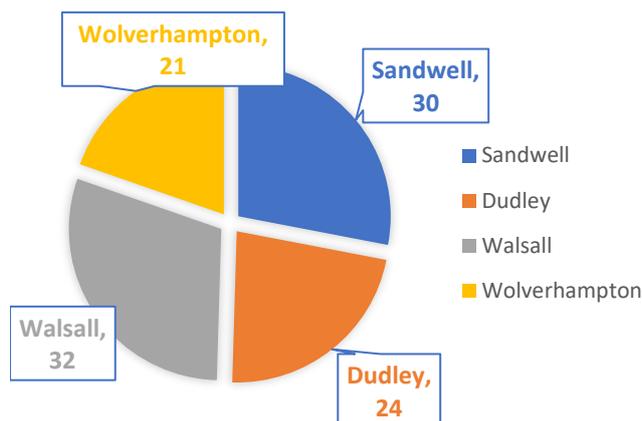
“Now I have an increased knowledge base, I am able to ensure there is a smooth transition for children into adulthood by looking at this earlier and knowing what services are available to support.”

The SCR’s which started in this year will be completed and monitored by the new Safeguarding Partnership arrangement.

6. Additional Safeguarding Workstreams and Responsibilities

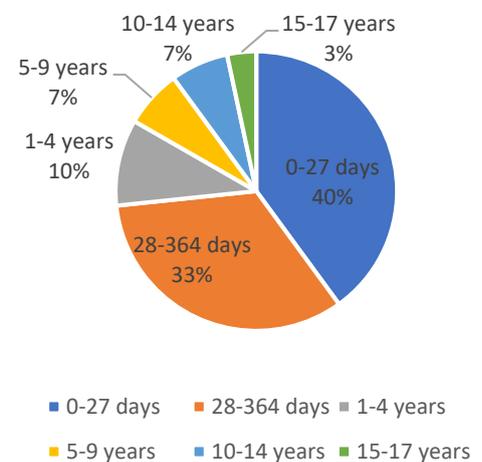
Child Death Reviews

- The new Child Death review arrangements went ‘live’ in September 2019 and are now part of a joint Black Country arrangement.
- As required by Working Together 2018, all relevant information relating to Child Deaths was successfully transferred over from the LSCB to the CCG and Public Health.



- There were 107 Black Country child deaths reported in 2019 – 2020; 32 of these were Walsall residents.

- 40% of the deaths in Walsall occurred in the 0-27-day (about 4 weeks) age group which is slightly lower than the national average for this age group which is 42%.
- 7 of the 32 deaths notified in this timescale in Walsall were unexpected and a Joint Agency Response was carried out.



84 deaths were reviewed in total across the Black Country. 30 of these reviewed deaths were Walsall resident child deaths. 33% of these deaths were identified as having modifiable factors.

These were identified as:

Smoking during pregnancy or smoking in the household; high BMI of expectant mums; consanguinity; alcohol misuse; late booking of pregnancy; sharing of information; safe sleeping practices; poor housing conditions.

Local interventions:

Newsletters are disseminated following every panel outlining learning.

Hospitals across the Black Country are all hoping to be 'smoke free' by the end of 2020 and support strategies for expectant mums who are smokers are being implemented through Local Maternity Systems.

Public Health Walsall are working with health agencies on several Infant Mortality Reduction workstreams.

Domestic Abuse

- The revised Domestic Abuse strategy was due to be relaunched in summer 2019 but has not yet been agreed by the Safer Walsall Partnership.
- A new Domestic Abuse Steering Group is to be established for 2020-21.

Safeguarding Procedures

- Walsall has continued to participate in the Regional Safeguarding Procedures consortium.
- This year has seen the final year of the 3 year contract with the current service provider. It has been agreed that this will be extended for an additional year in 2020-21 to enable the contract to be re-tendered.

Section 11 Audit

The Section 11 Audit was completed in March 2019. An initial analysis report was presented in July 2019 to Leadership Group which showed a high level of reported compliance with the Section 11 standards however, it highlighted the following areas for further assurance:

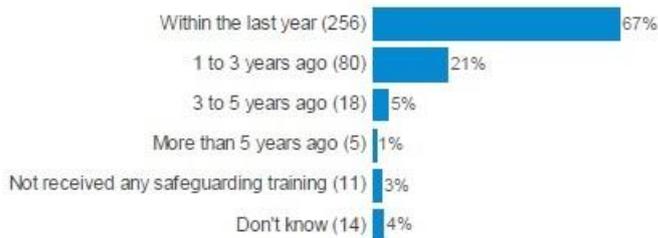
1. Assurance of how each agency are embedding the Neglect Strategy (completed through challenge event)
2. Impact of safeguarding training, embedding SCR learning into practice (completed through challenge event)
3. Further evidence of how the voice of the child is shaping service delivery (completed through the YSP Visits)
4. Further evidence of how agencies are evaluating outcomes from the perspective of the child or young person (completed through the YSP Visits)

Agencies submitted action plans to outline how they intended to address areas which did not meet the required standard.

In November 2019, a practitioner survey was undertaken to further quality assure the

initial findings reported by the agencies in their s11 audit returns. There were 384 responses across adults and children’s safeguarding workforce. The findings of the surveys were analysed and used to form the set of challenge questions for a peer challenge session. Some of the responses can be seen below:

When was the last time you attended any safeguarding training (including refresher training)? Tick one only.



Are you aware of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership’s escalation/resolution policy? Tick one only.



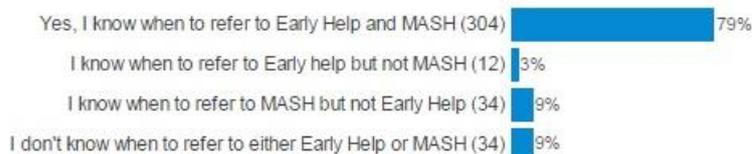
If you needed to, do you know who to report safeguarding concerns regarding adults and children to? Tick one only. (Adults)



If you needed to, do you know who to report safeguarding concerns regarding adults and children to? Tick one only. (Children)



Do you understand when to refer safeguarding concerns regarding a CHILD for Early Help and when to refer to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)? Tick one only.



