



Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on:

Thursday, 17 February 2022 at 6.00 pm

Public access to meeting via:

<https://youtu.be/H95mennYnsU>

Your attendance is requested at the above meeting, which will be held at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TW. A list of the items of business to be considered, together with any supporting papers, is enclosed. Please bring the papers with you to the meeting.

MEMBERSHIP

Chair	Councillor Lee Jeavons
Vice-Chair	Councillor Kerry Murphy
	Councillor Rose Burley
	Councillor Sabina Ditta
	Councillor Stacie Elson
	Councillor Kenneth Ferguson
	Councillor Sat Johal
	Councillor Pard Kaur
	Councillor Edward Lee
	Councillor Saiqa Nasreen
	Councillor Lorna Rattigan

NON-ELECTED VOTING MEMBERS

Lichfield Diocesan Representative	Vacancy
Archbishop of Birmingham's Representative	Vacancy
Parent Governors	Mrs Heena Pathan
	Vacancy
	Vacancy

NON-ELECTED NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Primary Teacher Representative	Ms Sharon Guy
Secondary Teacher Representative	Ms Wendy Duffus

PORTFOLIO HOLDER

For Education & Skills	Councillor Chris Towe
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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 To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee that was held on 13 January 2022.	Enclosed
<u>Scrutiny</u>		
6	Specialist Provision Review To receive and consider a report providing an overview on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) specialist provision planning in the Borough.	Enclosed
7	Update on Elective Home Education To receive and consider a report concerning Elective Home Education (EHE) and an update on how the Council meets its statutory responsibility regarding EHE.	Enclosed
8	Early Years Sufficiency Places To receive and consider a report concerning the Council's statutory duties under the Childcare Act 2006 and how Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is undertaken.	Enclosed
9	Walsall Right for Children Transformation Programme To receive and consider a report providing an update on the progress of the Walsall Right for Children (WR4C) Transformation Programme.	Enclosed
<u>Overview</u>		
10	Work Programme 2021/22 To receive and consider the Committee's work programme for 2021/22.	Enclosed
11	Forward plans To receive the Cabinet and the Black Country EJC forward plans.	Enclosed
12	Date of next meeting To note that the date of the next meeting of the Committee will be Thursday, 31 March 2022.	

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests that 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.

EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13 January 2022 at 6.00 pm

In the Council Chamber at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members present: Councillor K. Murphy (Vice-Chair in the Chair)
Councillor H. Bashir (Substitute for Councillor S. Nasreen)
Councillor R. Burley
Councillor S. Elson
Councillor K. Ferguson
Councillor P. Kaur
Councillor E. Lee
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor G. Singh Sohal (Substitute for Councillor S. Johal)

Portfolio Holders present: Councillor C. Towe – Education & Skills

Non-elected non-voting Members present: Ms S. Guy – Primary Teacher Representative
Ms W. Duffus – Secondary Teacher Representative

Officers present: Mrs S. Rowe, Executive Director – Children’s Services
Mrs S. Kelly, Director – Access & Inclusion
Mr R. Thomas, Head of Access
Ms J. Nash, Interim Head of SEND
Dr P. Fantom, Democratic Services Officer

1/22 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Ditta, L. Jeavons, S. Johal and S. Nasreen.

2/22 **Substitutions**

Councillor H. Bashir substituted for Councillor S. Ditta and Councillor G. Singh Sohal substituted for Councillor S. Johal.

3/22 **Declarations of interest and party whip**

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

4/22 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no agenda items requiring the exclusion of the public.

5/22 **Minutes**

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021 was submitted [Annexed].

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

6/22 **Change in the order of business**

The Vice-Chair advised that item 8 would be considered as the next item of business by the Committee.

7/22 **Update on the SEND Local Area Improvement Programme and EHCPs**

The Committee received a report on the SEND Local Area Improvement Programme and Education, Health and Care Plans [Annexed].

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor C. Towe, introduced the report, which updated Members on the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) produced following the February 2019 Ofsted inspection to address areas of weakness in the service. Recently a stock-take had reviewed all of the WSoA's actions, indicating the completion of 149 of 184 actions (81 per cent). Additionally, significant developments in other areas, such as risk assessment for children and young people with EHCPs and the monitoring of activities to ensure children not attending school were safe and well, had been undertaken. A 'head space' programme had been introduced that provided support to education staff – including a 7-day telephone support line for school leaders. It was noted that EHCP timelines continued to be a strong focus for improvement and the report contained an update on the actions being implemented

The Interim Head of SEND, Ms J. Nash, highlighted the key aspects of the report. She noted that two projects were being introduced in relation to EHCPs. The first project, which would run until 1 March 2022, was to ensure the clearance of the statutory assessment backlog and to improve timeliness to 60 per cent. There would also be a focus on those children missing from education and on vulnerable children who might be at risk in order to provide them with appropriate placement provision. The second project, which would run thereafter, would have as its aim the transformation of EHCP pathways by working with schools and parents to improve, co-produce and to design a long-term proficient service centred on the best outcomes for children.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

8/22 **Walsall Schools Overview Report**

The Committee received an overview report on schools in the Borough [Annexed].

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor C. Towe, introduced the report, noting that it included the outcomes of the latest Ofsted inspections, which, despite the challenges being faced, had remained positive. The report also set out the projects currently in place for school leaders, with the extensive range of support available being circulated to schools and shown on the Council's website. Also referred to in the report was information concerning the Government's consultation on school improvement, which it was anticipated would have an impact on the role of local authorities from April 2022.

In terms of the latest school attendance data, Councillor Towe reported that these were 92.6 per cent (primary schools), 87.6 per cent (secondary schools), 58.9 per cent (pupil referral units) and 86.5 per cent (special schools). In relation to Covid-19, 37 staff and 151 pupils had recorded positive tests and 22 settings had been affected. The current rate of infection in the Borough was 2,152 cases per 100,000, compared with 919 per 100,000 nationally, and remained significant.

The Director – Access & Inclusion, Mrs S. Kelly, reported that the Government's consultation on school improvement had now closed and the DfE were continuing with the proposal. Accordingly, the Council would consult the Schools Forum in order to continue to support schools by identifying what intervention and support was required. Further reports would be made to the Committee concerning any future developments arising from this.

Having regard to a question from Councillor Kaur concerning the utilisation of the improvement grant, Mrs Kelly advised that the improvement grant currently funded two activities/areas of work. Firstly, within the Council's own services and the maintenance of close relationships with schools via quality assurance and data analysis. Secondly, for the funding of external challenging education consultants, who visit schools to facilitate and support improvement. She advised that discussions were to be undertaken with the Schools Forum around the future use of this funding and the continued provision of activities and support to schools.

Councillor Kaur also enquired what the key highlights from the reviews had been. In response, Mrs Kelly noted the general themes with respect to social and mental health issues. The main strength of the reviews had been that as they were school-based, the focus had been placed on what children and schools required for improvement and a bespoke action plan had been created for each school. She also pointed out that since they had resumed, inspections of Walsall schools by Ofsted had resulted in requiring improvement or good outcomes. Furthermore, two maintained schools that had formerly been rated by Ofsted as inadequate had recently received improved outcomes of requiring improvement and that progress was continuing to be made.

Councillor Towe endorsed these comments, thanked the schools and staff concerned and expressed the hope that the Schools Forum would continue to work with the Authority.

Further to questions from Councillor Bashir regarding the schools rated inadequate or requiring improvement, and whether they were located in particular parts of the Borough, Mrs Kelly explained the way in which the Authority worked with schools and academies to challenge and seek improvement, including through the schools causing concern process and via the provision of additional support. Consequently, this engagement had been positively received by schools and there had been improvement in the outcomes of Ofsted inspections.

In response from an enquiry from Councillor Elson regarding the utilisation and promotion of support programmes, and for those programmes relating to mental health, Mrs Kelly confirmed that two head teachers were currently seconded to the Authority. A directory of information was also available and maintained, and there was a significant number of programmes and other resources for mental health. Mental Health leads received support and training from the NHS and the Authority's Education Psychology Service

With reference to a question from Councillor Kaur on the use of school facilities, Mrs Kelly advised that maintained schools were responsible for their premises and it was a matter for their governing bodies if they wished to lease these out. Noting that many schools provided services during school holidays, Councillor Towe referred to the importance of the Activity Fund, which was open to children eligible to receive free school meals and had now been extended to include children with EHCPs and care leavers. He pointed out that this had funding for another three years and, whilst take up was good in some areas, this was not the case in other parts of the Borough, and he asked Members who were school governors to encourage its take-up for children and young people.

Further to a question concerning the Shadow Board, its composition and operation, Mrs Kelly explained that this Board was comprised of children and young people and had been established in order to shadow and challenge the governance and decision-making of the Walsall Learning Alliance and the SEND Local Area Improvement Board. Accordingly, it worked with the head teacher of the virtual school and the children's champion.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9/22 **Update on School Organisation – Pupil Place Planning**

The Committee received an update report on school organisation and pupil place planning in the Borough [Annexed].

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor C. Towe, introduced the report. He noted the Authority's statutory duty for ensuring sufficient school places for resident children who wanted a school place, and a general duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1966 to ensure that there were available in each area sufficient schools (in number, character and equipment) to provide all pupils with the opportunity for an

appropriate education. He noted that there had been a reduction in birth numbers since 2016, resulting in a forecast reduction in the demand for primary school places, which might require schools to reduce their published admission number in future to maintain financial sustainability. However, for secondary schools, it was forecasted that there could be future shortages of places necessitating consideration of options for additional capacity, including school expansion and the possible construction of a new free school. Having regard to SEND, the School Organisation Service was reviewing the number of places and the SEND team was working closely with schools to develop a five-year plan to ensure that there were ample school places for children and young people with SEND.

The Head of Access, Mr R. Thomas, reported on the significant capital resource that been invested to create primary places and the steps to create additional capacity in secondary schools. In relation to specialist places, and the need for in-Borough highly complex needs provision, work was being undertaken with schools and assist with this, two head teachers had been seconded to the Authority.

A question was asked by Councillor Rattigan concerning the financial implications for schools of declining birth rates. In response, Mr Thomas stated that the Authority was meeting with head teachers to discuss the data, forecasts and current admission numbers to ensure that schools were sustainable and had appropriate staffing in future.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10/22 **Work Programme 2021/22**

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

Resolved:

That subject to the above-mentioned amendments, the Work programme be approved.

11/22 **Forward Plans**

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

Resolved:

That the Forward Plans be noted.

12/22 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held on Thursday, 17 February 2022 at 6.00 pm.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.43 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....

17 February 2022

Specialist Provision Review

Wards(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe – Education and Skills

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the current position of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) specialist provision planning within the Local Authority.

2. Recommendations

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this report and decides whether there should be further information or updates.

3. Know: Context

Following on from the paper brought to the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2021, this report provides an update on the ongoing work surrounding pupil place planning for SEND.

The ongoing focus of the school organisation service is to review the requirement for SEND places across the Borough in terms of pupil place planning and future proofing our place requirement. Working closely with the Inclusion Service, a five-year plan is being created to ensure our statutory responsibility for having sufficient school places is met.

3.1 Local Authority Support

The Local Authority have recruited two Head Teachers, Cathy Draper (Short Heath Federation) and Kate Bargh (North Star Federation) on a part-time secondment basis to support the development of school services within Walsall.

Together they will have responsibility for oversight and driving forward the education and inclusion agenda including the following 3 projects, working with our current LA teams, staff, and Walsall schools:

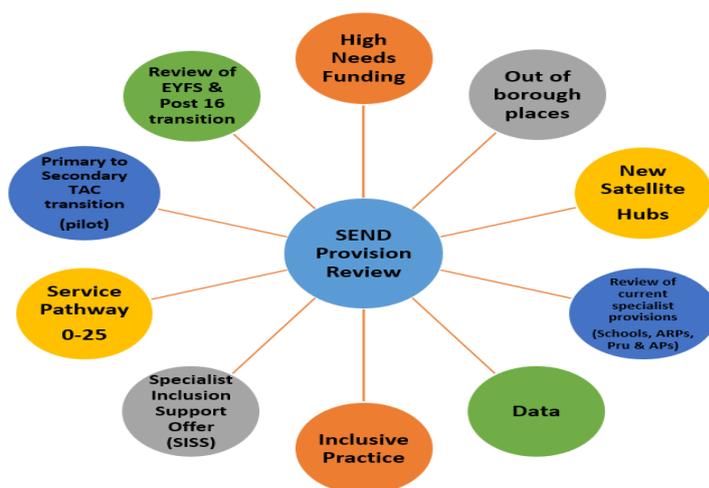
Specialist provision group/work- leading the development of the special provision plan to meet the gaps identified through the special provision group review of SEND places, working closely with our capital/school organisation team and SEND.

Specialist inclusion Service development – leading the development of our support services to support schools with behaviour, mental health support, and children at risk of poor/ non-school attendance or exclusion.

