



Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on: **Wednesday 13 April 2022 at 6.00 p.m.**

Meeting at: Walsall Council House.

Public access to meeting via: [Walsall Council Webcasting Portal](#)

MEMBERSHIP:

Chair: Councillor A. Hicken
Vice Chair: Councillor F. Mazhar
Councillor H. Bashir
Councillor G. Flint
Councillor A. Hussain
Councillor P. Kaur
Councillor K. Murphy
Councillor A. Nawaz
Councillor A. Nazir
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor T. Wilson.

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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 of the previous meeting To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting that took place on 8 March 2022.	<u>Enclosed</u>
<u>Scrutiny</u>		
6.	Children at Risk of Exploitation An update in respect of Walsall's arrangements to support Children and Young People that may be at risk of exploitation.	<u>Enclosed</u>
7.	Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2020 – 2021 An annual overview of the partnership performance in relation to safeguarding children and young people.	<u>Enclosed</u>
8.	Areas of Focus To review the Committees Work Programme and the Forward Plans for Walsall Council and the Black Country Executive Committee.	<u>Enclosed</u>
<u>Overview</u>		
9.	Date of next meeting To be confirmed at Annual Council.	

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</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.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALSALL COUNCIL HOUSE

Tuesday 8 March 2022 at 6.00 p.m.

Committee Members Present:

Councillor A. Hicken (Chair)
Councillor F. Mazhar (Vice Chair)
Councillor Bashir
Councillor G. Flint
Councillor Kaur
Councillor K. Murphy
Councillor A. Nawaz
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham

Portfolio Holder

Councillor T. Wilson (Via Teams)

Officers

Colleen Male - Director, Children's Social Work
Isabel Vanderheeran - Transformation Lead
Rita Homer - Head of Family Safeguarding and Localities
Neil Picken - Principal Democratic Services Officer

37/21

Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors A. Hussain and M Nazir for the duration of this meeting.

38/21

Substitutions

None.

39/21

Declarations of Interest and party whip

There were no declarations of interest for the duration of the meeting

40/21

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

There were no items to be considered in private session.

41/21

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 January, 2022 were considered by the Committee.

Resolved

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 January, 2022 be approved as a true and accurate record.

42/21

Family Safeguarding – Progress in 18 Months

The Head of Family Safeguarding and Localities presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed).

There then followed a period of questioning by members. In response to a question regarding cost savings, officers advised that they had been working on a partnership model with engagement of key agencies to embed cultural and systemic change. Budgets were being used differently to create better outcomes. This was supported by the Portfolio for Children's Services who confirmed that positive outcomes should always come before the costs.

The Chair referred to the service delivered in the Butts area and asked whether EHCP's were undertaken at that location. Officers advised that work was underway with colleagues in education and a further report would be submitted to a future meeting as it linked with locality decision making.

A member sought assurance that there was still contact once a child was no longer on a child protection plan. Officers confirmed that the child would still be a child in need and the situation would be managed under a child in need plan until the child's needs were addressed. This is to prevent patterns of repeat referrals.

In relation to Hubs, it was asked whether need was being met in the same way across all localities. Officers confirmed that the offer would be the same but that where possible but data would be used in a more sophisticated way so that each areas offer was tailored to meet need.

Members queried whether for some families, this type of intervention wasn't suited. Officers explained that family safeguarding was specific to the trio of vulnerabilities. However, we are considering how we can extend the model. A number of pilots would be carried out in near future.

Clarity was sought on the process and specifically which team takes the lead to co-ordinate what's required and what input the community has. Officers highlighted that Child and family assistants identify the needs of the family and group supervision was led by child social care

team manager. Members were advised that each partner focussed on the outcome of the child but was informed by a multi-disciplinary perspective. A member noted the point but raised concern that with a group of people involve, the child's needs may get lost and that this may not happened if there was one person focussed on the child. Officers explained that the social worker is the lead professional and that the model was in place to ensure that as well as focusing on the needs of the child, that the adult practitioners were in place to help each family member. In terms of input from the community, Members were informed that next area of focus as we move into the localities is that they would build resilience within communities over the coming 12 months and move to a 'hub and spokes' model of delivery. This was important as once a statutory intervention was no longer in place, there needed to be support for family's within local communities.

The Chair asked whether the localities model would be operational when the hubs opened to which officers explained that work has already started with Early Help already working in localities and Social Work Teams working from a central base but within their localities. Time to Talk multi-agency discussions are already established across each locality. There is a clear plan on how we will strengthen partnership working within each of the localities which will improve outcomes for children and their families.

Discussion ensued on how perpetrators are supported. Officers advised that whilst there was a national shortage of probation officers, Walsall were partnering with a Coventry based organisation, the police and SWP to identify ways to deliver support to perpetrators. A Member asked what was being done to retain the workforce to which officers explained that posts were fixed term as they were paid for by a funding stream. It is important that we can move to permanent contracts at the earliest opportunity.

In closing, the chair sought clarity as to how EHCP plans interlinked with child protection plans. Officers informed committee that the EHCP pulls together all the needs of the child and that all plans aligned with the EHCP.

Resolved

1. That the proposals for the ongoing implementation and development of the Family Safeguarding Model, both internally and across the Partnership, be supported: and
2. That a further update be provided to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December, 2022.

The Lead on Transformation for Children's Services introduced the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed).

There then followed a period of questioning by members. A member asked what the challenges were to engage with children. Officers explained that a broad approach was undertaken to engage children as it was clear from 'The Big Conversation' that children open up to the person with whom they have the best relationship. This could be a professional or an individual from the voluntary sector. A particular challenge was engaging with adolescents as some expressed feeling that engaging won't make a difference. It was important to engage with all children and young people and to explain that it would and could make a difference. By ensuring that children and young people talk to the person they have the best relationship with enables the council to hear what they have to say and includes checking whether changes have been made which, to them, have made a difference.

In response to a query regarding socio economic data of the 1700 children, the Committee heard that a national survey had been undertaken. The officer agreed to review the analysis to establish whether it contained information regarding ethnicity. Work was being undertaken to understand communities with Walsall Together as some groups would take up preventative support whereas others wouldn't. It was important to undertake work to understand the reasons for this.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services emphasised that the child's voice was at the heart of the service and that it was important to feedback to them.

The Chair thanked members for their questions and in closing, asked what Ofsted had said regarding the voice of children. Officers confirmed that Ofsted recognised that young people were at the heart of decision making.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

36/21

CAMHS Briefing Note

The Committee received a briefing note providing responses to questions raised at the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12th October, 2021.

Whilst for noting only, the Director – Children's Social Work explained that this service was not run by the local authority and was under significant pressure due to high levels of demand. It was important to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

Discussion followed as to how best to constructively challenge and support CAMHS. Further to which it was:-

Resolved

That a joint letter from the Chair of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services and Director of Children’s Services be set to the Chief Executive of CAMHS to acknowledge the challenging environment within which they are working, thank them for attending numerous council committees and explain that the Council wish to continue to work in partnership to achieve the best outcomes for children and Young People.

37/21

Areas of Focus

The Committee considered the areas of focus document.

Resolved

- 1. The areas of focus and forward plans were noted; and**
- 2. That Family Safeguarding be added to the 22/23 work programme for December, 2022.**

The date of the next meeting was 13th April, 2022 at 6.00 p.m.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.

Signed

Date

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13th April 2022

Agenda Item No. 6

Children at Risk of Exploitation

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Tim Wilson. Children's

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update in respect of Walsall's arrangements to support Children and Young People that may be at risk of exploitation. The issue of Child Exploitation remains a core and significant component of activity and leadership focus of Walsall Council, the Local Safeguarding Partnership and Community Safety Partnership.

Child Exploitation (CE) is a term with a broad definition. It includes Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, County Lines, Modern Slavery and Trafficking. Local Authorities have overarching responsibility for safeguarding all children in their area. Their statutory functions under the 1989 and 2004 Children Act(s) include specific duties in relation to children in need and children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm (under sections 17 and 47 of the Children Act 1989).

Local agencies, including police and health services, also have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people when carrying out their functions.

