

11 March 2021

## Right for Children Transformation Programme

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Chris Towe

### Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on progress against our Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) Transformation Programme and plans for further development over the next 3 years to achieve the benefits as set out within our Council's Proud Programme.

Our 3 year Transformation Plan is focussed on 3 strategic priorities to enable us to realise our vision and secure the associated benefits, these are:

#### (1) Reducing our demand

- Stopping failure demand - (when we are not the right organisation to provide help we currently end up being the default position – this leads to delay and not the right help for families with complex needs) Our transformation plan aims to re-direct this demand through self-help and outline clear roles and responsibilities relating to the partnership offer of support.
- Preventing escalation of demand (demand avoidance) – helping the right families through a graduated response of evidence-based programmes (from targeted help to placement support).
- Avoidance of high cost help and support – strategic commissioning that provides the right, most cost-effective placements for our looked after children and the right packages of support for our children with SEND.

#### (2) Developing a highly skilled/stable workforce

- Developing our profile as an employer.
- Making the job do-able and enabling our workforce to do the right thing.
- Supporting our staff with an effective workforce and wellbeing strategy.
- Developing a clear career pathway and succession planning.
- Having a clear recruitment and retention strategy.

#### (3) Co-ordinating and influencing the establishment of a mature WR4C partnership platform to drive the delivery of the WR4C vision

Reducing our demand and preventing children, young people and families from needing costly statutory interventions will require a strong and mature partnership approach.

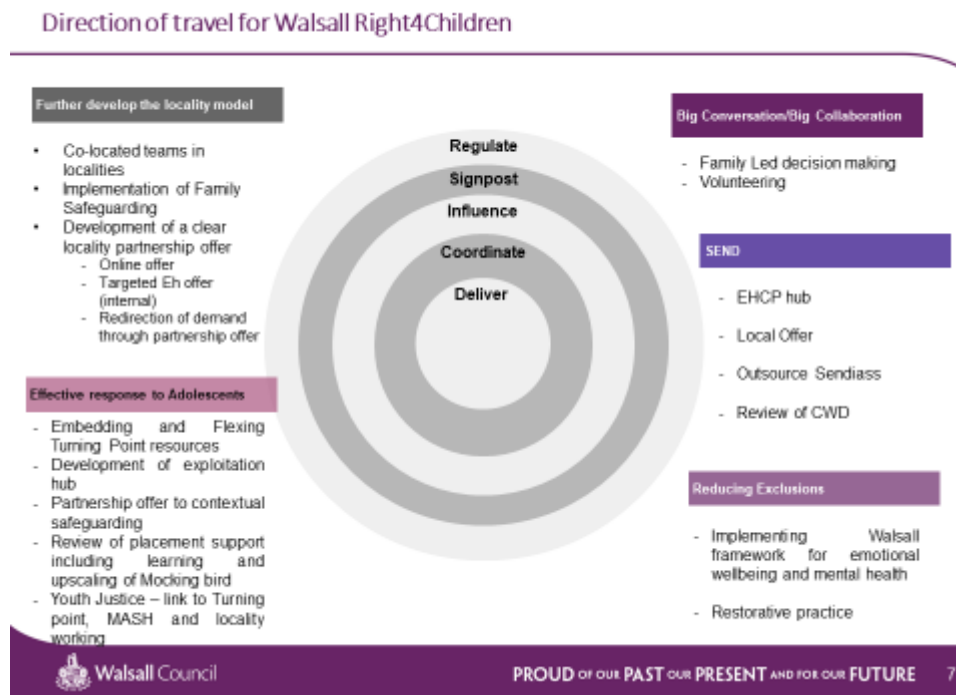
Connecting up transformation across Walsall in the interest children and families will be key including integrating services around our children and families where this makes sense for them, strategies, processes, adopting the same thresholds, removing duplication between partners and co-producing with families and the community

This work will need to link with

- Walsall Together

- Safeguarding Partnership
- Walsall for all
- Safer Communities
- Resilient Communities
- Youth Justice Partnership Board
- Regional Violence Prevention
- Troubled Families

At the start of 2020 we set out 5 key cross directorate priorities. These 5 priorities are driven by evidence from our performance framework, Ofsted Improvement plans and our 'Big Conversations' with children, young people and families. Our 5 cross directorate priorities are:



### Reason for scrutiny:

To provide members with a progress update of our 'Walsall Right For Children' Transformation Programme, outline our priorities and plans for the next 3 years in line with PROUD transformation benefits.