Some of the responses to the above questions are also played out in audits and reviews, such as use of escalation and data measures, and such as the reduction in MASH referrals.

Later in November an assurance and challenge event took place where partners came together to discuss, challenge, and hold each other to account.

Recommendations from the challenge and assurance event will be included in each agency's Section 11 action plan and monitored on a six monthly basis by PQA.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Training

- The partnership has offered a programme of multi-agency training.
- From 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, 21 Training Events (total 69 face to face sessions and 3 eLearning Modules) were delivered and 1,231 delegates have successfully completed this training.
- This year saw an increase of 28.7% in attendance compared to the previous year; in addition, 298 people attend the conferences.
 - 307 hours of training and development was accessed
 - 114 delegates booked a space on the training but did not attend
- This year's programme, across the children's and adult's workforce, has included the development of 3 Partnership eLearning Modules and 5 Practice Reflection Workshops with the themes of:
 - Right Help Right Time
 - Self-Neglect
 - Transition
 - Neglect
 - SEND Transition
- The Practice Improvement Strategy and Competency Framework has been revised and agreed.
- The partners have also supported the programme with a training pool, with 69 practitioners from across the partnership.
- The Business Unit has successfully recruited a new full-time role of Practice Improvement Manager, to support this area of work.

Areas of work for 2020-21

- To embed Impact evaluations across the partnership as part of management oversight and supervisions.
- To revisit the Practice Improvement Strategy and Competency Framework, to explore any gaps in the learning and development offer.
- To develop joint children's and adult courses in relation to Exploitation and Domestic Abuse.

7. Summary: Evaluation of the Safeguarding System

How safe are children in Walsall?

Evaluating the multi-agency audit from June 18 to practice at the end of 19-20 shows a range of practice improvements.

There has also been evidence of some other improvements within the year which includes:

- An appropriate reduction in referrals to MASH
- Positive impact of Early Help services (as evidenced in the data at the beginning of the report)
- A positive Ofsted inspection of the ‘front door’
- Positive reductions seen in the number of children subject to child protection plans.
- Less cases judged inadequate through audit, however as the majority were judged as ‘requiring improvement’ this means a reduction in those that were ‘good’.

Rating	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Good	32%	37.5%	23%
Requires Improvement	45%	45%	62%
Inadequate	23%	17.5%	15%

Areas for further development include:

- The development of an all-age exploitation pathway, hub, and screening tool to support the identification and response to children who are victims of all forms of exploitation as there are inconsistencies between pathways for CSE and CE and there remain issues in reporting missing children at “no apparent risk” to the local authority promptly.
- Ensure consistent application of the Right Help Right Time Continuum of Need
- Continued focus on practice in high impact areas such as Neglect, Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.
- Continue to develop our approach to identifying learning across the system and implementing it (see ‘Are we a Learning System’ below).
- Launch the Family Safeguarding Model.
- Utilise the TCE programme to enhance our response to exploitation.

How strong is partnership working?

- The successful TCE bid was submitted and coordinated by the CCG ensuring an inclusive partnership approach.
- External evaluation of the strength of partnership working has been positive e.g. successful TCE bid and FSM (due for launch April 2020 – this was delayed until October 2020 due to Covid 19).

- In addition, the partnership has created a pool of multi-agency trainers to support practice development.
- Partner agency contributions to learning reviews is positively commented on by external reviewers.
- The Ofsted LA Focused Inspection noted 'Leaders have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, with aspirational plans in place to effect positive change.'
- There is generally good attendance and contribution by all partners at meetings across all levels; however, progress in implementing key work streams is an area for development.
- There is a financial commitment to the partnership arrangements with a jointly funded Business Unit.
- Partners report they find meetings are interactive and developmental and 'do not simply process papers and reports.'
- The investment in the Impactful Partnership Programme shows a commitment to developing local leaders.
- There is a mutual commitment to improving practice through investment in the post of a Practice Improvement Lead. The post is hosted by WHT but based within the Business Unit and will enhance learning and development across the partnership.
- There are well established relationships between senior leaders which are utilised to resolve issues and escalations in a dynamic timeframe and to do so in a professional and supportive manner.
- There is a commitment to developing new ways of working, especially through a strong connection with Walsall Together, the integrated care partnership aimed at improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of the local population.
- Some evidence of impact of challenge, but work to do, to ensure more timely impact; the governance role of the Operational Subgroup is critical in this.
- There has been evidence of positive working arrangements, however, there have also been challenges. For example:
 - The new Safeguarding Arrangements, in line with Working Together 2018, have offered an opportunity to re-align the Leadership and accountability for the safeguarding agenda and develop a new vision for the Partnership. However, this year has been a time of change in strategic arrangements and, also, in the leadership and structure of CCG and health providers which has led to variations in the membership or consistency of attendance of some meetings.

- The frequency of newly established partnership meetings was less than planned which is not ideal. The wider 'Childrens Partnership' group did not meet between October 2019 and April 2020.
- There has been challenge at Board and Leadership meetings by and of partners e.g. regarding the health contribution to MASH.
- The response to Neglect is improving but progress in implementing the Strategy has been slower than intended in some agencies.
- There is representation by the Public Protection Unit at relevant meetings, but the unit services 4 LA areas and capacity can be an issue. There are plans to review this in 2020-21.

Areas for further development include:

- Finalising the agreed arrangements for health economy contribution to MASH.
- Further engagement with the voluntary and community sector including the implementation of our Engagement Strategy.
- There is not yet a Domestic Abuse Strategy for the partnership, which is a significant risk from last year that requires addressing.
- Resolving the impact of one agencies systems on the practice within another e.g. Police missing notifications.
- Appointment of a Designated Doctor is a priority.
- Ensuring an equal voice and accountability of all partners – this will only happen if all partners fully understand and effectively uphold their partnership roles.
- Effectively utilise and build on the leadership development that has already been undertaken.
- Continue to enhance the involvement of children and families in the work of the partnership.

Are we a learning system?