Reason for scrutiny:

This is an annual updating report outlining previous and current partnership activity relating to tackling Child Exploitation here in Walsall.

Recommendations:

This report aims to provide assurances and updates of the work that has taken place across the partnership since last presented to this committee in March 2021. It invites this committee to note and endorse the current plans in regards to the work being undertaken here in Walsall to safeguarding children at risk of exploitation.

Background papers:

Child exploitation is a continued concern across the country and both government and local authorities have seen the impact that exploitation has had on its children. Through research there have been lessons learnt and so local authorities now have a better understanding of how all forms of exploitation links to other behaviours which put children at risk of exploitative harm.

Previous reports in regards to Child Exploitation have been presented to this committee on the following dates:

March 2021

January 2020

September 2019

September 2018

January 2017

November 2016

April 2015

October 2014

There have been a number of regional and national reports published since Alexis Jay's Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham was published in August 2014. Since that time, the focus of what constitutes Child Exploitation has shifted and professionals working in this arena are now more educated as to its impact and how partners should work together in an attempt to reduce any risk within their communities.

Most recently, the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, funded by the DfE published its 2020 report into criminal exploitation. This report entitled '*It was hard to escape*' focused on the question of whether children and young people at risk of criminal exploitation receive state protection when they need it. This national review focussed on 21 young people from 17 Local Authorities where young people had died or suffered significant harm owing to them being criminally exploited.

In addition, Professor Alexis Jay has just last month (Feb 2022) published her latest report into child sexual exploitation by organised networks. Again, this review focussed on 6 case study areas and undertook a detailed analysis of information held by agencies to better understand the experiences and responses to children who were currently being, or had been, sexually exploited by organised networks.

Resource and legal considerations:

Responding to children at risk of significant harm is a statutory duty placed on local authority Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, Strategic Partnership Chairs and senior managers within organisations who commission and provide services for children and families. The resources required to respond to this statutory requirement come from within the existing resources across the partnership of organisations working in Walsall to protect vulnerable children and those at risk of harm.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

One of our corporate priorities is that children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well. We also aim to provide people to have increased independence, improved health, and can positively contribute to their communities. In Walsall, we strive to ensure that communities are prospering and resilient and that our children are living in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

Citizen impact:

The effective delivery of high quality services to protect children and young people from significant harm, including the risk of child exploitation has a direct impact on the welfare and well-being of children and young people in Walsall. It directly links to the corporate priority to Improve Health and Wellbeing and the Children's Services objective that all children in Walsall are safe and supported.

Environmental impact:

Not applicable for this report

Performance management

Protection from abuse is a fundamental right for all children and exploitation is a form of child abuse. Our vision is to ensure that children, young people and their families whose lives are affected by exploitation will receive a high level of support, protection, and that offenders are held accountable for their actions, and brought to justice. We currently collate and track information in regards to exploitation by both the hub performance data, Mosaic and manual tracking from within the Exploitation team. We are currently in the process of ensuring our mosaic workflows are more effective in pulling out the data in regards to our young people at risk of exploitation.

Reducing inequalities:

Our Walsall All Age Exploitation Strategy sets out the vision that Walsall Council has to ensure the co-ordinated provision of services designed to address the protection of children and the disruption and prosecution of activities by adults. It provides specific support for those children and young people who are at risk of significant harm, including those with protected characteristics of gender, disability, race and religion.

In line with our corporate priorities, Walsall sets out the response to secure improvements in the equality of services, which when achieved, will have a positive impact on our most vulnerable children and young people. Local Authorities, Police and Health Services as key local partners must provide a robust safeguarding approach to ensure they have arrangements in place to provide adequate protection for children at risk of exploitation.

Consultation:

In order to make sure that all children and young people's voices are heard, we must make sure that appropriate and accessible participation opportunities are available. This includes ensuring that children and young people have the skills and support they need to take part in a way that works for them and their families. This will be outlined within Walsall's Participation Strategy.

Contact Officers

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Introduction

The child exploitation landscape is a complex one with ever-shifting characteristics and challenges for local partnerships. The term 'extra familial harm' is one now embedded within current social work practice and local safeguarding partnerships are tasked with ensuring that those at risk within their communities are protected from those that wish to exploit them. Traditional approaches to protecting children/young people from harm have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home, usually from a parent/carer or other trusted adult and don't always address the time that children/young people spend outside the home and the influence of peers on young people's development and safety. It is now recognised that children may be affected by 'modern day risks' and that exploitation does not recognise race, ability, disability, sexual orientation, gender or class and that all children can be at risk of exploitation.

Every year, thousands of children in the UK are exploited. Some have been groomed into county lines drug trafficking, others face sexual abuse from within their own community. Although the forms of exploitation are changing, the methods stay the same as an adult will target a child, trick them into trusting them, and then abuse their power for their own needs. This is known as 'grooming' and it is used for both criminal and sexual exploitation. The term 'Contextual Safeguarding' is now used to describe an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form within their communities, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Contextual safeguarding recognises the impact of the public/social context on young people's lives, and consequently their safety. It seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people. It's an approach that looks at how interventions can change the processes and environments to make them safer for all young people, as opposed to focussing on an individual.

There are some young people that are defined as being at greater risk of exploitation. For example, criminals are more likely to exploit children who live in poverty or face significant vulnerabilities such as being excluded from school or being a child in care. As such, it is important that professionals involved with these children recognise their needs and minimise any opportunity for them to be targeted.

Local Authorities approaches to tackling exploitation differs significantly but the one constant is that any approach needs to sit alongside the framework of tackling violence reduction. Exploitation is not an issue in itself but as a type of serious organised crime and as such any exploitation strategy needs to recognise the issues and what is being done in terms of tackling serious organised crime and violence reduction across the region.

Local Response – what we do here in Walsall

Exploitation Strategy

Since 2019, Walsall Safeguarding Partnership has moved to an All Age Exploitation approach and has now developed an overarching All Age Exploitation Strategy. The governance of this approach has been reviewed and is managed through the Exploitation Sub Group and operationally through the Exploitation Panel. Both of these are multi agency meetings with members from Childrens and Adults Social Care, Education, Licencing, Youth Offending, West Midlands Police, Health and voluntary organisations.

Regionally, as one of the seven metropolitan Local Authorities across the West Midlands, we continue to be represented at various forums that feeds into the Regional Strategic Exploitation Framework. The West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit continue to work jointly across the safeguarding partnerships to establish a comprehensive dataset/dashboard which will provide an overview of exploitation and abuse across the West Midlands. This is part of the overall public health approach across the region of which our revised strategy will feed into.

Operational response

In Walsall we operate a 'hub' which is a virtual multi-agency approach to identifying, screening, and sharing of intelligence around those at risk of exploitation. The hub performance data continues to be shared at Exploitation Operational Delivery Groups. This is where exploitation triage leads meet on a weekly basis to review any themes or issues emerging from the hub, which are then raised at our monthly Exploitation Panel and shared with all agencies. The hub seeks to clarify intelligence around current CSE/CE risk, victims, perpetrators and locations as well as learning from historical investigations. .

The development of the exploitation delivery groups has been key in bringing partners together and strengthening multi-agency relationships, to enable a clear and robust exploitation pathway to be developed and embedded across the partnership. The two delivery groups continue to be split between adults and children's so that issues relating to these particular cohorts can be focussed and agreed with relevant agencies.

Walsall's Exploitation Pathway and Assessment has been in place since September 2020. Through regular promotion by multi-agency updates, school briefings and webinars, we have been able to successfully embed the process, so that they are now regularly used by professionals making referrals for both vulnerable adults and children. The pathway works alongside our MASH and promotes effective sharing of information between agencies. These discussions include, virtual schools, street

teams, Youth Justice Service, NPU police, Locate police, adult social care and a member of our exploitation team.

Our Exploitation Team is led by our Principle Exploitation Reduction Officer, Katie Storer-Young. This is currently a non-case holding team that offers consultation and support in regards to all types of child exploitation including sexual, criminal and children at risk of being trafficked. This role is now well established, with a key focus on strengthening partnership responses to missing and exploited children, young people and vulnerable adults here in Walsall.