School Improvement - working with Local Authority representatives and schools' teams to support the school improvement agenda e.g., Schools Causing Concern conversations, commissioning Challenge Education and family of school's developments conversations with schools as well as Families of Schools.

The work of the special provision review group aims to improve current processes and reorganise current provision to support better outcomes for children and young people (CYP) with SEND in Walsall. The work within this action plan aims to offer short, medium and long-term solutions. The expectation is that this work encompasses all sectors; education, health and social care and is co-produced with CYP and families working to the '*better together*' principle.

The action plan is divided into clear themes that all interweave and have equal importance to the overall vision of improving outcomes for CYP with SEND:



Each of these key strands of work can be grouped into two themes - the protocols to support inclusive practice and the review of specialist settings.

Inclusive Practice:

The equity of inclusive practice across the Borough is the highest priority. This is essential for the whole the education sector from EYFS to Post 16 to ensure we are preparing our CYP adequately for adulthood. Much of this work will involve reinforcing the SEND Code of Practice (CoP) and establishing clear protocols, support, and pathways for all partners, including health and social care to support mainstream settings with the full inclusion of CYP with

SEND. Working collaboratively with partners will allow greater opportunities to work in a more coordinated and efficient way.

Review of Specialist Settings:

Whilst our inclusive vision and legal presumption that all children including those with SEND have a right to mainstream education, we must ensure that children with significant and complex SEND have the opportunity to attend a specialist setting in a timely way. A review of current specialist places (special schools and resourced provisions) will focus on the immediate and future needs. An accurate picture of the data will enable provision to support the needs of CYP in the short, medium and long term. This will also include a full review of out of Borough places that are used for SEND placements.

3.2 Pupil Place Requirement

The pupil place requirement for SEND places is broader than just Walsall and indeed the Black Country; it is an increasing need for many Local Authorities. There continues to be increased demand for specialist school places and increased levels of SEND needs across the region and nationally. The reasons underpinning this are multi-faceted including improved early identification of needs, changing complexity of need and general increased demand.

The impact of this is that local authority areas may not have the sufficient or appropriate provision and capacity to deliver specialist support in their area and children may need to be educated in out of Borough commissioned high-cost independent settings that may not always be able to deliver good outcomes nor be value for money.

Following a detailed review and analysis over the last 3 years, forecasts indicate that Walsall is likely to see an annual demand growth of 6.3% of statutory assessments, which in turn will lead to a need for additional specialist places across the Borough. This has considered fluctuations in demand because of the pandemic.

The table below shows the current commissioned number of specialist places across Walsall for primary and secondary schools. The purpose of the table is to show shortfall in places in specialist provisions.

Commissioned places in Special Schools and Specialist Provisions:

	Commissioned Places Primary (P) R-Y6	Commissioned Secondary (S) Y7 - 14
Special School	343	480
Specialist Provision	36	91
Total	379	571

Shortfall in commissioned places in Special Schools and Specialist Provisions:

	2022 -2023		2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027	
	P R- Y6	S Y7- Y14								
Projected places needed	471	596	460	677	465	718	503	733	528	739
Shortfall	92	25	81	106	86	147	124	162	149	168

The forecasted demand shows a shortfall of places for Walsall over the next five years. These places are for both special schools and specialist places within mainstream schools.

Whilst the long-term plan for places is being reviewed there is an immediate requirement from September 2022 for high-need Cognition and Learning and Autism places in primary and secondary schools. Further places for Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) places within secondary are also required. The group is working with head teachers and governing bodies, from both mainstream and special schools to find an appropriate solution for this immediate need; this could be in the form of satellite/hubs, reorganisation of specialist places and/or increased commissioned numbers within current special schools.

Whilst the current need for 2022 is known, analysis of the forecasted demand including requests for statutory assessments, types and level of need is ongoing to ensure sufficiency of provision for the longer term. This more detailed review will allow Walsall the opportunity to provide the places required and ensure appropriate provision for all children moving forward in the most appropriate type of setting. A continual review of forecasted demands and places needed, as part of an annual sufficiency statement will ensure the needs for Walsall's pupils is kept under review.

3.3 Longer term needs

Interim solutions are being reviewed across the Borough in all education settings to provide additional places to meet the current needs of the CYP in Walsall.

For the majority of CYP, a mainstream education would be the most appropriate provision, however where needs are more complex and significant, a specialist setting may be an option. Consideration of additional ways to support CYP with an EHCP to remain in mainstream provision is one of the key themes in the action plan.

Once numbers have been confirmed in terms of need and designation, there are areas where the additional place requirement could be created for Walsall pupils:

1) Expansions of existing provisions within the Borough.

The School Organisation team has requested Integrated Facilities Management to commission work from an external architect company to undertake desktop feasibility studies. Currently they are working to establish the number of places each school can accommodate based on the ambulant and non-ambulant requirement of children within the school.

The architects, alongside the school organisation team will then review the current arrangements model of our special schools and consider how the existing spaces could be utilised in other ways to create more places within the current school footprint. They will also evaluate the site to determine if an expansion would be possible – considering any site constraints e.g., ground problems/mineshfts, highway implications etc.

In addition, working with our corporate landlord team, any existing corporate assets that are underutilised will be reviewed for consideration as satellite school expansion projects.

2) Review of capacity within mainstream settings that could accommodate and support additional SEND provision.

The School Organisation Team are currently reviewing all Net Capacity Assessments and floor plans for mainstream schools across the Borough to establish a baseline of teaching spaces and any surplus areas in the schools. These assessments will be used to have informed conversations with schools about the opportunity and suitability for a SEND hub to be created within the school. This would be utilising existing space within a school were appropriate, for children with SEND requirements to attend the provision at a mainstream whilst being on the school roll of their appropriate SEND school provision.

The table below indicates different types of provision that could be created within mainstream schools.

Special Resourced Provision (SRP)	Special Unit Provision	Satellite Provision	Hub Provision
CYP remain on roll of the mainstream school.	CYP remain on roll of the mainstream school.	CYP remain on roll of the designated special specialist school and are part of the specialist schools commissioned numbers.	CYP remain on roll of the designated special specialist school and are part of the specialist schools commissioned numbers.
Commissioned numbers are agreed.	Commissioned numbers are agreed.		
SRP tend to provide for a specific need such as speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN), hearing or	Unit provision tend to provide for a specific need such as speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN), hearing or	The location of Satellite provision is located as a standalone building.	The location of Hub provision is co-located on the site of an existing school.

visual impairment (HI/VI) or autism. In SRP pupils spend most of their time (usually well over 50% of their timetable) in mainstream classes.	visual impairment (HI/VI) or autism. Pupils in a Unit spend most of their time in their unit base, only attending mainstream classes for a few lessons, such as PE, for assembly or for lunch.		
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3) Creation of a Free School.

The Local Authority may have to review the need for a SEND Free School within the Borough, created through the DfE Free School Wave 15 application round – which we understand is likely to open in the Spring Term 2022.

4. Financial

The additional places and needs will form part of the SEND capital plan and utilisation of DfE grant funding for additional school places. Commissioned places are funded from the High Needs Block of schools funding and growth funding has been built into the future modelling of this funding.

5. Decide

Scrutiny may decide to note the current position. The Committee may decide to ask that a further briefing on place planning be offered to members.

6. Respond

The Committee may decide to request further information as pertains to individual planning area and school expansions.

7. Review

Continued development into the review of SEND place requirement across the Borough to future proof SEND provision for Walsall will continue through the special provision group.

Capital needs will be taken to Capital board

Background Papers:

SEND Strategy Paper – Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11 March 2021

Authors:

Rob Thomas, Head of Access – rob.thomas@walsall.gov.uk

Alex Groom, School Organisation Manager – alex.groom@walsall.gov.uk

17 February 2022

Update on Elective Home Education (EHE)

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to provide the current position concerning Elective Home Education (EHE) and an update on how Walsall continues to meet its statutory responsibility in regards to EHE and to present and explain EHE data.

2. Recommendations

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this report and decides whether there should be further information or updates.

3. Report detail – know

Following the Elective Home Education scrutiny report that was presented to the committee in January 2021 that outlined the statutory responsibilities in relation to EHE, this report updates the committee on the current position and updates the committee on some current activities being undertaken.

- There has been a significant reduction in the number of EHE registrations this academic year. In part, this has been achieved by early Intervention and working collaboratively with other services and schools. Early intervention includes pre-EHE meetings with professionals, and where appropriate, working with schools to conduct an early review of an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). An early review ensures the child's needs are accurately identified prior to the parent making a formal decision to home educate. The early intervention has been extremely successful as although we are still receiving a large number of enquiries, less of these are now translating to EHE registrations. Together with the fact that more children who were EHE are returning to school means we have a reduction in the number of EHE registrations.
- At the end of December 2021, there were 380 open Elective Home Education cases. This is less than the 463 open EHE cases at the end of December 2020 and is similar to pre Covid-19 levels when we had 379 open at the end of December 2019.
- Between the beginning of September 2021 and end of December 2021, 86 EHE new registrations were recorded. This is a notable decline to the 178 new registrations recorded between September and December 2020 and more in line with numbers recorded between September and December 2019 (99). The

number of open registrations at the end of December 2021 is therefore comparable to pre Covid-19 for the same reporting period.

- In order to meet the demands of Covid-19, which led to an increase in EHE enquiries and registration, and many parents citing anxiety as a reason for EHE, we have expanded staffing within the service. We now have an emotional literacy support officer within the team who offers face-to-face, virtual and group sessions for those children who are identified as experiencing emotional or mental concerns. The emotional literacy support has been utilised to support reintegration back to school, referrals to school health etc. and to support parents to fulfil their responsibility to provide a suitable and full time education. The weekly sessions that the emotional literacy support officer implements also means that we have a greater oversight of EHE children.
- A greater oversight of EHE children has also been achieved by completing more interim reviews than previously, which has in turn led to a marked increase in children being reintegrated back to school when the educational provision has been judged unsuitable.
- We have strengthened joint working with other professionals and raised the profile of EHE as we have delivered training for health visitors, the special educational needs service, school nursing and early help.
- The most vulnerable children including those under a Child Protection (CP), Child In Need Plan (CIN) or those receiving Early Help (EH) or in receipt of an EHCP are offered additional support and guidance as we contribute to all of the relevant meetings and review all EHCPs on a termly basis.
- We have developed and implemented a new EHE policy and processes (See Appendix A)
- The recent Ofsted Inspection of Walsall local authority children's services report noted ***'There is robust oversight of children who are electively home educated (EHE). There is strong partnership working with schools through a new EHE policy and positive relationships with families.'***

3.1 EHE audit

A Quality Assurance audit was carried out in June 2021. The purpose of the audit was to check the quality of the service to ensure that vulnerable learners have fair access to education and training. To achieve this we examined the data of 10 EHE vulnerable learners. This included CP, CIN, EH and those with an EHCP.

We explored the following:

- Whether our enquiries are timely and effective.
- Whether we work closely with other services to secure the best outcome for the child.
- Whether we return children and young people to school in a timely manner, when home education is not demonstrated to be suitable.

The audit identified the following good practice:

- We are supporting and working with parents who are EHE.
- Weekly reviews were completed to identify where current children or young people with EHE provision are new to Walsall Children's Services and this

was leading to timely contact and improved collaboration with internal services as well as other professionals.

