



Walsall Council

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10 March 2025 at 6:00PM

**Meeting Venue: Conference room 2, Walsall Council House, Lichfield Street,
Walsall**

[Livestream Link](#)

Membership:

Councillor A. Hicken (Chair)
Councillor E. Morgan (Vice-Chair)
Councillor J. Chapman
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor T. Jukes
Councillor N. Latham
Councillor S. Nasreen
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham
Vacancy
Vacancy

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor S. Elson – Children's Services

Quorum:

4 Members

Democratic Services, The Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW
Contact name: Nikki Gough Telephone: 01922 654767 Email: nikki.gough@walsall.gov.uk
[Walsall Council Website](#)

**If you are disabled and require help to and from the meeting room,
please contact the person above**

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

Part 1 – Public Session

- 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. Minutes of the previous meeting**
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2025.
(Enclosed, Pages 1 - 6)
- 4. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**
To receive declarations of interest or the party whip from Members in respect of items on the agenda.
- 5. 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.
- 6. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**
To receive an overview of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Walsall.
(To Follow)
- 7. Child Sexual Abuse**
An overview of the practice, response and support for children and young people who have been identified to be at risk of or experienced Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) within the borough.
(Enclosed, Pages 7 -14)
- 8. Areas of focus – 2024/25**
To review the areas of focus for 2024-25.
(Enclosed, Pages 15 - 16)
- 9. Forward Plan**
To receive the latest Walsall Council Executive Forward Plan.
(Enclosed, Pages 17- 23)
- 10. Recommendations Tracker**
To consider progress on recommendations from the previous meeting.
(Enclosed, Pages 24 - 25)
- 11. Date of next meeting**
To note that the date of the next meeting will be on 8 April 2025.

Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

28 January 2025, 6:00pm

In Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members present:

Councillor A. Hicken (Chair)
Councillor E. Morgan (Vice-Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes
Councillor N. Latham
Councillor S. Nasreen (left at 7.25pm)
Councillor L. Rattigan

Portfolio Holder

Councillor S. Elson

Officers present:

C. Male	Executive Director – Children’s Services
R. Homer	Director (Children’s Social Work)
D. Ricketts	Early Help South and Central Team Manager
I. Vanderheeren	Director (Early Help)
T. Coller	Strategic Business Partner
N. Gough	Democratic Services Officer

120 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Statham and J. Chapman.

121 **Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

122 **Declarations of interest and party whip**

No declarations of interest or party whip were received.

123 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

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

124 **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 December 2024 were considered.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

125 **Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2028/29 – Update**

The Strategic Business Partner spoke to a training presentation, which was requested at the previous meeting. The presentation provided an overview of the Early Help and Children's Social Care Budget Overview 2024-25. Members were provided with detail of the net budget for Early Help and Children's Social Care including the budget setting process.

The Strategic Business Partner presented the report (annexed) and highlighted the salient points. The Committee was informed that an updated draft budget position reported to Cabinet on 15 January 2025 presented a balanced budget for 2025/26; this was an £11.05m improvement since October 2024 as a result of a favourable provisional settlement and a number of changes as a result of focused management action to identify further savings and mitigate growth and demand pressures.

A period of questioning and discussion ensued. Officers clarified the reasons for the use of agency staff.

Resolved:

- 1. The Committee noted that the draft revenue budget for 2025/26 was now balanced,**
- 2. The committee noted the key announcements from the provisional settlement as published by government on 18th December 2024 including the impact of these announcements on services under the remit of this committee.**

126 **Walsall Young Carers Service Spotlight**

The Early Help South and Central Team Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Committee was informed that young carers were children and young people under the age of 18 who provided regular and ongoing care and emotional support to a family member who was physically or mentally disabled or misused substances. Members were informed that Walsall Council employed two young carer practitioners.

The services offered to young carers were described, which included:

- Assessments and reviews.
- Delivery of young carer groups and activities.
- Coordination of monthly partnership action group.
- Delivery of Young Carers national awareness week.
- Bespoke holiday activities for young carers.

In Walsall there were currently 363 young carers on record, which was in line with national data. It was stressed that the identification of young carers continued to

increase each year due to awareness campaigns and additional resource within the team.

There then ensued a period of discussion and questioning. Officers responded to describe efforts to identify more young carers, this including working with Partners to increase awareness. It was also done through identification via adult services and the all-age carers strategy.

Consideration was given to the location and need for transportation to 'My Place'. Officers stated that work was being done to identify a minibus to support young carers. Youth clubs were held fortnightly at My Place, and appropriate care was put in place for the people that young people cared for. Further to challenge, Officers stated that attendance at youth clubs was average, and an update would be provided to scrutiny on the barriers in access and how these could be overcome.