Rapid Reviews (RR's) and local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR's) will be conducted and overseen by the Practice Review Subgroup, within the new arrangements. A recommendation from the RR panel will be made to the Independent Chair, for their scrutiny, regarding whether a case will progress to a CSPR or whether all relevant learning has been identified. Resulting multi-agency action plans are developed and included within a thematic tracker. The thematic tracker was developed to help reduce duplication of activity or repetition of previous ineffective actions and to focus the partnership on areas of concern which are arising from multiple reviews.

- The partnership have produced several 7 minute briefings on issues which have been identified through reviews (e.g. Professional Curiosity, Think Family) and there has been a regular Neglect Newsletter produced to share good practice and ensure a maintained focus on this area.
- The multi-agency training programme has been shaped by learning from audits and reviews and the priorities within the partnership e.g. webinars on neglect and domestic abuse. Improvements have been made (e.g. including

front line practitioners in audits and the role out of Practice Reflection Workshops based on identified learning themes) but we are not yet operating as an effective learning system. There is more to be done to achieve this including strengthening the functioning and oversight role of PQA Subgroup, strengthening the audit methodology and learning from elsewhere.

This will include:

- A further review of the multi-agency safeguarding training offer, opportunities for practice improvement and the capacity to deliver on this across the partnership.
- Evaluating the impact of training.
- Engaging with children and young people in a meaningful way (as our 4th partner in the new arrangements)
- Embedding and ensuring that learning translates into impact for families, as currently we cannot consistently evidence the impact of learning on practice and outcomes.
- Regularly sharing single agency audits with partners and subgroups; West Midlands Police have created capacity to implement an internal audit schedule and this will include sharing the findings with the Safeguarding Partnership.

Opportunities

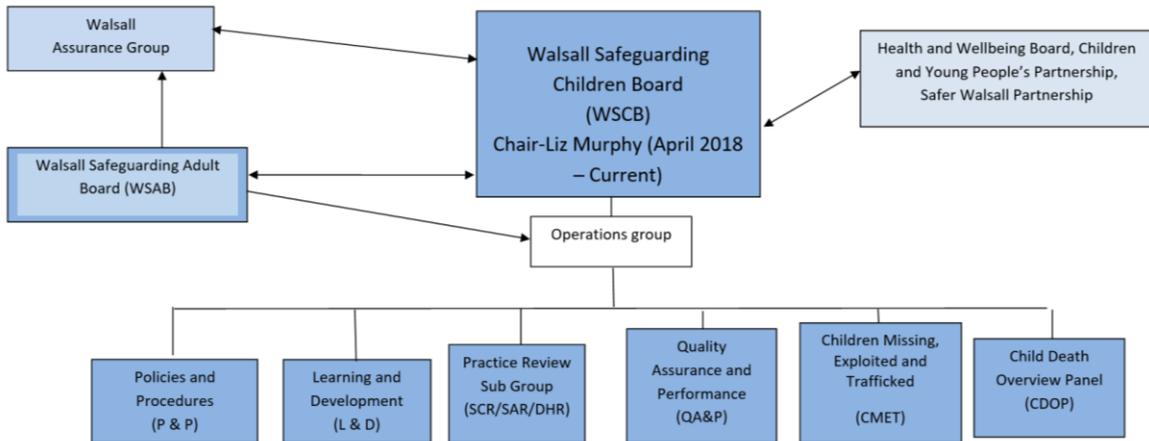
- The new arrangements offer the opportunity to renew the partnership governance structure and work more closely with other partnership boards (such as Safer Walsall Partnership – Community Safety).
- Increased capacity will be created to support the delivery of a robust multi-agency Practice Improvement Programme with the appointment of a full time Practice Improvement Manager – following a successful secondment during 2019-20.

Priorities and Next Steps in 2020-21

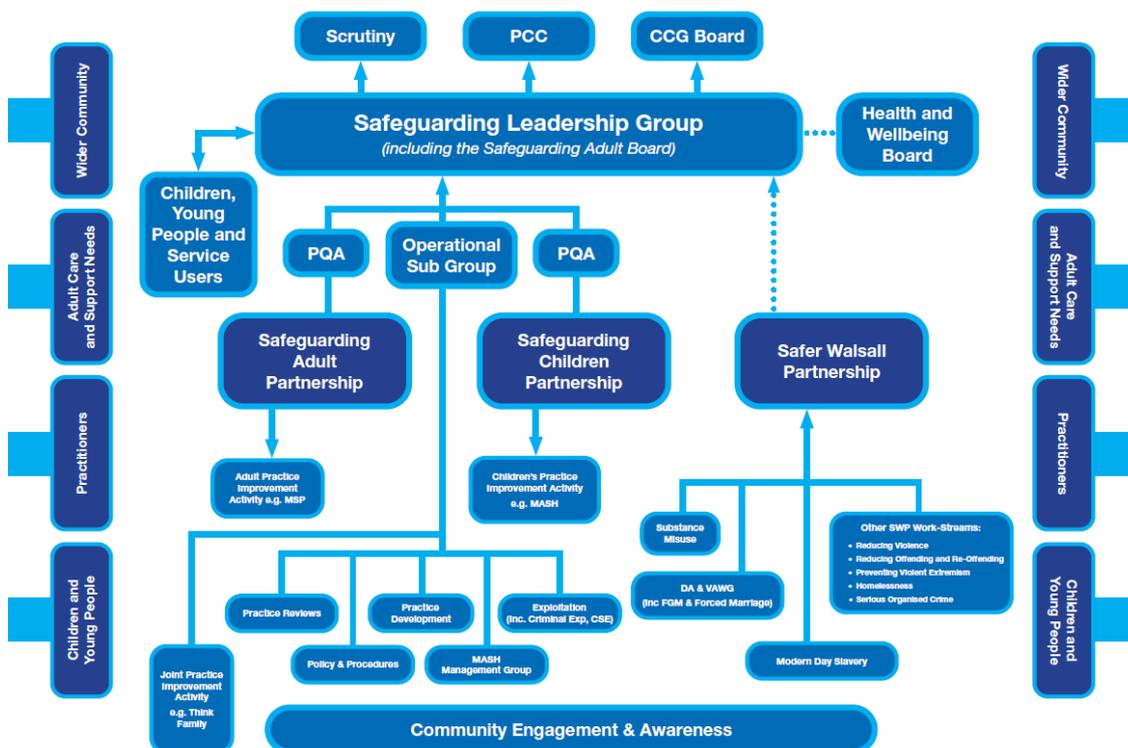
- Launch the CSA strategy and begin work on the action plan.
- Launch the Criminal Exploitation Pathway and Assessment Tool.
- Increase the pace of implementation of the Neglect Strategy following the review of the strategy.
- Review the New Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements.
- Implement the Family Safeguarding Model.
- Continue to develop and refine our approach to embedding learning from performance, audit, and reviews.
- Ensure children, young people and service users are actively engaged in the partnership.
- Increase the visibility of the Safeguarding Partnership.
- Continue to ensure strong safeguarding leadership across the partnership.