The team consist of the following staff:

- 1 x Principle Exploitation Reduction Officer (full time)
- 2 x Exploitation and Missing workers (full time)
- 2 x RHI Missing officers (full time)
- 1 x Specialist Practitioner (full time)

Team key activities:

- Is responsible for monitoring and reporting on all aspects of performance around exploitation and children who go missing across all Children's Services
- Holds daily exploitation triage in consultation with external agencies as part of all age exploitation strategy
- Has oversight of all missing children episodes and service responses
- Will offer 1:1 support sessions for practitioners and manager to complete exploitation assessments and use of toolkits and to consider/reflect upon potential support and disruption for individual children
- Will prompt allocated workers and Team Managers when missing children strategy meetings are required and attend these meetings
- Will attend planning or decision making meetings where there are indicators of any child being exploited, or going missing
- Works with all statutory and community partners to prompt and assist joined up working in respect of safeguarding and disruption in Walsall
- Has links to neighbouring authorities and regional forums where Local Authority/external agencies responses to vulnerable children are discussed
- Collaborates with west midlands VRU and have secured additional funding for 1 x additional exploitation worker within the team.
- Provides regular data and team overview to Senior Managers, where all of the above is presented and shared
- Is available for consultation, advice and support across all teams in Children's Services and Targeted Help in relation to exploitation.

Access to police support via the Exploitation Hub now consists of the following officers:

- 1 x Full time Sgt – Exploitation
- 1 x Full time PC – Exploitation
- 1 x Part Time PC – Exploitation
- 1 x CSE Sgt, 2 days a week
- 1 x CSE Coordinator, full time
- 1 x LOCATE Missing PC, full time

Triage 'hub' Data

The following is a breakdown of the numbers of children that have come through exploitation triage between 1st March 2021 and 28th February 2022.

Total number of children discussed is 334 and the breakdown of risk is as follows:

Level of risk	CE (Criminal Exploitation)	CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation)	CE and CSE	Youth Violence	Missing	Other
No risk	19	7	2	0	0	8
Low	142	56	9	3	1	0
Med	38	18	13	1	1	0
High	8	7	0	0	1	0
Total	207	88	24	4	3	8

In regards to referrers, the following breakdown applied:

CSC	Education	Street Teams	Police	YJS	Health	Early Help	Other
196	67	2	16	16	5	21	11

The team are currently working directly with a total of 13 children that are all medium and high risk. In addition, the team offers support to locality safeguarding teams in regards to issues of exploitation which is incorporated into the care planning for each of those children. The team are also working to try and map, track, build relationships and develop a direct youth work offer within key areas that have higher rates of youth violence and criminal activity. This is supported by mentors funded via the VRU, St Giles, Youth Connect and other organisations working with children across the area.

Utilising the support we have from the virtual school, we continue to link in with secondary schools in these areas, with a plan of offering prevention work in primary schools from March as a preventative approach to tackling the risk of exploitation in these key areas. This offers the schools the opportunity each week to discuss connections, actively engage children and work with mentors to support those children on the periphery of gang involvement and youth violence.

As we are now 18 months in, our Principle Exploitation Reduction Officer, is leading on a review of the paperwork and its effectiveness as part of the delivery Group. This review will consider overall effectiveness, consistency of information provided and collation of where referrals come from in regards to which agencies refer and those that do not. This will allow us to have a greater understanding of where to target further learning and development and if the forms used continue to be fit for purpose.

All missing children notifications from police and all exploitation assessments for children, young people and adults, continue to be discussed at the daily triage within 24 hours of receipt. This ensures a coordinated and timely response to information received and allows for appropriate intervention and support to be identified and implemented at the earliest opportunity. This work supports the primary and secondary interventions outlined within the Exploitation Strategy.

Over the course of the pandemic, the number of children going missing has fluctuated with significant periods during lockdown when the numbers have stayed low. Since restrictions have lifted, the number of missing logs have again reverted to pre pandemic numbers. In December 2021, the team received 99 missing logs (this was an increase of 12 from Nov 2021). Out of that 99, 10 were for children who live in our area but are from a different local authority so those notifications are forwarded onto the responsible authority. Of the 89 left, these were in respect of a total of 42 children.

The team continues to have direct contact with children who have been missing and all children are offered and/or are visited after a missing episode, usually within 72 hours of the episode. The missing worker completes return home conversations with the children and young people looking at the reasons why they were missing, provides a chance for them to talk about what happened whilst they were away and how they may be feeling now that they have returned. Whilst all children are offered this opportunity immediately once they return, not all may wish to receive it but the option to do so at a later date is available should they choose to do so.

As Covid-19 restrictions have lifted, there is now a greater push to get more disruption work being undertaken on the ground. This will include group work activities, community based support and how we best support these young people and their families. This has been further supported by some agreed funding through the VRU which has allowed us to utilise 1 x full time post from within our Turning Point Service to be dedicated to work community exploitation work across the borough.

We continue to work in partnership with the St Giles Trust and currently our Exploitation Team has a mentor from St Giles working with us for two days a week. This mentor works directly with children and young people from the Caldmore and Palfrey areas as we know this area has a high population of gang related referrals into exploitation triage. These children are also supported by YJS and street teams as part of the overall partnership response and is part of the wider work of Operation Bowbrush tackling exploitation and youth violence across the region.

In October 2021, Walsall Childrens Services was subject to a full ILACS inspection of which our response to exploitation was a key line of enquiry. In their final report that was published on the 26th November, they highlighted the following points:

'The response to children at risk of exploitation and children reported missing from home and care has improved significantly since the previous inspection in 2017 and a focused visit in December 2019. Professionals have a shared understanding of thresholds for exploited and missing children, enhanced by the daily multi-agency triage meeting in the MASH. This includes a range of specialist workers from the police, youth offending team, education, street teams, Turning Point, specialist sexual and criminal exploitation workers and the early help service. Professionals work closely together and collaborate well'.

Governance

Walsall now has an All Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy which is governed by the Safeguarding partnership. The Exploitation Sub Group continues to be held bi monthly and continues to be jointly chaired by Police and Local Authority. Information is also provided in regards to the partnership work around exploitation through Operations and Scrutiny Group and Performance and Quality Assurance meetings.

Exploitation Panel continues to be held monthly to ensure that there is a partnership understanding of risk, threat and harm and to provide a multi-agency coordinated response to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people. Themes from exploitation triage, exploitation work and any relevant areas of concerns form the basis of the agreed agenda items and a greater focus on partnership updates has been included within recent panels. It is also a forum whereby national publications are shared and discussed providing partners with the opportunity to reflect on how any recommendations that may arise from these, can be considered within their respective agencies.

Key focus points of the panel include:

- Raise awareness of exploitation across the partnership
- Discuss the need for expert consultation and analysis
- Help identify contextual risks and “map” known intelligence
- Gather and share intelligence from within and out of the area
- Collate data to create a local understanding of need
- Increase understanding of geographical “hotspots” and local themes

- Keep up to date with current practice research and themes.

The Exploitation Risk Register is in place and has now been updated to focus on issues such as capacity and resources within the hub. As a partnership, this is a strategically owned risk register around All Age Exploitation and so is owned by panel and is a permanent agenda item so that professionals can consider the impact of this within their respective roles. This then assists with identifying areas for development and learning locally, regionally and nationally across the partnership.

Investment from across the partnership is critical to fully tackle all facets of exploitation and here in Walsall we are having some real success in our responses to those at risk. As a partnership we work well to identify risk and intervene as appropriate and our systems rely heavily on the investment from partner agencies with clear assessment frameworks, referral pathways and sharing of resources in order to offer both support and intervention alongside the need to pursue prosecutions.

Partnership Updates

Police

Operation Yinto

In July 2021 there was a number of concerns around the sexual exploitation of young people in and around William House Walsall. This was a disused building that had become a 'hotspot' of activity in relation to potential exploitation of young people and vulnerable adults from Walsall and across the west midlands. Following further enquiries and multi-agency mapping activities, we were able to identify those at risk and implement safeguarding plans to protect them. As part of this operation, we were also able to obtain a closure order on the building and secure the area as a way of disrupting the activity that had been taking place.

