

Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on: **Tuesday 18 April 2023 at 6.00 p.m.**

Meeting at: Walsall Council House.

Public access to meeting via: <http://www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com>

MEMBERSHIP:

Chair: Councillor. Hicken
Vice Chair: Councillor. Jukes
Councillor. Garcha
Councillor. Harrison
Councillor. Horton
Councillor. Kaur
Councillor. Mazhar
Councillor. Nasreen
Councillor. Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham
Councillor. Waters

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor S. Elson

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Democratic Services, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TW
Contact: Nikki Gough ☎ 01922 654767 E-mail: nikki.gough@walsall.gov.uk

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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 13 March 2023.	<u>Enclosed</u>
<u>Scrutiny</u>		
6.	Children at Risk of Exploitation An update in respect of Walsall's arrangements to support Children and Young People that may be at risk of exploitation.	<u>Enclosed</u>
7.	Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2021 – 2022 An annual overview of the partnership performance in relation to safeguarding children and young people.	<u>Enclosed</u>
<u>Overview</u>		
8.	Recommendation Tracker To review progress with recommendations from previous meetings.	<u>Enclosed</u>
9.	Areas of Focus 2022/23 To agree the Committees Work Programme and review the Forward Plans for Walsall Council and the Black Country Executive Committee.	<u>Enclosed</u>
10.	Date of next meeting To be confirmed.	

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 & Scrutiny Committee
Conference Room 2, Walsall Council House**

Monday 13 March 2023 at 6.00 p.m.

Committee Members Present

Councillor A. Hicken (Chair)
Councillor A. Garcha
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor S. Nasreen
Councillor F. Mazhar
Councillor C. Statham
Councillor V. Waters

Portfolio Holder

Councillor S. Elson - Children's Services

Officers Present

Colleen Male - Director (Childrens Social Work)
Isabelle Vanderheeren - Director (Early Help)
Nikki Gough - Democratic Services Officer

54/22 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Rattigan and Councillor Jukes.

55/22 Substitutions

There were no substitutions.

56/22 Declarations of interest and party whip

There were no declarations and no party whip of interest.

57/22 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

58/22 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 were considered by the committee.

Resolved

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 March 2023 be approved as a true and accurate record.

59/22 Child Neglect Strategy

The Director (Early Help) presented the report (annexed) and highlighted the salient points. The Committee was informed that child neglect was a strategic priority for the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership, the strategy aimed to drive development and improvement. A child neglect steering group was established in January 2021, and this group identified key principles in effectively supporting children, who experienced neglect at the earliest opportunity, including:

- Training.
- Seeing and Hearing Children.
- Taking Action.

Members were informed that a comprehensive needs assessment and consultation exercise had identified 4 key strategic priorities, each of which were allocated to a lead partner to strengthen the shared accountability of the child neglect agenda. The outcomes framework would be used to determine if the strategy had made an impact.

There then ensued a series of questions, the Director (Early Help) explained that training took place across the partnership, with volunteers trained on awareness and low-level intervention. There were family hubs in four localities, and work would take place with the voluntary sector to further develop this work. Details of a conference were provided, and it was noted that this had been filmed to enable it to be used as a training resource.

In response to questions from Members, Officers explained that some children suffering from neglect were already known to the Authority, whereas others were referred through early help and children were also referred through schools. The police and schools made up the majority of external referrals.

It was noted that the health visiting service continued to face challenges in relation to its workforce.

Resolved

That the Committee supported the work being done with partners through the safeguarding partnership board in relation to the prevention and support of mitigating against the impact of child neglect.

60/22 Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance

The Director (Early Help) presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Walsall Right 4 Children transformation programme launched in September 2018. In January 2021, a review of the strategic partnership was carried out in collaboration with the CCG, Walsall Healthcare Trust, the Safeguarding Partnership and the Safer Walsall Partnership. The outcome of which recommended the development of the children and young people strategic alliance. The Committee were informed that the alliance provided an opportunity to develop a good understanding of the needs of children and young people in Walsall and a system wide change, which needed to take place to enable improved outcomes.

The Alliance had selected two key areas of focus the first 1001 days of a child's life and school exclusions.

Officers responded to a series of questions, explaining that education colleagues had come together to commission a piece of work in relation to the exclusion of children and to determine the key issues within the system. It was stressed that if children were out of school they were vulnerable and at increased risk of harm. It was stressed that they should be proactively supported to prevent exclusion. A discussion was held around the causes of exclusion, which included unidentified SEN. The need to create a system in which children got the right help at the right time was part of the long-term strategic vision. Family hubs would make information to families more accessible. Challenge was provided in relation to a lack of available support via services to prevent the exclusion, and the need for all parts of the system to be fixed to ensure adequate support could be provided.

Recommendation

That the Committee support the work being done with partners through the development of a Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance to secure better outcomes for children growing up in Walsall.

61/22 Recommendation Tracker

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the committee work programme had been circulated.

Resolved

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

62/22 Areas of Focus 2022/23

Resolved

That the areas of focus for the municipal year 2022/23 be noted

Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as 18 April 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business this meeting was terminated at 7:00 p.m.

Signed:

Date:

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
18th April 2023

Agenda Item No. 6

Children at Risk of Exploitation

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Stacie Elson - Children's Portfolio Holder

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update in respect of Walsall's arrangements and work completed to support Children and Young People that may be at risk of exploitation over the last 12 months. The issue of Child Exploitation remains a core and significant component of activity and leadership focus of Walsall Council, the Local Safeguarding Partnership and Community Safety Partnership.

Child Exploitation (CE) is a term with a broad definition. It includes Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, County Lines, Modern Slavery and Trafficking. Local Authorities have overarching responsibility for safeguarding all children in their area. Their statutory functions under the 1989 and 2004 Children Act(s) include specific duties in relation to children in need and children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm (under sections 17 and 47 of the Children Act 1989).

Local agencies, including police and health services, also have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people when carrying out their functions.

Reason for scrutiny:

This is an annual updating report outlining previous and current partnership activity relating to tackling Child Exploitation here in Walsall.

Recommendations:

This report aims to provide assurances and updates of the work that has taken place across the partnership since last presented to this committee in April 2022. It invites this committee to note and endorse the current plans in regard to the work being undertaken here in Walsall to safeguarding children at risk of exploitation.

Background papers:

Child exploitation is a continued concern across the country and both government and local authorities have seen the impact that exploitation has had on its children. Through research there have been lessons learnt and so local authorities now have a better understanding of how all forms of exploitation links to other behaviours which put children at risk of exploitative harm.

Previous reports in regard to Walsall's arrangements to safeguard our children exploitation have been presented to this committee annually and in line with safeguarding partnership processes.

There have been a number of regional and national reports published since Alexis Jay's Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham was published in August 2014. Since that time, the focus of what constitutes Child Exploitation has shifted and professionals working in this arena are now more educated as to its impact and how partners should work together in an attempt to reduce any risk within their communities.

In addition, Professor Alexis Jay has recently published (October 2022) her final report from the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. This outlines a number of key findings from a range of reports in regard to extra familial and intra familial sexual harm over the last 7 years. The most recent report specifically looking at Child Sexual Exploitation was published in February 2022 and outlined the findings of exploitation by organised networks. This review focussed on 6 case study areas and undertook a detailed analysis of information held by agencies to better understand the experiences and responses to children who were currently being, or had been, sexually exploited by organised networks. As with all regional and national research findings, we cross reference all key recommendations with the work of Walsall Safeguarding Partnership as an assurance and potential learning opportunity.

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. 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.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

One of our corporate priorities is that children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well. We also aim to provide people to have increased independence, improved health, and can positively contribute to their communities. In Walsall, we strive to ensure that communities are prospering and resilient and that our children are living in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

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, whatever their needs, are safe and supported.

Environmental impact:

Not applicable for this report

Performance management

Protection from abuse is a fundamental right for all children and exploitation is a form of child abuse. Our vision continues to ensure that children, young people and their families whose lives are affected by exploitation will receive a high level of support, protection, and that offenders are held accountable for their actions, and brought to justice.

We continue to collate and track information in regard to exploitation through our exploitation hub and via the use of performance data. This information is also shared regionally with the local Violence Reduction Partnership as part of the regional data set that is accessible to all partners across the region.

Reducing inequalities:

Our Walsall All Age Exploitation Strategy sets out the vision that Walsall Council has to ensure the co-ordinated provision of services designed to address the protection of children and the disruption and prosecution of activities by adults. It provides specific support for those children and young people who are at risk of significant harm, including those with protected characteristics of gender, disability, race and religion.

In line with our corporate priorities, Walsall sets out the response to secure improvements in the equality of services in order to have a positive impact on our most vulnerable children and young people. Local Authorities, Police and Health Services as key local partners must provide a robust safeguarding approach to ensure they have arrangements in place to provide adequate protection for children at risk of exploitation. The work we continue to do in regard to exploitation continues to be overseen and scrutinised by the key functions of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership business unit.

Consultation:

In order to make sure that all children and young people's voices are heard, we must make sure that appropriate and accessible participation opportunities are available. This includes ensuring that children and young people have the skills and support they need to take part in a way that works for them and their families. This is outlined within Walsall's Participation Strategy.

Contact Officers

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Introduction

The interpersonal harms that young people face beyond their families is now well known and categorised. From peer-on-peer abuse within schools and communities to an increase in domestic abuse amongst young people in intimate relationships and the exploitation of children for sexual and criminal purposes - these harms pose a significant and long-lasting risk to young people's welfare.

The exploitation of children can take a number of different forms and perpetrators may subject children and young people to multiple forms of abuse at the same time, such as criminal exploitation (including county lines) and sexual exploitation. The child exploitation landscape is a complex one with ever-shifting characteristics and challenges for local partnerships. Like most areas nationally, we have seen a significant overlap between children that are potentially being exploited with those that are also involved in, or exposed to, serious youth violence. Youth Violence is a term often used to describe the threat, physical injury and harm caused to children and young people from violence outside of the home.

As offending behaviours and the methods of exploitation of young people changes, so does the understanding of what constitutes Youth Violence. In the past five years, there has been a significant change in the nature and extent of those affected, as well as professional understanding of the issues and of what works to reduce its harm. Our focus on contextual harm and how we safeguard against this alongside our work in relation to exploitation will be further explored within coming months and may change the way in which we focus our resources and devise new pathways that may be required to better support our young people at risk.

Every year, thousands of children in the UK are exploited. Some have been groomed into county lines drug trafficking, others face sexual abuse from within their own community. Although the forms of exploitation may often change, the methods these adults use to target and exploit children largely stay the same. This includes supplying them with alcohol and/or drugs, befriending them and providing them with money/gifts. This is known as 'grooming' and it is used for both criminal and sexual exploitation. For some time now, the term 'Contextual Safeguarding' has been used to describe an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form within their communities, schools and online can feature violence and abuse and we here in Walsall are no different from other areas that are trying to adapt our work to ensure that our approaches remain current and in line with the needs of our community.

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. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. This is often seen when the young person being exploited believe that they are in a relationship with the perpetrator. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact as this can also occur through the use of technology. Over recent years there has been an increase in peer-on-peer abuse with the use of social media platforms aiding in the overall exploitation of one young person to another.

Child criminal exploitation is not defined in law, though the government's Serious Violence Strategy defines it as occurring where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity. It is in this context that we are seeing a larger number of young people potentially being exploited as part of the increase of serious youth violence across the region.

The vast majority of children and young people grow up safely in Walsall. However, a minority of children and young people face significant risks from exploitation and/or serious youth violence. Much progress has been made in Walsall in recent years in recognising and responding to the needs of our young people but there is a growing need to tackle violence and exploitation holistically, with consistent, evidence-based interventions which avoid fragmented, crisis-driven responses. The governance arrangements reflect the importance of a joined up approach between community safety and child safeguarding agencies and as such the partnership arrangements in place are robustly scrutinised here in Walsall.

