

Right for Children Transformation programme

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Tim Wilson. Children Social Care

Executive Summary:

Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C), launched in September 2018, is a whole system forward thinking transformation programme of which the first phase 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. The outcome of this transformation leading to outstanding practice and improved outcomes for children and young people in Walsall was recognised by Ofsted in November 2021.

As we were embedding our internal services 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 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.

The report provides an overview of the work done the journey so far in the development of a Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance.

Reason for scrutiny:

The report provides an overview and assurance of the work we are doing with partners through the development of development of a Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance to secure better outcomes for children growing up in Walsall

Recommendations:

The report to be noted.

Background papers:

Resource and legal considerations:

Not applicable to this report

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

The 'Right for Children' transformation programme will contribute to a number of our Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

1. People: The transformation programme will aim 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 focussing 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 main focus of the transformation 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:

We will listen to children, young people and their family's current experiences and understand and learn from when services make a difference and when they do not. As users of our service, children and families are best placed to tell us what it feels like to live in Walsall and to be in need of help and support. Through our WR4C Big Conversation we will continue to work in true collaboration with children, young people and families to develop and deliver our transformation programme).

Environmental impact:

Not applicable for this report

Performance management:

The Alliance will develop a clear Outcomes framework to measure the success of the strategic developments.

Reducing inequalities:

The aim of our 'Right for Children' Transformation 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.

Consultation:

The Alliance has committed to a programme of consultation and co-production with children, young people and families.

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Report

1. Context

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.

2. The journey so far

Over a series of 3 workshops key stakeholders including Children Services, Public Health, CCG, Walsall Health care trust, Resilient Communities, Police, Safeguarding Partnership we set out to:

- Establish our vision for more effective partnership working in relation to the business of securing better outcomes for children and families
- Create a collectively understand the context for change including:
 - What the enablers are
 - What the barriers are
- Have a collective understanding of the issues we are trying to resolve in order to secure better outcomes for children and their families
- Agree priorities

The workshop raised following key reflections that guided our thinking in the development of the Alliance:

- Meeting the needs of children, young people and family's needs a mature strategic partnership approach. This has been complex, especially with ongoing regional and local organisational change agenda's driven by budget reductions, national change agenda's e.g. academisation, Social Care review, Supporting People, integrated care agenda, etc

The pandemic has enabled partners to come together with a common purpose, find solutions to get us through the challenges and support communities impacted by COVID19, establishing new ways of working that connects us better and make decisions in a timely way to support the most vulnerable.

As we reset our activities in the context of the new normal it has given us lots of challenges as a partnership to reflect, check our moral compasses and rethink:

- What is important?
 - What are we leaving behind?
 - What are we retaining and why, i.e. to what purpose?
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- Partners agreed that we needed to work towards collective accountability through developing a systems leadership using an Alliance framework achieved through:
 - influence and ‘nudge’, not formal power
 - alignment around common vision or purpose: improved outcomes for service users
 - a focus on the outcomes and results, not the process
 - strong but robust and honest relationships
 - a mind set, rather than specific actions and behaviours
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- At the last workshop in November 2022 partners signed up to the establishment of a “Walsall Children and Young People 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.**

3. Children and young people’s voice at the Centre of Strategic Thinking and Doing

There has been 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 – undertaken by Children’s Services during Summer 2021.
- The Big Ask/ The Big Answer undertaken by the children commissioner for England – September 2021

A detailed overview can be found in Appendix 2

3. Governance

- USP of the Alliance and who does it specifically need to work with will be key. We need to make sure there is the right interface with other boards and other groups. The Alliance is not just a coordination role but is the voice and advocate for children.
- Today’s children are upstream adults, and a lot of the parents out there today are a product of the local schooling system so, our schools are an important part of this collective model. It was therefore agreed that the Walsall Learning Alliance will feed into the children and young people Alliance ensuring that wider system issues affecting children’s learning is picked up.

- There is a need to understanding that there is a world outside of Walsall and need to have a close working relationship with our Black Country partners to get support right for all children across the Black Country.
As a result the work achieved in Walsall on the Learning Alliance and the CYP Alliance was shared with the Black Country Alliance is considered a replicating the model for a coherent systemic approach to improving the public sector offer for the young people across all 4 Black Country local areas. This would support the possibility of shared solutions to the more complex challenges facing each of the 4 localities. If successful, this group would sit above the Walsall Alliance and act as the children and young people key group advising the ICS Board in the new NHS arrangements.

4. Membership of the Children and Young People Alliance

The development of the Alliance has included strategic leaders across key organisations including Walsall CCG, Walsall Health Trust, Children's Services, Walsall Together, Neighbourhood Police, Resilient communities, Safeguarding partnership, Public health, Black Country Health Care, WHG and Chair of the Learning Alliance.

5. Next steps

- A draft plan on a page (appendix2) was developed outlining the Alliances strategic vision, strategic priorities, how we will achieve the priorities and how we know we will have made a difference – see appendix1 out for consultation with:
 - Corporate Parenting board
 - Walsall Together
 - Safeguarding partnership
 - Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Safer Walsall Partnership
- A network of key people across all organisation who are involved with facilitating engagement and co-production in Walsall with children and young people has been developed. This will enable coordinated and strategic approach to maximise information and dialogue through existing opportunities as well as identification of gaps and barriers. This work may result in a young people conference later this year to enable designated time to bring children and young people together to reflect on key issues and consider co production opportunities to drive system change.
- The Staff College will to continue to be involved as a critical friend bringing in in best practice, research evidence and healthy challenge. This will be for the duration of the first 12 months while the partnership is maturing and allowing us to move forward in a evidenced based way.