The Committee was reassured that mental health needs were included in the young carers assessment, and the team linked in with health partners, and contacted schools. There were a range of positive activities which needed building on, this included bereavement support.

A discussion was held on the home education of young carers and the impact this could have on the child. Officers stated that this would be picked up as part of the home education and young carer assessment. A transition project aimed to assist young carers starting secondary school. The attendance levels of young carers was tracked to ensure it was at a good level.

The Committee was informed that as part of the all-age strategy an action plan had been developed with a child first focus. The identification of young carers was a national issue and would continue to be a focus for the Council. It was important to remove barriers and stigma for this group.

Officers provided clarification that the health needs of young carers were considered as part of the young carers assessment and were pursued through the school nursing service. It was noted that the Council did not have parental responsibility for young carers and so did not have legal jurisdiction. If there were concerns that a child's were not being met, then these would be dealt with in the same way as any other child.

Challenge was provided in relation to the end of a fixed term young carer coordinator post. Officers stated that this post had been funded on a temporary basis and had expediated work with the team, the service would continue with business as normal.

Resolved that:

- 1. The Walsall Young Carers Services Spotlight report be noted.**
- 2. The direction of travel for the Early Help Young Carers Services be supported.**
- 3. The progress planned improvements and ongoing awareness raising be supported by the Committee.**

127 Families First for Children Wave Two Pathfinder Programme

The Director (Children's Social Work) introduced the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report provided an update on the progress of the Families First for Children Wave Two Pathfinder and the key developments and areas of work undertaken to deliver the programme to date. It was noted that Walsall had already demonstrated strong innovation in the delivery of its services and that this programme built on this. Families First implemented the fundamental changes identified to help families sooner, drawing on the strengths of family and community networks. The establishment of the Family Help Service had been a key priority – teams were working in a multi-disciplinary way.

The Committee was provided with detail of partnership reform, and it was noted that there was a good level of investment from partners in Families First, and strong engagement with the Programme Board. Two Headteachers had taken on the roles of part-time Strategic Education Leads. Officers provided further detail on the planned activity.

There the ensued a period of questioning. Officers clarified that the ethos of families first was one a multi-disciplinary one. A discussion was held around children remaining within the family, and Officers stated that consideration would be given as to how family networks could be strengthened, and support be provided.

Members were advised that a performance framework would monitor outcomes and the number of children coming into care. It was noted that there may be unintended consequences of the programme. Officers described locality analysis and work underway to understand how to best work in partnerships with communities and best deliver services. Partnerships with the third sector were important to maximise opportunities with families. It was stressed that a focus on identifying the right person to deliver support to families was important to best meet needs at the earliest opportunity.

Resolved

- 1. That the Families First for Children Wave Two Pathfinder Programme was noted.**
- 2. That an update on the Families First for Children Wave Two Pathfinder Programme be provided to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the new municipal year.**

128 Family Hubs- Progress and Sustainability Planning.

The Director (Early Help) presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Committee was advised that the report provided a progress update of key developments, outcomes and highlights of Walsall Family Hubs Programme. The programme built on the strong foundations of the locality model with the ambition of creating a one stop shop for families. Four co-located family hubs and 10

community family hubs were launched in July 2023. Funding had been Funding had been focused on Pregnancy to ages 0-2 years and those born during covid to reduce potential inequalities.

The programme was delivered against Department of Education national expectations, with 240 out of 248 expectations delivered in Walsall (as at December 2024). Consideration was given to the national expectations that Walsall had not been able to meet, the reasons why and how these expectations could be progressed if needed. Challenge was given as to the repercussions of this, Officers clarified that the reasons for this had been communicated with Government and there was a recognition and acceptance that to achieve all 248 expectations was unrealistic in such a short period of time. Further consideration was given to the achievements in Walsall that had not been possible in other geographical areas, such as registration of births in localities.

The Committee was informed that the next steps were:

- The development of an outcomes framework which would measure the impact of the programme (initial observations suggested an increase in parental confidence).
- Embed Family Hubs services.
- A focus on inequalities (year 4).
- Place base integrated commissioning.

There then ensued a period of questioning. In response to Member queries, Officers confirmed that there were sessions aimed at Fathers, and for whom there was a dedicated parenting practitioner funded by the programme in the Local Authority.

The Committee was advised that to date this had been a Local Authority driven programme and to be sustainable place-based commissioning was needed through the partnership.