We are now in the second phase of Operation Yinto which is focused on enforcement and disruption of perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation. Multi agency visits are taking place across the borough by visiting hotels, fast food restaurants, pubs, schools and children's homes to provide staff with awareness and gather intelligence. In addition, we continue to maximise opportunities to prosecute potential perpetrators for any offences and bring them to justice by working much more closely together to tackle CSE across the region. Regular partner updates are provided at exploitation panel and areas of concern and/or emerging themes are discussed and actions agreed.

The joint working within the hub continues to work effectively and allows for the opportunity for us to expose risk and respond to it early. A recent example was when a referral was received from a DSL that had raised concerns in regards to one of her pupils that appeared to have been receiving gifts from an adult male. This led to direct

work being undertaken with the young person and after some time and building of trust, he was able to confide in professionals about what was happening to him which ultimately led to an arrest of this individual. In addition, since the arrest has been made, other potential victims have come forward strengthening the case against this adult that has for some time been exploiting vulnerable young people. This, amongst others, is a prime example of what the hub is designed to do and how it aims to keep our children in Walsall safe from those that wish to exploit them.

Violence Reduction Unit

The West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit continues to work across the region and have a number of projects in place across the west midlands. One project is the 'step together' which provides youth workers on key locations to and from schools so that young people fearing exploitation and violence have a trusted adult as a point of contact to support them. This project is targeted at key schools whereby young people are at greater risk of becoming exploited and coincides with the support and education programmes that the VRU continue to offer schools across Walsall.

Walsall Childrens Social Care have recently received some funding from West Midlands VRU to enable us to increase the hours of our violence coordinator. This ensures that there is a focus directly on youth violence and it is in tune with our exploitation work as there are many overlaps between youth violence and exploitation within our communities. This work has been really useful in mapping local urban street gangs and understanding what the local picture looks like in terms of how our children and young people are connected here in Walsall and across the region. Our violence co coordinator also currently works with four high risk schools within Walsall and connects children who are victims of violence directly to services. In addition, for those young people that have perpetrated violence against others, we are able to identify mentors to work with them in an attempt to reduce the levels of violence and support those at risk of further criminal exploitation. This level of work is closely aligned with our Youth Justice Services as many of these young people may be known to both YOS and Childrens Social Care.

Health – CCG

Black Country and West Birmingham acknowledge and support the Walsall Safeguarding partnership priority in responding to the risks of exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The designated nurse for safeguarding adults and the designated nurse for children in care are both active members of the exploitation partnership forums.

Black Country and West Birmingham CCG- Walsall Place continue to chair the All-Age Health Exploitation Group. The meeting has developed over the last 12 months with a range of attendees from across the health economy. The purpose of the Health Exploitation Group is to provide a structure in facilitating and embedding learning within the member health organisations to support systems in preventing abuse of children and adults at risk of exploitation. The group employ joint working to consider the impacts on all critical areas of business in protecting and recognising children and adults from exploitation and organised criminality. These arrangements seek to ensure each health partner/organisation will safeguard their stakeholders and promote the welfare of children and young people, vulnerable adults and protect the public in Walsall.

The Black Country and West Birmingham CCG are represented on the NHSE/ Regional Tackling Serious Violence Forum. In addition, the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults is an active member of the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network. Information from these strategic meetings is then fed in at a local level.

The CCG continues to assist with the co-ordination of the health response at a strategic level, ensuring there is correct representation at appropriate meetings from CCG and Provider Organisations with the intention of a health response in the Exploitation Hub and understanding the link between both the Safeguarding Partnership and Community Safety Partnership.

The CCG presented the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Community Resilience Project that Walsall had been fortunate to undertake to regional Safeguarding Leads at an NHSE Meeting. In addition, the CCG is currently facilitating work with the Violence Reduction Unit, to gain accurate health data to inform regional dashboards with the view to possibly commissioning a local response to support Walsall Accident and Emergency Dept.

As a commissioning organisation the CCG monitors their providers Safeguarding Training (including Exploitation) compliance via system wide Safeguarding Dashboards. This gives assurance that all staff have the appropriate level of training to respond to Safeguarding Risks. The Safeguarding Team ensure all communications relating to Exploitation is disseminated accordingly across the health economy in Walsall.

Street Teams

Street Teams continue to be a key partner in our work with young people at risk of exploitation. They run a multi-faceted prevention programme involving outreach work directly with young people as well as offering education and training programmes with schools and health agencies.

They continue to offer support to a number of our young people here in Walsall and aim to help them understand the risks, raise their self-esteem as part of their heal and repair journey and allow them to build aspirations for their future. Street Teams continue to be an active member at Walsall Exploitation Panel and continue to work alongside Walsall Childrens Services Exploitation Team.

Regional work

We continue to be involved in national initiatives and this month (March) are heavily involved in County Lines Awareness, National Exploitation Day and Operation Aidant. Operation Aidant is coordinated by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and is run nationally every year based on a key theme and involves local police forces working alongside partner agencies to focus on modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT). The campaign works to highlight the signs of modern slavery which people may encounter in their everyday lives, and encourage them to confidently report it. This is a key area for development and continues to be supported across the region by the 7 west midlands Local Authorities.

Next steps

Exploitation Pilot

In terms of operational strategies, we have linked in with the National Working Group and sought advice from other Local Authority's around their exploitation journey and how we can learn from and avoid mistakes of others. As we know, the national picture on how Local Authorities and partner agencies tackle exploitation differs significantly and we need to identify what is best for us here in Walsall. Understanding what we have, what our pinch points are and how we can best utilise our resources is crucial and we are now getting a much clearer picture overall. As such, we are now building on our work by developing a 12 month exploitation pilot team.

This pilot programme will focus on delivering bespoke packages of support to individual children that will be identified and selected through exploitation triage. This team will have case hold responsibility for up to 20 young people at risk of either criminal or sexual exploitation. The work of the team will be trauma informed and will focus on the use of motivational interviewing as a way of disrupting the pattern of exploitation. Caseloads within the team will remain small (approximately 5 each) so that the team have the dedicated time available to ensure that the required level of direct work is undertaken.

The pilot team will be set up to act as a 'pod' as an addition to the current Exploitation Team managed by Kirsty Storer-Young. The 'pod' will consist of a Consultant Social Worker, 1 x Social Worker and an ASYE Social Worker. The management of the Consultant Social Worker will, in the interim, sit under the Group Manager, Rebecca Warren. These posts have now been advertised internally as secondment

opportunities across the current social work teams and two of the 3 roles have now been filled.

The work with these young people would be undertaken in line with the Family Safeguarding Model using motivational interviewing in order to develop an assessment of need leading to a programme of tailored support. Group case supervision with input from all professionals would then be used to build on strengths and identify positive changes. In addition to the social workers, the team will consist of detached youth workers in partnership with Early Help and Street Teams. We will have dedicated support by being able to utilise resources from Youth Services and input from a dedicated CASH (contraception and sexual health) nurse.

Following a dedicated training programme being completed with the team, we are aiming to go live in May 2022. An evaluation framework has been devised in consultation with Wolverhampton University so that the impact of the team can be captured in order to inform us of whether this should become a permanent structure in our future service delivery.

