

**28 April 2022**

Inspection Reports 2021/22

**Ward(s):** All

**Portfolios:** All

**Purpose: For Information**

**1. Aim**

- 1.1 To provide oversight of inspection and independent reviews undertaken during 2021/22, recommendations from which may contribute to the internal control environment and the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22, for which the Audit Committee has a role in providing independent assurance.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 Audit Committee's terms of reference and work programme provides for receipt of information in relation to Inspections undertaken on council services and may seek assurance that actions arising from recommendations in relation to findings which may impact the councils internal control environment are being addressed. This report provides Audit Committee with information on the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services along with two independent reviews, as follows:
- Youth Justice HMIP Assurance Project independent review (following Inspection in 2019);
  - Adult Social Care Pause and Learn.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 Audit Committee are requested to note the report.

**4. Report Detail - Know**

- 4.1 Councils (and partners) are subject to Inspection by a number of bodies, including the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). This report focuses on one inspection and two independent reviews undertaken in 2021/22.

Adult Social Care (ASC)

- 4.2 In relation to Adult Social Care, the CQC is the independent regulator for health and adult social care in England. All councils will be subject to CQC inspections under the adult social care reforms, however, these are not due to start until April 2023

and Walsall Council has not been selected in the pilot areas. Our first inspection is expected to be in 2023/24.

- 4.3 During 2021/22, an independent review was undertaken. The ASC Pause and Learn approach was developed in response to Covid-19 by the West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in England (ADASS) as part of a comprehensive sector-led challenge and continuous improvement programme aimed at reflecting on ways of working and taking change forward. ADASS membership is drawn from serving directors of adult social care employed by local authorities and their direct reports.
- 4.4 The Pause and Learn process is aimed at understanding what is working well and what opportunities there are in Walsall ASC. It is not a formal inspection. The findings were reported to Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2021. The Committee report, along with a video/presentation of the feedback are available here: [Pause and Learn Report](#) and [Pause and Learn Presentation](#)
- 4.5 There were 3 parts to the pause and learn approach which included:
- Practice Review by Principal Social Workers with reflective discussions;
  - Data Review;
  - Focus Groups involving 50 people asking:
    1. What sort of team were you? Reflection on your actions;
    2. When you were at your best?
    3. What did you anticipate well and what surprised you?
    4. What will you hold onto going forward?
- 4.6 Opportunities for Adult Social Care to consider in the Pause and Learn report included:
- Grow and nurture a culture of self-reflection and self-awareness, underpinned by confidence in the freedom to act and proportionate governance, blended and flexible working;
  - Collaborate and build on relationships with our stakeholders including the care market and have a focus on living in your home as much as you can;
  - Continue to celebrate effectiveness as leaders of Place, providing the enabling, facilitative energy for the range of partners and stakeholders including Walsall Together as its shape adapts in the Integrated Care system response;
  - The overarching philosophy of the council as an enabler, politically, at senior leadership and expressed in the emerging partnership of Resilient Communities is consistent and well-articulated. This energy needs to be maximised quickly and targeted at building resilience in areas that will reduce demand on health and care services;
  - Commissioning is starting to see its role as a place shaper, as in addition to managing the wider care market, the underpinning philosophy demonstrated by increased investment into local communities will really help support a shift to strength and outcome based commissioning;

- Take the opportunity to reflect on where we might build different offers in response to local challenges for example the adaptability and agile behaviour evidenced in our provider services;
- Develop a stronger approach to strategic engagement by the Council and Mental Health Trust and a shared vision for Community Mental Health Transformation;
- Support operational team managers to develop stronger relationships with Mental Health Trust managers and have an open dialogue to address and resolve issues;
- Develop a strengths-based integrated mental health commissioning strategy for mental health provision;
- Roll out '3 Connections' Strengths Based Practice framework across adult social care and support operational managers to take greater responsibility and ownership for practice developments;
- Developing an engagement strategy for co-production;
- Explore the role that Social Workers play in raising peoples' aspirations to live a fulfilling life, ensuring they take a holistic approach to conversations;

4.7 Adult Social Care have incorporated actions in respect of the above into their service transformation plan which will be reviewed and taken back to Scrutiny in July/August 2022.