The exploitation of children cannot be addressed by a single agency working alone. Effective collaboration between partners is essential to the protection of children and ultimately in stopping offenders. There is a wide range of behaviours and scenarios that may not initially appear related to child sexual or criminal exploitation, but pieced together and put into context, form a bigger picture. This is why we hold daily triage conversations within our hub to ensure that those pieces of the jigsaw are put together to inform us of what actions may be required to safeguard those at risk and disrupt any potential exploitation from happening in the future. Any themes/patterns that emerge are routinely discussed in our monthly Exploitation Panel and the work of this is then overseen by the Exploitation Sub Group and the wider safeguarding partnership.

Local Response – what we do here in Walsall

Exploitation Strategy

Since 2019, Walsall Safeguarding Partnership has had an All Age Exploitation approach as part of our All Age Strategy to tackling Exploitation. The governance of this approach continues to be managed through the Exploitation Sub Group and operationally through the Exploitation Panel with individual operational oversight taking place through the separate adults and children's delivery groups. All of these are multi agency meetings with members from Childrens and Adults Social Care, Education, Licencing, Youth Offending, West Midlands Police, Health and voluntary organisations.

Regionally, as one of the seven metropolitan Local Authorities across the West Midlands, we continue to be represented at various forums that feeds into the Regional Strategic Exploitation Framework. The West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership continue to work jointly across the region to provide an overview of exploitation and abuse from across the West Midlands. This is part of the overall public health approach across the region of which our revised strategy will feed into.

In addition, we feed into a regional dataset that is used to cross reference themes/patterns in relation to children missing or at risk of exploitation from across the region. This information is then used to determine what support/resources may be needed in particular areas and how as a collective partnership we can tackle some of the issues from a regional perspective.

Operational response

In Walsall we continue to operate a 'hub' which is a virtual multi-agency approach to identifying, screening, and sharing of intelligence around those at risk of exploitation. The hub performance data continues to be shared at Exploitation Operational Delivery Groups. This is where exploitation triage leads meet on a weekly basis to review any themes or issues emerging from the hub, which are then raised at our monthly Exploitation Panel and shared with all agencies. The hub seeks to clarify intelligence around current CSE/CE risk, victims, perpetrators and locations as well as learning from historical investigations.

Walsall's Exploitation Pathway and Assessment has been in place since September 2020. Through regular promotion by multi-agency updates, school briefings and webinars, we continue to promote the process, so that they are now regularly used by professionals making referrals for both vulnerable adults and children. The pathway works alongside our MASH and promotes effective sharing of information between agencies. These discussions continue to include our Virtual School, Street Teams, Youth Justice Service, NPU police, Locate police, Adult Social Care and a member of our exploitation team.

Exploitation and Missing Team

Our Exploitation Team continues to be led by our Principal Exploitation Reduction Officer, Katie Storer-Young. This is currently a non-case holding team that offers consultation and support in regards to all types of child exploitation including sexual, criminal and children at risk of being trafficked. Katie Storer-Young is well known both regionally and within the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership in regards to tackling exploitation here in Walsall. She shares information and data in regards to the hub in a variety of forums across a number of agencies and acts as a guide to practitioners across the safeguarding partnership.

The team consist of the following staff:

- 1 x Principle Exploitation Reduction Officer (full time)
- 2 x Exploitation and Missing Coordinators (full time)
- 2 x RHI Missing officers (full time)
- 1 x Specialist Practitioner (full time)

Team key activities:

- Is responsible for monitoring and reporting on all aspects of performance around exploitation and children who go missing across all Children's Services and reporting this data to senior managers.
- Holds daily exploitation triage in consultation with external agencies as part of all age exploitation strategy.

- Offers 1:1 support sessions for practitioners and managers to complete exploitation assessments and use of toolkits and to consider/reflect upon potential support and disruption for individual children.
- Will attend and provide information for strategy meetings in regard to high risk children.
- Will attend planning or decision-making meetings where there are indicators of any child being exploited, or going missing.
- Works with all statutory and community partners to prompt and assist joined up working in respect of safeguarding and disruption in Walsall
- Has links to neighbouring authorities and regional forums where Local Authority/external agencies responses to vulnerable children.
- Collaborates with west midlands VRP and provides support into intensification weeks.

Access to police support via the Exploitation Hub consists of the following officers:

- 1 x Full time Sgt – Exploitation
- 1 x Full time PC – Exploitation
- 1 x Part Time PC – Exploitation
- 1 x CSE Coordinator, full time
- 1 x LOCATE Missing PC, full time

Triage 'hub' Data

The following is a breakdown of the referrals of children and adults that have come through exploitation triage between 1st October 2022 and 28th February 2023.

Total number of referrals is 181 and the breakdown of risk is as follows:

Level of risk	CE (Criminal Exploitation)	CE and Violence	CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation)	CE and CSE	Youth Violence	Adults	Other
Returned not discussed	6	1	2	2	2	4	12
No risk	9	0	5	1	3	2	0
Low Risk	29	0	22	3	3	7	0
Med Risk	20	1	14	5	0	7	0
High Risk	3	0	10	2	0	6	0
Total	67	2	53	13	8	26	12

In regards to referrers, the following breakdown applied:

CSC	Education	Street Teams	Police	YJS	Health	Early Help	Other

74	34	11	14	3	9	16	20

Although this report is in regard to safeguarding our children at risk of exploitation, as we operate an All Age Exploitation Hub, it is worth noting that the referrals for adults being exploited in Walsall continues to increase. Within this increase, there are two key themes that have emerged within the last six months – those of adults being groomed and exploited by local drug dealers who take over their home and sell drugs from the property (previously referred to as ‘cuckooing’) and those adults who are victims of Modern Slavery. Due to ongoing training and support for the multi-agency partnership supporting vulnerable adults in Walsall, we expect the number of referrals to increase over the next year. As such, Adult Social Care are in daily attendance to triage discussions where these key themes are discussed and reviewed and a delivery group focussing on the support for adults is in place and will feed separately back into the safeguarding partnership as part of our practice and quality assurance arrangements.

Community work

Over the last 12 months, a significant amount of community work has been undertaken by the Missing Children and Exploitation Team. This work has continued to develop on previous successes working directly with children and families and growing multi-agency knowledge and understanding around the issues of contextual safeguarding.

Over the last six months, our exploitation team have been supporting work in Bloxwich, Blakenhall and the Town Centre providing targeted youth work and support to children on the edges of being exploited by local gangs and groups. This work started prior to current potential gang related tensions and was in direct response to referrals made by social workers and their concern that potential street gangs were operating in the local area that were grooming children for car crime and drug sales. This work has enabled us to gather the views of local children, schools and parents on their feelings of safety. We have partnered with organisations such as Youth Connect, Street Teams and EYES (Engaging Youth Empowerment Services). This work continues and will play a key role in our future operational responses to local concerns whilst considering the views of the young people we are aiming to protect.

The team are also actively involved with and facilitate some of the actions as part of County Lines Intensification Weeks. These national campaigns happen each quarter across the West Midlands region and is an opportunity for police and partners to pull together partnership plans to consider any potential county lines running through Walsall and their impact on children in the borough.

Our last week of activity ran in February and was another well-planned and supported week with youth work activity, partnership walk around with Street Teams and detached work in schools, towns and transport hubs. The work from the Exploitation Team involved running workshops for practitioners on understanding drill music, engaging with families on public transport and workshops for social care to give a roader understanding of the issue in Walsall. These weeks are coordinated by the Violence Reduction Partnership who commented that the Walsall partnership plan was one of the best in the region.

Working with parents

In addition to our continued community work, we have continued to increase our offer of supporting parents through the ongoing work of the team and have linked in with parents that are interested in supporting other families whose children have been exploited. There is a joint work offer with social workers to support the whole family approach where exploitation has been identified. Families are experts into their own lives and know their children better than any professional, therefore their support and ability to engage in the safety planning is crucial to the success of any intervention.

The exploitation team will also support parents reporting concerns to police, understanding and identifying potential risk and reporting children as missing when necessary. Our support may also include linking with other partner agencies such as housing as some of our parents have needed to be provided with alternative accommodation when risks to children and their families have become high. For parents, having a child groomed for exploitation can be incredibly traumatic and the team look at what additional support they may need that can ensure they are supported in keeping their children safe within their own community.

Cross border work

It is recognised that the exploitation of children does not stop at Walsall's geographical boundaries. Many of the most vulnerable children in the borough are those children who are in care and some high-risk children may have been moved into homes in the Walsall area from other local authority areas. As part of our MASH arrangements at the front door, we have a well-established cross border social care network to ensure that safeguarding information is shared and updated when children from other local areas go missing. Our Exploitation team are also part of several regional relationships with other Exploitation Hubs across the seven local authorities in the West Midlands region. We meet bi-monthly to discuss best practice and share learning across the regional safeguarding partnerships.

Children missing from home/care

The team continues to have direct contact with children who have been missing and all children are offered and/or are visited after a missing episode, usually within 72 hours of the episode. The missing worker completes return home conversations with the children and young people looking at the reasons why they were missing, provides a chance for them to talk about what happened whilst they were away and how they may be feeling now that they have returned. Whilst all children are offered this opportunity immediately once they return, not all may wish to receive it but the option to do so at a later date is available should they choose to do so.

We know that when children are missing from their homes, the risk to their health and wellbeing is extremely high and the need to locate them and ensure their safety is our main function. The team have two full time dedicated missing children workers,

offering direct face to face one to one discussions when a child goes missing. This work continues to develop and we offer additional sessions when a vulnerable child will potentially go missing again. This isn't a statutory obligation, but an added extra so that workers are able to support children when they are at their most vulnerable. This work also allows workers to make any additional referrals that may be needed for that child or family as a way of disrupting the pattern of missing episodes. This element of our work is new and is an extension of our focus on prevention.

Walsall Exploitation Pilot

As recognised within recent inspections, we have a shared understanding of thresholds for exploited and missing children, enhanced by the daily multi-agency triage meeting in the MASH. We have also strengthened our response to children at risk of exploitation with the launch of our Exploitation Pilot. Commencing in October 2022, this is a 12-month programme that is focussing on delivering bespoke packages of support to individual children that are being identified and selected through exploitation triage. The team consists of social workers, youth workers and links in with key partners such as health, police, education and the youth justice team. This team has case holding responsibility for up to 20 young people deemed as medium risk of exploitation and will sit alongside the wider work that continues within our Exploitation service.

As this is a pilot project, we have not made any changes to the current Safeguarding Partnership Exploitation Pathway. However, this pilot is being used to test whether a case-holding model is the way forward for us here in Walsall and whether we should ultimately move towards a permanent multi-agency co located team in the future. In order to do this, management information and performance indicators are being collected throughout the term of the pilot in line with the KPI framework and evaluation that has been specifically devised. All children from the pilot are being individually audited as well as 20 comparable children from the wider service that are being supported via the usual route.

The feedback thus far has been positive and some of the obvious benefits are being identified. This includes a better engagement from families and the young people themselves with some that are involved having previously refused support by Early Help or the wider safeguarding teams. This seems to suggest that the message to families involved with the pilot has been well received as they feel more able to engage with the preventative work that the team are set up to provide rather than the more traditional routes of offering support.

Equally, the relationships being forged between the young people and the team is having a positive impact on the feedback that we receive from the young people themselves. This is due to the lower caseloads allowing the workers within the team to build positive relationships with the young people in order to better understand their circumstances, build the trust and identify the support that they and their family need. Each young person and their family are asked to provide feedback on the support provided which will be included in the overall evaluation on the impact of the pilot project. A final evaluation report of the pilot will be completed and shared across the partnership in September 2023.

Walsall CARE Project

Walsall Council was one of 7 Local Authorities nationally that were successful in securing 1 year funding from DfE for the 'Better Integrated Care Fund' (short breaks innovation funding) for delivery of projects between April 2022 and April 2023. This funding enabled us to deliver the Walsall CARE (community activities reducing exploitation) project, an innovative short-break model specifically for 60 young people aged 11 plus, in academic school year 6 and above who have additional needs, either diagnosed or undiagnosed and who due to their vulnerabilities are at risk of and/or showing early warning signs of low-level exploitation. The objective of the model was to provide positive activities and diversionary support to each young person involved in the project so that they achieve better outcomes and have greater aspirations.