- Regularity of reviews of EHE provision is based on the child/young person's needs and current circumstances
- There were weekly or fortnightly calls with parents who require further support with their child's learning.
- There were collaborative annual reviews of the EHCP to set specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based targets

The following actions were identified:

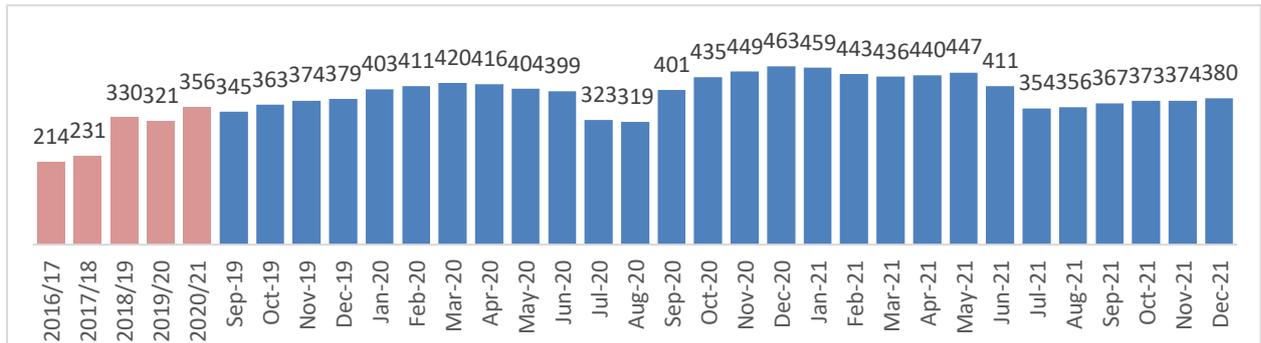
- To identify those cases where parents have persistently refused actual or virtual visits over the last 6 months.
- To identify EHE children/young people who are part of a sibling group, to understand whether there may be other EHE siblings that we may not be aware of or who may be missing education
- To employ a specialist in emotional support
- Identify EHE cases who have an EHCP and work with the special educational needs and disabilities team to prioritise reviews, particularly for those who are likely to return to school or home education has been deemed as not suitable
- Refresh EHE review process to ensure that the child's cultural needs are being considered as well as any risks of exploitation or enticement from others, including older siblings not to attend school

Following the audit we have actioned the following:

- An Emotional literacy support officer has been employed
- We are identifying children and young people who have refused a visit in the last 6 months and offering them visits again.
- Visits have been offered to all those who have cited Covid-19 as a reason for EHE to offer support and to discuss whether parents would now consider a return to school and if so how we can support a return.
- Visits and support sessions with the emotional literacy support officer have been offered to all those who cited anxiety as a reason for EHE.
- Visits have been offered to all those eligible for free school meals or pupil premium.
- Visits and additional support has been offered to all our Gypsy Roma Traveller families.
- Visits and termly reviews have been offered to all those with an educational health care plans (EHCP).
- Processes have been developed to ensure we check the education base of siblings of those who are EHE. Additionally, when communicating with parents we check whether they have any other children who are not attending school.
- EHE training was delivered to health visitors and the school nursing service to further strengthen collaborative working and to ensure they alert us to any EHE children who we may not be aware of.

4. Elective Home Education Data (EHE)

4.1 Number of EHE open at the end of the year/month



- The above graph illustrates how on average the number of open elective home education registrations is lower for the autumn term 2021 compared to the autumn term 2020. The figures for the autumn term 2021 are very similar to the pre Covid-19 2019 autumn term.

4.2 Number and percentage of Initial EHE enquiries that lead to an EHE registration.



- The graph above shows that less initial EHE enquiries are leading to EHE registration.

As EHE potentially has huge implications for the child, where possible the EHE service offers parents guidance and support before they formally decide to home educate.

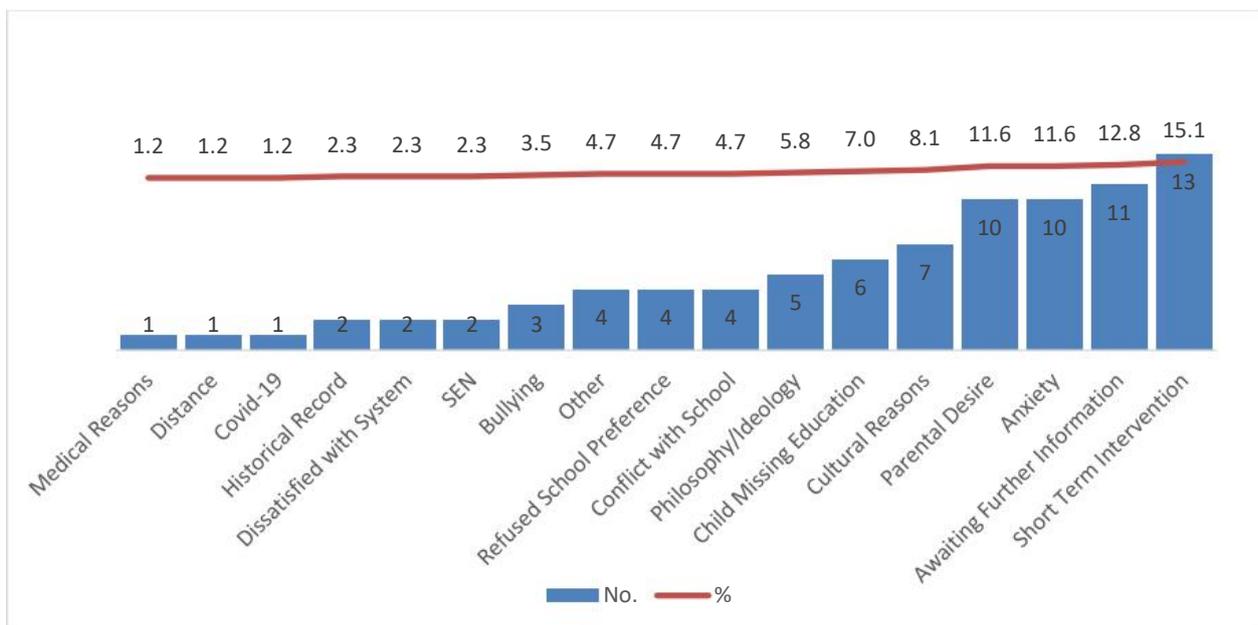
Parents, professionals and schools are encouraged to contact the service if parents are considering EHE. The service also coordinate pre EHE meetings between school, child, parent and other relevant professionals to resolve potential issues in school, which may be the cause for the decision to home educate.

The Pre EHE education meetings are also an ideal opportunity to remind parents they are taking on a duty of care to ensure their child’s educational, social, emotional and mental health needs are met when they elect to home educate. It is reiterated that there is no financial support available for EHE education.

The EHE policy and the EHE information booklet are also available on the Local Authority website alongside a webpage which ensures parents have easy access to the appropriate information to make an informed choice.

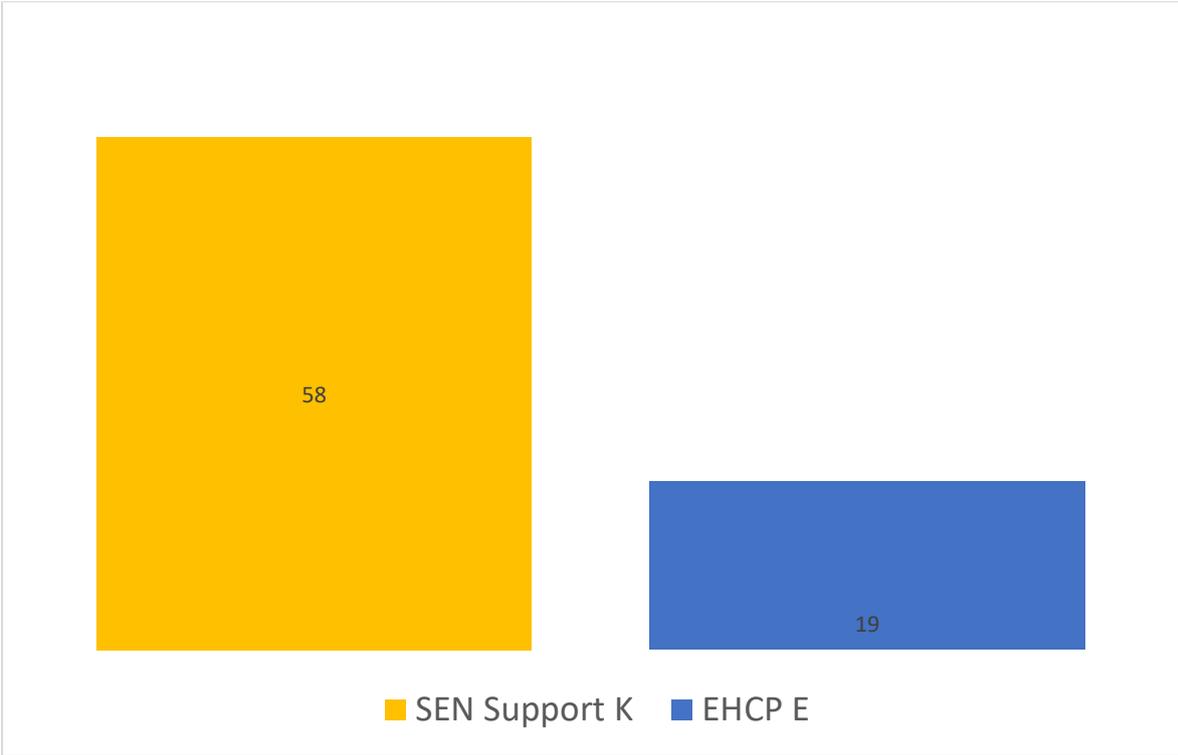
https://go.walsall.gov.uk/home_education

4.3 Primary reasons for new EHE registrations from 1 September 2021 to 31 December 2021



The graph above shows the most popular reason for EHE is now ‘short term intervention’ and ‘anxiety’. ‘Short term intervention’ is generally cited when parents choose to EHE whilst they are waiting for a place at their preferred school or when they intend to address a key concern they may have in regards to their child’s education. By home educating, these parents can deliver personalised learning in order to better prepare their child for school by either focusing on academic, emotional or social needs. In order to support these families we offer regular educational reviews, emotional literacy support, teaching and learning guidance, support with school applications and a support package to reintegrate the child back to school.

4.4 Number of EHE registrations open at the end of December 2021 by special educational needs (SEN) stage



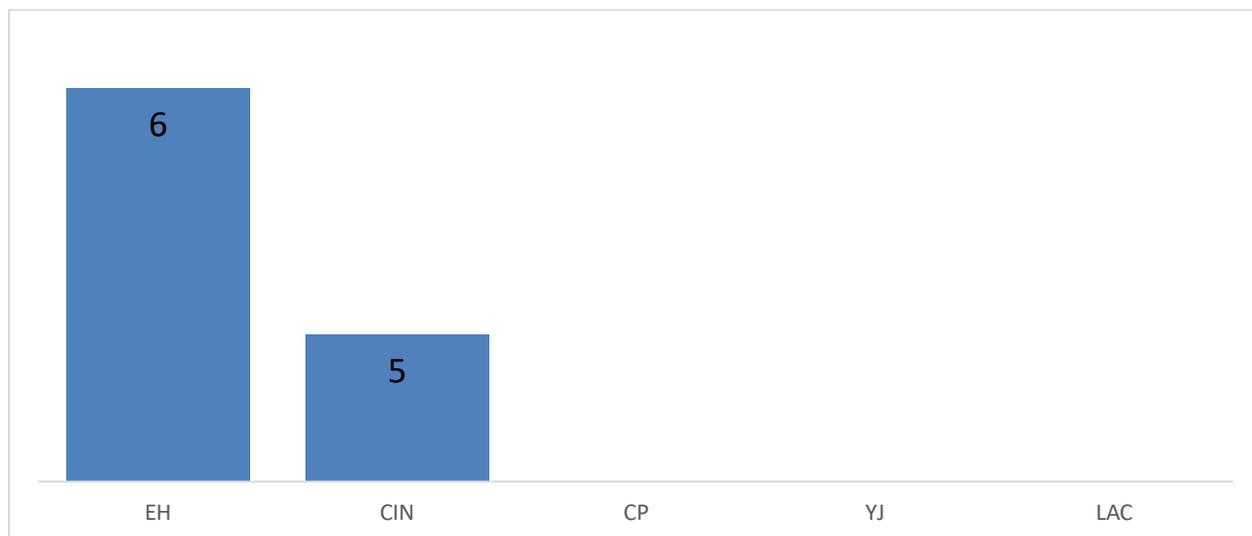
The graph above shows that of those registered as EHE, 15% have a special educational need (SEN) and 5% have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).

These children are effectively monitored and supported as the EHE officer that leads in supporting these children is an experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENDCo).

We have implemented a new process so that we are now leading on EHCP reviews so that all EHE with an EHCP have a termly review, to ensure the children are in the most appropriate provision and receiving the best support.

If an initial EHE enquiry is received for a child who has an EHCP, the school are advised to arrange for an early annual review of the EHCP to assess whether the child's need have changed and to coordinate a pre EHE meeting. All relevant professionals involved attend e.g speech and language therapy, child & adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), school health, educational welfare, pastoral support and SENDCo. This provides assurances for parents and children that they have other options other than EHE, as all professionals work together in a child centred approach.

4.5 Number of EHE registrations open at the end of December 2021 by Child in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP), Early Help (EH), Looked After Child (LAC) and Youth Justice (YJ).



The above chart shows the low number of vulnerable learners that are registered as EHE. Early intervention and robust monitoring processes ensure these children are closely monitored and supported. Two of the CIN and two of the children receiving EH have weekly face-to-face sessions with the Emotional literacy support officer.

One of the CIN has an EHCP and is offered termly reviews. We have coordinated for one of the CIN children to attend college three times a week and weekly reports are received in regards to attendance and progress.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of the EHE corporate policy (See Appendix A) as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Local Authority officers within the EHE team do not have the power to enter the homes of, or otherwise see, children for the purposes of monitoring the provision of EHE under current legislation. However the Children Act 2004 allows local authorities to insist on seeing children in order to enquire about their welfare where there are grounds for concern.

If the EHE Officer has concerns about a child during the course of engagement with children and families or otherwise they will follow procedures as set out in the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership and the Continuum of Need procedures.