Appendices

Appendix 1. LSCB Structure



New arrangements structure



Appendices

Appendix 2. Walsall Safeguarding Children Board / Partnership - Meeting attendance April 2019 – March 2020

2 meetings were held (June 2019 and October 2019), January 2020 and March 2020 were postponed.

Organisation / Member	Total % attendance
Independent Chair	100%
Lead Member/Councillor	0%
WSCB Business Unit	100%
Children's Services, Walsall Council	100%
Community Safety Partnership	0%
Clinical Commissioning Group	100%
Education	100%
Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust	100%
Walsall College	100%
West Midlands Police	100%
National Probation Service	100%
Designated Doctor for Safeguarding	0%
Public Health, Walsall Council	100%
Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Partnership Trust	100%
CRC (Reducing Reoffending Partnership)	50%
Youth Justice	100%
CAFCASS	0%
Housing	50%

There were 6 Leadership Group meetings between July 2019 and March 2020.

Organisation/member	Total % attendance
West Midlands Police	100%
Adult Social Care	67%
Children's Social Care	100%
CCG	83%
Access and Achievement (Education)	67%
Public Health	100%
One Walsall (VCS)	50%

Appendices

Appendix 3. Budget

	Budget 2019-20	Actual 2019-20
	Total	Total
Funding	£	£
Walsall Council Contribution	(51,584)	(51,584)
Walsall Council Additional Investment	(200,000)	(200,000)
NHS Walsall	(10,000)	(10,000)
Probation Services (NPS & CRC)	(3,000)	(1,500)
West Midlands Police	(30,594)	(31,209)
CAFCASS	(550)	(550)
CCG	(40,000)	(70,000)
CCG Additional (One off)	(15,000)	(15,000)
Other Training	0	(3,105)
Other CDOP	6,264	1,620
	(344,464)	(381,328)
Costs		
Salary Costs	254,190	250,263
Agency	0	13,644
Consultants Costs	4,000	4,586
Workforce Development SLA	25,000	10,319
Section 11/157/175 Tool	3,000	0
Chronolator Tool	1,580	850
SCR / SAR	38,008	25,327
Development Day / Conference	0	3,627
Development Activities	0	2,727
PHEW - Online Child Protection Procedures	686	686
Other Costs -	6,000	11,395
Online booking system	2,000	0
Service User Involvement	10,000	621
	344,464	324,044
Carry forward to be request/(use of reserve)		57,374
Forecast Outturn Over / (Under)	0	90

Appendices

Appendix 4. New Arrangements

In September 2019 the Safeguarding Children Board, in partnership with the Safeguarding Adult Board, disbanded the LSCB and launched their new arrangements in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children.

The Partnership Arrangements can be found [here](#).

March 2021

8.

The Black Country Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC) Programme: The First Five Months

Ward(s): All wards

Portfolios: Councillor Wilson, Children's Services

1. Aim

The Black Country Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC) programme is an alternative approach to working with families to support them to keep their children within their care. The programme works exclusively with parents who have alcohol or substance misuse issues, which are affecting their ability to provide good enough parenting for their children and are going to be subject of public court proceedings. .

The parents have often had a number children previously removed from their care. FDAC utilises a multidisciplinary team, to provide a range of holistic interventions to support parents to achieve abstinence from drugs or alcohol and improve their ability to care for their children.

The FDAC programme was derived from Family Treatment Courts in California, USA and was first piloted in the UK in London by District Judge Nicholas Crichton in 2008.

The Black Country FDAC programme works across the areas of Walsall, Sandwell and Dudley and is a collaborative programme between all the local authorities with 32 support places available across each year. Walsall Council is the lead authority on the programme.

2. Reason for Scrutiny

This report provides an update on the FDAC programme over its first five months of service for Members of the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable them to fulfil their key responsibilities and duties in holding the council to account for its work in preventing and protecting children and young people from harm in Walsall.

This funded model needs to develop evidence to support its sustainability past the initial three-year pilot.

3. Recommendations

The Scrutiny Committee are invited to:

- I. To note the implementation of The Black Country Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC) Programme

The Walsall Right for Children (WR4C) Transformation Programme, launched in September 2018, driving forward our Children's Services vision to ensure that the right children are in the right place with the right support for as long as needed to ensure that they are safe from harm, are happy and learning well. FDAC is an important part of delivering this transformation.

The FDAC Model was launched in Walsall on the 28th September 2020 and brings an alternative approach in Children's Social Care to tackling the impact of the 'Trio of Vulnerabilities' on children's lives, addressing substance misuse as the primary issue and domestic abuse and mental ill-health as related secondary issues.

A specialist multi-disciplinary team works with parents during court proceedings, to provide holistic support to parents including support with alcohol and substance misuse recovery, mental health interventions, parenting skills support and even support with domestic abuse issues. This intensive support of parents provides better outcomes for children with the intent of keeping families together and addressing a range of issues and their root causes. There is a wealth of evidence available externally which supports this.

Where it is not possible for families to stay together FDAC supports more timely permanency outcomes for children.

Walsall, as the lead authority, along with Sandwell and Dudley local authorities provided a combined initial investment of £1.007m for the programme. An additional investment of £1.094m was applied for and successfully awarded by the Department for Education over three years, as part of its Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Initiative.

To support the programme during the postponement of the programme from April – September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a supplementary £0.165m was secured from the emergency COVID -19 funds from all three local authorities.

