

Walsall Youth Service

# Peer Consultancy

## Visit Report



**Walsall**  
Council



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### Summary

The We Are Walsall 2040 (WAW2040) strategy was informed by an extensive programme of engagement, analysis and consultation with residents, youth & community groups and businesses across the borough and sets out a number of ambitious and transformative aims. Walsall Children & Young People's Alliance (WCYPA) is a themed partnership that delivers elements of that vision specifically for children, young people and families and which identifies themes of safety and access to trusted adults as priorities for children and young people.

In 2025, the Council announced a new youth hub in Walsall town centre, converting a retail unit into a youth-space offering free Wi-Fi, gaming, arts and crafts, a chill-out area and staffed by youth workers. The new hub is part of a larger regeneration package for Walsall town centre, with stated aims including tackling crime and providing "safe, welcoming spaces" for children and young people (Express & Star, 4/3/25).

The Walsall Youth Offer and Participation Team (WYOPT) consists of six full-time Youth Workers (including two JNC-qualified), a Senior Practitioner, two Youth Support Apprentices and a Parenting Practitioner, led by a JNC-qualified Team Manager. The team is based across Family Hubs in all four localities across the Walsall borough, the Town Centre Open Access Provision, and also delivers detached services. It also positions experienced youth & community development officers in co-ordinating roles within Family Help, Young Carers and Youth Justice functions.

Since 2024, targeted investment has strengthened the Walsall Youth Offer and Participation Team, increasing their capacity to engage with children and young people meaningfully, respond to their needs, and ensure they have a clear voice in shaping services and opportunities within the borough, but there are challenges as well as areas of good practice.

### Peer Support Process

WYOPT accepted an invitation to be part of a collaborative process, facilitated by the National Youth Agency (NYA), with colleagues from Havering Youth Service and Lewisham Youth Service. Together these representatives are in a community of practice offering peer consultancy as part of the DCMS funded Peer Review project. This "light touch" collaborative offer, distinct from the more formal and intense full

Peer Review, is designed to facilitate co-exploration of key matters of interest each local authority brings to the group. It seeks to enable engaged professionals to find responses to key matters in their own locality through peer support and discussion.

The visit to Walsall by the NYA team is part of this process. The function of this element is to create this report, which in turn aims to support Walsall colleagues in their understanding of the areas of interest they have highlighted; the development of an adolescent outcomes' framework to measure progress, and on the inclusion of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and to support their further work within the Peer Consultancy group and process.

## **Key messages**

### **WYOPT are well positioned within the wider functions of the Local Authority.**

WYOPT receives referrals from a range of internal as well as external stakeholders, most notably schools and the 'Building a Safer Tomorrow Today' Prevention Panel (Home Office funded pathfinder in Walsall funded to 31/03/27). These relationships are founded on an evidence-based approach to targeted intervention and support the early identification of need, particularly for children and young people at risk of exclusion, exploitation or offending. Reporting via Sentinel and the MOSAIC Management Information system allow Youth Workers to effectively record and share impact with key partners.

### **WYOPT are relatively agile and able to respond/adapt quickly.**

The positioning of the Open Access offer in the Town Centre between 3.30 – 6 pm and on a short term let basis allows flexibility, to move according to the needs, particularly as the Town centre undergoes its planned regeneration. The long-term plan is that this open access offer will continue as the new, longer-term youth hub is opened towards the end of 2026 and fits neatly with a Contextual Safeguarding model. While currently limited in scope this presents a great opportunity for growth if WYOPT can continue to invest in the leadership roles of the Youth Work Apprentices, Youth Council members, and the children and young people who attend services.

At the time of the visit WYOPT were planning a full needs assessment, which we understand is now being developed and will enable the service to better respond, with this flexibility. Equally, it will fit with and feed into the developing draft youth offer.

### **WYOPT staff offer insight, experience and quality resources to support children and young people**

The creative use of HAF has enabled the service to respond effectively to an increased demand from children and young people who may otherwise experience social isolation and declining mental health and wellbeing. This demand has been influenced by wider economic pressures, including delays within Education, Health and Care needs assessment processes.

## **Walsall is a forward-looking authority**

Walsall has used recent Families First for Children Pathfinder funding to research and test innovative and creative methods to develop its Youth & Community Offer. The use of a range evidenced-based programmes was a strong model, offering clear options of what the team can provide. The team would recommend that to consolidate the approach, continue maintaining a good balance of trainee staff working alongside senior workers to share experiences and support, ensuring trainees develop the crucial relational practice that is unique to youth work. This will help to evidence that youth work practices are vital to delivering outcomes for young people.

Another example of forward-looking innovations can be seen in the team linking into wider initiatives such as Families First. The programme has aimed to integrate Children's Social Care and Family Help functions for more effective safeguarding.

## **Use of relevant Adolescent Outcomes Frameworks**

WYOPT appears to be forward thinking in its approach to measuring outcomes, and as such is ahead of many other areas in this regard.

There is a need for further exploration of tools such as the [Framework of Outcomes](#) and approaches to linking outcome measures with council priorities, including demonstrating impact on hard outcomes (e.g., reductions in antisocial behaviour) and help safeguard the service from budget cuts.

## **The offer sits well with the aspirations of the current Government**

The recently published 10-year strategy document Youth Matters emphasises efforts to reduce barriers to trusted adults in safe spaces as a way of improving support for transitions into adulthood. Early delivery outputs include investment in Workforce Development, Youth Hubs and Open Access Youth Spaces. These align well with Walsall's work and ambitions. The team saw evidence of strong partnerships (within what was possible to observe) and would encourage Walsall to continue developing this and engaging with a wide range of partners to ensure representation of volunteers and workforce going forward.

## **Developing the voice of children and young people with SEN/D**

The visit team welcomed developing approaches to identifying and embedding SEN/D needs within youth voice structures, including plans to develop the Walsall Youth Collaborative. The team didn't get a full sense of where specific needs for young people with SEN/D were being identified, but this could be owing to the limited scope of the short visit.

## **Accessibility audits and adaptations to facilities (inc. associated Safe Spaces)**

In particular, the plan around developing safer spaces for children and children and young people in Walsall is a valuable approach, though similar programmes struggle with the challenge of this, e.g. personnel turnover in venues. They also recommend ensuring that this is co-produced with children and young people so they can input where they believe is safe to go and what changes would make other places safer.

It is recognised that these strengths position WYOPT well to develop an Adolescent Outcomes Framework, enabling the service to measure progress effectively and ensure the inclusion of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

## **Next Steps**

This report offers observations gained through discussions with Walsall colleagues, their partners and some of the volunteers and children and young people who attended the Youth Hub during the site visit (27.11.25). It is limited in scope and does not represent all the observations found during the visit or through accompanying documentation. The aim of the visit and reporting process is to support Walsall colleagues with their engagement with the Peer Consultancy community of practice and in understanding their current position.

Walsall colleagues are invited to explore their areas of interest with others in the Peer Consultancy group to support the development of their plans.

The logo graphic consists of a large light blue trapezoidal shape on the left, and a dark purple triangular shape on the right that overlaps the bottom-right corner of the light blue shape.

**National Youth Agency**

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