The CARE project sought to deliver a bespoke locally delivered programme of positive activities including sports, arts, cooking/life skills, ICT and other diversionary activities designed to develop positive health, wellbeing, and resilience delivered by the voluntary and community services. Following a procurement exercise 2 local community providers were secured to deliver the pilot programme. This was Street Teams and The Inspire Group.

The CARE project operates in each of the 4 locality areas of Walsall and is shaped around the needs of each area. The programme albeit initially set to support 60 CYP, is supporting with approval from the DfE 69 Children/young people and will continue for another year. The service providers deliver weekly activities after school and at the weekend. These programmes engage individual young people in a bespoke programme of activities and mentoring.

Each Young person has access to:

- 1 x after-school club pw (term-time only)
- 1x weekend activity pw (term-time only)
- 121 mentor/trusted adult (throughout the programme)
- HAF programme

The combination of diversionary activities and 1:2:1 mentors provides targeted, bespoke interventions for each child as part of our SEND Local Offer, reducing isolation and increasing understanding of the dangers of exploitation. Referrals are received from schools, GPs, other health professionals, Early Help locality teams, Police and other professionals who may be working with young people, meeting the criteria who have SEND and are at risk of exploitation.

The CARE programme is an evaluated programme with key KPI's and tools used to monitor performance and impact. As such, the following indicators have so far been identified:

Improved education outcomes: we are waiting on data around the current education attendance data, however from what we have available for the academic year 2021/22, compared with the current academic year;

- 1YP attendance remains the same
- 17 C/YP have had an increase of school attendance
- 16 C/YP have had a slight decrease * however this is compared to a whole academic year 2021/22
- 35 C/YP data is not available currently for 2022/23

- 29 CYP data is not available currently for 2021/22 to allow for comparison

Improved emotional outcomes All young people accessing CARE programme are supported to complete My Mind outcome stars, evidence from outcome stars is positive, showing that the majority have seen a positive impact as follows:

- 85% of young people had improved or sustained positive scores on feelings and emotions
- 78% of young people had improved or sustained positive outcome scores for healthy lifestyles
- 82% of young people had improved or sustained positive outcomes for how they used their time
- 74% of young people had improved or sustained positive outcomes for self esteem

On the 17th March we held an awards event at the Bescot stadium to celebrate the achievements of the children and young people involved in this project. The children enjoyed the celebrations and for the professionals in attendance, it was a delight to see the positive impact that this project has made.

Practice Improvement and Quality Assurance

In November 2022, Walsall Safeguarding Partnership was subject to a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk in Walsall. This inspection took place from 7 to 11 November 2022 and was carried out by inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

In their letter to the Safeguarding Partnership on the 6th January 2023, they highlighted the following points:

Strong and stable leadership across the partnership has successfully embedded the 'Right Help, Right Time: A Multi-Agency Guidance Continuum of Need'. This ensures that children receive a timely and proportionate response when needs and risks are identified in the front door. Professionals in all agencies working in early help and in the MASH understand this guidance and apply it effectively.

Risks to children from sexual or criminal exploitation are recognised well at the front door. The daily Exploitation Triage meeting is a well-attended multi-agency meeting that explores effectively the risks faced by children when they are reported as missing. Information is shared effectively in order to help professionals' understanding of risks and actions, which helps inform decision-making.

The chair of the Exploitation Triage meeting rotates between its core members, which is inclusive and indicative of confidence in the commitment and capability of the participants in the meeting. This ensures that responses to child protection are a shared responsibility across all partners.

Prior to this JTAI Inspection, as part of our quality assurance work across the partnership, we conducted a 'mock' JTAI in regards to Exploitation. This was supported by the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit and was conducted within the timeframes that would be expected when an inspection is undertaken. This audit was undertaken to provide an insight into the effectiveness of multi-agency practice where a child or young person had experienced or is at risk of exploitation.

The following agencies were asked to take part in this audit. The agencies who participated was smaller than usual due to the specific theme considered:

- Youth Justice
- Early Help
- Children's Social Care, including Local Authority Missing and Exploitation Reduction Team
- Black Country Healthcare Foundation Trust (BCHFT) - CAMHS
- Walsall Healthcare Trust – School Nurses
- Integrated Care Board - GPs
- Street Teams
- Police PPU / Force CID
- Schools

The scope of this audit was focussed on children and/ or young people that had been assessed as being at risk of exploitation using the exploitation toolkit, and who are open to Children's Social Care. The children audited were randomly selected with each audit undertaken with reference to the JTAI Inspection guidance but with individual agencies using their own audit templates. Specific questions linked to the inspection criteria were identified, and key questions included:

- Have agencies worked together to identify children at risk or who are exploited, intervened to reduce risk and monitor effectively the impact of interventions so that risk is reduced?
- Are assessments timely and include contributions from all agencies?
- Do the assessments consider contextual risks and protective factors, risks and strengths within the family, and risks online?
- Are assessments and plans dynamic and change in the light of emerging issues and risks?
- Are the key participants in attendance in multi-agency meetings?
- Is there effective information sharing, planning, decision-making and monitoring?
- Do actions happen within agreed timescales and the help and protection provided reduce risk and meet need?
- Is the experience of the child well understood and their views are clearly recorded and central to an effective multi-agency response?
- Were Children and their families offered a sufficient range of effective services that are well coordinated, including therapeutic help?
- Have agencies worked together to ensure that they are appropriately persistent in their efforts to engage with children and their families?
- Do partners understand the impact of exploitation on children's health and well-being?
- Are partners avoiding victim-blaming language and approaches in their practice?
- Do agencies avoid the unnecessary criminalisation of children?

- Do children at risk of exploitation who are missing receive a well-coordinated multi-agency response to prevent and reduce risk?
- Do agencies work together to support children to remain in education?

The areas of good practice identified included positive examples of skilled professional work to engage with children, young people and families who were at points of crisis and had experienced trauma and adversity. It also identified that Individual agencies were generally engaging well with children and families with some good examples of individual working and that exploitation was recognised and for the most part the relevant assessments and tools were completed.

Areas for development included better information sharing across agencies and some confusion as to when things should be reported. This led to agencies working with the children not always having the full picture either in relation to the child's history or current interventions that are being offered. Where individual agency remedial actions had been identified by auditors in relation to specific cases, agencies were asked to ensure these were taken forward. The overall findings from the piece of work will now be used as part of our continued development of the exploitation hub and will inform future service delivery from across the partnership.

Governance

Walsall's All Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy is governed by the Safeguarding Partnership. The Exploitation Subgroup continues to be held bi monthly and continues to be jointly chaired by Police and the Local Authority. Information is also provided in regard to the partnership work around exploitation through Operations and Scrutiny Group and Performance and Quality Assurance meetings.

Exploitation Panel continues to be held monthly to ensure that there is a partnership understanding of risk, threat and harm and to provide a multi-agency coordinated response to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people. Themes from exploitation triage, exploitation work and any relevant areas of concerns form the basis of the agreed agenda items and a greater focus on partnership updates has been included within recent panels. It is also a forum whereby national publications are shared and discussed providing partners with the opportunity to reflect on how any recommendations that may arise from these, can be considered within their respective agencies.

Key focus points of the panel continues to be:

- Raise awareness of exploitation across the partnership
- Discuss the need for expert consultation and analysis.
- Help identify contextual risks and "map" known intelligence.
- Gather and share intelligence from within and out of the area.
- Collate data to create a local understanding of need.
- Increase understanding of geographical "hotspots" and local themes
- Keep up to date with current practice research and themes and to share findings as they relate to us here in Walsall.

A review of the core functions of the hub is being undertaken which focusses on issues such as capacity and resources. Changes in the number of referrals and the

complexities of some of the issues that are referred means that the current pathway and framework needs to ensure we are able to continue to meet demand. This is a joint piece of work with the engagement of all partners. Currently an analysis of the impact on serious violence in Walsall is being undertaken by Professor Helen Lowey. She is an independent researcher and consultant in public health. Again, the findings and recommendations from this analysis will inform our work in regard to exploitation and how we incorporate the contextual element of violence that is becoming increasingly risky for some of the children we work with.

Investment from across the partnership is critical to fully tackle all facets of exploitation and here in Walsall we are having some real success in our responses to those at risk. As a partnership we work well to identify risk and intervene as appropriate but our systems rely heavily on the investment from partner agencies with clear assessment frameworks, referral pathways and sharing of resources in order to offer both support and intervention alongside the need to pursue prosecutions.

Partnership Updates

Police

Police participation, work and personnel in the hub has continued to progress and evolve over the last 12 months, with a new Partnerships Inspector and more recently new Sergeant overseeing it on a daily basis and handling the referrals coming through. Alongside the volume of cases through triage we have also worked hard to deliver joint working within the hub, in particular through the four County Lines Intensification Weeks run throughout the year – where we included the wider police partnership team and Neighbourhood Teams in joint patrols on key transport routes to deliver a joined up contextual safeguarding approach.

We were also very pleased with the recent Schools Open Day at Bloxwich Police Station which included not only police department inputs to 150 young people but also a County Lines input and a violence and exploitation input from the Exploitation hub and Street Teams. We will continue to plan and deliver such joint operational activities over the next 12 months.

The link previously articulated around exploitation, violence and acquisitive crime has become ever more apparent. Over the last 12 months from April 2022 to March 2023 compared to the same timeframe 2021/ 2022, both Serious youth violence and knife related youth violence has reduced according to police crime statistics, however there has been several significant serious crimes involving a targeted group of young people, many of whom had an exploitation footprint previously that has caused significant community impact.

In response to these crime trends linked to exploitation and violence, Walsall Police have created a new Impact Area on the borders of Bloxwich and Blakenall with additional Neighbourhood team resources. Additionally, the Exploitation team are working alongside the pro-active team and partners around mapping two new Urban Street Gangs from Blakenall and Bloxwich which has been driving some of the recent acquisitive vehicle crime and violent crimes. This work will continue to address the location and individuals. We are also looking to further invest into the partnerships

team by increasing our resource to support the suppression of violence and delivering our serious violence duty. This will involve working closely with the Violence Coordinator where we have secured their position through the Safer Walsall Partnership for the next twelve months.

Finally also over the previous 12 months there have been a number of cases dealt with by the Exploitation hub where we have worked with Walsall Drug and Alcohol Services and local housing provider to safeguard vulnerable drug users from having their addresses taken over by drug dealers and users, and more recently with the Gang masters and Labour Abuse Authority to intervene in a case of modern slavery with a group of Czech nationals being exploited in the borough, and the employer to take steps to prevent further incidents.

In terms of educating our officers and staff locally around the work of the Exploitation hub, we have participated in the roll out of Trauma Informed Practice and have also presented to other police teams around the role and existence of the exploitation hub and to drive up standards of completion of the Exploitation referrals by explaining what is required and what then happens to their referrals. This work educating police and partners around the content and quality of the detail of information will continue to progress over the next 12 months in order to improve the quality of referrals and information received.

Violence Reduction Partnership

The West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership continues to work across the region and have a number of projects in place across the west midlands.

The VRP delivery model aims to:

- Deliver primary prevention, whole population approaches to violence prevention and reduction, including training, intervention, capacity building and awareness raising.
- Fund targeted work in areas we know are impacted more by violence (secondary prevention).
- Respond effectively as a partnership to incidents when they occur to limit the onward transmission of violence and address the trauma that serious incidents cause to individuals and communities (tertiary prevention).



Highlights 22/23

- Established a comprehensive prevention programme for schools, which can meet the individual needs of different schools and localities. Offered support to schools to develop consistent, long-term approaches to prevention that move away from reactive models but promote planning across the academic year. There has been a strong partnership with schools and West Midlands Police in delivering this programme. Despite only being in its third month of delivery, this programme is already reaching almost 2,000 young people and frontline professionals per quarter
- Commissioned local projects that provide a range of support, activity, intervention and training to approximately 4,000 individuals each quarter (i.e. over each 3-month period) who are at risk of engaging in or being exposed to violence. The majority of that activity reaches young people aged under 25, and frontline professionals who work with children and young people.
- Developed a robust response model, contributing to partnership responses to around 60 incidents of serious violence across the region every 3 months. VRP have arranged for the deployment of youth work teams, offered support to affected schools and coordinated the delivery of psychosocial and therapeutic interventions (amongst other activity) in the aftermath of serious violence to ensure further violence is prevented.
- Continued to build on the engagement with parent and carers through forums and awareness raising sessions. Developed a number of community pilots, aimed at increasing the role communities across the region play in violence prevention and most importantly giving communities the ability to make decisions about where they live.