- II. To note the adaptations made to launch and facilitate the FDAC programme during the COVID-19 pandemic

During the project postponement from April - September 2020 due to the unpredictable climate of the COVID-19 pandemic a business continuity plan was drawn from the programme to be able to launch and operate during the restrictions and lockdowns.

There were a number of adaptations made to start and operate the programme in a safe way; supporting families in a safe manner, as well as keeping the FDAC Team, local authority staff and the judiciary safe.

The business continuity plan remains a live document and is updated regularly and formally reviewed on a quarterly basis. There was a vast amount of learning from these adaptations, which can be transferred into future practice.

- III. To have oversight of work undertaken to embed the FDAC Model and work to make this model sustainable

A communication plan had been drawn up for the programme and a range of communication has been utilised to embed the programme across the social work teams of all three authorities to give them a comprehensive understanding of the programme and give social workers the confidence to refer parents & families onto the programme. Meetings were arranged to make contact with senior managers, presentations were delivered to team managers and social work teams, leaflets were emailed to teams along with pathways diagrams for referrals and links to a webinar. This work is ongoing.

In addition to this a range of communication methods has been utilised to embed the programme within the local community to increase awareness and give stakeholders a good understanding of the programme. Meetings were arranged to make contact with senior managers from a range of organisations including the NHS, probation services and domestic violence organisations like Black Country Women's Aid. Presentations were delivered to teams, leaflets and links to a webinar emailed out. This work is ongoing.

There are plans for case studies to be sent to social workers and stakeholders once the first cases complete the programme after the 31st March 2021, as well as a press release and some promotional videos to be made once the pandemic restrictions ease.

Work has already begun on the case for sustainability of the FDAC programme after the initial 3-year pilot. Links have been made with more established FDAC programmes for some joint working on cost-benefit analysis and performance data collation for sustainability.

A cost-benefit analysis exercise is being planned to identify secondary savings for other state services including mental health and substance misuse recovery services in the NHS, the Police through via reduction of incident call outs and education in the reduction in truancy levels and alternative educational when children are taken into care. The piece of work will follow a family through the FDAC programme to identify the organisations which interact with the family and the different interventions they receive.

Underpinning the sustainability will be a clear use of data to evidence improvements in outcomes for families and reduction in costs across the system, such as the cost avoidance of foster or residential care placements if children are reunified with their parents and savings in social worker time, money and travel costs.

Additional to this will be the secondary savings to other state services identified above such as the Police due to reduced incident call outs.

- IV. To consider how Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee can support in making the model sustainable through support and challenge

The FDAC programme has been funded as three-year pilot with 32 place allocations for each year, totalling in 96 cases across the three years.

As identified previously the programme was initially funded by three Black Country local authorities – Walsall, as the lead authority which commissioned 15 places per year (45 across the three years), Sandwell which commissioned 12 places per year (36 across the three years) and Dudley which commissioned 5 places per year (15 across the three years).

The initial investment from the three local authorities funded the FDAC multi-disciplinary support team. The additional Department for Education funding which was successful awarded funded supplementary costs for the programme such as a programme and implementation manager for the programme, COVID-19 resource costs, childcare and travel costs for parents during the support sessions, training and resources for the delivery team etc.

Some local authority areas that have previously implemented the model have achieved sustainability through sharing ongoing costs with stakeholders and partners. In others, the costs have been entirely borne by the local authority from the savings released.

4. Report detail – Know

4.1 Overall

On the 28th September 2020 the FDAC model formally launched. The launch was carried out virtually and was successfully attended by over 40 professionals. Councillor Wilson gave an introduction as part of the launch.

The delivery of the programme was out sourced to the charity Change, Grow, Live who are established specialists in alcohol and drug misuse recovery with the Black Country region with support delivery sites across the Black Country.

The FDAC Delivery team is a multi-disciplinary team recruited to provide a holistic range of interventions to families. The structure of the team is below:

Type of worker	Number post	in	Full Time/Part Time
Senior Management Team			
Service Manager	1		Full Time
Clinical Lead/Senior Social Worker	1		Full Time
Psychologist	1		Part Time
FDAC Delivery Team			
Social Worker (Parent)	1		Full Time
Recovery Co-ordinator	1		Part Time

Recovery & Volunteer Co-ordinator	1	Part Time
Domestic Abuse Worker	1	Full Time
Family Support Worker	2	Part Time
Administration Apprentice	1	Part Time

The FDAC team have been trained in and utilise a range of approaches in line with the National FDAC guidelines including:

- Motivational Interviewing
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Family Therapy
- Mentalisation
- Delivering anxiety management groups
- Domestic Abuse interventions for those who abuse or experience abuse

Programme Structure

Parents are supported across the 26 weeks of the programme utilising a range of interventions from different members of the team. Alcohol or substance misuse recovery is addressed as the primary issue but there is also mental health support on the programme as well as support with improving parenting skills and addressing issues of domestic abuse when they are present in families.

Supplementary to the support, FDAC Judges have fortnightly non-lawyer reviews with families to support them and track their progress. At the core of the programme is the strong relationship the judge builds with the families, which improves their trust in the state and judiciary systems. This is in contrast to the more formal courtroom relationships with between judges, parents and their solicitors during standard care proceedings cases.

There are only 3 exceptions from working with parents on the programme:

- 1.) Parents who have a history of sexual and physical abuse of children.
- 2.) Parents who have significant mental health difficulties that will impact their cognitive functioning (understanding and retention) and therefore the success of the support
- 3.) Parents who have current domestic violence issues occurring but are refusing to engage with support for the issue

The aim of the programme is for parents to achieve abstinence from alcohol or drugs and improve their parenting skills, so they are good enough for their children to remain in their care. The FDAC team acts as expert court witnesses on the programmes and at the end of the 26 weeks they make a recommendation to the court regarding whether the parents should be reunified with their children.

During and after the programme parents are sign-posted and referred for scaffolding support from other local agencies to support them with matters which may trigger their misuse such as debt or housing issues.

The Current Context

Of the 32 available places on the programme per year, Walsall’s investment in the programme was for 15 places, Sandwell’s was for 12 places and Dudley’s was for 5 places. Therefore of the 16 places allocated for this half-financial year, 7 were allocated for Walsall, 6 were allocated for Sandwell and 3 allocated for Dudley.