Zoe Morgan
Head of Service, Help, Protection and Support

13 April 2022

7

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Childrens Services and Education

Report:

1. Although this year has been challenging due to a pandemic, there continues to be evidence that children are safe in Walsall (data on page 8 of full report):
 - I. An appropriate reduction in referrals to MASH
 - II. Positive impact of Early Help services
 - III. Positive reductions seen in the number of children subject to child protection plans
 - IV. Positive increase of the number of families supported through the Family Safeguarding Model
- 2 Partnership focus on safeguarding has continued through regular meetings between statutory partners despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.
- 3 Attendance at multi-agency meetings has improved, particularly since they moved online. This virtual or blended approach allows for greater flexibility moving forward.
- 3 A successful bid to the TCE (Tackling Child Exploitation) Programme saw work with local colleagues begin to develop work in relation to community resilience and engagement and consider the role which the wider community can take in developing an effective, strategic all-age response to exploitation.
- 5 The CSA Strategy was updated and re-agreed by partners and an action plan developed.
- 6 The Neglect Strategy was revisited to bring a renewed focus.
- 7 Progress was made with the All-Age Exploitation pathway and included the development of an Exploitation Hub.
- 8 The multi-agency audit programme continued to obtain learning in order to improve practice and saw improvements in the case ratings.
- 9 During the year there were 5 multi-agency audits carried out, 4 were linked to the safeguarding partnership priorities and one (during quarter three) was in response to the
- 10 Parliamentary Under- Secretary of State for Children and Families request for assurance in respect of services to new-borns and infants

during lockdown . In respect of the latter, all the children had been seen by the relevant multi-agency professionals with good recording regarding whether this was face to face or virtually. All case files audited had relevant risk assessments in place and PPE was utilised appropriately as required for in person contact. There was consistent evidence of good information sharing across agencies. Needs identified during assessment were being met and children and their families were being supported. Where risks had escalated, there was clear evidence that the appropriate actions had been taken to respond and consider these in a multi-agency forum, leading to an initial child protection plan for one infant.

- 11 Work has taken place to embed the SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) pathway, supported by SARC Lunch and Learn training sessions.
- 12 An independent review (by Penny Thompson, CBE) commissioned by the 3 statutory partners in Autumn 2020 to consider the first year of the new arrangements was a proactive and positive undertaking. The report commented on the committed and effective Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit and the openness, candour and self-reflection demonstrated by the partnerships leaders.
- 13 Approaching the end of the contract held by the previous Independent Chair (Liz Murphy) the statutory partners reflected on the independent scrutiny of the Safeguarding Arrangements and opted to re-appoint an Independent Chair. Recruitment took place in the early part of 2021 with the new post holder (Sally Hodges) commenced in April 2021.
- 14 **Areas for improvement or focus in 2021-22**
 - I. To implement recommendations made by Penny Thompson in her independent review of the Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements, including creating an Executive Group and reducing the number of partnership priorities to provide more focus and impact.
 - II. To consider and implement recommendations from the Wood Review.
 - III. Progression and sign off the All-Age Exploitation Strategy.
 - IV. Revision and continued delivery of the Neglect Strategy.
 - V. To review the participation strategy to ensure we effectively engage with young people and practitioners and improve our communication with partners
 - VI. Implementation of the ICON Programme across Walsall
 - VII. Strengthen the links between the Family Safeguarding model and Walsall Safeguarding Partnership

- VIII. Develop a positive and productive relationship between Safeguarding Partnership and the Safer Walsall Partnership
- IX. Due to Covid-19 there was limited inspection activity of the statutory partners during this year. Once this re-commences the Partnership will be sighted on and respond to the respective findings.
- X. Track the impact that learning from our reviews and audits have had by carrying out a range of assurance activities and engaging with practitioners.
- XI. To embed Impact Evaluations across the Partnership as part of management oversight and supervisions.


Recommendations:

That:

1. That Scrutiny note the content of the Annual Report

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Right for Children, Families and Adults

Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership **Annual Report** 2020-21





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Introduction

Welcome to the 2020-2021 Children's Annual Report of Walsall's Safeguarding Partnership.

Following the publication of Working Together 2018, partner agencies in Walsall established Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and published their plans on 1st September 2019, launching the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership, which replaced previous arrangements, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Further information on the detail of these arrangements can be found here.

Following the first 12 months of the new arrangements the statutory partners commissioned an independent review of their arrangements. The review focused on the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Arrangements; the Strategic Plan; robustness of Performance and Quality Assurance; effectiveness of Learning from Serious Incidents and the impact of Independent Chair Arrangements and proposals for future Independent Scrutiny, in Walsall. Penny Thompson (CBE) undertook this review in autumn 2020 and shared her findings with partners in December 2020. Achievements which were highlighted included the Learning & Development offer; timeliness of Rapid Reviews; the management of the impact of Covid-19 and improved Communications with practitioners. The review noted the 'openness, candour and self-reflection' of those involved, it also acknowledged a consensus that some adaptation to the current arrangements would be helpful, and that these will be behavioural and cultural as well as organisational. Areas for further focus included ownership and leadership by the statutory partners, a reduction in meetings and priorities and greater attention to the underpinning values agreed by the partners. These will be taken forward in 2021 by a newly formed Executive Group of the partners. A breakdown of the partnership funding can be found in Appendix 1.

2020-21 was a challenging year with the Pandemic however, WSP continued to exercise oversight over children's safeguarding, whilst mindful of the pressure that health, police and social care have been and continue to be under. During the Pandemic, WSP held weekly partnership meetings to review how services have been responding to the challenges that the virus has created.

We have maintained close oversight on arrangements led by the Police, CCG and the Local Authority to Safeguarding Children. We maintain a close focus on our child safeguarding practice reviews and on learning from our assurance activity.

There is, of course, more to do and more that should be done to continue to improve safeguarding services and become an effective learning system.

The Partnership would like to thank agencies for the work they have done to keep our communities safe and to respond to the needs of children at risk of abuse and neglect in Walsall.

The partners would like to express thanks to Liz Murphy for her work as Independent Chair, for her support and leadership and the work that she has helped progress during this reporting period and throughout her 3 years in Walsall.

Walsall at a glance

Population of 286,716
69,375 (24.2%) of whom are children aged 0-17
2020 mid year population estimate

The number of children and young people aged 0-17 is projected to rise to 71,822 by 2020

Deprivation levels are high

In the Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI)

Walsall is the **19th most deprived Local Authority** in the country with (29%) of neighbourhoods in the top 10% of most deprived neighbourhoods nationally which is the 15 highest.

Two of Walsall's three parliamentary constituencies are in the **top 50** constituencies with the highest levels of child poverty

Children and young people have more health challenges than their peers

3.5% of babies are born with a low birth weight
Compared with 3.3% to the West Midlands and 2.9% nationally (2019 data)

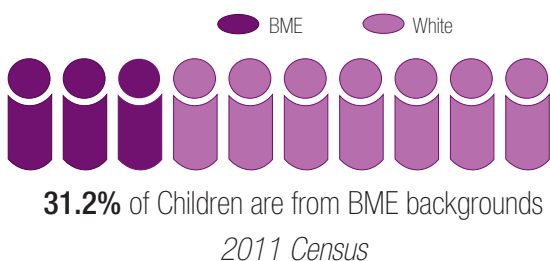
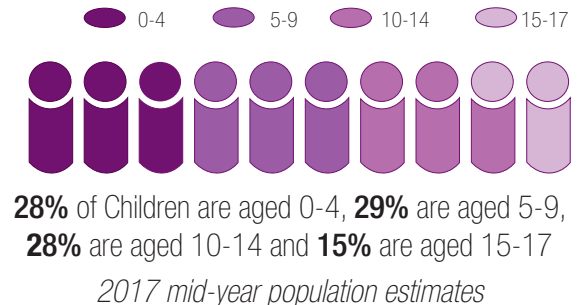
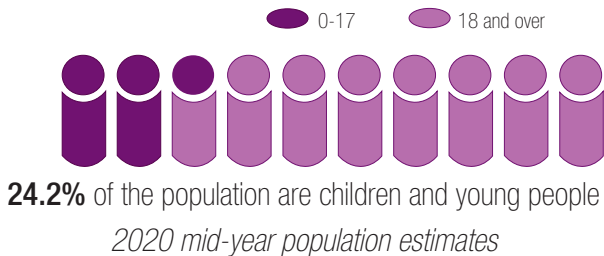
6.8 per 1000 children die before their first birthday
Compared with 5.6 in the West Midlands and 3.9 nationally (2017-2019 data)

3.0% of young girls get pregnant at 15, 16 or 17
compared with 1.9% in the West Midlands and 1.7% nationally (2018 data)

7.3 per 10,000 would be admitted to hospital as an inpatient for mental health issues
compared with 9.2 in the West Midlands and 9.0 nationally (2019-20 data)

1.5 per 10,000 admitted to hospital for alcohol related issues
compared with 2.6 in the West Midlands and 3.1 nationally (2017-18 – 2019-20 data)

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What the Safeguarding Partnership has focussed on during 2020/21

During this year, not only have we focused on our strategic priorities, we have focused on ensuring that partnership agencies have continued to deliver safeguarding services during the pandemic. Regular Safeguarding Partnership Covid Meetings were held to discuss service response and assurance, risks and opportunities, key issues or messages and staffing. This offered partners the opportunity to respond to and manage risk, support other services and utilise local resources. It also provided a risk escalation process for the partners.