### Children's Services

4.8 Local Authority children's services are inspected by Ofsted through a number of frameworks including Special Educational Needs (SEN) inspections and Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.

4.9 The ILACS framework replaced the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF) in 2018. Walsall's previous judgement inspection under the SIF found that Children's Service 'required improvement' overall, 'required improvement' for children in need of help and protection, 'required improvement' for looked after and achieving permanence and 'required improvement' for leadership, management and governance. There were 12 recommendations. In response to the inspection and the recommendations, Walsall Children's Services developed, launched and implemented its Walsall Right 4 Children Transformation programme to improve the services it offered to and the outcomes for children in Walsall.

4.10 Since the SIF inspection, Walsall has received two focussed visits. These are short two-day inspections on a specific topic. The first was in September 2018 and focussed on Care Leavers and the second was in October 2019 and focussed on the front door and Early Help. Both of these short focussed visit inspections were positive.

4.11 In October 2021, Walsall was inspected by Ofsted under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. Ofsted judged Walsall to be 'good' overall, 'requires improvement' for children in need of help and protection, 'good' for children in care and 'good' for leadership. Ofsted found that:

*“An ambitious and stable senior leadership team is dedicated to the delivery of the Walsall Right 4 Children transformation programme, launched in September 2018. Since the previous inspection in 2017, outcomes for children and their families have been improving and children’s services are now good. There has been deliberate corporate investment in children’s services, to create a skilled and stable workforce. As a result, some exceptional practice from social workers helps children’s experiences improve and supports families to make positive changes to their lives.”*

4.12 There were four recommendations as a result of the inspection:

- The application of thresholds, so that children receiving early help support can access statutory services when they need help and protection;
- Management oversight and support for children living in private fostering arrangements;
- Consistency in the quality of supervision records and analysis in the recording of frontline management oversight;
- Management oversight of children living in unregistered children’s homes.

4.13 After an inspection Local Authorities are required to write an action plan as part of the framework and submit it to Ofsted within 70 days of receiving the final inspection report. The high level improvement plan was submitted to Ofsted in March. The action plan will be reported to Scrutiny during 2022/23 to consider progress. The Ofsted report is available at this link:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80574>

#### Youth Justice Services.

4.14 During 2019, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspected Youth Justice Services and reported an overall rating of ‘requires improvement’. Four recommendations were made that HMIP believed, if implemented, would have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in Walsall, as follows:

Walsall Council and its partners should:

1. review the budget allocation to the youth justice service to determine the correct level of resource that allows the service to undertake its key functions well;
2. make sure that all children and young people working with the youth justice service receive their full entitlement to education and that provision is tailored to their specific needs.

The Walsall Youth Justice Service Board should:

3. make sure, in the delivery of work, that sufficient attention is given to protecting known victims and others from harm, and to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people;
4. understand the reasons for and try and reduce the disproportionate number of black and minority ethnic children and young people in the service.

The report is available here:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/walsallyjs/>

- 4.15 The response to the key inspection findings has been subject to an independent review commissioned by the Walsall Youth Justice Service Performance and Partnership Board. The findings of the review were reported to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 31 January. The Scrutiny report can be accessed here: [Youth Justice HMIP Assurance Project](#).
- 4.16 The Youth Justice Assurance Project was to provide assurance to Walsall YJS Performance and Partnership Board (and Scrutiny Committee) that the response to the 2019 key inspection findings were robust and that changes made as a result have been sustained. The review concluded that the main issues arising had been addressed, with the exception of the offer to victims and restorative practice, which had not yet delivered the improvements required, however it acknowledged a change of approach had now been agreed.
- 4.17 Progress against the priorities and the delivery plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the YJS Performance and Partnership Board.

## **5. Financial information**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this update.

## **6. Reducing Inequalities**

- 6.1 There are no equality implications directly related to this report.

## **7. Decide**

- 7.1 Audit Committee may wish to comment on the Inspection/reviews set out within this report.

## **8. Respond**

- 8.1 Audit Committee may wish to receive further updates on the Inspection/reviews set out within this report.

## **9. Review**

- 9.1 Actions arising from the Inspections/reviews will be monitored by the relevant Committee during 2022/23.

## **Background papers**

HMIP Inspection Report 2019  
Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services report 2021

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