Resolved

That

- 1. The Family Hubs- Progress and Sustainability Planning report be noted and the Committee acknowledge progress made.**
- 2. The Committee support the recommendations and the plan for sustainability beyond the programme funding.**

129 Areas of Focus – 2024 – 2025

Members agreed that the issue of children's mental health was of significance, and that the Committee should receive an item on CAMHS at a future meeting. It was

agreed that the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be invited due to the relevance to their remit.

Resolved

- 1. That the areas of focus was noted.**
- 2. An item on CAMHS be considered at the next meeting.**
- 3. A finance training item be added to the first meeting of the new municipal year.**

130 Forward Plans

The forward plans were considered by the Committee.

Resolved

That the forward plans were noted.

131 Recommendation Tracker

The Committee received the tracker of recommendations from previous meetings, including progress made and outstanding items.

[Annexed]

Resolved:

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

132 Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be 10 March 2025.

There being no further business this meeting was terminated at 8.30 pm.

Signed:

Date:

10th March 2025

Child Sexual Abuse

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Childrens Social care

1. Aim

This report provides an overview of the current landscape of practice, response and support for children and young people who have been identified to be at risk of or experienced Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) within the borough.

The report details the national and regional picture with regarding recognising, responding and supporting these children, young people and families. In June 2023, CSA became a priority within Walsall Safeguarding Partnership following the conclusion of 'Operation Satchel' which culminated in the convictions of 21 adults on CSA charges, from several families. In September 2023 the Partnership formed a multi-agency sub-group, consisting of representatives from Police, Probation, Health and Local Authority Children's Services. This Safeguarding Partnership sub-group is currently progressing the 6 recommendations that have been drawn from the national review published in November 2024. The report outlines in detail the work currently being undertaken alongside the next steps to ensure a robust partnership response to safeguarding children and young people.

2. Recommendations

- Scrutiny and Overview Committee to have oversight of the refreshed CSA strategy which will be informed by the findings from focus groups and the CSA conference and implementation of the regional pathway and finding from the current research underway (Summer 2025)
- Scrutiny and Overview Committee to request an update with regard strategic and practice responses, to seek assurance that children who present a risk of sexual harm are identified and safeguarded from harm in a timely way (Summer 2025)
- To note the on-going work and progress that the CSA subgroup has made to date.

3. Report detail – know

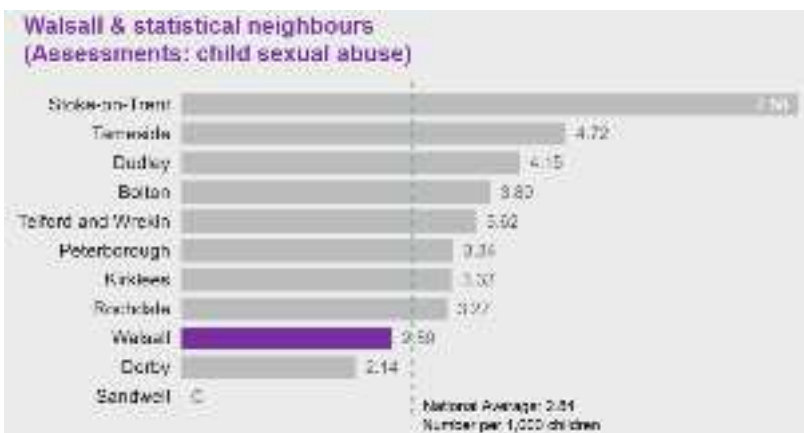
3.1 Context

Child Sexual abuse (CSA) remains a serious issue, affecting thousands of children each year, with an estimated 1 in 20 children in the UK experiencing CSA. CSA can take many forms, including physical contact, exploitation, grooming, and online abuse. CSA has long-lasting emotional and psychological harm. Despite increased awareness and efforts to protect children, many abuse remains undetected or unreported.

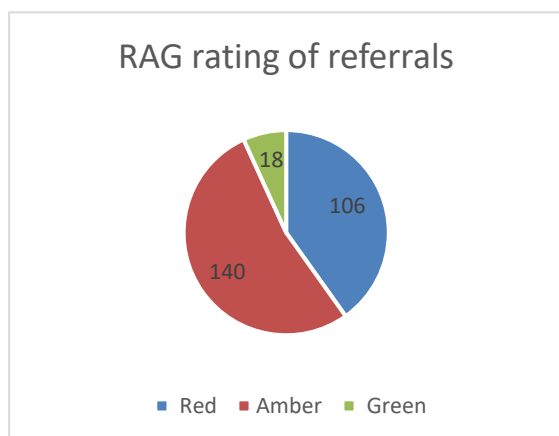


The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published “I wanted them all to notice” Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment in November 2024. The findings of this national review highlight a systemic failure across all services to recognise and respond when children are at risk of, or are already, being sexually abused by someone in their family environment.