Our practice development opportunities, audit processes and multi-agency meetings were quickly adapted and we embraced using virtual platforms in response to the national lockdown to support ongoing multi-agency learning opportunities as well as business activities and meetings.






Our Priorities	What we said we would do:	What we did:
<p>To support the local and professional community to ensure that children and families receive the right help at the right time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch the multi-agency CSA strategy. • Effective communications strategy to deliver key messages. • Embed a Child Exploitation pathway. • Ensure appropriate police referrals to MASH in relation to Domestic Abuse. • Improved timeliness of early help assessments and interventions. • Ensure information from GP's and mental health is available in MASH in a timely way. • Launch and embed the Family Safeguarding Model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 Right Help Right Time virtual training events (235 attendees). • A Practice Reflection Learning Event: Injuries in non-mobile babies and children (109 attendees). • Domestic Abuse webinar, April 2020. • CSA Strategy revised and agreed. • Developed and disseminated regular Key Messages newsletter, to quickly update partners and practitioners with relevant information. • GP / MH info is now available via the Named Nurse in MASH. • Quarterly partnership newsletters. • Learning from Reviews Newsletter, February 2021. • Developed information materials and revised our website to support Covid volunteers. • 7 minute briefings: including – Domestic Abuse, CSA, Babies born during lockdown. • CSA focused partnership event facilitated by CSA Centre for Excellence. • Family Safeguarding Model was launched • Launched the All-Age Exploitation Panel, pathway and assessment tool • Held multi-agency Exploitation webinar. • Timeliness of Early Help Assessments (within 5 days) has doubled.

Our Priorities	What we said we would do:	What we did:
<p>To support the local and professional community to recognise, respond to and reduce the impact of neglect in a child centred way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect is identified and assessed consistently well across the system • Neglect is tackled holistically via a whole family approach • Increased professional challenge and curiosity • Families are enabled and empowered to make positive and timely change and to identify support • where possible from their own networks • Professional practice supports timely and effective interventions to reduce risk and promote positive • change within families • Assessment, intervention, decision-making and recording is focused on the lived experience of the child • Pilot of the NSPCC pre-birth assessment tool • Continue the Look, Say, Sing, Play campaign (NSPCC) • Implement the Family Safeguarding Model (FSM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Safeguarding Model was launched and implemented. • Undertook a multi-agency Neglect Audit. • Neglect webinar, November 2020. • Look, Say, Sing play roll-out continued
<p>Assurance regarding transition arrangements for agreed vulnerable groups between children and adult services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain more assurance that agencies are embedding a think family approach in practice through audit activity. • Embed the Exploitation Transition Protocol • Establish a multi-agency, all-age, Exploitation Hub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried out a joint children's and adults audit to review the effectiveness of the Transition Exploitation Protocol • Launched the all age Exploitation Panel, pathway and assessment tool • Launched the All-Age Exploitation Hub • Began to develop an All-Age Exploitation Strategy
<p>Tackle exploitation and supporting those children and adults who are victims of exploitation and/ or go Missing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch an Exploitation Screening Tool and Pathway. • Establish an Exploitation Panel (as part of the Pathway). • Further develop the data scorecard. • Develop joint children's and adult courses in relation to Exploitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to develop an all-age exploitation scorecard • Launched the Herbert Protocol across the West Midlands • Held an All-Age Exploitation Webinar • Successful Tackling Child Exploitation programme bid.

What has this meant for children and families in Walsall?

Early Help, identifying need and appropriate thresholds

<p>Contacts to Early Help have increased by 7% 4,893 contacts were received between 01 April 2020 and 31st March 2021</p> <p>Top three referrers to Early Help are:</p> <p> Police (20.2%) LA Services (19.8%) Health (16.7%)</p> <p>Top three presenting needs to Early Help are: Challenging Behaviour (18.4%) Emotional Wellbeing (child) (14.7%) Domestic Abuse (parent/carer) (14.3%)</p>		<p> Referrals to social care have reduced by over 30% since Right Help, Right Time was launched in 2019</p> <p>3,431 referrals were received between 01 April 2020 and 31st March 2021 compared to 4,401 last year and 5,267 the previous year</p> <p>Top three presenting needs to Social Care are: Domestic Abuse (37.9%) Emotional Abuse (29.4%) Neglect (16.3%)</p>	<p>83.5% of contacts to social care were completed within 48 hours</p> <p>58% are completed within 24 hours</p>
<p>Timeliness of Early Help contacts is improving</p> <p>89%  were completed within the 5-day target Up from 70% in 2019-20</p>	<p>Timeliness of Early Help assessments has doubled</p> <p>56%  were completed within the 5-day target Up from 28% in 2019-20</p>	<p>Timelessness of assessments is improving</p> <p> 90.2% were completed within 45 days Up from 74.8% in 2020</p>	
		<p> 75% of children age 5 or over are seen alone as part of their assessment</p>	

<p> Family Safeguarding</p> <p>265</p> <p>Children from 141 families have or are being supported through the Family Safeguarding model</p>	<p> Adolescents entering care have reduced by 29%</p> <p>63 in 2020-21 compared with 89 in 2019-20</p>	<p>94%  Views</p> <p>of children have heard at their child protection conference</p> <p>31% attend their conferences</p>
<p> Children subject of a child protection plan has halved</p> <p>203</p> <p>Children were subject of a plan 31st March 2021 compared with 408 in March 2018</p> <p>Initial Child Protection Conferences are timely</p> <p>85% are completed within 15 days of the strategy discussion and 80.4% lead to a child protection plan</p>	<p>Care Applications have reduced by 28%</p> <p>78 in 2020-21 compared with 108 in 2019-20</p>	<p>95 children and young people are at risk, 21 are at significant risk and 9 are at serious risk of sexual or criminal exploitation</p> <p>75 Had their risk reduced throughout 2020-21</p>
<p>The number of children going missing has decreased</p> <p>To 233 in 2020-21 compared with 319 in 2019-20 but missing episodes have reduced by 26%</p> <p></p>		<p>Timeliness of return interviews is improving</p> <p>398 Return home interviews were offered and accepted</p> <p>68.1% were completed with 72 hours Compared with 52.6% in 2019-20</p>

• Multi-agency audit findings:

When undertaking multi-agency case file audits a noticeable improvement on previous years was found in practice.

Grade	2019/20	2020/21
Outstanding	0	4%
Good	23%	61%
Requires improvement	62%	30%
Inadequate	15%	4%

• Practitioner's and young people's voice:

"I will apply the guiding principles into my everyday practice and be honest and open with our parents and families and work in ways that builds on family's strengths."

Practitioner changed their practice, following Right Help, Right Time training.

"I will be able to apply it to situations that arise when younger children present we have a duty to find out why there is bruising and have professional curiosity."

Practitioner changed their practice, following Bruising in Non Mobile Babies webinar.

"Working within a multi-disciplinary team, using a restorative approach to support families, has been the missing piece to the puzzle. I'm delighted to be a part of this project barriers will be broken down."

Practitioner involved in Family Safeguarding.

Hello my name is *** and I'm 15, all through the summer I had Sarah as my support worker. I had been struggling a lot and my anxiety was really bad. I've had many social workers etc in the past and I have never really bonded with them or been helped by them, they never had an impact on me however when I met Sarah she was really calm and helped me control my anxiety and I really wish I could have had her long as she helped me so much. She is amazing and I can see she helps many children, and I just wanted to thank you for letting her be my support worker, if I didn't have her I'm not sure where I would be today. My granddad and my auntie really appreciate what Sarah did for me so thank you.