Health – ICB

In April 2021, 4 legacy CCGs merged to become one, requiring a significant Management of Change Process to support staff through the transition. For safeguarding, 4 separate Designated Professional Teams were brought together with the requirement to align processes, policies and procedures whilst maintaining their presence within key partnerships in place. At this point there were already plans in place for the CCG to become an ICB in April of 2022 (although this was later deferred until July 2022).

The Designated Nurses across the system take responsibility for a portfolio of work which is overseen by the ICB Safeguarding Steering Group. These portfolios include cross cutting safeguarding issues where standardisation of approach and monitoring is desirable and necessary and so that duplication of effort can be avoided. As part of this, Exploitation is a key workstream across the Black Country (B/C) footprint and a key priority for 22/23 has been to review the health support for Exploitation Hubs within each local place, strengthening partnerships and response to children at risk which are discussed at exploitations hubs/health forums by identifying gaps and seeking a solution. A systemwide Exploitation Options Proposal has been developed for operational specialist nurse support to work across the B/C footprint supporting the Exploitation Agenda. At this stage it's not known if this proposal will be approved and commissioned by the ICB, however the paper and costings has been shared with ICB Associate Director for Safeguarding and Partnerships to progress through the

appropriate ICB governance process. Along with our system response to Exploitation, we also continue to maintain our place-based response in Walsall. The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children is an active member of the Partnership Strategic Exploitation meeting and continues to chair the highly regarded All Age Exploitation Health group.

The Health Exploitation Group in Walsall continues 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. The group is regularly attended and supported by the Principal Exploitation Reduction Officer from Walsall LA. This reinforces partnership working and has improved communication pathways.

In 2022 via the Senior Principal for Health Equity at the ICB, the violence reduction fund we had was allocated to a scheme supporting prevention of childhood exploitation in Walsall via Walsall Street Teams. Walsall Street Teams operates 'Keep Safe', a multi-faceted prevention programme involving community outreach work, workshops and alternative learning schemes, education and training programmes with schools, education and health professionals, and specialist work with gangs, boys, and other young people deemed at high risk. Funding directly supported an expansion of programme delivery to address unmet needs. This was a one-year fund that finished in September 2022.

Following on from this opportunity to access potential Health Equity funding, the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children recently submitted a bid via the ICB Health Equity Team for National NHS Prevention monies to fund a Nurse to support Exploitation in Walsall. Unfortunately, this bid was not successful. NHS England commenced its 'New NHS England' change programme which has meant that all National programmes of work have had to revisit and re-profile budgets and work for this year. The team are developing other options around ICB health inequalities funding so something that will be considered moving forward.

As a commissioning organisation the ICB continues to monitor our health providers Safeguarding Training (including Exploitation) compliance via system wide Safeguarding Dashboards. This gives assurance that all staff have the appropriate level of training to respond to Safeguarding Risks. The Safeguarding Team ensure all communication and training opportunities relating to Exploitation is disseminated accordingly across the health economy in Walsall. In addition, GPs receive bespoke training around Exploitation and the next session is being held on 28th March 2023.

Health – BCHFT

The Lead Nurses for Exploitation (One whole time equivalent – job share) are starting to develop relationships with partners across all four boroughs and have now met with all four ICBs. They are attending meetings in regards to PREVENT, CONTEST,

Modern Day Slavery, Domestic Abuse as well as both Adult and Childrens Exploitation Boards and ICB Health Exploitation meetings. They are currently supporting information requests from Hubs in Wolverhampton and Dudley, whereas in Sandwell and Walsall these requests go through MASH. They are currently looking at developing data sets to help inform their developing role and are also looking at how best to get the messages across to their teams in regards to exploitation - recognising signs and how to support/refer etc. They will also be looking at the possibility of developing exploitation champions across the teams so that they can share new developments, information and learning. It is still a very new role and will be developing over the next 6-12 months.

Street Teams

Street Teams is a local organisation specialising in the prevention of child grooming/exploitation and helping those who have been abused to rebuild their lives. Their work includes direct support for parents, siblings, young people in transition to adulthood and also adult survivors of child exploitation. Exploitation has changed over the years and referrals to their service now cover child sexual and criminal exploitation (CCE), including County Lines, gangs, and knife crime.

Street Teams continue to be a key partner in our work with young people at risk of exploitation. They run a multi-faceted prevention programme involving outreach work directly with young people as well as offering education and training programmes with schools and health agencies. Their overall aim is to prevent child exploitation and support victims and those at risk of abuse, whilst educating the wider public about how to identify grooming and exploitation and appropriately respond. They deliver several successful services for Walsall and these include:

- Project X – working frontline with identified young people from the exploitation triage process.
- Kaleidoscope – Working directly with families who have children who have been exploited or vulnerable to exploitation.
- The Hope Project – working with survivors of exploitation.
- Bridging the Gap – supporting young people who are exploited but that are reaching the age of adulthood (17-25)
- Community Futures – engaging communities in the fight against exploitation
- CARE project – supporting identified young people with additional educational needs at risk of exploitation
- Enlighten – Educating young people and professionals on exploitation and connected modern day issues.

They continue to offer support to a number of our young people here in Walsall and have been delivery partners in the aforementioned CARE project. Street Teams continue to be an active member at Walsall Exploitation Panel and continue to work alongside Walsall Childrens Services Exploitation Team.

Next steps

Over the next 12 months we will continue to evaluate and develop our work collectively across the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership. We will conclude and report on the impact of both the CARE project and the Exploitation Pilot team as well as complete a review of and outline the future development of our exploitation hub. We will continue to be involved in joint regional initiatives such as County Lines Intensification weeks and Walsall will continue to play an integral role in the development of our regional work with the support of the Violence Reduction Partnership.

We will continue to provide good quality training and development opportunities across the partnership in relation to Child Exploitation and will use forums such as the Exploitation Panel to ensure that good practice and areas of further development are identified and responded to. The partnership response in regard to exploitation here in Walsall is strong, but there is always more to be done. Collectively, and with the continuation of good multi agency working, I am confident that the good work identified within this report can continue to move forward for the benefit of our children here in Walsall.

Report prepared by:

Zoe Morgan

Head of Service, Help, Protection and Support, Walsall Childrens Social Care

Tuesday 18th April 2023

7.

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Childrens Services and Education

Report:

1. The Walsall Safeguarding Partnership (WSP) annual report provides an overview of multiagency safeguarding activity during the year 2021-2022 and reflects the efforts of partner agencies who have worked in collaboration to promote the welfare and safeguarding of the children and young people of Walsall.
2. The WSP has demonstrated its ability to provide effective leadership through a time of significant challenge following the impact of the pandemic. Some of the new ways of working required in the previous year have been retained by the partnership to better support our children, young people, and their families/carers.
3. In December 2020 Penny Thompson was commissioned by WSP to review the effectiveness of the partnership. The partnership maintained its focus during 2021-2022 on strengthening its multiagency arrangements by ensuring the system had:
 - a. Robust and streamlined governance structure to ensure effective focus for the respective children and adults safeguarding arrangements and where there were joint interests.
 - b. clearer line sight to frontline practice
 - c. increased connectivity to practice through practice reviews, audit and workforce development.
4. The WSP identified three priorities for progression, Neglect, Self-Neglect and All-Age Exploitation.
5. The children's safeguarding agenda nationally became subject to much criticism and scrutiny because of the events relating to the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. The WSP responded at pace to ensure the children's workforce were briefed of early findings.
6. Opportunity was taken to further look at the effectiveness of the WSP arrangements following the publication of the Wood Review of Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements published in May 2021. A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) was

completed with the development of a supporting action plan on areas of the partnership which required additional development.

7. WSP are required to assess the effectiveness of the multiagency safeguarding arrangements. This assurance was elicited through a range of activities undertaken across the year. This includes OFSTED Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services (ILACS) outcome, section 11 audit, feedback from service user experience and views of practitioners and measuring the impact from Walsall's child safeguarding practice reviews.
8. The WSP also considers the outcome of partner agency inspection and the implication on the effectiveness of the multiagency safeguarding system.
9. In May 2021 the CQC published its findings on key areas of practice inspected within the Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust. The three domains assessed in the unannounced March 2021 inspection – safe, responsive and well-led – were rated as “Inadequate”; downgraded from “Requires Improvement.” The WSP will continue to seek assurance from health colleagues on its improvement plans.
10. The **WSP Performance data** has told us the following:
 - a. Early Help demand has increased in 2021 compared to 2019 and there remains a positive impact of Early Help services for children and families.
 - b. There has been a slight increase in referrals to MASH for period 1st April 21- 31st March 2022 compared to the same period in 2020/21 and remains appropriately lower than the previous year.
 - c. There remains a positive reduction in children subject to child protection plans 2021/222 when compared to 2019.
 - d. There remains a positive increase of the number of families supported through the Family Safeguarding Model.
 - e. The pre-birth assessment guidance is being used effectively and is monitored through regular audit activity (impact of SCR 7 recommendation).
 - f. Staff who responded to the satisfaction survey felt their organisation ensured they were competent and supported to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities.
11. In terms of the **WSP Priorities**
 - a. Neglect
 - There has been a revision to the revised strategy and action plan and development of an outcome's framework.
 - More children are being supported through Early Help and less children (11% compared to 16% last year) are having a social care Child and Family Assessment due to Neglect.
 - b. Exploitation
 - We have identified, screened and worked with more young people at risk of Exploitation.

- Development of an all-aged Exploitation Strategy and related training to 190 delegates
- Progress continues to be made with the All-Age Exploitation pathway and included the development of an Exploitation Hub.
- Impending development of a performance framework
- We continue to work with partners to develop the multiagency dataset and score card to assess identification and response to exploitation.

12. **Multiagency audits (MAA)** - Four themed audits were undertaken in the period - Neglect, Review of Line sight of frontline practice, Child Sexual Abuse and Injuries in non-mobile babies.

13. MAA have further provided assurance around improving safeguarding performance with no cases graded inadequate in this period. There was an increase from 30% in the previous year to 40% of cases being graded as requiring improvement and 60% of audits undertaken were graded as good, a slight decline of 1% on the previous year. No case was considered as outstanding which is also decline on the previous year's performance of 4%.

14. The WSP continues to work robustly to ensure that learning arising from audits is cascaded widely and in a timely manner to ensure real time focus on areas of practice requiring improvement. To complement practitioner briefings, learning from the cases is also shared within a Practice Reflection Workshop. Practice Reflection Workshops provide some vital time out for any practitioner working with children or adults to embed good practice through reflecting on a case study from the audit.

15. During 2021 a new process for measuring the impact from case reviews was developed, agreed and implemented. This was something which the partners had identified as an important focus in the 2021-22 Annual Report.

16. In December 2021 a learning event from child reviews was held which covered learning on a range of themes including:

Child Sexual Abuse	Under 2's	Bruising in non-mobile babies	Connected Carers
Information sharing	Multi-agency working and coordination	Think Family	Professional Curiosity
Professional Challenge	Mental Health	Pathways and referrals	

17. The Partnership and children and adult workforce continue to receive learning from audits and case reviews by way of 'Key Messages' in newsletters, website updates, 7-minute briefings, webinars and input to existing and new training courses being developed.