The current sign up of cases on to the programme are:

Local Authority	Number of cases allocated	Number of cases signed up	Number of cases remaining
Walsall	7	5	2
Sandwell	6	2	4
Dudley	3	3	0
Total	16	10	6

As the FDAC programme duration is 26 weeks the first case will not complete until the 31st March 2021. Outcomes from the programme will only begin to be realised after this date.

4.2 Board and Workstream Arrangements

Governance of the programme is through a fully established FDAC Steering Group. The FDAC Steering Group meets monthly for strategic debates assuring the programme activities, collaboration working, risks and issues.

Underpinning the FDAC Steering Group is the FDAC Operations Group.



4.3 Operational Development

The Operational Group meets monthly and acts as the change authority for the programme.

The FDAC programme works alongside Walsall's Family Safeguarding Model to support families and keep children with in the care of their families.

Where the Family Safeguarding Model utilises in-house multi-disciplinary professionals to provide families with support across the whole children's social care spectrum of Child in Need, Child Protection and Children in Care, the FDAC programme works exclusively with families where children are entering care proceedings due to the parents drug or alcohol misuse affecting their parenting.

The FDAC programme works alongside the Family Safeguarding Model with pathways being constructed to step up or step down families from one programme to another.

There are clear links from the programme to the three strategic priorities of the Walsall Right for Children Transformation Programme below:

a) Reducing our demand

- Stopping failure demand: when we are not the right organisation to provide help we currently end up being the default position. This leads to delay and not the right help for families with complex needs.

FDAC redirects this demand to the out sourced specialist delivery team to help people get the right help at the right time.

Reducing legal costs by mitigating against the need of commissioned independent expert assessments. This also translates to more timely care proceedings.

- Preventing escalation of demand (demand avoidance): helping the right families at the right time through evidence-based programmes.

FDAC supports families utilising a range of evidence-based supportive interventions

Demand is further reduced as FDAC cases are contested less often than standard care proceedings cases.

- Avoidance of high cost help and support: reunifying children with their families will produce savings in cost avoidance of high cost foster care and residential placements, as well as other areas.

b) Developing a highly skilled/stable workforce

- Developing our profile as an employer

Out sourcing the delivery of the FDAC programme to an established recovery services provider helps to diversify and improve the capability of local authority services

- Making the job do-able and enabling our workforce to do the right thing

Utilising a specialist team to provide support to parents reduces the demand on social workers from parents, saving social work time and money.

Successful reunifications through the programme will also save social work time and money.

c) Co-ordinating and influencing the establishment of a mature WR4C partnership platform to drive the delivery of the WR4C vision

- Reducing our demand and preventing children, young people and families from needing costly statutory interventions will require a strong and mature partnership approach

Out sourcing the FDAC delivery service to Change, Grow Live an established recovery provider and having a domestic abuse worker seconded from Black Country Women's Aid seconded onto the team and funded through the Police and Crime Commissioner improves our partnership working

- Connecting up transformation across Walsall in the interest children and families will be key including integrating services around our children and families where this makes sense for them: strategies, processes, adopting the same thresholds, removing duplication between partners and co-producing with families and the community

FDAC is part of WR4C transformation in relation to the establishment of evidenced based services that will potentially transform our effectiveness in working with and making a significant difference to the lives of a specific cohort of children and their families that generationally reoccur in our care proceedings overtime.

Restorative Practice Approach

The FDAC programme aligns with Children's Services whole system restorative approach ethos, providing parents with the opportunity and support to improve their own lives and the lives of their children through managing their misuse issues and improving their parenting.

4.4 Performance and Sustainability

National governance of this programme is through a quarterly return to the Department of Education for its funding contribution towards the programme via its Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. This initiative invests £84 million over 5 years to support up to 20 local authorities to improve work with families to safely reduce the number of children entering care.

The return includes an update on families on the programme, their demographics, misuse behaviours, past history with social care, secondary issues linked to their misuse

including mental health, domestic violence etc. and types of support received across the programme.

The What Works For Children's Social Care Centre have been commissioned by the Department for Education to conduct a study on the impact FDAC has on reunification of parents with their children by the end of care proceedings and on parental substance misuse. The study will also provide detailed information about how FDACs have been implemented across the country and how this differs from usual practice.

The study will provide an estimate of the cost of running an FDAC, from the perspective of Local Authorities and will assess cost savings such as the use of expert witnesses during proceedings and the duration of care proceedings.

An evaluation will be carried out by the National Centre for Social Research institute, which comprises of data collated by the Centre of Justice Innovation from FDAC programmes across the country. The evaluation will utilise qualitative and quantitative measures to identify effects on child outcomes. The detailed data gathering will be carried out for a period of 18 months and commenced in January 2021 and will end at the end of June 2022.

At the end of the study, an evaluation report will be made publicly available on the WWCS website. The study findings will be used by the WWCS and the Department for Education to inform future practice.

Additional to this evaluation, the Centre of Justice Innovation will be producing national FDAC monitoring reports on a quarterly basis and annual reports for each FDAC programme across the country.

Locally, we have developed a detailed outcomes framework with underpinning Key Performance Indicators agreed with the delivery provider.

We have produced a dashboard for the Black Country collaboration and individual local authority data as it relates to FDAC.

4.5 Expected outcomes

There have been two main studies carried out on the FDAC programme conducted by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust and Brunel University and The Centre for Child and Family Justice Research at Lancaster University.

Below are a selection of the outcomes with the most robust evidence. Overall, the most significant outcome is that more families stay together safely. Some more specific expected outcomes are listed below:

a) Better outcomes for children and families

The findings from both studies identified found FDAC helped more families stop misusing drugs and alcohol and the rate of family reunification was higher, meaning that fewer children were taken into care.

In addition to the intensive support from FDAC, the FDAC families also were offered more substance misuse and family support services than comparison families, possibly helping to explain the better results.

Quantitative Findings

53% more FDAC families stopped misusing drugs and alcohol compared to non-FDAC families.

48% more FDAC families were reunified compared to non-FDAC families.