Staff members know and understand indicators that may suggest that a child or young person is suffering or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or harm and if the EHE service have any concerns about a child's welfare, they act on them immediately by following Walsall's Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures.

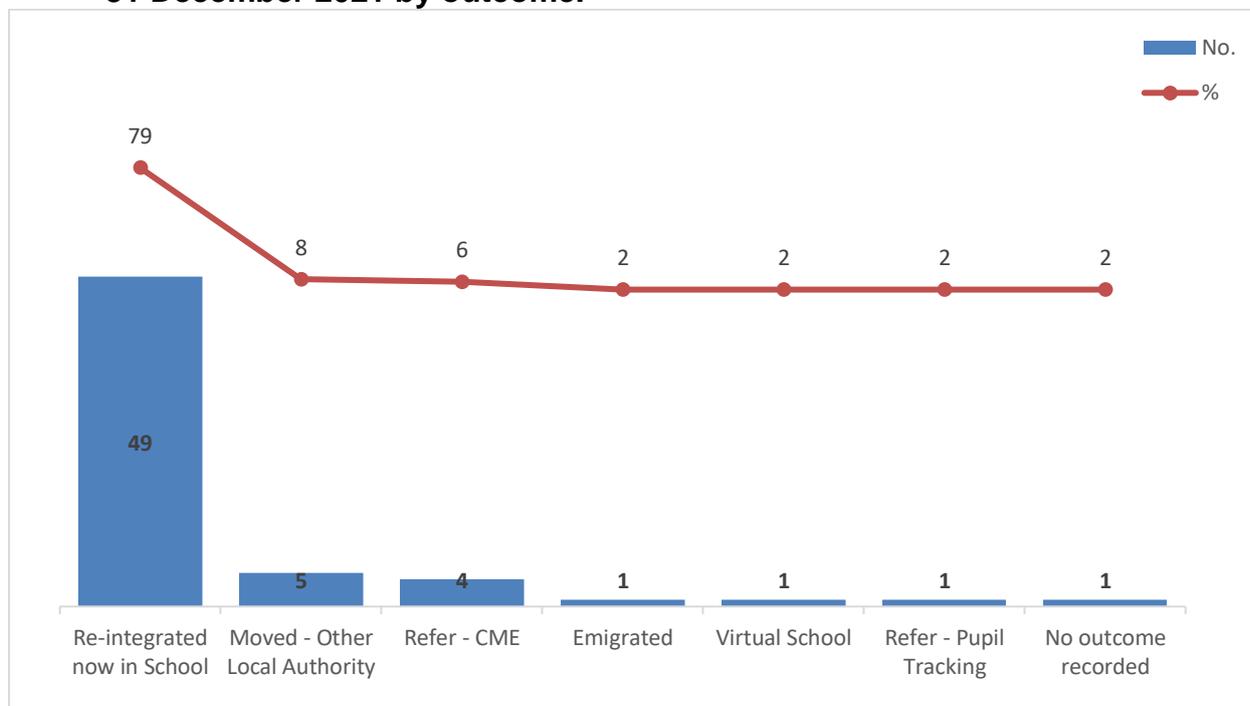
The EHE service fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities by the following:

- To report a concern the EHE education service understand that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the first point of contact for any professional or concerned individual who has concerns about a child. MASH will be contacted. The EHE service can contact children's social care for advice and guidance, early help support or to refer a child in need of safeguarding.
- When an initial EHE enquiry is received schools are asked to share any safeguarding concerns.
- All appropriate professionals are invited to the Pre EHE meeting, including school nursing, social workers and Early Help etc
- School Nursing are notified of any new EHE registrations
- Upon receipt of an initial EHE enquiry and upon registration, checks are completed on Mosaic (social care system) and on Capita (education database) and regular communication is maintained with professionals.
- Weekly reports are created to identify any children who have just become known to social care or Early Help and the appropriate professional is immediately contacted.
- EHE officers are up to date on all relevant safeguarding training and are confident in using the relevant tools to support an assessment of need including Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutation screening tools to support an assessment of need.
- The EHE officers understand the process for making a referral to social services and will send all information to the Multi Agency Service Hub using the Multi Agency Referral Form. This form is used to support all verbal referrals and be sent within 24 hours.
- EHE officers represent the service if a child is being assessed for a Child in Need Plan or Child Protection Plan, and produce the required information and reports for such assessment.
- The EHE service are aware of the vulnerabilities that children may face and have procedures in place to safeguard appropriately.
- The EHE officers are Prevent duty aware and discussions are had at visits in regards to content of learning, social opportunities outside the home and attendance at other settings for education to ensure they are not against British values and to ensure learners are safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Written records are made in a timely and appropriate manner, these records are shared appropriately and, where necessary with consent.
- Early help is offered to families from first contact and schools are also encouraged to offer this to families.
- Robust processes are in place if children move in and out of the area. Detailed information is exchanged with other local authorities; checks are completed with the previous school and other relevant professionals. If there is no engagement from the parent, a visit would be attempted to verify the address and social care and data checks are completed. A referral to pupil tracking would also be actioned if we are unable to ascertain the child's address.
- The EHE service manager is a member of (AEHEP) Association of Elective Home Education Professionals and attends the Midlands forum - this

provides networking opportunities and discussion around agreed good practice when new children/young people move in and out of neighbouring authorities.

- EHE training has been provided for early help, social workers health visitors and School nursing to consolidate joint working to ensure we help those children who are at risk of abuse and need early help or statutory social care involvement.

4.6 Number and percentage of closed EHE cases between 1 September 2021 and 31 December 2021 by outcome.



The graph above shows the high number of EHE registrations that have been closed. It is pleasing to see the vast majority of learners are returning to school. This can be attributed to the good working relationships we have built with families, schools and other services.

By offering more visits and weekly sessions with the emotional literacy support officer we have a greater oversight of the children and we are therefore identifying those who are receiving an unsuitable education and returning them to school in a timely and effective manner.

5. Financial information

There are no direct financial implications of the report. As a result of the increase in the number of elective home educated children an additional post was created in October 2020. This is a two year fixed term post. In August 2021 £107,000 was allocated from the Public Health Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). This has funded two additional EHE officer posts and an emotional literacy support officer - all employed as agency staff.

The allocated budget for the financial year April 2020 to March 2021 was £77,589, and the actual spend was £75,745 and this funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The total projected budget for April 2021 to March 2022 is £165,677. This includes the COMF funding.

6. Reducing Inequalities

The principal objective of the local authority is to continue to identify characteristics of good practice in addressing inequalities in elective home education, with particular attention to the following factors: gender; ethnicity; and Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Our aim is to work towards the position where the needs of all young people are addressed in school or alternative provision and parents are only electing to home educate as a positive choice rather than being evoked due to dissatisfaction/conflict with schools or a or conflict with schools.

7. Decide

Scrutiny may decide to note the current position.

The Committee may decide to request further information or assurance in respect of the progress of elective home education.

8. Respond

Any recommendations made by the Committee will be assessed against the Access and Inclusion work programme and performance board.

9. Review

Elective home education is under constant monitoring and assessment via Children's Services Performance Board.

Author:

Manni Uppal
Specialist Officer for Elective Home Education
☎ 652937
✉ manni.uppal@walsall.gov.uk

Rob Thomas
Head of Access
✉ rob.thomas@walsall.gov.uk

Early Years Sufficiency Places

17 February 2022

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe – Education and Skills

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to

- Summarise the statutory duty of the Local Authority relating to the Childcare Act (2006).
- Outline how the Local Authority has met this duty.
- Highlight key information from the draft Childcare Sufficiency Assessment undertaken.

2. Recommendations

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this informative report and decides whether more details are required.

3. Know

3.1 Policy Context

The Childcare Act (2006) requires local authorities in England to ensure a sufficiency of childcare for working parents, parents studying or training, and for disabled children. There is a requirement on local authorities to produce an annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) on the availability and sufficiency of childcare in their area. This information should be reported to elected members and made available for parents.

To meet the requirements of the Childcare Act local authorities, need to collect and publish information on the supply of provision and demand for childcare in their area. Statutory guidance provides clear indication of what must be included in the annual review, and what should be included.

3.2 Walsall's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA)

Walsall Local Authority has commissioned Hemsall's - market leaders in advising on and delivering CSA for local authorities to support the completion of this assessment. On completion of this year's CSA the Local authority will provide an annual report for members and will publish the assessment on the Family Information Service website for parents and providers for information.

3.3 Key elements of the CSA

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is a summary of the childcare position in Walsall and provides useful information for:

- Parents – to understand the types of childcare on offer in Walsall, to look specifically at the number of childcare places by provider near to the family home and help to inform decisions about childcare options for their family.

- Childcare providers – to understand the local childcare market and to help them make informed choices about future developments for their business.
- Councillors and Executive Members – to have clarity on services available for local residents and to support the decision-making process.
- Local authority officers – to have a clear picture about childcare in Walsall, to tailor support for providers and to ensure that there is a balanced childcare market meeting local demand.

To meet these requirements, Walsall undertook the following actions:

- Research to establish populations and trends and the local economy to provide a context for the CSA.
- An assessment of the supply of early years and childcare provision across the local authority area, to provide an overview of capacity and type of provision to act as a baseline for future supply trend analysis from Summer 2021 term.
- A snapshot survey of all registered early years and childcare providers as was in October 2021.
- Analysis of take-up of the early years entitlements to establish trends and take-up patterns as at January 2021.

3.4 LA support through COVID-19

Sufficiency of childcare supply has not been an issue nationally in the current environment, as demand for childcare decreased from the start of the national COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Walsall Council's Early Years teams and Family Information Service have offered support and guidance to all early years and childcare settings. Face to face support for early years and childcare settings was put on hold and the early years and childcare team continued to offer support via telephone contact and email, sharing updates from Gov.uk and Public Health England (PHE) throughout. Headteachers received weekly briefings with input from PHE and a weekly Education update. Relevant data was also shared with childcare settings. Walsall collected data on the number of children accessing the early year's entitlements on a weekly basis, to update the Department for Education and to monitor engagement.

Provider audit responses showed that the support provided by Walsall Council had been very well-received.

3.5 The impact of COVID-19 on the early years and childcare market

The short-term impact of COVID-19 was to provide access to childcare to only relatively small numbers of children (vulnerable and key worker children) between 23 March and 1 June 2020. After which, settings in England were encouraged to re-open their doors to all children. Demand for childcare did not recover to pre COVID-19 levels from 1 June 2020 and remained depressed into autumn 2020 and in 2021.

The continuation of early years funding, alongside the other Government measures introduced to support businesses (furloughing, Self-Employed Income Support, Bounce Back Loans, and business rates relief, for example) will have provided early years settings with some cushion against the full impact of COVID-19 on demand for their services.

Prior to lockdown (based on spring 2018 national data), the national childcare sector received just over a quarter of its income from free entitlement (public) funding for children aged two, three- and-four. During lockdown, and throughout autumn 2020, settings offering the early years entitlements were to a large degree, protected by the Government's commitment to continue funding at 'expected' levels.

3.6 Sufficiency in Walsall

There is currently sufficient childcare in Walsall. Overall, demand for early years and childcare provision has decreased since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, with nearly half of childcare providers (48%) reporting a decrease in demand in the provider audit. Take-up of the early years' entitlements - 15hrs from age 2 and 30hrs from age 3 has decreased, both in terms of actual numbers of children participating, and the percentage of eligible children taking up their entitlement.

Where data is available, a very high proportion of registered childcare settings in Walsall (91%) are judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Focussing on early years provision, quality overall has been increasing. An incline in the proportion of Good or Outstanding settings has risen to 99% in 2021 where it was 94% in 2018. As a comparison, across England, 97% of early years settings were judged Good or Outstanding in 2021 and 96% specifically within the West Midlands.

3.7 Availability of provision

Most registered childcare settings (61%) such as childminders and day nursery settings are open all year round. Early years places in the maintained sector (nursery schools attached to a primary school) account for around one in five full-time equivalent places for children aged 0-8 years (1,120 FTE places in the maintained sector and 4,754 Ofsted registered places).

Provision in the maintained sector is term-time only which may mean there is a lack of flexibility in terms of accessing provision during the school holidays, should parents want or need to do so. This may be a particular issue in wards that have a high proportion of their provision in the maintained sector, which would include: Blakenhall, Bloxwich East, Bloxwich West, Darlaston South, Pleck and Short Heath.

3.8 Forecasting future demand for early years and childcare

Forecasting demand for early years and childcare is not a precise science. Unlike school attendance, Early Years childcare is not compulsory, and parents may choose not to access their early years' entitlements or use formal childcare, for a variety of reasons. As discussed, demand for early years and childcare has decreased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In part this will be attributable to parents and carers changing their working patterns (furlough, working from home, redundancies etc.) and in part to anxieties associated with COVID-19 and sending children to childcare settings. There has been a decrease in the number of children accessing the early years' provision within Walsall.