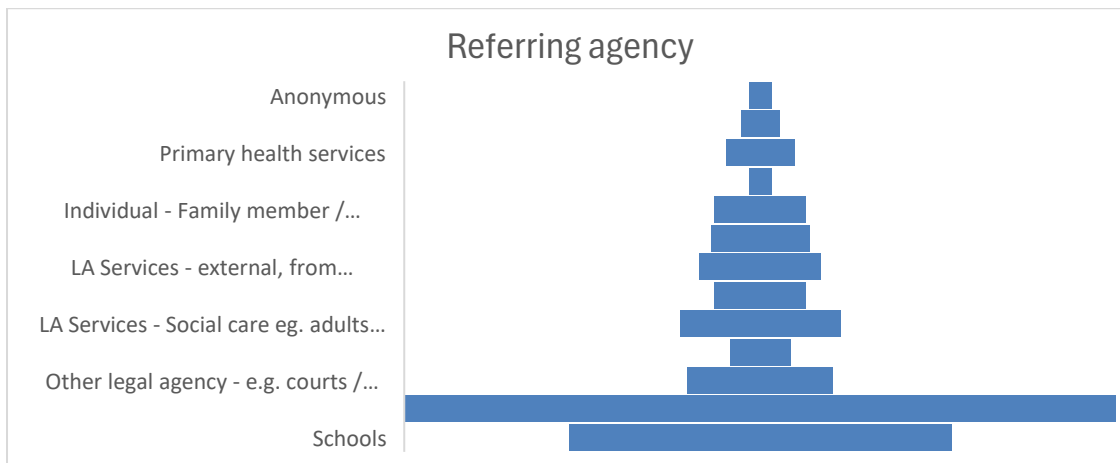
The centre of expertise on child abuse have developed a data insights hub utilising data from local authorities and police nationally.



Data from the centre of expertise on child abuse reports data from 2022/23. During this reporting period 2,300 children were supported via child protection plans nationally under the category of sexual abuse, with the national average being identified as 2.84 children per 1,000. Within the same reporting period data from Walsall was reported at 2.59 children per 1,000.



Within Walsall from the 1st April 2024 until the 18th February 2025, **264** referrals were received to the front door due to concerns relating to CSA. Of the **264** referrals received, 35% of these were received from the police with **106** of these referrals being RAG rated red following initial screening.



	Strategy discussion		Total
	Yes	No	
Central and South	32	34	66
East	26	19	45
North	29	43	72
West	39	28	67
(blank)	13	1	14
Grand Total	139	125	264

During the reporting period 1st April 2024 to 18th February 2025 **139** strategy discussions have been convened at point of referral to children social care due to concerns related to child sexual abuse.

Within Walsall as of the 19th February 2025 we have 10 children subject to child protection plans under the category of sexual abuse. Of these 10 children 2 are female, aged under the age of two years-old, with the remaining 8 children, males aged between 0-12 years-old, further demographics of these children are noted in the table. These 10 children represent 3.5% of children and young people subject to child protection plans, with the most predominant category of harm being emotional abuse.

Age	Gender	Ethnicity
12	Male	White British
10	Male	Pakistani
12	Male	Pakistani
8	Male	White British
6	Male	White British
1	Female	White British
1	Female	Pakistani
0	Male	White British
0	Male	
1	Male	White British

8 of these children have been subject to child protection plans for between 3-6 months, with one child support by a child protection plan for less than three months, the final child aged 5 months has been supported by a child protection plan for over 6 months following a pre-birth assessment being undertaken.

For both children aged under the age of one year, pre birth assessments have been undertaken with, support established via a multi-agency child protection plan prior to their birth. It is key to identify that it is evident that professionals are ensuring information is shared by partner agencies with children's social care to ensure effective and timely pre-birth assessment are undertaken when adults within their immediate family have been deemed as posing a risk.

Of note none of these 10 children have previously been subject to child protection plans prior to this current period of support, which indicates that risk factors aligning with CSA are promptly assessed and responded to.