62% fewer reunified children from FDAC cases returned to court than reunified children from non-FDAC cases.

Long term Outcomes

76% more FDAC families remained reunified 3 years after the programme compared to non-FDAC families.

46% more FDAC families experienced no disruption 3 years after the programme compared to non-FDAC families

Qualitative Findings

Parents valued the FDAC service and the overwhelming majority would recommend FDAC to other parents in a similar situation. The professionals all considered FDAC to be a better approach than ordinary care proceedings.

b) Better use of public money

Every £1 spent on FDAC saves £1 over 2 years and £2.30 over 5 years. (Reeder and Whitehead 2016)

c) Outcomes for staff

FDAC has been shown to strengthen information sharing and decision-making. Utilising an assigned multi-disciplinary team to support families reduces the pressure on social workers, as well as saving social work time and money from both primary and secondary modes such as reduced travel costs and time.

Providing social workers with an alternative pathway to standard care proceedings produces more opportunity and because FDAC cases are contested less often provides additional savings for staff in time and money in repeated work with families.

d) Outcomes relating to the local authority

The FDAC model produces increased success for reunifying parents with alcohol or substance misuse issues with their children. These parents often have complex lives

with several facets of support required to make parenting good enough. These cases are high–cost to the local authority due to the variety of interventions required and the number of professionals involved.

Success on the FDAC programme reduces the requirement of support from public health, as well as producing cost savings in foster care or residential placement avoidance.

Children coming from families where misuse is an issue in the household can suffer neglect and experience domestic abuse which can lead to behavioural and mental and physical health problems for children.

There are also cost savings when families are successful on the FDAC programme through the reduction of cases loads, which put less strain on the social care infrastructure as a whole.

Due to FDAC cases being contested less there are substantial savings in legal fees and time.

In FDAC cases the FDAC team act as expert witnesses, which eliminates the costs that are incurred in standard care proceedings cases, where a number of expert witnesses may be utilised.

d.) Outcomes for courts

FDAC cases being contested less often than standard court proceedings cases save the courts and judiciary system time and money.

e.) Outcomes for the wider system

Additional to the courts there are secondary savings in money and time in a number of other state services.

Work is being planned to identify and quantify these secondary savings to get a thorough measure of the overall cost- benefit analysis of the FDAC programme.

Secondary saving will be analysed in a number of areas including:

- i. Police - reductions in call-outs to police to FDAC families and anti-social behaviour incidents
- ii. NHS - substance misuse services, mental health services, reduction in the spread of diseases and illness from needle sharing etc.
- iii. Education – reduction in truancy, reduction in educational support and moves due to foster placement or residential care
- iv. Housing – due to a reduction in home moves due to anti-social behaviour incidents, domestic violence etc.

4.6 Workforce development

Awareness of the FDAC programme and process has helped social work teams to identify an alternative option to standard care proceedings for families with drug or alcohol misuse issues and which are affecting their parenting.

Out sourcing the delivery of the FDAC programme to an established recovery services provider helps to diversify and improve the capability of local authority services

4.7 Financial information

The postponement of FDAC programme due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and restrictions led to cost pressures, as people had already been recruited. All three authorities put forward part of their emergency COVID-19 funds towards covering this first six month period, before the FDAC programme had gone live, when the team were supporting families from all there authorities with pre-proceedings work as an alternative.

The funding from the three local authorities in the collaboration has funded the FDAC delivery team for the three years of the pilot programme. The additional DfE money has funded a programme and implementation manager and paid for supplementary costs on the programme such as childcare for FDAC parents during delivery sessions, interpreters for non-English speaking families and resources required for working during the COVID-19 pandemic such as alternative, less intrusive forms of drug testing and tablets for families to receive remote support delivery.

Up to the present all spending on the FDAC programme has been within the estimated budget allocation and the budget is looking healthy with a significant amount funds allocated for any contingencies which may arise. The additional funds are continually being re-profiled to identify whether there will any funds present at the end of the three-year term to extend the programme any further.

5. Reducing inequalities

Overall, the implementation of FDAC programme is likely to have a positive impact on equality.

The programme will provide opportunities for people with alcohol and substance misuse issues to achieve abstinence improve their lives and move their lives towards securing employment if unemployed.

Past evaluations identify that fathers engage more positively with FDAC proceedings than standard care proceedings.

The use of interpreters will be monitored to ensure those for whom English is a second language are actively included.

Data collated on the children within Black Country FDAC families to date, identifies the ethnicity of the majority of the children as being of mixed ethnicity – 58%. The FDAC programme will provide a greater opportunity for successful reunification with parents for this demographic of children.

The FDAC programme has a clear link to the impacts in the Marmot reports, as it will enable children to have a more positive start in life and maximise their capabilities.

6. FDAC links to Council Corporate Plan Priorities

The Walsall Right for Children Transformation Programme contributes to a number of our Council Corporate Plan priorities:

a) People

Throughout the programme, we have and will continue to work with children, young people and their families to ensure they have increased independence, improved health, and can positively contribute to their communities.

b) Internal Focus

The programme is focused on a change of working, to ensure that within Children's Services we are as efficient and effective as we can be.

c) Children

The primary objective of the programme is to ensure that the right support is in place so that children can have the best start and are safe from harm, are happy, healthy and learning well.

7. Decide

To note the contents of this report and support the FDAC programme.

8. Respond

Any feedback and recommendations from scrutiny will be taken to FDAC Steering Group

The next milestone is the quarterly submission of data by the end of April 2021 for the DfE evaluation.

9. Review

There is a clear governance structure for the programme, which includes regular data monitoring and scrutiny within the local authority.