3.9 New homes developments

Between 2020-2021 and 2025-2026 there are plans to develop around 4,074 new homes across Walsall (source: Walsall Planning January 2022). Wards with a high number of planned new homes (over 10% of total) include Blakenhall, Birchills, Leamore and St Matthews. Where there are a significant number of new homes

planned, demand for early years and childcare may increase as the local population increases.

3.10 Potential future sufficiency issues

Data has been analysed to identify wards that have a potential future sufficiency risk based on the composition of current provision, current childcare ratio (supply relative to overall supply) and new homes developments over the period 2020-2026 from the Black Country Development Plan.

Across Walsall, the average childcare ratio (0-8 years) is estimated at 0.14, or roughly one place for every 7.1 children in this age range.

Blakenhall	Childcare ratio lower than average and a high proportion of places delivered in the maintained sector. This may affect parental choice for provision outside term-time. High number of new homes planned over the next five years (19.3% of total planned). The key consideration in this ward is new homes developments and the impact on the local population and childcare demand.
Birchills Leamore	Childcare ratio lower than average and a higher-than-average number of places in childminding. High number of new homes planned over the next five years (13.2% of total planned). The key consideration in this ward is new homes developments and the impact on the local population and childcare demand.
Bloxwich East	Very low childcare ratio with a high proportion of places delivered in the maintained sector. The majority of childcare provision (0-8 years) in this ward is in the maintained sector which may limit parental choice.
Pheasey Park Farm	A below average childcare ratio and a higher than average percentage of places in childminding. If decreases in the number of childminders continue this may result in sufficiency issues in this ward. The overall childcare ratio is very low.
Pleck	A below average childcare ratio and a high proportion of places delivered in the maintained sector. This may affect parental choice for provision outside term-time. A relatively high number of new homes planned 2020-2026 (8.4% of total planned).
St Matthews	A high number of new homes planned (13.4% of total planned). St Matthews has the highest childcare ratio 0-8 currently with a relatively high number of places in day nursery provision.
Pelsall	A slightly lower average childcare ratio and a higher-than-average percentage of places in childminding. There is provision available in day nursery and pre-school provision, but this may impact on affordability of childcare.

3.11 Future planning

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has set out some key sufficiency areas to review, the boroughs they affect and the recommendations for each area.

Sufficiency area	Issue	Areas potentially impacted	Comment	Recommendations
Provision of before and after school and/or holiday care.	There is little data held on childcare provision for school-aged children. The Childcare Sufficiency Duty relates to children aged 0-14 years (and up to 18 for disabled children).	Borough-wide	The Government's Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) provides funding to local authorities for free holiday places for eligible children during prescribed school holidays. Funding for HAF has been announced for the three-year period 2022-2025. HAF guidance encourages making places available to fee paying children in addition to free places for eligible children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen links with the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) to better understand provision for school-aged children. Identify opportunities to ensure out of school providers are active partners in delivery. • Consider an audit of out of school provision (non-Ofsted-registered, stand-alone and school-based) to understand capacity for older children and to identify opportunities to extend the reach of Government schemes to support parents to reduce the costs of childcare (Tax Free Childcare and the childcare element of Universal Credit). • Promote vacant places through the FIS to support parents who are experiencing difficulties in finding appropriate childcare.

<p>Childcare sustainability and sufficiency</p>	<p>Childminders The number of childminders has decreased in recent years. Analysis of provider audit data identified childminding provision as potentially more vulnerable in terms of a lower overall percentage of settings withheld cash reserves, lower levels of income derived from the early year's entitlements and lower confidence in the financial sustainability of the setting in the next six to 12 months.</p> <p>Childcare markets with a high proportion of childminders may be negatively impacted if the trend to declining numbers continues.</p> <p>Demand Providers report a decrease in demand for childcare, and in particular paid-for childcare, which may impact on financial sustainability if demand continues to be lower than pre-COVID-19 levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birchills Leamore • Aldridge North and Walsall Wood • Pelsall • Pheasey Park Farm • Darlaston South • Willenhall North • Willenhall South 	<p>Provider sustainability, increased demand as a result of new homes developments and current levels of childcare inter-relate to inform an assessment of sufficiency.</p> <p>The risk to sufficiency is higher where there is a relatively low level of childcare, combined with a high level of new homes developments and potential sustainability concerns for exiting provision (for example, a relatively high proportion of childcare delivered by childminders).</p> <p>A high proportion of provider audit respondents reported concerns around income levels and financial</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with planning to ensure increased demand for early years and childcare is recognised in areas where there are high number of new homes planned. Focus particularly in areas with a currently low childcare ratio. • Review capacity within wards with a higher than average reliance on childminding to identify where the market could absorb closures (if required) • Assess parental demand via a parent/carer survey mid to late 2022, to identify if and how demand has changed. • Re-assess market capacity with specific reference to identifying capacity for different age ranges (0-2, 2, 3-4, 5-10 and 11+). This is particularly important for 0-4 years to support allocation of development funding. This granular detail will also support S106 applications. • Share information from the CSA with providers and encourage providers to review their business models and demand patterns, signposting to business support and advice. • Provide all settings with access to business planning tools that support financial planning (for example, National Day Nurseries Association [NDNA Early Years Business Zone: https://www.earlyyearsbusinesszone.org.uk/], Hemsall's Business Map [https://foundationyears.org.uk/2021/01/hempsalls-business-map-for-early-years-providers/]).
<p>Current low childcare ratios</p>	<p>A low childcare ratio indicates areas where current provision per head of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blakenhall • Birchills Leamore 	<p>levels and financial</p>	

	population (0-8 years) is lower than the borough average.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloxwich East • Pelsall • Pheasey Park Farm • Palfry • Pleck 	sustainability of resilience.	
New homes developments	<p>There are plans to develop 4,074 new homes across Walsall between 2020/2021 and 2025/2026.</p> <p>New homes developments will most likely impact on demand for childcare provision.</p>	<p>Wards with the highest number of new homes proposals across the five-year period include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blakenhall • Birchills Leamore • St Matthews. 		
Children with SEND	There is some evidence of an increase in the number of children with SEND attending childcare settings. 11% of provider audit respondents reported an increase in the attendance rate of children with SEND	All areas, particularly evident amongst school respondents to the provider audit.		Continue to monitor the need for additional support for children with SEND, both in settings and to access settings and work with them to plan and deliver support to settings.
Workforce recruitment and retention	Recruitment of suitably qualified staff was a concern for 27% of provider audit respondents.		Workforce recruitment and retention is recognised nationally as a concern which can impact on the stability of the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local training providers to identify suitable training opportunities • Work with Jobcentre Plus to promote childcare as a viable employment option.

<p>Take-up of the early years entitlements, and specifically the two-year-old entitlement.</p>	<p>Take-up of the two-year-old early years entitlement fell to 56% of the eligible population in January 2021 from 71% in 2020. Whilst take-up has decreased nationally, the decrease is much more marked in Walsall.</p>	<p>Borough-wide</p>	<p>The two-year-old entitlement supports the most vulnerable children to access good quality early years provision and support their cognitive outcomes and social skills.</p> <p>The early year's entitlements are a source of revenue for local authorities as funding is received from central Government which LAs broker to early years settings. LAs are allowed to retain a small percentage of Government funding which supports funding for early years teams and other functions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a deep dive to understand the drivers impacting on take-up of the two-year-old entitlement. This could include consultation with parents and carers and childcare providers, and analysing take-up data to identify any trends in terms of geography or type of provision. • Promote the benefits of the early years entitlements to key stakeholders (for example, health, social care etc.) to ensure they are supporting vulnerable families to access their entitlement. • Promote the three- and four-year-old early year's entitlements (universal and 30 hours childcare) to maximise take-up.
<p>Delivering the childcare sufficiency duty</p>	<p>To meet sufficiency duties under sections 6 of the Childcare Act (2006), the LA needs to undertake an annual childcare sufficiency assessment and report to members (making the information available to parents).</p>	<p>Borough-wide and broken down to a sub-locality level.</p>	<p>Annual childcare sufficiency assessment requires a number of inter-related activities and data.</p>	<p>As a minimum the following are recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the early years and childcare market at least annually to establish maximum capacity. Use the 2021 childcare sufficiency assessment as a baseline against which changes to the market (in terms of composition and number of places) can be monitored.

			<p>The process benefits from being embedded across teams, with a central coordinator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a provider audit at least annually to establish how places are being deployed across age groups, and levels of take-up. Within the audit review fees charged, any changes to patterns of demand and any unmet childcare demands. • Review when childcare is available and assess if availability matches parental need (in terms of hours and weeks of availability). • Monitor recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff to the sector. Understand any barriers being faced to support targeted intervention should this be required. • Consider consultation with parents and carers to establish the extent to which their childcare needs are being met, and to identify any unmet needs. • Capture any enquiries to the Family Information Service (FIS) that inform an assessment of sufficiency (for example, requests for support finding or paying for childcare). • Consider the impact of new homes developments as these will change annually. Work with planning to assess the impact on local populations and need for childcare.
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Overall, Walsall currently has sufficient childcare to meet demand and to offer families childcare choices, however, as a local authority we will continue to:

- Provide accurate, accessible, up to date, online information for childcare providers and families on all aspects of childcare and early education.
- Support families by offering a brokerage service to make links with providers where needed.
- Work with providers to share childcare market trend data.
- Offer business support to childcare providers to help maintain a sustainable childcare sector in Walsall Council
- Develop systems and processes to make it easier for providers to share their capacity, vacancy and service information with the local authority, and ultimately parents.
- Refresh marketing materials for parents to ensure all are aware of the financial support available for childcare.
- Explore different ways of engaging parents and encouraging take up of funded early education programmes.

4. Decide

Scrutiny may decide to note the current position.

The Committee may decide to request that a further briefing on Early Years Sufficiency be offered to all elected members.

5. Respond

Early Years place planning activity will take into account sufficiency needs identified. Training and support will be signposted to providers.

6. Review

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment will be completed annually in line with the statutory requirement for local authorities.

The actions and outcomes within this report are under constant monitoring and assessment and any significant changes would be further reported.

Authors:

Rob Thomas, Head of Access – rob.thomas@walsall.gov.uk

Alex Groom, School Organisation Manager – alex.groom@walsall.gov.uk

Right for Children Transformation Programme

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe

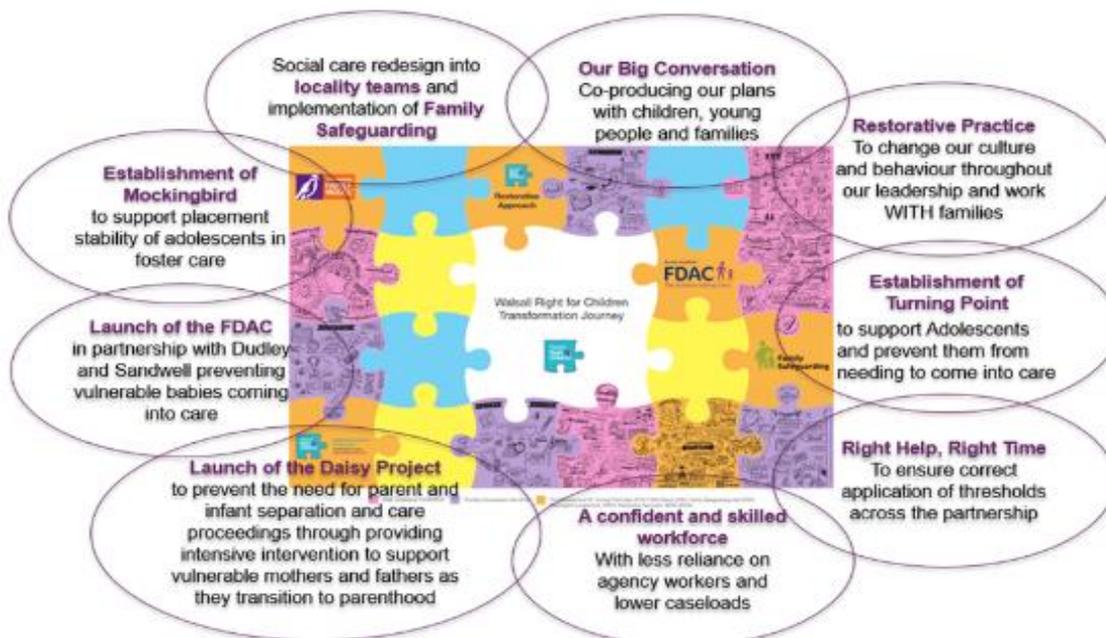
Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on progress against our Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) Transformation vision and Programme.

Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C), launched in September 2018, is a whole system forward thinking transformation programme driven by the following principles:

- Get the basics right for children
- Strong leadership informed by 'what works' setting our direction
- Mirror the lives and challenges of real families
- Implement changes that work for Walsall children and families, underpinned by evidence
- Prioritise the stability of children in all aspects of their lives – design out 'handover' and 'pass on'
- Develop a culture of being proud of what we achieve through a relentless focus on quality, impact and outcomes

The first phase of the WR4C focussed on transformation across Council delivered Children's Services in ensuring we were supporting the right children, at the right time, in the right place for as long as it is needed.



As our internal services have embedded we started to focus on Co-ordinating and influencing the establishment of a mature WR4C partnership platform to drive the delivery of the WR4C vision.

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

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

Reason for scrutiny:

To provide members with a progress update of our 'Walsall Right For Children' Transformation Programme.

Recommendations:

For progress to be noted

Background papers:

Scrutiny reports presented on October 2019, February 2020, March 2021

Resource and legal considerations:

Transformation programme is aligned to the Councils Medium Term Financial Outlook, and sets to achieve benefits to the value of £10M over the three year term by March 2023.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

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

1. People: throughout the programme we have and will continue to work with children, young people and their families to ensure they have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.
2. Internal Focus: The programme is focussed on a whole system change to ensure that within Children's Services we are as efficient and effective as we can be.
3. Children: The primarily objective of the programme is to ensure that the right support is in place so that children can have the best start and are safe from harm, happy, health and learning well
4. Communities: Our transformation programme will connect and strengthen relationships with Walsall communities and ensure that they are resilient with all housing needs for children and young people being met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

Citizen impact:

Our WR4C transformation contributes towards the Council's target to increase Customer satisfaction through:

- Children, young people and families' voices help shape our service design and development through our WR4C Big conversation programme.
- Our restorative approach means we work with families and therefore families understand better why we are involved and will feel that they play an active part in the plan of support
- Our work through the CAM work stream should ensure information easier to access and therefore customers will be able to self-service where relevant.
- We will be providing timely, relevant and seamless support from WBC

Environmental impact:

Not applicable for this report.

Performance management:

We developed a WR4C outcome framework - This framework sets out the five key priorities and the individual outcomes within each of them alongside the indicators that will be used to measure progress against each of the outcomes and ultimately whether they have been achieved and the quality assurance questions that need to be asked alongside the data to fully understand progress.

The framework aims to utilise existing service KPI's but view them through a cross directorate lens to measure our system wide success in achieving our transformation priorities.

We also recognise that our WR4C transformation can only be achieved through collaboration with partners internally and externally and this document sets out how the WR4C transformation programme links in with the wider aims of the Walsall Together partnership and Walsall Council's Corporate priorities and PROUD Transformation Programme. It also outlines how the monitoring of the outcomes will be governed in line with the existing performance and quality governance arrangements.

Reducing inequalities:

The aim of our 'Right for Children' programme is to ensure that all children have the right support, in the right place, at the right time, for as long as it is needed to enable them to be safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best.

Our Outcome framework has a cross focus on equality and includes the following:

- a) To incorporate equality monitoring into existing processes considering all applicable 'protected characteristics'
- b) To monitor interventions/activities to progress towards improved equality of access and opportunity
- c) To monitor interventions/activities to progress towards improved equality of outcomes
- d) To use equality monitoring to develop and improve interventions/activities and to act where inequalities exist

Consultation:

Throughout the transformation programme there has been consultation with our workforce, children, young people and their families and partners most notably , our Big Conversation

Contact Officer:

Isabel Vanderheeren
Lead on Transformation for Children Services.



01922 650434

Isabel.vanderheeren@walsall.gov.uk

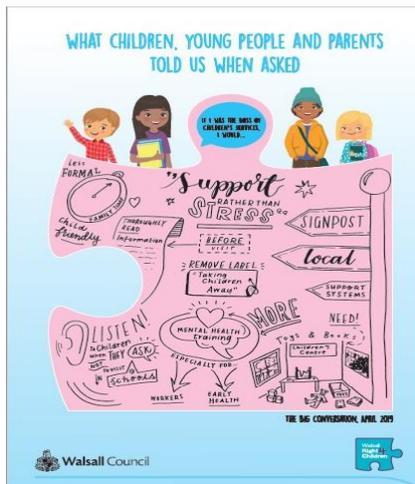
Report

1. Our Big Conversation – voices of children, young people and their families at the heart of decision making and influencing our partnership development

Our Big Conversation is a fundamental part of our Walsall Right 4 Children transformation Journey. It is an ongoing programme of activities, aimed at talking with and listening to children, young people and parents about the services we deliver and what is important to them and acting on what they say.

We seek out opportunities to collaborate with them on aspects of day to day practice and transformation.

Since 2018 we have created a number of Big Conversation practice tools to collaborate and gather feedback. We have used the information to:



- redesign social care;
- shape the locality partnership offer;
- develop our approach to reducing exclusions;
- create our new support hub for adolescents;
- help us to understand children and young people's experiences during 'lockdown' and inform our reset plans including the development of an emotional and wellbeing partnership framework to support children to make a successful transition back into school.

Summer – daily Conversation

During the summer the Local Authority and its partners took time to talk with children and parents to better understand;

- Their lived experience of growing up in Walsall?
- The impact of COVID on their lives, their peers and their community
- What might help improve their lived experience now
- What their ambitions are for the future
- What might be barriers to achieving their future ambition
- What help or support could help remove these barriers to achieve their ambition

During the w/c 16th and 23rd of August we asked anyone working with children to reflect on one question a day and let us know their views, thoughts and ideas.

During this time we heard from 323 children aged 5 -18 year. A high proportion of children taking part in the daily conversation are entitled to Free School Meals.

In addition, we sent a survey to parents of children taking part in our Holiday Activity and Food programme and asked them:

- What do you like most about living in the borough of Walsall?
- What don't you like about living in the borough of Walsall?
- What would make living in the borough of Walsall better for you and your family?

102 parents returned the survey

See appendix 1 – Daily Conversation overview.

What have we done with the information so far?

The detailed analysis has informed the refreshed Early Help Strategy and the Child Neglect Strategy.

Following our daily conversation, we are working with a group of 13 children and young people (and expanding) who have had support from different part of children's services to explore the outcome of the daily conversations and how they want to take this forward, with a focus on how we can ensure that children have easy access to early help and support. We have secured £10K from the PCC to develop this work.

This piece of work will form a key part of the development of the Walsall Children and Young people Alliance and has been integrated to the development of a Common Moral Purpose document.

Relevant information and themes has been presented to other key partnership boards to influence their strategic thinking, direction and delivery, including and we are tracking the actions taken as a result of the

- Walsall Together – Community Resilience work stream
- Safer Community Partnership
- Safeguarding Partnership

2. Development of a Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance

In January 2021 we undertook a review of strategic partnership working around the agenda of children, young people and families. This review was undertaken in collaboration with the CCG, Walsall Health Trust, the Safeguarding Partnership and the Safer Walsall Partnership and raised some critical issues around the effectiveness of the partnership as well as some drivers for change, opportunities and solutions.

As a result all partner collectively agreed to a series of externally facilitated strategic partnership workshops to explore more effective strategic collaboration and decision making across the partnership in relation to children, young people and family business.

At the last workshop in November 2022 partners signed up to the establishment of a "Making Walsall Right for Children Strategic Alliance", critical to developing new ways of thinking and new ways of working, driven by the voices of children and young people and **working to one moral purpose - to regularly consider how the lived experience of children and young people in Walsall can be improved.**

The Alliance will have governance links with the Walsall Learning Alliance and the Black Country Children and Young people Partnership Board

The Alliance is currently developing their plan on a page – see appendix 2

3. Strengthening the partnership with the voluntary and community sector helping us to build our locality offer.

Using the Council's resilient community work stream we have secured opportunities to strengthen the capacity and capability of the voluntary sector as part of our locality model. This partnership has enabled us to better meet the needs of Walsall's diverse community, redirect demand appropriately and ensure community 'scaffolding' is available to sustain change for vulnerable families following statutory intervention.

This work started in during the initial pandemic wave in 2020 with the development of a proactive, well co-ordinated, and targeted summer provision with significant contributions

from the voluntary and community sector that helped vulnerable families to continue to receive support, enabling a successful transition back to education and the prevention of increased referrals to Children's Services in September.

This work provided a strong learning platform for the development and delivery of our Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) funded from £1.7M investment by the DfE in 2021. We developed, in a very tight timescale and challenging COVID context, an innovative face-to-face and online programme of activities and healthy food hampers, delivered by 47 local providers throughout Easter, summer and Christmas 2021, to 3000 children (21% of our FSM cohort).

We used this opportunity strategically to build capacity and optimise capability across the Voluntary Sector, strengthen reach and engagement with communities and to proactively identify and respond to issues relating to poverty, neglect, exploitation and mental health.

Through a stronger relationship with the voluntary sector we have been able to develop access to a network of community buildings for children services team to use for a range of activities providing opportunity through their work to connect families they work with, with community resources.

4. Improving access to information for children, young people and families.

We used one of the Proud capabilities to optimise Customer Access Management in exploring how we can reduce / divert unnecessary demand through our children services front door by providing better access to information and services to help parents be more resilient.

The initial stage of this work has been completed with the redesign and relaunch of the Early Help webpages in October 2021 to support parents, carers, children and young people and professionals to access help and support on a self-serve basis. Webpage have been developed in consultation with parents and children and continues to be improved based on feedback.

[Early Help \(walsall.gov.uk\)](https://www.walsall.gov.uk/early-help)

5. Partnership with schools in providing the Right Help at the Right Time for children

As part of locality multi-agency partnership work we have put in support to strengthen the locality offer in ensuring children get the right help at the right time, this includes:

Time 2 Talk

During COVID 19 Our Early Help localities introduced a partnership 'Time 2 Talk', a platform to enable partners across sectors to keep connected and support each other through these unprecedented circumstances. This approach valued by partners with increasing attendance started to bring significant benefits to children, young people and their families by creating the space for local services to understand local families and their needs, identify local services and also local gaps in provision. Partners agreed to further develop this platform and embedded into the core locality Early Help support offer.

'Time 2 Talk' has proved invaluable for us while we are navigating the changes coming thick and fast during the COVID 19 pandemic. We have felt connected to colleagues in our area and supported. The sessions are relaxed and focussed, with useful information and an opportunity to share amongst ourselves our experiences and local issues. They

have been timely and much welcomed. Restorative Practice in action!" Feedback from Health partner

Based on this the partnership have strengthen with new members committing to the locality work. The groups now meet bi-monthly to look at needs, share experience, to support each other, consider joint training opportunities and connectivity based on needs of local families and are working at bringing together each partners data to really understand needs and develop and share the early Help local offer, with specific focus on 'helping at the earliest opportunity'. Each have developed their own action plans to show progression and impact.

'Session 1 started well as we felt included on sharing the issues/barriers we currently face in school. If I'm being completely honest, I didn't think that our points raised were going to go anywhere as that is what has happened in previous meetings - not necessarily in children's services - but generally across all areas of education. It was a great meeting yesterday, really purposeful and good to share, put names to faces, etc. and get some contact details. When our partner shared the findings from the last meeting and that each area would be addressed in subsequent meetings - I thought it was fab!! Feedback form School

Supervision for Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL's) in school

Walsall was successful in securing a place on the research project with The What Works Centre for Social care to develop supervision for DSL's.

The aim of the programme is to ensure children in schools and their families get help as soon as a problem emerges, to prevent things getting worse and/or an escalation in intervention – ensuring the right support is provided at the right time, in the right way. It is hoped that this will divert families away from statutory social work intervention and offer an alternative which is more proportionate. Where statutory intervention is necessary, it is hoped that delays will be avoided, and referrals will accurately identify safeguarding concerns.

Schools in Walsall were randomly selected by the research programme to take part in the pilot. There are 43 Primaries and 11 Secondaries that were chosen of which 38 Primaries are taking up the offer and 2 of the 11 Secondaries.

The Primaries have reflective supervision and the secondaries have group supervision. These are offered every 6 weeks for primaries and every 4 weeks for the secondaries.



Children and young people voices on what it is like growing up in Walsall to help our Strategic Thinking and Doing



Walsall Council

Page 45 of 78 **PROUD** OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

About children and young people living in Walsall

Walsall has a **population** of **286,716**

69,375 of whom are **children aged 0-17**

The number of children and young people aged 0-17 is projected to rise to 71,822 by 2030

● 0-17 ● 18 and over



Almost a quarter of the population are children and young people
2020 mid-year population estimates

● BME ● White



Almost a third of Children are from BME backgrounds 2011 Census

Almost a quarter of our children have English as an additional language

Children and young people have more health challenges than their peers

In 2019/20 hospital admissions for accidental or deliberate injury in 0-14 year olds in Walsall were lower than regional and national rates.