Walsall Young Person was supported to succeed.

Kids not getting the correct nurture

A child always playing alone when their parents are always on their phone

Young people's views were heard on what neglect means to them.

Over 200 parents and professionals attended 3 events to promote Look, Say, Sing, Play

Hundreds of parents have signed up to 'brain building tip's' online

Communication and Engagement

The Partnership Joint Engagement Strategy (2020-2022) aims to support the safeguarding partnership achieve the vision of having children, young people and adults as equal partners alongside the Local Authority, Health and Police. The strategy outlines 4 key steps to achieve engagement with adults: consultation, representation, decision-sharing and co-production.

We also set out in our vision that we wanted to raise the profile of the Safeguarding Partnership, with the community and professionals, and have sought to do this in a number of ways.

The partnership recognises that one of the effects with Covid-19 is the reduced ability to engage with the workforce and with children, despite this the workforce has continued to get information through our communication below. For the young people we have made concerted efforts to keep in touch via virtual means.

During the year we:

Created and distributed a leaflet to support those that needed to isolate at the start of the first lockdown	Created an online tool kit for professionals and volunteers who may be seeing vulnerable families during the pandemic, to raise awareness of safeguarding.	Distributed regular Key Messages to professionals in partner agencies in relation to Covid -19 and partnership safeguarding work	Employed an Engagement Officer in the Business Unit to progress the work of involving our 4 th Partner in our work	Invited young people to discuss the Family Safeguarding Model.
Held 4 Walsall webinars <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic abuse (113 attended) Exploitation (201 attended) Trauma Informed Practice (163 attended) Neglect (87 attended) 	These Webinars have been uploaded to our website and accessed 874 times.	Supported #16days action against domestic abuse campaign on twitter (181 clicks on the content and 11,747 views)	Youth Safeguarding Partnership (YSP) Interviewed and influenced the appointment of the new Independent Chair.	Developed and distributed 7 Minute Briefings on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-agency audit findings Injuries in non-mobile babies CSA Domestic Abuse Learning from Alex (W11) SCR
Supported Sexual abuse and sexual violence awareness week on twitter (17 clicks on the content and 755 views)	Delivered an engagement and training forum with Healthwatch Walsall to 38 residents of Walsall	Published a Domestic Abuse awareness poster in the Health and Community guide which reaches over 40,000 residents of Walsall	Shared learning from all our Walsall Reviews to all partner agencies	Developed the future engagement project and delivery of strategy for 2021-22
Maintained contact and held 7 virtual meetings with YSP.	Discussed with young people, what neglect means to them.	Young people reviewed the WSP website and a film produced by Walsall College.	Began planning 2021-22 YSP events / activities.	

Learning from Case Reviews and Audits

5 children were referred to the Practice Review Subgroup for consideration of a review during the year.

None of these were Child Safeguarding Incidents notified to the National Panel or Ofsted by the LA.

One case progressed to a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR, W13) and is due to be completed in summer 2021.

2 cases were teenagers, the others were all aged 3 years or younger.

There was learning identified in all of the case discussions and associated actions were monitored by the Practice Review Subgroup with cross reference to the Practice Development Subgroup as appropriate.

Walsall also contributed to the National Panels report 'Out Of Routine: A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm' which was published in July 2020. The published report was shared across the partnership and included discussions at the Black Country CDOP, which has led to plans to commission and roll out the ICON Babies Cry You Can Cope programme in 2021/22.

Disseminating and implementing the learning included:

- A 7 minute briefing on W11 SCR (Alex) was produced and shared across the partnership.
- A 'Learning from Reviews' Newsletter was produced and shared across the partnership.
- A multi-agency leaflet on Bruising in Non-Mobile Babies was developed and a webinar facilitated by the CCG and WHT, which was positively evaluated.
- One of the cases influenced the review of the CSA Strategy and plans for future audits and CSA training.
- A standardised agenda template for Strategy Meetings was developed and implemented to support good practice and consistency.
- Awareness raising of adult self-neglect and hoarding issues took place with practitioners who work with children.

In summer 2019 the Walsall Local Safeguarding Children Board published a Serious Case Review which included learning in relation to Connected Carers. During quarter 3 of 2020-21 a multi-agency audit was undertaken to provide an insight into practice in relation to children placed with connected carers and review the impact of this previous learning.

Overall the multi-agency team determined that of the 5 cases audited, one case was 'Outstanding' and two cases were 'Good'. Of the remaining two cases, while the audit team recognised that the outcomes for the child in each case were good, in the specific area of ensuring notifications to agencies were timely, improvement was required.

The audit demonstrated that while in every case the required notifications to Out of Authority agencies and to the local Healthcare Trust had been made, they had not all been made in a timely way in every case. As with all multi-agency audits an action plan was put in place.

There was evidence of good multi-agency information sharing about planned placement moves to ensure seamless transition of health provision and where children were of an age (5yrs plus), there was good evidence that the voice of the child had been sought in planning and preparing the child for a move to connected carers.

In order to further embed this learning a webinar will be planned for 2021.

How effective have our arrangements been?

What has worked well?

- Although this year has been challenging due to a pandemic, there continues to be evidence that children are safe in Walsall (data on page 8):
 - An appropriate reduction in referrals to MASH
 - Positive impact of Early Help services
 - Positive reductions seen in the number of children subject to child protection plans
 - Positive increase of the number of families supported through the Family Safeguarding Model
- Partnership focus on safeguarding has continued through regular meetings between statutory partners despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.
- Attendance at multi-agency meetings has improved, particularly since they moved online. This virtual or blended approach allows for greater flexibility moving forward.
- A successful bid to the TCE (Tackling Child Exploitation) Programme saw work with local colleagues begin to develop work in relation to community resilience and engagement and consider the role which the wider community can take in developing an effective, strategic all-age response to exploitation.
- The CSA Strategy was updated and re-agreed by partners and an action plan developed.
- The Neglect Strategy was revisited to bring a renewed focus.
- Progress was made with the All-Age Exploitation pathway and included the development of an Exploitation Hub.
- The multi-agency audit programme continued to obtain learning in order to improve practice and saw improvements in the case ratings.
- During the year there were 5 multi-agency audits carried out, 4 were linked to the safeguarding partnership priorities and one (during quarter three) was in response to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families request for assurance in respect of services to new-borns and infants during lockdown . In respect of the latter, all the children had been seen by the relevant multi-agency professionals with good recording regarding whether this was face to face or virtually. All case files audited had relevant risk assessments in place and PPE was utilised appropriately as required for in person contact. There was consistent evidence of good information sharing across agencies. Needs identified during assessment were being met and children and their families were being supported. Where risks had escalated, there was clear evidence that the appropriate actions had been taken to respond and consider these in a multi-agency forum, leading to an initial child protection plan for one infant.
- Work has taken place to embed the SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) pathway, supported by SARC Lunch and Learn training sessions.
- An independent review (by Penny Thompson, CBE) commissioned by the 3 statutory partners in Autumn 2020 to consider the first year of the new arrangements was a proactive and positive undertaking. The report commented on the committed and effective Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit and the openness, candour and self-reflection demonstrated by the partnerships leaders.
- Approaching the end of the contract held by the previous Independent Chair (Liz Murphy) the statutory partners reflected on the independent scrutiny of the Safeguarding Arrangements and opted to re-appoint an Independent Chair. Recruitment took place in the early part of 2021 with the new post holder (Sally Hodges) commencing in April 2021.

