

Walsall Best Start in Life 2026–2040

A whole-system plan so every child is ready to learn.

Our Ambition

Walsall will be a child friendly borough, where every baby, child and family is supported to thrive from pregnancy through early childhood and beyond. By acting as one system and investing early, we will ensure that all children are safe, healthy, confident and ready to learn, with inequalities reduced and life chances no longer determined by where a child grows up.

Our 2028 milestone



74.7%

of children in Walsall will reach good level of development by the end of reception.

62.9%

of children eligible for free school meals will reach good levels of development

Guiding Principle



- Support for all families, with extra reach and intensity where need is greatest
- Reducing inequalities without creating parallel systems
- Going where the silence is, not waiting for needs escalating and crisis



Why This Matters



- Early years are the foundation for later outcomes across Walsall's Children and Young People Strategy priorities.
- Walsall's needs profile shows inequalities by place, with deprivation patterns and variable engagement in universal services (including cohorts who remain "silent").
- The system has a strong locality model to build on e.g. Family Hubs, FFfC, strong VSCE and strong Early Years provision

Our Pillars to success

Pillar 1: Confident workforce, inclusive culture and consistent practice

- A skilled, confident and trauma-informed workforce across health, education, early years and VCSE
- Shared values, language and expectations for how we support families
- Consistent use of evidence-based approaches from pregnancy through early childhood

Pillar 2. Inclusive learning pathways for parents, carers & communities

- Clear, accessible learning and support pathways for parents and carers
- Strong focus on early relationships, language development and infant feeding
- Community-based and culturally responsive approaches that build confidence and capability

Pillar 3. Collaborative working, warm handovers & every contact counts

- Strong partnership working across services and sectors
- Joined-up pathways with clear roles and responsibilities
- Every interaction used as an opportunity to identify need and offer help

Pillar 4. Targeted response to need

- Early identification of emerging need using shared intelligence
- Proportionate, timely support that increases in intensity where required
- Targeted outreach to families least likely to engage with universal services

Cross cutting pillar: Engagement, participation & respectful co-production

Ongoing parent/carers voice and lived experience shaping design, delivery and review — especially for least heard groups

Cross-cutting Pillar — System & operational change

Remove system barriers (information sharing, aligned commissioning, integrated pathways) so families experience "one system".

Cross cutting pillar: Data & evidence-led practice

Shared intelligence, visibility of who is missing, outcomes tracking, and learning loops so decisions are timely and accountable