3.2 CSA subgroup

In June 2023, CSA became a priority within Walsall Safeguarding Partnership following the conclusion of 'Operation Satchel' which culminated in the convictions of 21 adults on CSA charges, from several families. In September 2023 the Partnership formed a multi-agency sub-group, consisting of representatives from Police, Probation, Health and Local Authority Children's Services. The group are responsible for driving forward a number of actions on behalf of the Partnership including:

- Developing a multi-agency dataset that can support the partnership to assess scale of CSA in Walsall and the impact of multi-agency response
- Developing a multi-agency practice pathway to support best practice
- Conducting quality assurance activity (audits) to seek assurance that multi-agency practice is keeping children safe
- Developing awareness of CSA through campaigns, conferences, resource development, website information
- Ensuring professionals have access to good quality training

The CSA strategy will be further informed by work being undertaken in Walsall by Dr Helen Lowey. At this time there are three active workstreams, with the final stream being informed by the literature review and focus group findings

A. **To understand the evidence base in relation to professionals responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment**

Literature Review: Undertake a literature review that seeks to explore the beliefs, attitudes and understanding of CSA amongst professionals and to determine what prevents them from, or enables them to, explore CSA when engaging with children.

B. **To explore professional's emotive responses to child sexual abuse and the impact this has on responding.**

Focus Groups: Undertake focus groups with professionals to explore their emotional responses towards CSA, and whether or not this, impacts on their identification and response.

C. **To consider learning from the Quality Assurance Process**

To review the learning from the Quality Assurance Process, and its activity locally, and to conduct additional activity, where identified, in respect of Walsall's response to CSA with a specific focus on outcomes for Children, Parents, learning and best practice.

D. **Theory of Change, Logic Model and Evaluation Framework**

Develop a Theory of Change, with clear outcomes, that takes a Logic Model Approach to understanding professional's beliefs and attitudes towards CSA that enables an Evaluation Framework to be considered.

The focus will be towards professional beliefs and attitudes in relation to raising CSA with children, families, other professionals, drawing on the findings from the literature review and, the focus groups.

3.3 Training

Child Sexual Abuse is a complex area. Professionals need comprehensive training to recognise the signs of abuse and handle disclosures with sensitivity and confidence. They also need clear, accessible reporting procedures that protect both the child and the professional. Building a supportive environment where discussions about abuse are encouraged rather than avoided is essential. By addressing these challenges, we can empower professionals to act decisively when a child's safety is at risk, helping to create safer spaces for children to grow and thrive.

Over the course of the last 18 months a variety of training has been offered both via the Walsall safeguarding partnership and within individual agencies depending on the needs of specific practitioners.

Training delivered:

- Weddle training
- Child Sexual Abuse Workshop: Hearing and Responding to allegations/disclosures and the role of the professional network
- Working together to meet the needs of children and young people who have displayed Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Speaking to children about sexual abuse
- Spotting the signs and indicators of child sexual abuse
- Putting the Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway into Practice
- Supporting parents/carers when their child may have been sexually abused
- Responding to Harmful Sexual behaviour in education settings
- Lucy Faithful Foundation Training

The ICB held a Multiagency Lunch and Learn webinar to launch a number of CSA resources and professional guidance, in December 2024. The resources were created in partnership by South London CSA Support Services and NHS England. The resources consisted of guidance for children, families and professionals to help develop a shared understanding of what might happen after a child has been sexually abused. The resources have been shared electronically and printed versions sent out across health and charitable organisations to assist professionals with supporting children and families with CSA.

Within the partnership significant attention has been paid to developing effective training for practitioners in relation CSA; however, we have been acutely aware that further understanding needs to be gained with regard the emotional and psychological impact for practitioners to ensure training provided is effectively translated into day-to-day practice with children young people and their families. Therefore, as part of the work being undertaken by the Walsall safeguarding partnership, we are running single agency focus groups to gain a better understanding of: **What enables professionals to consider child sexual abuse and what are the barriers?**

The aim was to have between 3-8 people per focus group and the following professionals were invited:

- 4 focus groups for Children's Social Care
- 4 focus groups for NHS / Health professionals
- 3 focus groups for Police
- 3 focus groups for Education professionals

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership are to host a CSA conference on 31st March 2025 at Bescot Stadium. The event is open to 200 multi-agency professionals and the focus will on 'Supporting Professionals who work to Protect Children from Sexual Abuse'. The event is being led by key speaker Dr Zoe Loderick who is an experienced sexualised trauma therapist. Feedback from the above

workshops will inform the event and Dr Loderick’s input will enable professionals in Walsall to respond in line with national best practice.

3.4 Audits

Three specific audits have been undertaken within children’s social care and the Walsall safeguarding partnership in relation to CSA:

- *Dip sample children subject to CP plans Sexual abuse February 2025*
- *SARC audit August 2024*
- *Walsall Safeguarding Partnership multi agency audit Q1 2023-2024*

Learning reflected through multi-agency audits will be overseen by Safeguarding Partnership.