18. **Ofsted In Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACs)** took place in October 2021 of which the overall effectiveness was graded as Good'.
19. The report recorded '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.'
20. Positive multiagency work has been observed across the WSP children's safeguarding arrangements through 2021-2022. There is always more to be done and the partnership adopts a positive approach to continually learning.
21. **Areas for focus in 2022-2023**
 - a. Review of the Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose across the children's and adult's strategic agenda.
 - b. Full Section 11 Audit to be completed during the next year, utilising the West Midlands Audit Tool.
 - c. To deliver the proposed forward plan for practice development activity, informed by the learning gained from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and National Reviews, the outcomes of audits and aligned to the Partnerships Key Priorities, alongside the regular training schedule for the year.
 - d. Continue to progress the All-Age Exploitation Strategy and Child Neglect Strategy as key priorities under the children's agenda and measure their impact through the outcome framework.
 - e. Strengthen the Think Family approach, in particular children's staff knowledge around the Self-Neglect Pathway and Mental Capacity Act.
 - f. Additional scrutiny work to be commissioned in 2022-23 to explore if it is possible to identify any changes or improvement in practice as a result of a previous SCR recommendations and actions.
 - g. Additional scrutiny work to be undertaken in relation to robustness of the functioning of the MASH, application of Right Help Right Time Guidance and use of single agency Early Help to meet need at the earliest opportunity.
 - h. Re-establish capacity within the Business Unit and further the children and young people's engagement agenda.

Recommendations:

That:

1. The Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the content of the WSP Childrens Annual Report 2021-2022 attached.



103066 Safeguarding
Children's Annual Rep

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Right for Children, Families and Adults

Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership **Annual Report** 2021-22





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Foreword – Sally Hodges

Welcome to the Children's Annual Report of Walsall's Safeguarding Partnership. This report covers the period between 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022.

Our vision:

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership aspires to be a learning organisation in order to deliver our shared responsibility to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk.

The core purpose of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership is to:

- Provide effective and informed leadership to the local safeguarding system;
- Deliver our shared responsibility for the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk in the borough;
- Promote positive working relationships with each other and children, adults and families;
- Identify and act on learning
- Provide assurance to the Walsall community

Without doubt 21-22 has been a challenging year for everyone committed to safeguarding children, young people and families.

The impact of the pandemic and the review into the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson have further illustrated the necessity for children to be 'seen, heard and helped'. We cannot understate the importance of these basic principles of getting this right for children and families through listening to concerns they express and acting promptly on these.

The partnership has taken time to reflect on the learning from the pandemic and these tragic cases to ensure they drive our improvement journey going forward.

Despite the challenges COVID 19 continued to throw throughout the year, the partnership has continued to make progress against its key priorities. The development of a hybrid working approach for many of its business arrangements has been successful. However, the lack of face to face events, and the opportunity for exchange of views, conversations and networking, has been felt by many, and the partnership is considering reintroducing events more in the coming year. As we move forward, we need to ensure that these operating environments do not hinder safeguarding practice and we will review our meetings framework to take this into account.

During the year, we have maintained close oversight on arrangements led by the Police, Health and the Local Authority in Safeguarding Children. We maintain a clear focus on our Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and on learning from our assurance activity. There is always, of course, more to do and more that should be done to continue to improve safeguarding services and become an effective learning system.

The Partnership would like to thank agencies for the work they have done to keep our communities safe and to respond to the needs of children at risk of abuse and neglect in Walsall. We should also thank all the local communities who have supported the safeguarding of children in Walsall over the last year.

Sally Hodges
Independent Chair and Scrutineer
Walsall Safeguarding Partnership

Walsall at a glance

Population is 286,716
(ONS-2020 mid-year estimate)
of which 69,375 (24.2%)
aged 0-17yrs

Deprivation levels are high

Deprivation (IDACI) – Walsall ranked 19th most deprived nationally.

2 of Walsall 3 constituencies in top 50 highest levels of child poverty

4.2% babies born with Low birth weight, compared to 3.1% in West Midlands and 2.9% nationally

Children and young people have more health challenges than their peers

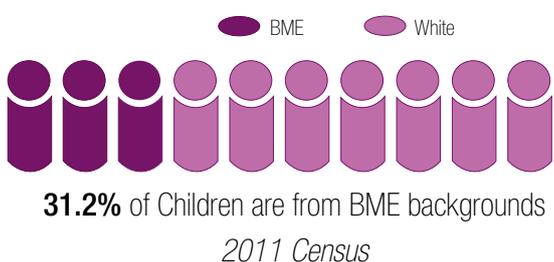
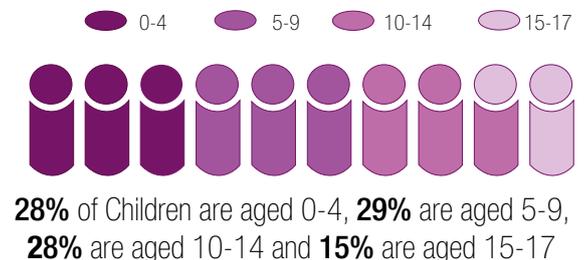
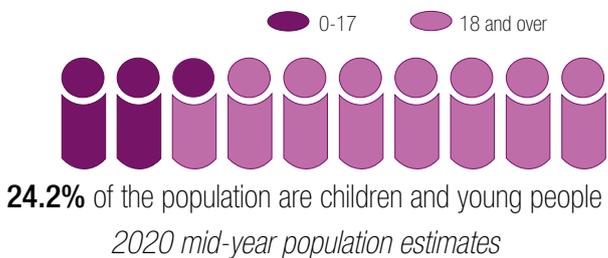
Infant Mortality Rate - 6.2 per 1,000 (2020)
compared to West Midlands at 5.5 and 3.8 in England

Teenage Pregnancy 2.5% of 15-17yr olds (1.8% West Midlands & 1.6% Nationally in 2019)

Rate of hospital inpatient admissions for Mental Health issues - 7.9 rate per 10,000 (2020-21) 8.6 in West Midlands and 8.8 Nationally

Rate of hospital admissions for alcohol related issues 1.5 per 10,000 (2017/18 to 2019/20) compared with 2.6 West Midlands and 3.1 nationally

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Page 38 of 71 **39%** Live in poverty after housing costs May 2021

What the safeguarding partnership has focussed on during 2021/22.

In response to an independent review of the partnership arrangements in 2021-22, the priorities for the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership (WSP) this year have been streamlined to ensure a focused partnership approach. Three priorities were identified across the adult and children's agenda, with Neglect and All Age Exploitation being key for the Children's Partnership. These priorities were determined through our review of partnership data, our understanding of practice from case reviews and audits and wider partnership discussion about issues which require a joint spotlight.

Below is our partnership plan:

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership 2021-2022

Find out more about our arrangements Here: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/walsall-safeguarding-partnership/Arrangements>

Priorities: Neglect, Self Neglect, Exploitation	Work-streams		
<p>Neglect.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To improve the awareness and understanding of neglect and the delivery of effective preventative support 2. To improve the recognition and assessment of children and young people living in neglectful situations before statutory intervention is required, including the use of appropriate assessment tools. 3. Improve the effectiveness of interventions and reduce the impact of neglect. 4. A strategic commitment and leadership that drives good practice and improvement in tackling neglect. 	<p>Performance and Quality Assurance activity:</p> <p>Ensuring subgroups routinely feed assurances and areas of concern into PQA subgroup in order that progress can be monitored and quality assured.</p> <p>Provide assurance, scrutiny and challenge to agencies in ensuring they are fulfilling their statutory obligations.</p> <p>To receive performance reports in to measure the improvement and impact in safeguarding practice</p> <p>Measuring the impact of case review and audit outcomes on multi-agency practice</p> <p>To ensure a high level of professional skill and development through the Practice Development Subgroup and the delivery of the learning opportunities</p>	<p>Practice Review activity:</p> <p>Efficiently undertake review of those cases where it is appropriate to do so. Obtainine and reflecting on learning, sharing learning and improving practice where needed.</p> <p>Practice Review Subgroup will work with the Performance and Quality Assurance Subgroup to evaluate outcomes and impact of the work</p> <p>Utilise regional and national learning to develop our local esponse and approaches.</p>	<p>Practice Improvement activity:</p> <p>Undertake a training and development needs assessments across the partnership.</p> <p>Establish closer working relationships / processes with other suberoups to deliver a practice improvement programme that draws on our understanding of safeguarding issues and learning from reviews across the Borough.</p> <p>Develop a training strategy to support the partnership priorities 2021/22.</p>
<p>Self Neglect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake a needs analysis. 2. Develop a Self Neglect Strategy 3. Revise the Self Neglect Pathway. 			
<p>All Age Exploitation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather evidence and intelligence regarding the risk and prevalence within Walsall to identify further work required. 2. Agree the partnership Exploitation Strategy. 3. Develop delivery plans against the Strategy. 4. Review the Strategy based on the above information and activity. 5. Capture a qualitative narrative influenced and shaped by experts by experience. 6. Agree multi-agency data scorecard to support the impact/ outcome focus of the refreshed strategy. 			

Working with the Walsall Community : our 4th partner

In addition to our three identified priorities the partners have also focused on key areas of statutory activity to quality assure and improve our collective safeguarding response, for example undertaking Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and disseminating the learning and the collation and review of multi-agency performance and quality assurance data.

In November, 74 managers attended the Safeguarding Partnership Priorities and Next Steps event which covered achievements and future plans for the partnership, key priorities, learning from reviews and multi-agency practice development.

'The event made it clear what the strategic priorities & vision are for the next 12 months, and how these will be achieved. It gave very clear expectations and opportunities for engagement' (Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust)

The Wood Review of Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements was published in May 2021 and the Safeguarding Executive Group, supported by the Independent Chair and Business Manager, undertook a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) with a supporting action plan and reviewed the current areas of the partnership which were operating effectively or required additional development. As identified in the 2020-21 annual report the WSP has progressed the implementation of this action plan such as improving the connectivity between the subgroup work streams and connectivity with other strategic Boards such as the Safer Walsall Partnership (Community Safety).

Part of the role of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership (WSP) is to assess the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements in agencies working with adults and children. This is where all local agencies and organisations who provide services to children and adults are asked to provide assurance to the extent to which they meet the safeguarding arrangements and standards set out in statutory guidance.

During 2021 WSP carried out a number activities to elicit this assurance, below is outlined some of the assurance gained from Section 11 assurance activity, service user quality assurance with partners, findings from the 2021 practitioner survey and measuring impact from Walsall Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Whilst Walsall Safeguarding Partnership wait for the development of combined S11/Care Act Tool and online platform, it was agreed to hold assurance meetings with agencies that had submitted their S11 in 2019, rather than complete a full S11 Audit. However, to ensure compliance with S11, the assurance questions for the session were developed to reflect key areas from the regional audit tool along with quality assuring findings from reviews, audits and practitioner and 4th Partner feedback. This ensured partner agencies were able to provide assurance of their statutory duties.

Areas of assurance

- Section 11 compliance across agencies that were asked to participate was particularly strong in:
 - Governance arrangements
 - Quality Assurance
 - Ensuring staff are competent to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities
 - Children and young people influencing change
- YSP (Young People's Safeguarding Partnership) were assured that staff they spoke with had a good understanding of their role in safeguarding.
- CCG are monitoring GP practice improvements in relation to learning from SCRs (Serious Case Reviews) and CSPR's (Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews) in W6, W7 and W9.
- Learning from W10 SCR recommendations have been embedded, particularly around Professional Curiosity and Offender Management.

Impact:

- Learning is disseminated in a timely way across the partnership by way of 'Key Safeguarding Messages' - 57% (131) of survey respondents confirmed this
- 86% (198) of practitioners received regular supervision (impact of SCR W6 recommendation)
- 51% (118) were aware of the Children's Resolution and Escalation Policy – an improvement on 43% 2019 survey (Impact of an SCR W6 recommendation)

- The pre-birth assessment guidance is being used effectively and is monitored through regular audit activity (impact of SCR 7 recommendation)
- Staff who responded in the survey felt their organisation ensured they were competent to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities
 - **Public Health:** 'Everyone is trained and kept up to date with any changes, the team uses reflective practice to go over cases and issues as lessons learned from each other.'
 - **Probation:** 'Safeguarding is core to the organisation.'
 - **CAMHS:** 'There is good support for clinicians from the safeguarding team.'
 - **Health Visitor:** '[Good Practice] Safeguarding supervision. Regular meetings with safeguarding team.'
 - **Midwife:** '[Good practice] Safeguarding Supervision.'