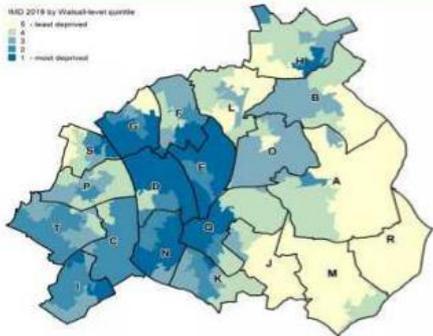
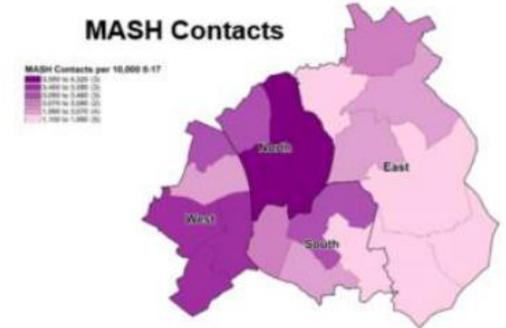
In 2019/20 hospital admissions for accidental or deliberate injury in 0-14 year olds in Walsall were lower than regional and national rates.

Walsall is the 19th most deprived Local Authority in the country (IDACI)



39% of children live in poverty after housing costs Campaign for Children in Poverty – May 2021

Need is unevenly distributed across the borough



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Children Voices need to be at the heart of our thinking and doing by:



LISTENING



REFLECTING



RESPONDING



LISTENING – what did we do?

Three key pieces of engagement work undertaken with children and young people growing up in Walsall provided us with valuable and rich information that help us to understand their lived experience and the things Walsall partnerships need to consider in ensuring all children in Walsall can be happy, healthy, safe and learning well.

The key pieces of work are:

- An ethnographic Study on ‘growing up in Walsall’ – commissioned by Public Health - November 2020
- Big Conversation – Summer Daily Conversations programme – undertaking by Children’s Services during Summer 2021.
- The Big Ask/ The Big Answer undertaken by the children commissioner for England – September 2021

A separate report is available on each pieces of work.



Growing up in Walsall – public health report

Walsall Council commissioned M-E-L Research to undertake a detailed ethnographic study to help them understand what it is like to be a young person growing up in Walsall.

The Council were particularly interested in hearing from girls and boys aged between 11-18 years old (i.e. from year 6 of primary school and throughout secondary school), who had different educational needs, came from different parts of the Borough, required different levels of parental input and came from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Walsall Council commissioned M-E-L Research to conduct up to ten in-depth ethnographic case studies with children and young people. The ethnography study focused on the young person's experience of growing up in Walsall, their challenges, hopes, dreams and fears, what support they access in comparison to what they need, and their recommendations to help make Walsall a better place to grow up

The findings from the research were used to inform the Council's Public Health 2020 and 2021 annual reports and its 'Walsall Best Start 4Life' (BS4L) strategy.

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Big Conversation – Summer Daily Conversation 2021

Children's Service created the **Big Conversation** programme as part of its Walsall Right 4 Children transformation journey - a programme of activities, aimed at listening to and acting on what children and families are saying about the services we deliver as well as seeking out opportunities to collaborate with them on aspects of day to day practice and / or transformation.

During the Summer the Local Authority and its partners took time to talk to 323 children aged 5 to 18 and 102 parents with the aim to better understand;

- Their lived experience of growing up in Walsall?
- The impact of COVID on their lives, their peers and their community
- What might help improve their lived experience now
- What their ambitions are for the future
- What might be barriers to achieving their future ambition
- What help or support could help remove these barriers to achieve their ambition

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Big ask/big response

The Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza DBE, launched the Big Ask in 2021 as a means of hearing the voices of as many children in England as possible.

She undertook this as one of her first tasks on becoming Children's Commissioner. Every school and Local Authority were asked to engage with over half a million children aged 6-17 responded to the survey.

Over 1,700 children and young people in Walsall responded to the questionnaire. This data was made available to help our local developments.



REFLECTING on what children told us

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The best thing

- Family
- Friends
- Somewhere to play
- Good school or learning opportunities
- Sense of community

"Walsall has a good community – everyone seems to know each other and get on with their neighbours. It is also very multicultural. I have seen lots of weddings in different cultures and religions taking place – hearing the music and seeing all the colourful outfits makes me happy."

What do children say about growing up in Walsall?

"It's home because it's where my family lives"

Not so good

- Too much crime
- Too many homeless people
- Too many people drinking on the street or in the park
- Not enough green space/areas to play
- The house they live in
- How their community looks – litter, vandalism
- Not feeling safe on the street
- More opportunities for children and young people to be involved in decision making

"I think Walsall is quite dirty. I have seen empty beer cans, syringes and empty condom wrappers in Silverdale Park, but I think the Arboretum is much cleaner and safer! The Town Centre also has a good variety of food shops, and a cinema!"

What do children say needs to happen to make Walsall the best place to grow up?

- More place to go
- More events – especially music
- More friendly neighbourhoods
- More green spaces
- More green streets
- Support home for homeless people
- More support around mental health for children/young people
- Support around poverty
- More people that we can trust
- More listening to children and young people
- Clean up the rubbish
 - More police

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What does Being Happy mean to children?

Big Ask told us that

7% of children in Walsall are **unhappy with their lives overall** England-wide the total unhappy with their lives was 9%.

- The biggest cause of unhappiness was **the choice of things to do in my local area** with 19.5% (1,687 children) of 9-17 year olds responding to the survey unhappy
- The second biggest cause of unhappiness for 9-17 year old respondents was **my mental health** at 17%
- **Life at school and college** ranked third at 14%
- Unhappiness with **progress in education** ranked fifth at 9.4%
- Unhappiness over **personal safety** ranked as one of the lowest causes of unhappiness at 3%
- For children aged 6-7, who responded from Walsall the factors that made them unhappy included **how much I can play** (6.3%), **my family life** (4%), **the places I can have fun** (3.4%) and **education** came fourth in the things that caused unhappiness.

“Walsall has a good community – everyone seems to know each other and get on with their neighbours. It is also very multicultural. I have seen lots of weddings in different cultures and religions taking place – hearing the music and seeing all the colourful outfits makes me happy.”

“The main thing that concerns me whilst growing up in Walsall is the gangs. Sometimes when I go into town, I see lots of ‘dodgy’ people. This makes me nervous as I think they may follow me and something bad might happen to me. I don’t really feel safe walking somewhere on my own as there can be big groups of children.”

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What does learning well mean to children?

Key drivers for doing well at school are

- To earn good money
- Having a nice car
- Owning a nice house

Getting a good job

Going to university

When I grow up I want to...
SET HIGH ASPIRATIONS

Following my dreams

Getting good grades

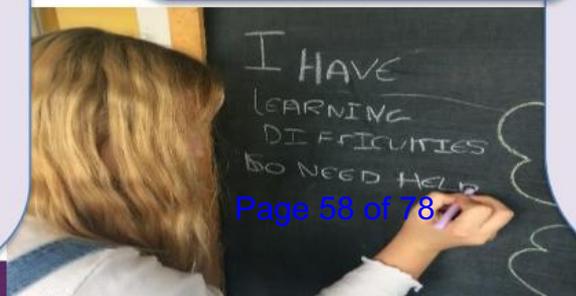
What children say they are responsible for to help them learn better

- Positive mind set
- Working hard
- listening
- Not being disruptive or distracted in class
- Being on time
- Asking for help
- Not giving up on dreams.



Other things that could help with learning better

- Good role models
- Good friendships
- Being more active
- Good sleep routines
- Getting feedback on your achievements
- Different teaching styles to meet different learning needs
- Additional support for children who need it
- Early identification of SEND and additional support
- Supportive parents/adults.
- Funding to go to university



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What does feeling safe means to children?



What children say about what keeps them safe



"I feel safe in the area where I live because I know the people and they know me and my family."

"The main thing that concerns me whilst growing up in Walsall is the gangs. Sometimes when I go into town, I see lots of 'dodgy' people. This makes me nervous as I think they may follow me and something bad might happen to me. I don't really feel safe walking somewhere on my own as there can be big groups of children"

"Feeling safe is knowing that nothing can happen to you and you just knowing you're not going to get hurt and everything will be fine, surrounded by your family and friends."

What do children say about their future

Big Ask told us that

- As to what was important for their future as 6-8 year olds 68% said **getting on well with their current family**; 66% said **being healthy and active** and 65% said a **good job or career**. 45% saw a good education as being important to their future which implies some in this age group don't correlate a good education with a good job or career.
- As to what was important for their future as 6-8 year olds 68% said **getting on well with their current family**; 66% said **being healthy and active** and 65% said a **good job or career**. 45% saw a good education as being important to their future which implies some in this age group don't correlate a good education with a good job or career.
- For 9-17 year olds the most important issue for their futures was a **good job** (72%) (69% England-wide). This was followed by: **having enough money to buy the things I need** (59%), **having a good education** (55%), **having good friends** (53%) and **getting on well with my current family** (33%).
- **Good mental health** came fifth in terms of things important to their futures for 7-19 year old respondents in Walsall. Interesting **physical health** came in eighth at 31%.
- **Living in a nice area** was important for 11% of respondents and being part of a **good local community** was rated by only 4.6% as being important.
- 14% of respondents aged 9-17 in Walsall **were not worried about anything**. Of the key worries for that age group 39% were worried about **not having enough money to buy the things I need**, 35% were worried about **having a good job or career**; 34% were worried about a **healthy environment** and 32% were worried about their **mental health**. 19% were worried about **having a good education**.
- When asked whether they thought they would have a better life than their parents 53% thought that they **would have a better life**. 9% however thought that it was **unlikely that they would have a better life than their parents** (8% Walsall North, 11% Aldridge-Brownhills, 9.49% Walsall South).

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What do children say about their future

- When asked about what concerned young people in the future, the most frequently mentioned topics were:
 - **doing well at school**
 - **passing exams**
 - **securing future employment.**

“In the future, I would like to pass my Level 3 Sports course and my GCSE Maths and English. After this, I would like to become a Sports Development Officer or PE teacher. In order to achieve these things, I would like some work experience (as getting a job is very important to me). I am worried about putting together my CV and going for interviews (due to my Autism) so it would be good if Walsall Council could give me a chance without having to jump through ‘hoops’ to get there. I think the council should give kids more opportunities to get work experience, real work experience that gets you a job.”

“I am currently studying A Level Sociology and English at Bloxwich Academy. After I finish this, I would like to train to become a support worker which specialises in young children or teenagers. I do not think young people always get the help they need whilst they are growing up.”

“I would really like to go on University visits but only the top performing classes are allowed on these. I think if the school gave the other classes the opportunity too, more kids (including me) would feel more inspired to work harder and get better grades.”

What children would do if they were the boss to ensure that all children are happy, healthy, safe and learning well:



What children told us in 2019 about what they would do if they were the boss of Children's Services is not much different to what they told us now:

- Listen to children's views more and take notice and take action.
- Listen to the people who know me well (parents, carers, key workers)
- Invest more in mental health services
- Provide the right support to keep families together
- Make sure children have places to go where they have trusted adults they can talk to and provide good help
- Provide free transport, school uniforms and food
- Help as many people as possible

"I would like the Council and other organisations to make Walsall a more enjoyable place to grow up."

"Finally, I would like The Council to listen to young people and involve teenagers in decision making going forwards"

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**REFLECTING
on what
parents told us
(102 responses from
parents who's children
attended Summer HAF
programme)**

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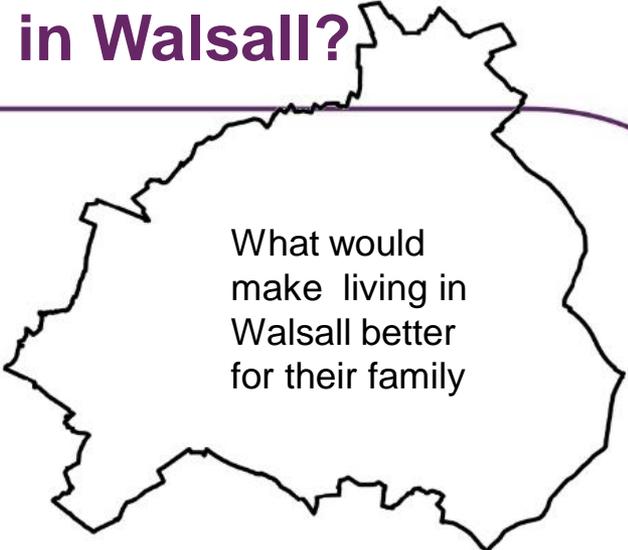
What do parents say about living in Walsall?