Good practice	Areas of practice development
<p>Positive relationship-based engagement with families resulting in effective interventions with children and their parents.</p> <p>Evidence of good joined up working particularly between Schools and Children’s Social Care.</p> <p>Strategy Meetings are held as appropriate – legal threshold of significant harm had been met and in accordance with WTSC</p> <p>Strategy discussion involve all partner agencies to ensure clarity and understanding of lived experience and support safety planning for children and young people</p> <p>CSC are clear in relation to their thresholds regarding risk if police decision is no further action.</p> <p>Section 47 enquires are undertaken by the multi-agency partners this provides a clear holistic picture of risk and understanding of the child’s lived experiences</p>	<p>Improved multi-agency plans and planning required where there are ongoing police investigations</p> <p>Missed opportunities across partnership to identify potential early signs of CSA</p> <p>SARC/CYPSAS Representatives to contribute to decision making and this to be reflected in meeting minutes</p> <p>Delay in accessing specialist support for children and young people regarding sexually harmful behaviours</p> <p>Plans need to be specific about identified risk</p> <p>Ensure practitioners are confident in talking to children and young people about their disclosures of CSA</p> <p>Police need to ensure they are sharing detailed information within strategy discussion regarding “no further action” being taken within investigations.</p> <p>Although safety plans are in place for all children and young people it would be beneficial to ensure these are developed in collaboration with family members</p>

3.5 Regional response pathway

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership have been working with the Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, drawing on their national best practice resources to develop local pathways. More recently, the other 6 West Midlands Police area Safeguarding Partnerships have expressed an interest in developing their pathways in line with the Centre of Expertise and as a result Walsall have joined a regional task group to bring the work together across the West Midlands area. This will mean that there is one consistent set of practice guidance for all professionals working within the West Midlands, which is particularly beneficial for those working across borders. The launch of the CSA pathway is anticipated in March 2025.

3.6 “I wanted them all to notice”

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published “I wanted them all to notice” Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment in November 2024. The findings of this national review highlight a systemic failure across all services nationally to recognise and respond when children are at risk of, or are already, being sexually abused by someone in their family environment.

The report makes 6 recommendations. These are:

- 1) Safeguarding partners should consider the findings of this national review and develop a local action plan to respond to its recommendations as it affects local multi-agency practice.
- 2) Safeguarding partners should undertake a multi-agency training needs assessment, to ensure that their practitioners are able to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in this area. This should include the achieving best evidence joint training.
- 3) Safeguarding partners should audit the quality of local multi-agency decision making when responding to concerns about child sexual abuse. This may include adoption of a pathway approach, use of guidance about signs and indicators of sexual abuse and reviewing threshold documents about assessment of need and risk
- 4) Safeguarding partners should, with all relevant agencies such as the Probation Service, review how people who present a risk of sexual harm and who have contact with children are assessed and managed, with information about risk shared across agencies in a timely way. Partners should consider the use of civil orders and other measures to effectively manage the risk from the person of concern
- 5) Safeguarding partners should take necessary steps to ensure that all practitioners in their area (including foster carers) understand and are confident in talking directly to children, and families, about concerns of sexual abuse, taking due account of ethnicity, language and disability
- 6) Safeguarding partners should ensure that there are local pathways for referring children for appropriate forensic medical and other health assessments, for both recent and non-recent sexual abuse, and that safeguarding practitioners understand them.

Locally, Walsall Safeguarding Partnership have considered the findings from the report and drawn the recommendations into the CSA sub-group action plan. A few of the recommendations were already being progressed in Walsall, as has been outlined in this report. The learning from the National Review will also be shared at the CSA conference and will inform the refresh of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership CSA Strategy which the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership plans to review following the conference on 31st March 2025. Walsall Safeguarding Partnership have also arranged to work with the NSPCC to undertake a strategic ‘snapshot’ of the local response to CSA in Walsall. A session with strategic leaders and the NSPCC is scheduled to take place in May 2025 from which the refreshed strategy will then be developed.

4. Financial information

There are no financial considerations outlined with this report.

5. Reducing Inequalities

There are, no direct considerations with regard reducing inequalities with this report. However, the CSA response pathway and training needs to ensure that we are robust in our response to all children and young people within the borough.

Consideration needs to be given regarding proportionately of children and young people with disability and additional needs and the additional training and support that is required to the professional network to ensure we are recognising, responding and meeting the individual needs of all children at risk of child sexual abuse.

7. Respond

This report has indicated the work that is currently being undertaken in relation to recognising, responding and investigating CSA, to ensure learning from the national review is interweaved into our partnership responses.