Progress on our Children's Priority areas:

1. Child Neglect Strategy

Following a neglect stock take in January 2021, the Partnership identified it was important to refresh and re-energise activity around neglect.

The refreshed strategy published in October 2021 aims to offer an analysis of the Walsall context, the impact of neglect on children in Walsall, and what the Partnership is going to do to strategically improve practice and services to children and families.

The refreshed strategy is based on four key principles:

1. Collective understanding of the issues around 'neglect' from a child, family and community point of view across Walsall
2. Outcome focused strategic priorities and an action plan (short and long term) which focusses on securing better lives for children, families and future generations
3. Making decisions driven by evidence, including celebrating and embedding what works well (linked to creating opportunities for a bottom up approach – what works from a practitioner point of view to support them in delivering better support to prevent and / or address issues around neglect effectively)
4. Effective collaborative multi-disciplinary partnership working

The partnership has also developed a Child Neglect detailed action plan and an outcomes framework.

2. All Age Exploitation

Following the sign off of the All Age Exploitation Strategy. Exploitation Awareness Fortnight was held in March 2022.

190 delegates attended across 14 sessions that focused on 'All age Exploitation' workshops.

100% of delegates felt the right themes/subjects were covered.

When asked how they have embedded learning in to practice this is what they said:

'The terminology used is different on the street to what professionals use. I have started working with a child who is being exploited, the training has given me knowledge of the language he uses and what is meant by it. This has really helped me to connect with the Young Person. (Early Help Team – West Locality)

'I have used the idea of the three B's- Being (initial contact), Becoming (engaging), and Belonging. It has created lots of discussions with foster carers. It was good information, and have shared with some carers which has aided to dismiss myths and unhelpful views, but raised an awareness/ understanding of how some birth parents (especially women's) lifestyles take this direction. (Fostering Services)

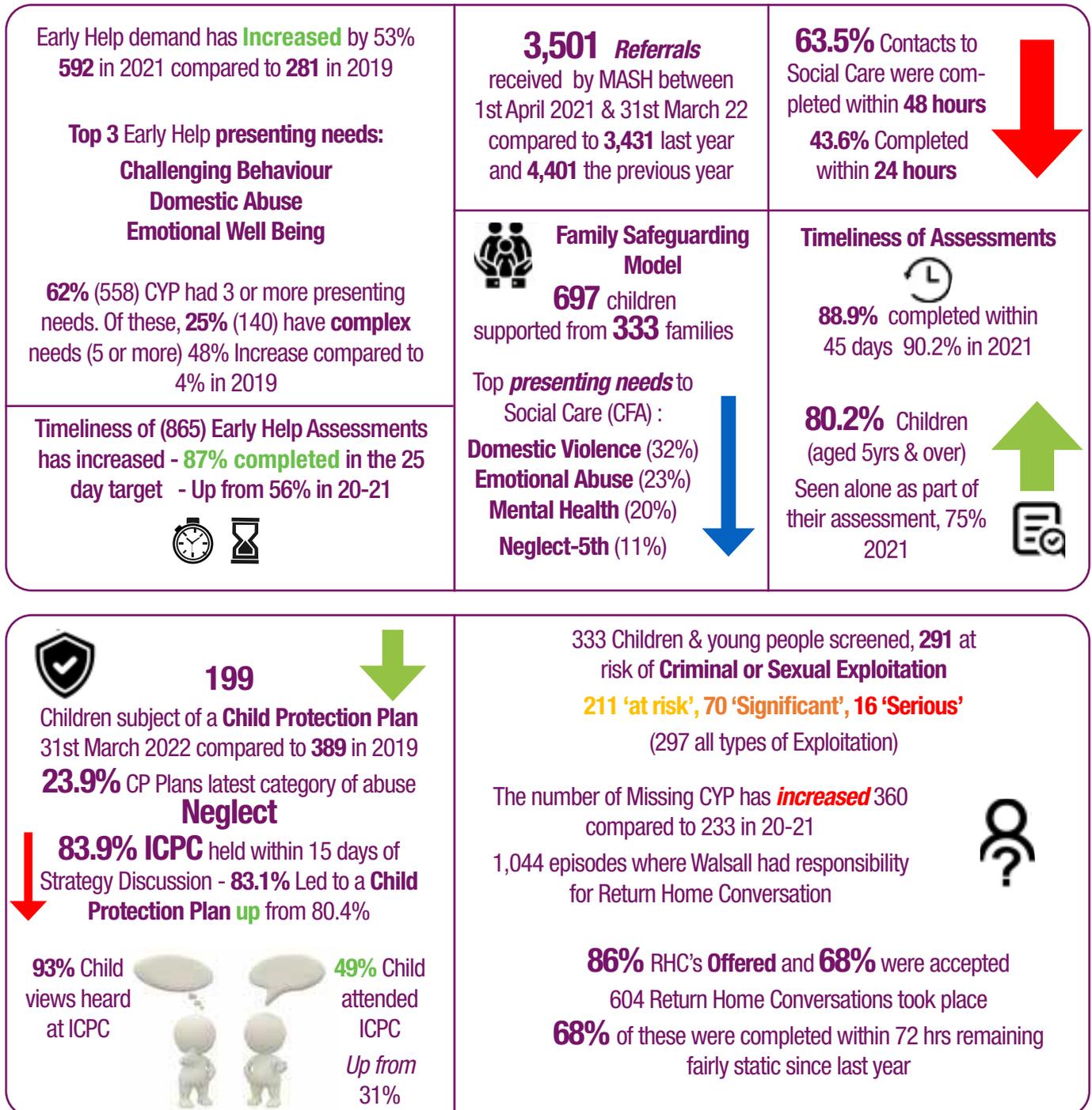
'I have made a referral into the Hope Project, I didn't know this existed so it has been really helpful and hopefully the adult I work with will have positive outcomes as a result of working with this service.' (Walsall CAMHS)



What has this meant for children & families in Walsall?

Partnership Priority: Neglect – more children are being supported through Early Help and less children (11% compared to 16% last year) are having a social care Child and Family Assessment due to Neglect.

Partnership Priority: Exploitation – we have identified, screened and worked with more young people at risk of Exploitation.



The work of 4th Partner

In 2019, our Youth Safeguarding Partners (YSP) who represent our children and young people (4th Partner) completed inspection visits and focus groups with practitioners in line with the Section 11 Children Act Audit. There was some excellent feedback from this activity, which contributed to a challenge event for our partners to reflect on their Section 11 compliance and safeguarding responsibilities.

During August and October 2021 YSP held these focus groups again, on a virtual basis, during which young people asked practitioners questions relevant to the Section 11 Audit, questions relating to themes arising from Audits and Case Reviews as well as topics that are important to them. YSP met with staff from West Midlands Police, Youth Justice, Children's Social Care, Health Visiting and School Nursing Teams and gave the below feedback regarding each agency:

Police:

'I think they are doing a good job overall, better impression this time around as answered the questions well – they were very knowledgeable.'

'We were concerned that they didn't know what the Right Help Right Time document was – however they understood MASH /Safeguarding processes and explained this throughout the answers to the questions.'

'We would like more assurance that different departments are talking to one another about safeguarding children and young people.'

Social Workers

'I was supported previously and was good, useful and needed – my experience is social workers able to change people's lives. They listen to young people and be patient.'

Youth Justice

'All the staff were honest about the struggles they face, especially during Covid. They seemed genuine people.'

School Health Nurses and Health Visitors:

'They were able to answer the questions really well and all attendees had their say'.

'Although I wouldn't have a need to go to a school health nurse, thinking about someone who would, then they would be a good person to speak to.'

Work on the communications and engagement agenda was not progressed as far as had been anticipated following the departure of a key staff member within the Business Unit during the year. This will be a priority to address in 2022-23.

Learning from Case Reviews and Audits

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR)

- Within the year 2021-2022, 4 cases were referred for consideration of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review.
- 1 of these was also notified to the National Panel and Ofsted as a Serious Child Safeguarding Incident and therefore a statutory Rapid Review was undertaken. It was agreed by the partners that a LCSPR was not appropriate in this case and the National Panel agreed.
- Of the 4 referrals considered, 1 progressed to a LCSPR.
- There was also 1 further LCSPR from 2019-20 which continued to be progressed during the year. This will be published in May 2022 (W13 'Sam').
- No children's reviews were completed or published.
- 8 action plans relating to previous Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) or Rapid Reviews were completed within the year.

Learning from these cases, including good practice, in relation to traveller's mental health, suicide prevention, thresholds and recognition of needs or abuse – Right Help, Right Time, non-accidental injuries and bruising in non-mobile babies, Think Family, working with fathers and cross border working are all being taken forward by the Partnership.

Multi-Agency Audits (MAA)

During the year there were three multi-agency audits carried out, one was linked to the safeguarding priorities and two were as a direct result of case review learning. During Q2 the audit process was reviewed to include a revised MAA audit template and process to enhance the learning system.

7 minute briefings were disseminated for each audit which included learning for all partners, in an accessible format. Recommendations were followed up during the year.

Practice in the cases shows continued improvement and was graded as follows:

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
2021-22	0%	60%	40%	0%
2020-21	4%	61%	30%	4%
2019-2020	0%	23%	62%	15%

Key learning from the audits included:

**Q1
Neglect**

This audit reviewed how effective the multi-agency partnership is in addressing the needs and safeguarding concerns for children experiencing Neglect which is a key priority for WSP. Overall practitioners were able to identify neglect appropriately and referrals to CSC were appropriate. There was a clear understanding of neglect by practitioners and a focus on the impact. Audits highlighted some good quality relationship-based working from involved professionals. However, there is a need for work to be better coordinated as a multi-agency approach to understanding and assessment. There was also limited use of the Graded Care Profile 2 Tool for assessing and working towards change where neglect is the key concern.

**Q2
Review of the
process**

The process was refined to revise the audit tool and the process to better ensure that front line practitioners from all agencies have a line of sight to the work of the Partnership, case workers are actively involved with the auditing process and are invited to participate in the audit discussion for their case. This brings the case to life, enabling individual practitioners to reflect on their part in partnership working and creates individual learning along with the multi-agency themed learning and actions for single agencies.

**Q3
Child Sexual
Abuse**

This audit reviewed how effective the multi-agency partnership is in addressing the needs and safeguarding concerns for children who have experienced or are at risk of sexual abuse. The question set was developed in response to the findings from an unpublished Walsall Case Review and a Rapid Review. Risks were appropriately recognised with timely responses coordinated between agencies. The harm experienced and risk of harm to the child was considered and understood, decisions were made appropriately, demonstrating effective safeguarding and the right courses of action being taken for children. Assessments seemed to focus on work completed by a single agency, plans did not have enough multi-agency input. However, there were examples of good work being done by professionals to work with children and family members and multi-agency working had made a difference for children.

**Q4 Injuries in
non-mobile
babies**

This audit reviewed how effective the multi-agency partnership is in responding to babies or young infants who have experience a non accidental injury and quality assured how findings from recent Walsall reviews have been implemented. Overall, these audits found that multi-agency working was effective in the identification and management of the safeguarding concerns identified and that specific decision-making was timely and purposeful. This meant that vulnerable babies and children were safeguarded. However, there was less focus on the shared multi-agency practice that followed in working with the family, and there appear to be opportunities for shared learning and developmental work.



To complement practitioner briefings, learning from the cases is also shared within a Practice Reflection Workshop. Practice Reflection Workshops provide some vital time out for any practitioner working with children or adults to embed good practice through reflecting on a case study from the audit.

A practitioner from Children's Services who attended Quarter 2 Practice Reflection Workshop said 'Following the workshop I will write more effective plans - sometimes I think we can be a little vague, or perhaps just not specific enough, but that doesn't benefit anyone, so it's important to create a plan that everyone is reading will be able to understand and know what needs to happen, why it needs to happen, and when it needs to happen.'

