

12th October 2021

Councillor Timothy Wilson
Children's Services Directorate
Walsall Council

By email: Cllr.timothy.wilson@walsall.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Wilson

Thank you for your kind letter, and for the warm welcome you, the Council Team and the fantastic care leavers I met, gave me when I visited on 3rd September 2021.

It was great to meet with such an impressive and ambitious group of young people. Their concerns on the prospect of having to face early adulthood without the support networks most children have echoed those of many children and young people that I have spoken to in care. It reinforced that it is essential that there is a cohesive programme of support available for care leavers to boost their chances, particularly through guaranteed housing for care leavers by giving them priority status until the age 25, and through council tax exemptions. It was very impressive to hear how Walsall are already doing this through housing pathway.

The pandemic has had such a detrimental effect on the emotional and social development of many children across the UK, and I agree that HAF programmes have had a positive impact in improving children's wellbeing and have helped build their confidence for the next stages in their lives. I do want to see funding for the HAF programmes committed for another 3-years so the successes like the programme in Walsall can be built on. This would enable increased participation, particularly for vulnerable children and those with a history of poor school attendance as well enable providers to deliver a wider range of cultural and educational activities through the programme.

Thank you again for such an enjoyable visit. I do hope I will have the opportunity to visit Walsall again next year.

My team will be in touch shortly with how we can assist with data from the Big Ask.

Warmest Regards



Dame Rachel de Souza
Children's Commissioner for England