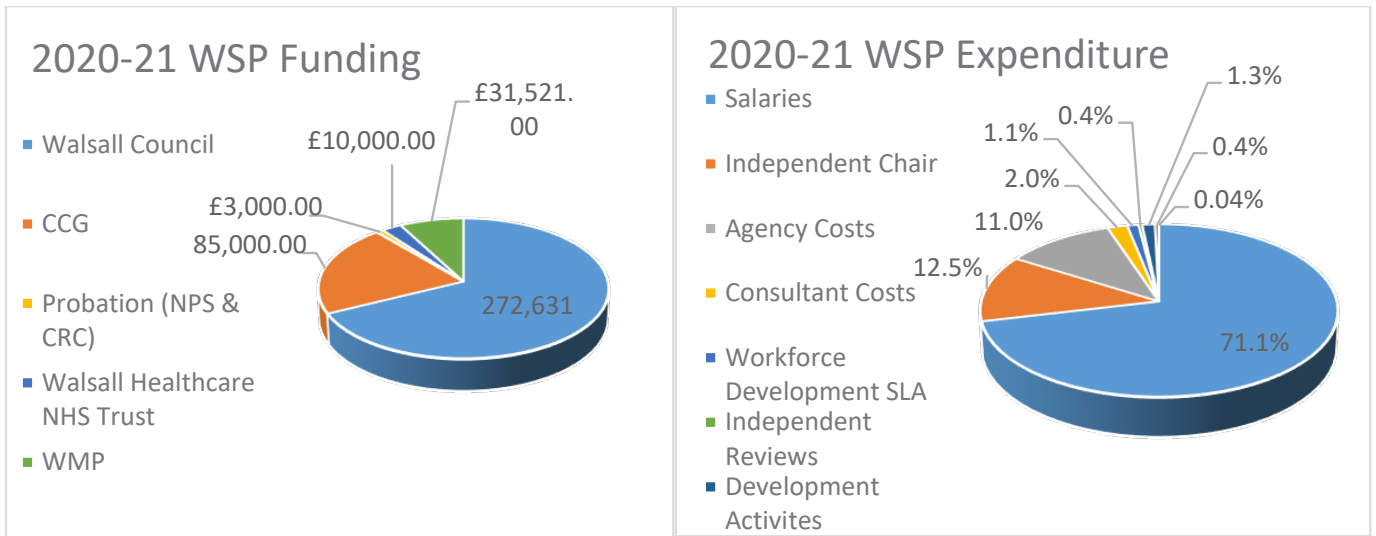
Areas for improvement or focus in 2021-22

- To implement recommendations made by Penny Thompson in her review of the Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements, including creating an Executive Group and reducing the number of partnership priorities to provide more focus and impact.
- To consider and implement recommendations from the forthcoming Wood review
- Progression and sign off the All-Age Exploitation Strategy.
- Revision and continued delivery of the Neglect Strategy.
- To review the participation strategy to ensure we effectively engage with young people and practitioners and improve our communication with partners
- Implementation the ICON Programme across Walsall
- Strengthen the links between the Family Safeguarding model and Walsall Safeguarding Partnership
- Develop a positive and productive relationship between Safeguarding Partnership and the Safer Walsall Partnership
- Due to Covid-19 there was limited inspection activity of the statutory partners during this year. Once this re-commences the Partnership will be sighted on and respond to the respective findings.
- Track the impact that learning from our reviews and audits have had by carrying out a range of assurance activities and engaging with practitioners.
- To embed Impact Evaluations across the Partnership as part of management oversight and supervisions

Appendix 1: Financial Summary

In 2020-21 the partnership had £402,000 pooled into a partnership budget. This money was contributed by the Statutory Partners, plus the local Healthcare Trust and Probation. The majority of the resource was used to pay for Business Unit staffing. Other costs include the Independent Chair, Regional Procedures and online products used for business processes, Service User Involvement, Consultancy and Training.

The charts below show the proportion of the contributions by organisation and also the percentage split of the expenditure.







Right for Children, Families and Adults

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/22

Committee date	2nd Sept	12 th October	23 rd November	31st January	8 th March	13 th April
Report Deadline	24 th August	4 th October	15 th November	21 st January	28 th February	5 th April
Safeguarding young people with disabilities			ZM/HK			
Family Safeguarding		<i>If CAMHS not available</i>			Helen Billings Rita Homer	
CAMHS					Overview.	
Effectiveness of partnership working (strategic level)					IV	
Understanding the impact of deprivation			HK			
Children's services Performance			HK			
Transition into adult services				ZM/KJ		
Holiday Activity Fund – impact		IV				
Child Exploitation						ZM/Partners
Youth Justice peer review				PR		
Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report						
Finance			Q2 Finance report Budget			



Walsall Council

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

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

4 April 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 45 of 51](#)

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
MAY 2022 TO AUGUST 2022 (4.4.22)**

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
97/22 (7.3.22)	Corporate Plan 2021/22: To note the Quarter 4 (outturn) 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	Leader of the Council.	June 2022
99/22 (4.4.22)	Corporate Performance Management Framework: To present the refreshed framework which is part of the Council's governance arrangements along with feedback from Audit Committee following its consideration of the robustness of the framework.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Helen Dudson Helen.dudson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Leader of the Council	June 2022
100/22 (4.4.22)	Pre-Audit Outturn 2021/22 and Covid-19 Update – To receive the pre-audit revenue and capital financial outturn position for 2021/22 and approve recommended carry forwards, and financial and treasury indicators for 2021/22, along with an updated assessment of Covid-19 funding allocations to address cost pressures and income losses	Cabinet Key Decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Corporate Management Team and internal services	Leader of the Council	June 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	David Hamilton David.hamilton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care	June 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 up to 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	Portfolio Holder for Regeneration	June 2022
101/22 (4.4.22)	Corporate Financial Performance 2022/23, approach to Budget Setting for 2023/24, and changes to the council's Tax Strategy – To report the financial position based on 2 months to May 2022, including the impact of Covid-19, and to set out our approach and timeline for the 2023/24 budget process and amendments to the Tax Strategy.	Cabinet Key Decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Corporate Management Team and internal services	Leader of the Council	July 2022
98/22 (7.3.22)	Statutory Advocacy Services: To receive an update on the recommissioning of these services and delegate authority to accept and award a contract	Cabinet Key decision	Tracy Simcox Tracy.simcox@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care	July 2022

**Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Forward Plan of Key Decisions Published up to August 2022**

Date created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main Consultees	Date of meeting
02/08/2021	<p>Black Country Executive Joint Committee Collaboration Agreement – Deed of Variation 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 the report.</p>	Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	27/04/2022
Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF)				
06/12/2022	<p>Globe House, Walsall Approval for the Accountable Body for the Land and Property Investment Fund (Walsall Council) to proceed to enter into a Grant Agreement with Globe Asset Management 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.</p>	Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	27/04/2022
Local Growth Fund (LGF) Programme changes				
01/11/2021	<p>Hatherton Street Phase 2 Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Jessup Brothers Ltd, to reflect the reduction in match funding and re-</p>	Simon Neilson Simon.Neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	27/04/2022

Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Forward Plan of Key Decisions Published up to August 2022

Date created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main Consultees	Date of meeting
	profiled outputs within the Hatherton Street Phase 2 project funded by the Local Growth Fund (LGF).			
01/11/2021	<p>i9 Wolverhampton Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Ion Projects Limited, to reflect the change and profile in indirect outputs within the i9 (Block 9) Wolverhampton project funded by the Local Growth Fund (LGF).</p>	Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk	Wolverhampton City Council	27/04/2022
06/04/2021	<p>Dudley Advanced Construction Centre 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.</p>	Helen Martin Helen.Martin@dudley.gov.uk	Dudley Council	29/06/2022
06/09/2021	<p>Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with the University of</p>	Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk	Wolverhampton City Council	29/06/2022

**Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Forward Plan of Key Decisions Published up to August 2022**

Date created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main Consultees	Date of meeting
	<p>Wolverhampton, to deliver the Local 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.</p>			
Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF)		Programme changes		
10/01/2022	<p>Sandwell Housing Gap Funding 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.</p>	<p>Tony McGovern Tony.McGovern@sandwell.gov.uk</p>	Sandwell Council	27/04/2022
Growing Places Fund				
07/02/2022	<p>Black Country Digital Strategy 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, funded from the Growing Places revenue budget.</p>	<p>Simon Neilson Simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Walsall Council	29/06/2022

**Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Forward Plan of Key Decisions Published up to August 2022**

Date created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main Consultees	Date of meeting
	Delivery is to carry on in the 2022/23 financial year.			