During 2021 a new process for measuring the impact from case reviews was agreed and commenced. This was something which the partners had identified as an important focus in the 2021-22 Annual Report. The process is broken down into the below 5 approaches. On occasion one or more of the approaches can be used dependent on the action that is being quality assured.

- **Approach 1** - Agencies will be asked to provide evidence on a single agency basis how the implemented action(s) has made a difference to practice and if there is any further action/risk to the partnership.
- **Approach 2** - Where there is a natural fit, themes from the reviews/audits will be included in the current multi-agency audit schedule (set at the beginning of the year).
- **Approach 3** - Additional specific audits / deep dives may be required if there is a recurring theme from case reviews or audit findings.
- **Approach 4** - Assurances triangulated within the biennial S11 assurance events.
- **Approach 5** - Agencies may be asked to attend an 'enquiry panel' where senior Managers will be asked to provide assurance on a number of their actions which have been marked complete.

Assurance was requested for completed actions around key recommendations from Case Reviews by using approaches 1 and 4 above. Further approaches will be used in the coming year.

How have we collated and shared learning?

- An initial meeting with subgroup chairs was held to support greater connectivity between the subgroups, this led to a revision of the Terms of References for the subgroups.
- Business Unit processes and systems were enhanced i.e. case review action tracker, forward plan for Operations and Scrutiny Group and Performance and Quality Assurance Subgroup (PQA), regular meetings with subgroup leads from the Business Unit for PQA/Practice Development Group (PDG)/Practice Review Group (PRG).
- The Business Unit structure was reviewed to ensure there was appropriate support for the subgroups and key work streams. The Business Unit leads now meet regularly to bring together and align work streams and ensure a joined up approach to forward planning (e.g. learning from reviews being followed up in the multi-agency audit programme).
- The Children's 2021-22 audit plan was linked to findings from previous practice reviews i.e. Child Sexual Abuse, Neglect and Injuries in non-mobile babies.
- Children's audit learning was routinely shared by PDG through quarterly Practice Reflection Workshops, using one of the cases from each audit to demonstrate the learning and facilitated by the children's practitioners involved in the child's life.
- The 2021 Practitioner Survey, led by PQA, included questions which were linked to both Childrens and Adults case review and audit learning i.e:
 - Are you aware of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Children's Resolution and Escalation Policy?
 - How confident are you about implementing the MCA in your practice?
 - Do you receive regular supervision? Does this include: reflection on practice/professional support/ personal support/reflect on training?
- Section 11 Assurance Challenge events were held in November 2021 which incorporated questions to measure impact from reviews and probe the findings from the 2021 Practitioner Survey.
- A new framework for evaluating the impact from case review actions was implemented (see embedded document below) which had 5 approaches to measuring impact, with reports in to PQA and PRG on an annual basis (first report presented January 2022 to PQA).

- In December 2021 a learning event from child reviews was held which covered learning on the following themes:
 - Child Sexual Abuse
 - Under 2's
 - Bruising in non-mobile babies
 - Connected Carers
 - Information sharing
 - Multi-agency working and case coordination
 - Think Family
 - Professional Curiosity
 - Professional Challenge
 - Mental Health
 - Pathways and referrals
- The WSP learning offer includes specific training resulting from child reviews i.e. bruising in non-mobile babies (W12 & RRs) / working with fathers (W5, W7, W10, Practice Reflection Workshop on Connected Carers W11). WSP have also launched the ICON programme across the partnership as we set out to do in the 2021-22 annual report (linked to SCR's W5, W7).
- Links were further strengthened between the Multi-Agency Audit Group and Practice Development Group as the Practice Improvement Lead attends the audits and there is an agenda item on PDG for feedback from audits.
- The Partnership have received learning from audits and reviews by way of Key Messages newsletters, website updates, 7 min briefings, webinar's and new training courses being developed.

Some examples of how we have disseminated learning:

SCR W11: theme Connected carers / out of area change in policy

- top tips, 7 Minute briefing, learning from reviews newsletter,
- Practice Reflection workshop,
- MA Audit (improved working between WHT & LA noted), 7 minute briefing developed from the audit learning and shared
- Learning from Reviews event

Following the practice reflection workshop a social worker from Children's Services stated the impact the training had on her:

'It reminded me that children who are placed with connected carers are not automatically safe from harm. Visits, meetings, assessments etc. should still be conducted within timescales and monitor placement progress and any issues. I have been reminded of the importance for post placement support and importance of professional curiosity which I now use more of within my practice'.

SCR W12: theme Injuries in non-mobile babies

- Specific briefing on injuries in non-mobile babies
- Learning from reviews newsletter
- Injuries in non-mobile babies webinar held
- Revised guidance included in multi-agency procedures
- Multi-agency Audit in Quarter 4 2021-22
- Injuries in non-mobile babies leaflet produced and disseminated

How effective have our arrangements been?

In October 2021 Ofsted undertook an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. Their overall effectiveness was graded 'Good'.

The report recorded '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.'

In May 2021 the CQC published its findings on key areas of practice inspected within the Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust. The three domains assessed in the unannounced March 2021 inspection – safe, responsive and well-led – were rated as "Inadequate"; downgraded from "Requires Improvement." The overall rating for Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust remains "Requires Improvement."

As a Safeguarding Partnership there is now a clearer line of sight and increased connectivity between the work streams of the partner's activity such as practice reviews and workforce development. Forward plans, standing agenda items and report templates across the meeting and subgroup structure have ensured issues and assurance are shared and understood from frontline practice through to senior leadership.

There are improved links with the Community Safety Partnership with the Chair being part of the Safeguarding Executive Group, the Community Safety Partnership Manager co-Chairing the Exploitation Subgroup and the Independent Safeguarding Partnership Chair meeting regularly with Community Safety colleagues.

There continues to be strong links with the Family Safeguarding Board, with attendance at the board and regular updating reports on the impact of the model and progress of establishing sustainability being considered at Operations and Scrutiny Group.

The All Age Exploitation Strategy and Child Neglect Strategy were finalised and agreed by partners.

The multi-agency audit programme continued to obtain learning in order to improve practice and saw improvements in the practice which was reflected in improved case ratings.

Positive work has taken place, with improved outcomes, in relation to children experiencing Neglect and those at risk of Exploitation.

Areas for focus in 2022-2023

- Review of the Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose across the children's and adult's strategic agenda.
- Full Section 11 Audit to be completed during the next year, utilising the West Midlands Audit Tool.
- To deliver the proposed forward plan for practice development activity, informed by the learning gained from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and National Reviews; the outcomes of audits and aligned to the Partnerships Key Priorities, alongside the regular training schedule for the year.
- Continue to progress the the All Age Exploitation Strategy and Child Neglect Strategy as key priorities under the children agenda and measure their impact through the outcome framework.
- Strengthen the Think Family approach, in particular children's staff knowledge around the Self-Neglect Pathway and Mental Capacity Act.
- Additional scrutiny work to be commissioned in 2022-23 to explore if it is possible to identify any changes or improvement in practice as a result of a previous SCR recommendations and actions.
- Additional scrutiny work to be undertaken in relation to robustness of the functioning of the MASH, application of Right Help Right Time Guidance and use of single agency Early Help to meet need at the earliest opportunity.
- Re-establish capacity within the Business Unit and further the children and young people's engagement agenda.

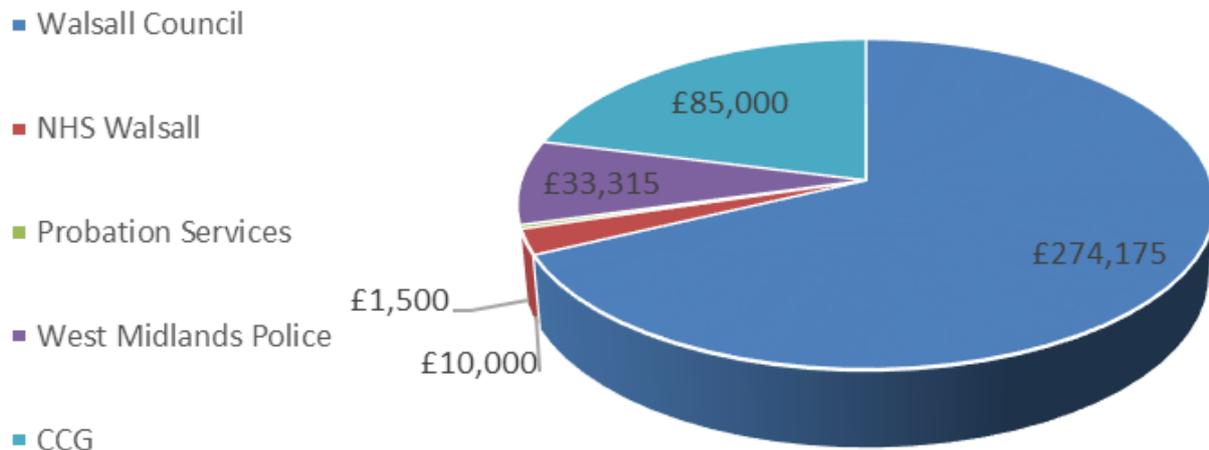
Appendix 1: Financial Summary

In 2021-22 the Partnership had £404,000 pooled into a partnership budget. This money was contributed by the Statutory Partners, plus the local Healthcare Trust and Probation. The majority of the resource was used to pay for Business Unit staffing. Other costs include the Independent Chair, Regional Procedures and online products used for business processes, service user involvement, consultancy and training.

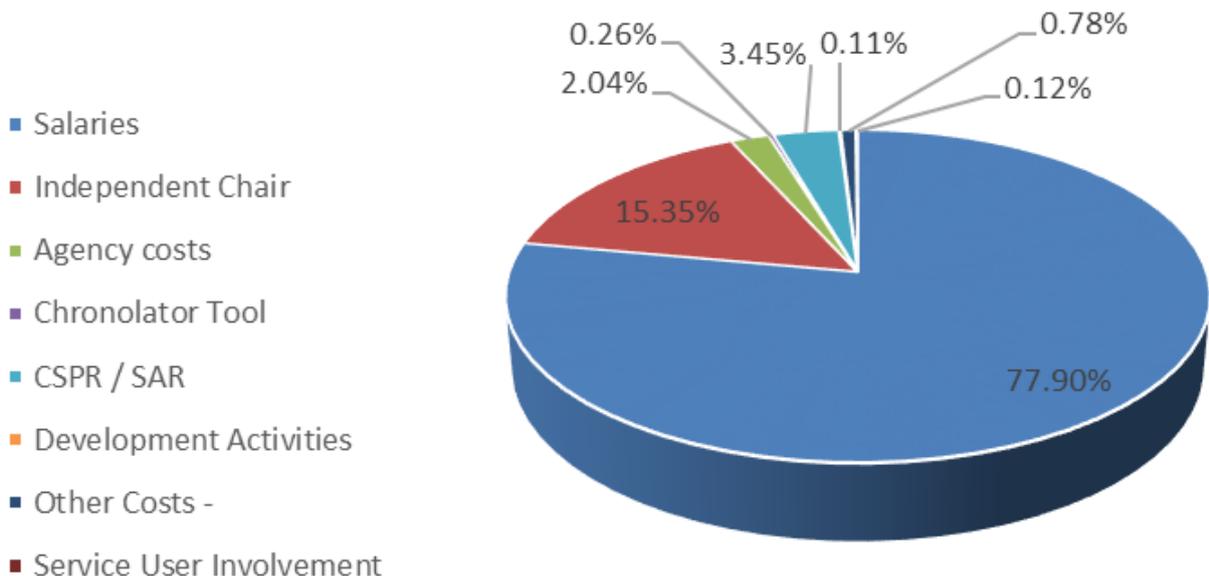
Due to previous carry forward and underspend in the current year, £279,044 is held in reserves. Planning for utilising this in 2022-23 is taking place and will include the commissioning of a Safeguarding Adult Consultant to support the Partnership. Also, due to the high number of SAR's commenced by the Adult Partnership in 2021-22 there will also be an increase in expenditure associated with Independent Reviewers in 2022-23.

The charts below show the proportion of the contributions by organisation and also the percentage split of the expenditure.