Recommendations received following the presentation of this report will be explored with the CSA sub-group.

8. Review

This paper has outlined the work that is currently taking place within the Safeguarding Partnership to ensure robust responses to CSA. "I wanted them to listen" was published in November 2024 by the Child Safeguarding and Review Panel outlining 6 key recommendations which are currently being progressed in Walsall, as has been outlined in this report. The learning from the National Review will also be shared at the CSA conference and will inform the refresh of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership CSA Strategy which the Partnership plans to review following the conference on 31st March 2025. Walsall Safeguarding Partnership have also arranged to work with the NSPCC to undertake a strategic 'snapshot' of the local response to CSA in Walsall. This will ensure that local practice is informed by local, national and best practice and developed in conjunction with front line staff.

Hannah Thompson & Sian Jones
Principal Social Worker

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Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Area of Focus – 2024/25

25 June 2024	24 September 2024	05 November 2024	03 December 2024	28 January 2025	10 March 2025	08 April 2025
<p>Walsall as a Families first pathfinder presentation.</p> <p>Walsall Right for Children (WR4C) Refresh.</p> <p>Areas of focus – 2024/25</p>	<p>Complaints report.</p> <p>Update on Children’s Alliance and Children and Young People 2040 Strategy.</p> <p>Portfolio Holder</p>	<p>Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report.</p> <p>Budget consultation.</p> <p>Quarter 2 financial monitoring</p> <p>Private Fostering Annual Report.</p>	<p>HAF</p> <p>Youth Justice. Annual YJ plan. Invite Partners. YJ, Police, Probation and Health.</p>	<p>Young Carers.</p> <p>Pathfinder Update.</p> <p>Family Hubs-sustainability.</p> <p>Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/2026 – 2028/29</p>	<p>Child sexual abuse within the family environment.</p> <p>CAMHS</p>	<p>Children at risk of exploitation.</p>

*Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 Financial reports will be circulated via e-mail to Members of the Committee and will not form part of the Committee’s Agenda unless specially requested by the Committee.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Area of Focus – 2024/25

Items to be scheduled	Notes
Children's Alliance and Children and Young People 2040 Strategy Update	
Annual Social Work Report	

*Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 Financial reports will be circulated via e-mail to Members of the Committee and will not form part of the Committee's Agenda unless specially requested by the Committee.



Walsall Council

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

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

4 February 2025

FORWARD PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
MARCH 2025 TO JUNE 2025 (04.02.2025)**

7 1	2	3	4	5	6	
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
2/25 (6.1.25)	Operational Technical Advisors (Construction Projects): To appoint operational technical advisors for building contracts. The advisors' supply operational support for technical disciplines, such as architects, quantity surveyor, mechanical and electrical engineers. They do not provide strategic advice.	Cabinet Key Decision	Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	12 February 2025
66/24 (7.10.24)	Corporate Budget Plan 2025/26 – 2028/29, incorporating the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management and investment Strategy 2025/26: To recommend the final budget and council tax for approval by Council.	Cabinet Council Key Decision	Shaun Darcy Shaun.Darcy@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations Internal Services	Cllr Statham	Cabinet 12 February 2025 / Council 27 February 2025
67/24 (7.10.24)	Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25: To report the financial position based on 9 months to December 2024.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Shaun Darcy Shaun.Darcy@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Statham	12 February 2025

77/24 (2.12.24)	All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2027: To approve the All-Age Carers Strategy, which highlights the role of Carers and outlines plans for improving the wellbeing of Carers living in the borough.	Cabinet	Andrew Osborn Andrew.Osborn@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services External Partners	Cllr Pedley Cllr Elson	12 February 2025
71/24 (7.10.24)	Net-Zero 2041 Strategy: To approve the draft Net-Zero 2041 Strategy and the establishment of a 'Walsall Net Zero Partnership' to deliver the borough-wide elements of the Strategy.	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	12 February 2025
62/24 (7.10.24)	Adoption of the new Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy: To approve the new Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and establish a council-led steering group to undertake ongoing monitoring.	Cabinet Key Decision	Black Country PPOSS - Overarching Strategic Framework Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	12 February 2025
35/24 (4.6.24)	Walsall Housing Allocations Policy: To approve Walsall's Housing Allocations Policy which details how the Council will prioritise applicants for nomination to housing association properties.	Cabinet Key Decision	Elise Hopkins Elise.Hopkins@walsall.gov.uk	Public Consultation Internal Services Housing Associations	Cllr Garcha	12 February 2025
1/25 (6.1.25)	Private Rented Sector offer to landlords: To approve the Council's policy detailing actions aimed at increasing	Cabinet Key Decision	Elise Hopkins Elise.Hopkins@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Garcha	12 February 2025