The best thing

- 61% close to friends and family
- 51% parks and open spaces
- 42% it's where I grew up
- 35% good schools and colleges
- 32% health facilities
- 32% affordable housing
- 31% good transport links
- 28% leisure facilities
- 28% feel safe
- 22% the shops
- 21% diverse community
- 19% community spirit

What they don't like about living in Walsall

- Crime rate – some indication parents feel its getting worse, 'not feeling safe'
- Nothing to do for young people
- No safe places for children to play
- Racism
- No information on what services or what's on in different communities
- The way some parks and places in the borough look – 'mess', 'litter', 'run down' 'look of the town centre', 'unclean'
- Too many rough sleepers
- Drug taking and drinking in the street
- Lack of support around children with SEN



What would make living in Walsall better for their family

- More activities/safe spaces for children and young people including children with SEND
- More police
- Clean-up and make-over of certain areas – like Town centre
- Community projects/ better community interaction
- More green spaces



RESPONDING

- Feedback from the Daily Conversation is influencing ways of thinking, strategic direction and multi-agency working around the Early Help Strategy, Neglect Strategy, Resilient Community Strategy, Safer Walsall Partnership and the Walsall Learning Alliance.
- We will monitor on a quarterly basis how each partnership group is considering young people's views into their planning and actions taken as a result.
- We are now in the process of working with children and young people to develop a WR4C Shadow Board to develop a response to the Daily Conversation – to consider what actions they think partners should take as a result and what actions they would like to take forward.
- The WR4C Shadow Board will take part in the planning and delivery of:
 - ✓ Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) staff and young people's awards evening with a focus on what good help looks like for young people
 - ✓ A digital resource to be used across the Early Help partnership; this resource, led by young people, will share information advice and guidance on Early Help partnership services and shared on Walsall Childrens services website.

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Walsall Children, Young People & Families Strategic Alliance

Making Walsall Right 4 Children

Working together to ensure CHILDREN have the best possible start, are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.

What we'll do

One common moral purpose

Create and maintain a strategic alliance which will regularly consider how the lived experience of children and young people in Walsall can be improved.



Building a strong alliance

We are committed to working together in a way where we put the need of children and families above systems and process.

Clear priorities

- Making Walsall right WITH children – listening, acting, collaborating
- Best start in life for all children – before and after birth
- Attaining and Achieving – linked to Learning Alliance priorities
- Keeping Children Safe
- Keeping children with and connected to their family and community
- No child left behind – tackling poverty and inequalities across all areas
- Think Family – we will build relationships with families and provide help and support within their communities
- Mitigating against impact ongoing pandemic - key themes around poverty, mental health and wellbeing, etc continue to come up)
- Make Walsall a better place to grow and develop – look and feel nice with opportunities to thrive



How we'll do it

Right Help Right Time

We will focus on offering support in a proactive way, using innovative ways to make services easy to access and ensuring all our vulnerable children have access to a trusted adult who feels confident in navigating or providing the right support.

Build resilient families

We will build community led help by building networks and circles of support that help and strengthen families in difficult moments before problems escalate to the point where a formal intervention is needed.

Strong stable Skilled workforce

We will provide effective support across our collective workforce to ensure we build a consistent strength based high quality of practice across all our work with children and young people.

Big Conversation

We will have a ongoing programme of activities, aimed at talking with and listening to children, young people and parents about the services we deliver and what is important to them to drive forward our strategic thinking and doing.

Evidence based decision making/continuous improvement

We will provide strong leadership informed by 'what works' setting our direction. We will implement changes that work for Walsall children and families and underpinned by evidence.

Locality Working/offer

We will focus on connecting practitioners with communities, ensuring the needs of each community is well understood and collectively we have the right support in the right way to meet this need.

Artwork of 'My Walsall' to be included



How we'll know we've made a difference

- Children and young people tell us Walsall is a great place to grow up, they feel connected to their community and feel positive about their future. When they need support services are easy to access and services provided are of good quality (annual Survey).
- Children will tell us they are involved in decision making that affects their lives.
- Failure demand will be reduced – NFA rate, DNA rate and re-referral rates will reduce
- It will be easy to recruit and retain skilled staff. Workforce will tell us they enjoy working for Walsall, they feel supported to do their job effectively and they feel they making a difference for children, young people and their families.
- The locality profile tells us that outcomes for children are improving and the disproportional difference in outcomes for any groups of children and young is closing.

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Work programme 2021/22

Main agenda items	14/09/21	14/10/21	25/11/21	13/01/22	17/02/22	31/03/22
Schools Update	X					
SEND Update	X					
Establishment of Working Group	X					
Special provision Update		X				
Post-16 Skills and Employability		X				
Q2 Finance report and Budget Proposals			X			
Admissions/Attendance Figures			X			
Vulnerable pupils update			X			
Capital Programme/Pupil placed planning				X		
Schools Update				X		
SEND Update				X		
Walsall Right for Children Update					X	
Early Years Sufficiency/Places					X	
Special Provision Review					X	
Elective Home Education					X	
Changes to the Funding Formula						X
Admissions/Attendance Figures						X
Walsall Right for Children Update						X
Working Group Report						X

NB: The Outturn, Q1 and Q3 Finance reports to be by email circulation to the Committee in July and September 2021, and February 2022 respectively.



Walsall Council

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

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

6 February 2022

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 helen.owen@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 (helen.owen@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. [Page 70 of 78](#)

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
MARCH 2022 TO JUNE 2022 (6.2.22)**

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
88/21 (1.11.21)	Corporate Plan 2021/22: To note the Quarter 3 performance against the Measures of Success in the Corporate Plan 2021/22	Cabinet Non-key decision	Stephen Gunther Stephen.gunther@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Councillor Bird	16 March 2022
78/21 (1.11.21)	Upgrade of education IT systems: Authority to procure software as a service (SaaS) cloud based education system via relevant procurement frameworks and associated costs	Cabinet Key decision	Helena Kucharczyk Helena.kucharczyk@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Councillor Bird	16 March 2022
3/22 (10.1.22)	Walsall Council's Digital Strategy 2022-2025 To approve a three-year strategic strategy for the Digital ambitions and vision for Walsall Council.	Cabinet Key decision	Luke Morgan Luke.Morgan@walsall.gov.uk 01922 658305	Internal Services	Councillor Bird	16 March 2022
89/22 (6.2.22)	Walsall Proud Programme – Next Steps: Moving Forward with Transformation and Change: To note the achievements of the Proud Programme to date; agree the benefits and milestones for the next phase; and agree to extend the strategic partnership core contract for one year until March 2023	Cabinet Key decision	Cabinet report 24 October 2018 Caroline Brom Caroline.brom@walsall.gov.uk	Corporate Management Team and Internal Services	Councillor Bird	16 March 2022

86/21 (1.11.21)	Award of new contract(s) for Disabled Facility building works and other Housing related Works and Services: To approve the award of new contracts for the period 1 march 2022 to 22 February 2027 <i>Report in two parts. Private report contains commercially sensitive information</i>	Cabinet Key decision Private session	David Lockwood David.lockwood@walsall.gov.uk Bill Weston William.weston@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Councillor Andrew	16 March 2022
22/21 (8.3.21)	Walsall Council Housing Allocations Policy: To update the policy which sets the principles for the allocation of affordable housing	Cabinet Key decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Public, Housing Associations, Internal Services	Councillor Andrew	16 March 2022
90/22 (6.2.22)	West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme 2022/23: To approve the WM Strategic Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme.	Cabinet Key decision	Matt Crowton Strategic Transportation Manager 07944 783 934 Matt.crowton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Councillor Andrew	16 March 2022
77/21 (4.10.21)	Supported Housing Repair and Maintenance Contract: To approve the award of the contract.	Cabinet	Ian Lister ian.lister@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Councillor Statham	16 March 2022
46/21 (2.8.21)	Emotional Wellbeing and Therapeutic Support for Children and Young People in need: To approve entering into an appropriate agreement with the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to provide therapeutic services for children and young people in need, including those who are looked after.	Cabinet Key decision	David DeMay David.demay@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services, Walsall CCG and Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Councillor Wilson	16 March 2022

74/21 (4.10.21)	COVID Memorial Garden: To consider options for a COVID Memorial Garden	Cabinet Key decision	Dave Brown Dave.brown@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services. Stakeholders dependent upon options being developed	Councillor Butler	16 March 2022
91/22 (6.2.22)	Walsall Borough Bonfire Night - Future Proposals Decision to be made on the future provision and location(s) of Walsall Bonfire Night celebrations	Cabinet Non-key	Jaki Brunton-Douglas Jaki.brunton-douglas@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Councillor Butler	16 March 2022
4/22 (10.1.22)	Early years funding formula: To approve the Early years Formula, as agreed by Schools Forum, to be used for the allocation of funding to early years providers in Walsall	Cabinet	Neil Millward Neil.millward@walsall.gov.uk Cabinet report 8 February 2017 & 17 March 2021; Walsall Schools Forum report 20 September 2016 & 9 March 2021; Government's response to the early years consultation and fact sheet	Internal Services Schools Forum	Councillor Towe	16 March 2022
92/22 (6.2.22)	Revenue and Benefit Processing System: Consolidation of agreements relating to Council Tax, Business Rates Housing Benefits, Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payments.	Cabinet Key decision	Mark Fearn	Internal Services	Councillor Andrew	20 April 2022

93/22 (6.2.22)	Safer Streets Programme – delivery of pilot areas To update Cabinet on progress of the programme and seek approval for the direction of travel and next steps	Cabinet Non-key decision	Paul Gordon	Internal Services	Councillor Perry	20 April 2022
94/22 (6.2.22)	Adult Social Care Charging Policy: To consider and approve the revised Charging Policy, within ASC, following completion of the Public Consultation.	Cabinet Key decision	Karen Jackson	Internal Services	Councillor Pedley	20 April 2022

**BLACK COUNTRY
EXECUTIVE JOINT COMMITTEE**

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - PUBLISHED UP TO JUNE 2022

Black Country Executive Joint Committee Collaboration Agreement – Deed of Variation

Key Decision to be considered:	Approval of the proposed amendments, as highlighted, to the Collaboration Agreement covering the removal of the Advisory Board and revised Black Country Executive Joint Committee governance, and Governance Principles: Enterprise Zones, included as Appendix 1 to this report.
Date first entered into the plan	02 August 2021
Contact Officer	Simon Neilson Simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk
Main consultees	Walsall Council
Date Item to be considered	30 March 2022

Local Growth Fund (LGF) Programme changes

Project Name	Hatherton Street Phase 2
Key Decision to be considered	Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Jessups Brothers Ltd, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Hatherton Street Phase 2 project with delivery to continue in the 2021/22 financial year. Note that change request relates to a change in match funding and outputs.
Date first entered into the plan	01 November 2021
Contact Officer	Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk
Main consultees	Walsall Council
Date Item to be considered	30 March 2022

Project Name**i9 Wolverhampton**

Key Decision to be considered

Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Ion Projects Limited, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the i9 Wolverhampton project with delivery to continue in the 2021/22 financial year.

Note that change request relates to a change in outputs.

Date first entered into the plan

01 November 2021

Contact Officer

Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk

Main consultees

Walsall Council

Date Item to be considered

30 March 2022

Project Name**Dudley Advanced Construction Centre**

Key Decision to be considered

Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Dudley College, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Dudley Advanced Construction Centre project with delivery to continue in the 2022/23 financial year.

Note that change request relates to a change in outputs

Date first entered into the plan

06 April 2021

Contact Officer

Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk

Main consultees

Walsall Council

Date Item to be considered

27 April 2022

Project Name**Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills**

Key Decision to be considered

Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with the University of Wolverhampton, to deliver the Local

Date first entered into the plan
Contact Officer
Main consultees

Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills (ECMS) project with delivery to continue in the 2022/23 financial year.
Note that change request relates to a change in outputs
06 September 2021
Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk
Walsall Council

Date Item to be considered 27 April 2022

Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF) Programme changes

Project Name

Sandwell Housing Gap Funding

Key Decision to be considered

Approval for the Accountable Body for the Land and Property Investment Fund (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Sandwell Council, to deliver the Land & Property Investment Fund (LPIF), funded elements of the Sandwell Housing Gap Funding project with delivery to continue in the 2022/23 financial year.

Date first entered into the plan
Contact Officer
Main consultees

10 January 2022
Tony McGovern Tony.McGovern@sandwell.gov.uk
Sandwell Council

Date Item to be considered

30 March 2022

Project Name

Globe House, Walsall

Key Decision to be considered

Approval for the Accountable Body for the Land and Property Investment Fund (Walsall Council) to proceed to enter into a Grant Agreement with Globe Property Limited, to deliver the Land & Property Investment Fund (LPIF), funded elements of the Globe House project with delivery to commence in the 2022/23 financial year.

Date first entered into the plan
Contact Officer
Main consultees

06 December 2021
Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk
Walsall Council

Date Item to be considered 30 March 2022

Black Country Digital Fund

Project Name **Black Country Digital Strategy**

Key Decision to be considered Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with the Black Country Consortium Ltd to increase its funding allocation to further develop the Black Country Digital Strategy, initially funded from the Growing Places revenue budget, and where applicable and eligible, recharged to the capital Black Country Digital Fund.

Date first entered into the plan 7 February 2022
Contact Officer Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk
Main consultees Walsall Council

Date Item to be considered 27 April 2022