2021-2022 WSP Funding



2021-2022 WSP Expenditure







Right for Children, Families and Adults

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Children's Annual report 2021-2022

Report to the Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday 18th April 2023



Royal for Children, Families and Adults



Microsoft Word
Document

Introduction

The reports provide assurance around the effectiveness of our local safeguarding arrangements and evidences the impact of these arrangements in ensuring the welfare and safety of the children young people of Walsall.



Walsall Safeguarding Partnership (WSP)

Legacy of the pandemic

In December 2020 Penny Thompson undertook a **review of the effectiveness of the partnership** which required us to focus on

- creating a system with a clearer line of sight and increased connectivity through practice reviews and workforce development
- identify priorities for the WSP and streamline partnership governance structure to provide a more focused approach to joint Children and Adult arrangements.

Three key priorities identified were:

Neglect, Self-Neglect and All-Age Exploitation

The Arthur & Star National Review was a significantly challenging for the partnership and local services, however Partners continued to work closely together to ensure that children in Walsall were safeguarded.

Wood Review of Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements published in May 2021

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How effective are our arrangements?

Activities undertaken that have provided the partnership some confidence in our arrangements;

1. In May 2021 the CQC published its findings on key areas of practice inspected within the Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust.

2. In October 2021 Ofsted undertook an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. Their overall effectiveness was graded 'Good'.

3. Children - Section 11 Assurance and Adult - Care Act Compliance Assurance event which included

- ✓ '4th Partner'- service user quality assurance with partners
- ✓ Findings from the 2021 practitioner survey,

Both provided the opportunity for partner agencies to demonstrate assurance of their statutory duties)

NB. The WSP is supporting the SAB with its preparation for CQC Inspection of its social care arrangements and its provider services



How effective have our arrangements?

Governance

- As a Safeguarding Partnership there is now a clearer line of sight and increased connectivity between the work streams of the partner's activity such as practice reviews and workforce development. Forward plans, standing agenda items and report templates across the meeting and subgroup structure have ensured issues and assurance are shared and understood from frontline practice through to senior leadership.
- There are improved links with the Community Safety Partnership The All Age Exploitation Strategy was finalised and agreed by partners, as was set out in last years' Annual Report as a priority.
- The multi-agency audit programme continued to obtain learning in order to improve practice and saw improvements in the practice which was reflected in improved case ratings.
- A new framework for evaluating the impact of learning from case reviews and audits has been agreed and commenced.
- Positive feedback was received via the Practitioner Survey.



How effective are our arrangements?

What our data tells us

- Early Help demand has increased in 2021 compared to 2019 and there remains a positive impact of Early Help services for children and families.
- There has been a slight increase in referrals to MASH for period 1st April 21-31st March 2022 compared to the same period in 2020/21 and remains appropriately lower than the previous year.
- There remains a positive reduction in children subject to child protection plans 2021/222 when compared to 2019.
- There remains a positive increase of the number of families supported through the Family Safeguarding Model.
- The pre-birth assessment guidance is being used effectively and is monitored through regular audit activity (impact of SCR 7 recommendation).

Staff who responded to satisfaction survey felt their organisation ensured they were competent and supported to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities.

How effective are our arrangements?

Partnership Priorities

Neglect

- There has been a revision to the revised strategy and action plan and development of an outcomes framework. More children are being supported through Early Help and less children (11% compared to 16% last year) are having a social care Child and Family Assessment due to Neglect.

All Aged Exploitation

- Development of an all aged Exploitation Strategy and related training to 190 delegates
- Progress continues to be made with the All-Age Exploitation pathway and included the development of an Exploitation Hub.
- We have identified, screened and worked with more young people at risk of Exploitation.

○ Impending development of a performance framework.

We continue to work with partners to develop the multiagency dataset and score card to assess identification and response to exploitation



How effective are our arrangements?

Measuring impact Case Reviews and Multiagency Audits - Childrens

- During 2021-2022, 4 cases were referred for consideration of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review, 1 progressed to a LCSPR. No children's reviews were completed or published. 8 action plans relating to previous Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) or Rapid Reviews were completed within the year
- The multi-agency audit programme continues to obtain learning in order to improve practice and saw improvements in the case ratings. During the year there were three multi-agency audits carried out, one was linked to the safeguarding priorities, child sexual abuse and injuries in non-mobile babies (as a direct result of case review learning). During Q2 the audit process was reviewed to include a revised MAA audit template and process to enhance the learning system.
- During 2021 a new process for measuring the impact from case reviews was agreed and commenced. This was something which the partners had identified as an important focus in the 2021-22 Annual Report.
- The WSP learning offer includes specific training resulting from child reviews i.e. bruising in non-mobile babies (W12 & RRs) / working with fathers (W5, W7, W10, Practice Reflection Workshop on Connected Carers W11). Also launching the ICON programme across the partnership as we set out to do in the 2021-22 annual report (linked to SCR's W5, W7).
- Links strengthened between the Multi-Agency Audit Group and Practice Development Group (PDG) as the Practice Improvement Lead attends the audits and there is a standing agenda item on PDG for feedback from audits.

The Partnership receive learning in real time from audits and reviews by way of feedback to practitioners and managers, Key Messages newsletters, website updates, 7 min briefings, webinar's and new training courses being developed.



Areas for focus and improvement in 2022- 2023

- Review and restructure of the Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements
- Full Section 11 to be completed utilising the West Midlands Audit Tool. - challenge the
- To deliver the proposed forward plan for practice development activity, informed by partnership learning
- Continue to progress the All Age Exploitation Strategy and Child Neglect Strategy as key priorities and measure their impact through the outcome framework.
- Strengthen the Think Family approach
- Additional scrutiny work to be commissioned in 2022-23 to explore if it is possible to identify any changes or improvement in practice as a result of a previous SCR recommendations and actions.
- Additional scrutiny work to be undertaken in relation to robustness of the functioning of the MASH, application of Right Help Right Time Guidance and use of single agency Early Help to meet need at the earliest opportunity.
- Re-establish capacity within the Business Unit and further the children and young people's engagement agenda



Committee Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action/Recommendation	Officer responsible	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
	Areas of Focus	The glossary and summary data in relation to children in care, starters and leavers to be shared with the committee via e-mail	Colleen Male	Complete		
		A work programme for the municipal year be produced containing agreed areas of focus, for agreement by the Committee.		Complete	26 September 2022	
27 September 2022	Areas of Focus	A progress report on the Youth Justice Service be heard at future a meeting.	Philip Rutherford	To be scheduled July 2023	July 2023	Pushed back due to delay in competition of video.
3 November 2022	Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Position	A draft letter, to the Department of Education, be considered by the Committee at its next meeting which highlights the financial challenges faced by Children’s Services.	Clerk	Complete	8 December 2022	Sent , reply received and circulated.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022/23

Committee date	27 September	3 November	8 December	30 January	13 March 2023	18 April 2023
Report Deadline	16 September	25 October	29 November	19 January	2 March	5 April
Budget setting process		xx		xx		
Locality Hubs and working				xx		
Early Help Strategy	xx					
Social Worker recruitment and retention		xx				
Private Fostering			xx			
Youth Justice priorities and Disproportionately	xx				Xx Deferred to new year.	
Children at Risk Exploitation and Safeguarding Annual Report 2021/22						xx
Family Hubs update and progress and Early Help Update				xx		
Children and Young People Alliance					xx	
Young Carers			xx			
Placement Sufficiency						
Child Neglect Strategy					xx	
Transition from Children's Services into Adult Services - Update						



FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

**Council House,
Lichfield Street,
Walsall, WS1 1TW**
www.walsall.gov.uk

3 April 2023

FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan sets out decisions that are termed as “key decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet). Also included on the plan are other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet (“non-key decisions”). Preparation of the forward plan helps the Council to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk and can also be accessed from the Council’s website at www.walsall.gov.uk. The Cabinet is allowed to make urgent decisions which do not appear in the forward plan, however, a notice will be included on the agenda for the relevant Cabinet meeting which explains the reasons why.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change. Please contact the above addressee if you wish to check the date for a particular item.

The Cabinet agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public 7 days prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on the Council’s website. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Cabinet and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they are confidential. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer. These details can also be found in the forward plan.

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. The forward plan will show where this is intended and the reason why the reports are confidential. Enquiries regarding these reasons should be directed to Democratic Services (craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk).

“Key decisions” are those decisions which have a significant effect within the community or which involve considerable expenditure or savings. With regard to key decisions the Council’s Constitution states:

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £500,000.
- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
MAY 2023 TO AUGUST 2023 (03.04.23)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
15/23 (6.3.23)	Council Plan Markers of Success Q3: To note the Quarter 3 2022/23 (outturn) performance against the Markers of Success in the Council Plan 2022/25	Cabinet Non-key decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	19 April 2023
16/23 (22.3.23)	Adult Social Care budget increase: To seek Cabinet approval of an increased budget to Adult Social Care to fund adult social care market rate pressures. <i>This will be a private session report containing exempt information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Tony Meadows Tony.Meadows@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Pedley	19 April 2023
20/23 (3.4.23)	Temporary Workers (Agency) Provision: To appoint the Council's temporary agency provider. <i>This will be a private session report containing exempt information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Michelle Leith Michelle.Leith@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Ferguson	19 April 2023

155/22 (7.11.22)	Council Plan: Review of Achievements 2021/22: To note the Review of Achievements for 2021/22, highlighting successes and progress towards achieving our Council priorities.	Cabinet Non-key decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Leader of the Council	June 2023
17/23 (3.4.23)	Pre-Audit Outturn 2022/23: To receive the pre-audit revenue and capital financial outturn position for 2022/23 and approve recommended carry-forwards, and financial and treasury indicators for 2022/23.	Cabinet Key decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Leader of the Council	June 2023
18/23 (3.4.23)	Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23: To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (and in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017), the annual report for treasury management activities 2022/23 including prudential and local indicators.	Council Non-key decision	Treasury Management Code of Practice. Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Leader of the Council	June 2023
6/23 (9.1.23)	Borough Playing Pitch Strategy: To adopt and publish the Walsall Playing pitches strategy and the Black Country strategic framework	Cabinet Key Decision	Liz Stuffins Liz.Stuffins@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing	June 2023
129/22 (5.9.22)	Update on Resilient Communities Safer Streets Programme: To report back on Safer Streets activity and recommend any	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Paul Gordon Paul.Gordon@walsall.gov.uk Page 68 of 71	Internal Services	Portfolio Holder for Resilient Communities	June 2023

	adjustments/additions to the programme.					
14/23 (6.2.23)	<p>Growth Funding for Schools:</p> <p>To enable the Local Authority to fulfil its duty to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places, through the adoption of a policy for the application of revenue funding for school growth.</p>	<p>Cabinet</p> <p>Key Decision</p>	<p>Alex Groom</p> <p>Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal services, Schools Forum</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills</p>	<p>June 2023</p>
19/23 (3.4.23)	<p>Corporate Financial Performance 2023/24, approach to Budget Setting for 2024/25, and changes to the council's Tax Strategy:</p> <p>To report the financial position based on 3 months to June 2023, and to set out our approach and timeline for the 2024/25 budget process and amendments to the Tax Strategy.</p>	<p>Cabinet</p> <p>Non-key decision</p>	<p>Vicky Buckley</p> <p>Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p>	<p>Leader of the Council</p>	<p>July 2023</p>

Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Forward Plan of Key Decisions Published up to July 2023

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	Black Country Executive Joint Committee Governance			
05/12/2022	<p>Approval of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee Collaboration Agreement</p> <p>Approval of the revised Black Country Joint Committee Collaboration Agreement, attached as Appendix A.</p>	<p>Simon Neilson Simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Walsall Council	19/04/2023
06/03/2023	<p>Constitution and Timetable of meetings</p> <p>Approve the timetable of meetings for 2023/24.</p> <p>Approve the amendments to the BCJC Constitution and Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Approve the amendments to the BCJC Working Protocols.</p>	<p>Deborah Hindson ChiefExecutive@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Dudley Council Sandwell Council Walsall Council City of Wolverhampton Council</p>	26/07/2023