	<p>access to private rented sector properties for homeless households.</p> <p><i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i></p>					
68/24 (7.10.24)	<p>Determination of School Admission Arrangements 2026-27:</p> <p>To set out the proposed scheme for co-ordinated secondary and primary admissions and mid-year admissions for the 2026/27 academic year and the proposed admission arrangements for primary community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2026/27 academic year.</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Sharon Kelly Sharon.Kelly@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services Schools Forum</p>	<p>Cllr Kaur</p>	<p>12 February 2025</p>
73/24 (4.11.24)	<p>Early Years Funding Formula 2025/26:</p> <p>To approve the proposed Early Year Funding Formula for 2025/26.</p>	<p>Cabinet Decision</p>	<p>Sharon Kelly Sharon.Kelly@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services Schools Forum</p>	<p>Cllr Kaur</p>	<p>12 February 2025</p>
46/24 (5.8.24)	<p>Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):</p> <p>To seek approval of a draft Planning Obligations SPD for consultation with key partners, stakeholders, infrastructure providers and the general public. The document will be consulted on a 6-week consultation.</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p>	<p>Cllr Andrew</p>	<p>19 March 2025</p>
3/25 (6.1.25)	<p>West Midlands Local Transport Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme 2025/26:</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p>	<p>Cllr Andrew</p>	<p>19 March 2025</p>

	To seek approval of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme 2025/26, to support the delivery of transport capital projects including the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP).					
74/24 (4.11.24)	High Needs Funding Formula 2025/26: To approve the proposed High Needs Funding Formula for 2025/26.	Cabinet Decision	Sharon Kelly Sharon.Kelly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Schools Forum	Cllr Kaur	19 March 2025
5/25 (6.1.25)	Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2024/25: To note the Public Sector Equality Duty annual report which will be published in March 2025 in accordance with our obligations with the Equality Act 2010.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Keith Beech Keith.Beech@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Corporate Equality Group	Cllr Lee	19 March 2025
75/24 (4.11.24)	Adult Social Care and Children's Services Case Management System: To approve the renewal of the contract for Mosaic. The current contract ends on 31/07/2025.	Cabinet Key Decision	Andrew Osborn Andrew.Osborn@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services External Stakeholders	Cllr Pedley Cllr Elson	19 March 2025
70/24 (7.10.24)	Gasholders - Black Country Enterprise Zone: To approve entering a Funding Agreement with City of Wolverhampton Council for site preparation works and the approach to progressing project delivery.	Cabinet Key Decision	Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 April 2025

	<i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>					
4/25 (6.1.25)	Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document: To approve the final version of the Supplementary Planning Document for adoption.	Cabinet Key Decision	Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 April 2025
78/24 (2.12.24)	Waste Management Strategy, Fryers Road Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) redevelopment: To approve the pre-tender budget for the redevelopment of a larger Fryers Road HWRC and agree to the use of the Pagabo framework (design and build stages) for the procurement of Fryers Road HWRC.	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew Cllr Murphy	16 April 2025
6/25 (6.1.25)	Provision of HWRC Skips and Associated Plant Equipment: To award a contract for the provision of skips and associated equipment for the Middlemore Lane HWRC.	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Murphy	16 April 2025

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Recommendation Tracker 2024/25

	Committee Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Recommendation	Status	Officer responsible	Target Completion Date	Notes
1.	24 September 2024	Children's Alliance and Children and Young People 2040 Strategy	That the Committee is provided with an update on progress at a future meeting.	Ongoing	IV		To be scheduled in the new municipal year.
2.	5 November 2024	Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2023 – 2024	That the Children's Services Overview Scrutiny Committee seek assurance from the Executive Group that the timeliness of police investigations was improving.	Ongoing	SJ	8 April 2025	To receive an update at the 8 April Committee.
3.	3 December 2024	Youth Justice Annual Plan and Strategic Priorities	That an item on CAMHS (in relation to the youth justice service) be considered at a future meeting.	Ongoing	CAMHS	Scheduled for 10 th March 2025.	
4.	28 January 2025	Families First for Children Wave Two Pathfinder Programme	That an update on the Families First for Children Wave Two Pathfinder Programme be provided to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny	Ongoing	IV		To be scheduled in the new municipal year.

Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Recommendation Tracker 2024/25

			Committee in the new municipal year.				
5.	28 January 2025	Areas of Focus – 2024 – 2025	A finance training item be added to the first meeting of the new municipal year.		TC	June 2025	To be scheduled in the new municipal year.