Background papers

- FDAC Study - Lancaster University Centre for Child & Family Research - http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/cfj-fdac/files/2016/12/FDAC_FINAL_REPORT_2016.pdf
- FDAC study – Brunel University & Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust - <https://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/5909/2/Fulltext.pdf>
- Better Outcomes, Better Justice, Redder & Whitehead, 2016 [https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ii1zDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT246&dq=Reeder+and+Whitehead+2016\)+better+courts&ots=Kvlf2BsiCC&sig=ktH17UbC-1XQ_1yT1_16NP62Y9o#v=onepage&q=Reeder%20and%20Whitehead%202016\)%20better%20courts&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ii1zDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT246&dq=Reeder+and+Whitehead+2016)+better+courts&ots=Kvlf2BsiCC&sig=ktH17UbC-1XQ_1yT1_16NP62Y9o#v=onepage&q=Reeder%20and%20Whitehead%202016)%20better%20courts&f=false)

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BLACK COUNTRY EXECUTIVE JOINT COMMITTEE
FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
Published up to July 2021 (for publication 01/03/2021)

Date first entered into the plan	Project Name	Key Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside of the Council)	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Date Item to be considered
04/01/2021	Hub to Home Transport Innovation Centre and Test Track Project: Very Light Rail and Autonomous Technologies – National Innovation Centre	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to enter into a Grant Agreement with Dudley Council to deliver the Local Growth Deal Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Hub to Home Transport Innovation Centre and Test Track Project: Very Light Rail and Autonomous Technologies – National Innovation Centre project with delivery to commence in the 2021/22 financial year.	Papers TBC – Helen Martin Helen.Martin@dudley.gov.uk	Dudley Council	31/03/2021
04/01/2021	Getting Building Fund – Capital and Revenue Funding Approval	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to use the revenue funding and capital contingency funding for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walsall Council to carry out its role as Accountable Body to the Getting Building Fund programme, and • Walsall Council to cover the costs of the external legal and technical fees in support of managing the programme. 2. Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to enter into a Grant Agreement with the Black Country Consortium for the Management and Administration functions of the Getting Building Fund. 3. Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to proceed to re-profile the Getting Building Fund (GBF) projects Hub to Home Transport Innovation Centre and Test Track Project: Very Light Rail and Autonomous Technologies – Innovation Centre (Dudley Council), and the National Brownfield Institute Phase 2 - Construction and Delivery (University of Wolverhampton). 	Papers TBC – Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	31/03/2021

BLACK COUNTRY EXECUTIVE JOINT COMMITTEE
FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
Published up to July 2021 (for publication 01/03/2021)

Date first entered into the plan	Project Name	Key Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside of the Council)	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Date Item to be considered
04/01/2021	Land & Property Investment Fund – Programme Extension	Approval for the Black Country Land and Property Investment Fund programme (LPIF), be re-profiled to allow expenditure and outputs to be claimed up to March 2025. Approval for the programme management costs, within this fund be reprofiled to March 2026, to ensure that the expenditure and outputs are audited in line with the Black Country Assurance Framework.	Papers TBC – Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	31/03/2021
08/02/2021	Wolverhampton Canalside – Change Request	Approval for Sandwell Council to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Wolverhampton City Council, to deliver the Growing Places Fund (GPF) funded elements of the Wolverhampton Canalside project with delivery to conclude in the 2021/22 financial year.	Papers TBC – Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk	Wolverhampton City Council	31/03/2021
05/10/2020	Dudley Advanced Construction Centre – Change Request	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Dudley College, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Dudley Advanced Construction Centre project with delivery to continue in the 2021/22 financial year.	Papers TBC – Helen Martin Helen.Martin@dudley.gov.uk	Dudley Council	28/04/2021
07/09/2020	Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills – Change Request	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with the University of Wolverhampton, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills project with delivery to continue in the 2021/22 financial year.	Papers TBC – Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk	Wolverhampton City Council	28/04/2021
08/02/2021	Hub to Home Transport Innovation Centre and Test Track Project: Very Light Rail	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Dudley Council to deliver the Local Growth Deal Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Hub to Home Transport	Papers TBC – Helen Martin Helen.Martin@dudley.gov.uk	Dudley Council	28/04/2021

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	and Autonomous Technologies – Test Track 1 Project Change Request	Innovation Centre and Test Track Project: Very Light Rail and Autonomous Technologies – Test Track 1 project with delivery to continue in the 2021/22 financial year.			
04/01/2021	Black Country LEP Assurance Framework	Approval of the revised Black Country LEP Assurance Framework, following the implementation requirements of the new Black Country Executive Joint Committee Governance arrangements, and the programme of continuous improvement to further enhance the BC LEP governance and transparency above and beyond published government standards, included as Attachment 1 to this report.	Papers TBC – Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	28/04/2021
01/03/2021	Bilston Urban Village Change Request	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Wolverhampton City Council, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Bilston Urban Village project with delivery to continue in the 2021/22 financial year.	Papers TBC – Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk	Wolverhampton City Council	28/04/2021
01/03/2021	Goscote Lane Corridor Change Request	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Walsall Housing Group Limited, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Goscote Lane Corridor project with delivery to continue in the 2021/22 financial year.	Papers TBC – Simon Neilson simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	28/04/2021
01/03/2021	Transport Major Road Network (MRN) Development	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Wolverhampton City Council, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Accessing Growth Transport	Papers TBC – Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk	Wolverhampton City Council	28/04/2021

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	Change Request	Major Road Network (MRN) Development project with delivery to continue in the 2021/22 financial year.			
01/03/2021	Growth Hub – Peer Networks Programme	Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to enter into a grant agreement with the Black Country Consortium Ltd to deliver the Growth Hub Peer Networks Programme for 2021/22.	Papers TBC – Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	28/04/2021
01/03/2021	Growth Hub Grant Funding Agreement Approval 2021/22	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Black Country Growth Hub (Walsall Council) to proceed to a Grant Agreement, with the Black Country Consortium Ltd, to deliver the Black Country Growth Hub Funding for 2021/22.	Papers TBC – Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	28/04/2021
01/03/2021	Parallel 9/10 PRIVATE SESSION - Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act1972 (as amended)	Approval for Walsall Council to enter into a Grant Agreement with Cayborn Limited to deliver the Black Country Enterprise Zone (BCEZ) funded elements for the Parallel 9/10 project, with delivery to commence in the 2021/22 financial year. Approval that business rates from the wider BC EZ can be utilised by Walsall Council to repay borrowing costs, with Parallel 9/10 being confirmed as the next priority project in respect of the allocation of business rates, after Categories 1 – 6 as set out in the BCJC Collaboration Agreement.	Papers TBC – Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	28/04/2021