### Recommendations:

For progress to be noted.  
For priorities and plans to be supported.

### Background papers:

Scrutiny reports presented on October 2019, February 2020  
Appendix 1 - WR4C outcomes framework  
Appendix 2 – briefing paper on Holiday and Activity Food Programme

## **Resource and legal considerations:**

Transformation programme set out for the next 3 years is projected to secure £11.742M benefits.

## **Council Corporate Plan Priorities:**

The 'Walsall Right for Children' Transformation Programme contributes to a number of our Council Corporate Plan priorities:

1. **People:** throughout the programme we have and will continue to work with children, young people and their families to ensure they have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.
2. **Internal Focus:** The programme is focussed on a whole system change to ensure that within Children's Services we are as efficient and effective as we can be.
3. **Children:** The primary objective of the programme is to ensure that the right support is in place so that children can have the best start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.
4. **Communities:** Our transformation programme will connect and strengthen relationships with Walsall communities and ensure that they are resilient with all housing needs for children and young people being met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

## **Citizen impact:**

**Our WR4C transformation** contributes towards the Council's target to increase Customer satisfaction from 67% to 77% through:

- Children, young people and families' voices help shape our service design and development through our WR4C Big conversation programme.
- Our restorative approach means we work with families and therefore families understand better why we are involved and will feel that they play an active part in the plan of support
- Our work through the CAM work stream should ensure information easier to access and therefore customers will be able to self-service where relevant.
- We will be providing timely, relevant and seamless support from WBC

## **Environmental impact:**

Not applicable for this report

## **Performance management:**

We developed a WR4C outcome framework (see appendix1) - This framework sets out the five key priorities and the individual outcomes within each of them alongside the indicators that will be used to measure progress against each of the outcomes and ultimately whether they have been achieved and the quality assurance questions that need to be asked alongside the data to fully understand progress.

The framework aims to utilise existing service KPI's but view them through a cross directorate lens to measure our system wide success in achieving our transformation priorities.

We also recognise that our WR4C transformation can only be achieved through collaboration with partners internally and externally and this document sets out how the WR4C transformation programme links in with the wider aims of the Walsall Together partnership and Walsall Council's Corporate priorities and PROUD Transformation Programme. It also outlines how the monitoring of the outcomes will be governed in line with the existing performance and quality governance arrangements.

### **Reducing inequalities:**

The aim of our 'Right for Children' programme is to ensure that all children have the right support, in the right place, at the right time, for as long as it is needed to enable them to be safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best.

Our Outcome framework has a cross focus on equality and includes the following:

- a) To incorporate equality monitoring into existing processes considering all applicable 'protected characteristics'.
- b) To monitor interventions/activities to progress towards improved equality of access and opportunity.
- c) To monitor interventions/activities to progress towards improved equality of outcomes.
- d) To use equality monitoring to develop and improve interventions/activities and to act where inequalities exist.

### **Consultation:**

Throughout the transformation programme there has been consultation with our workforce, children, young people and their families and partners most notably , our Big Conversation.

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# Report

## 1. Building on our transformation successes

**1.1** The WR4C Transformation Programme, launched in September 2018, drives forward our Children's Services vision to ensure that the right children are in the right place with the right support for as long as it's needed to ensure that they are safe from harm, happy and learning well.

In order to do this we identified that we need to:

- move away from the current process driven practice model which 'does to and for' to a more collaborative model that 'works with' families and partners.
- move away from silo working to a more integrated approach internally (across the directorate and council) and across partners.
- focus on creating resilience in families and managing risk more supportively

To realise our WR4C vision we need to do things differently:

- move to a locality model, where it makes sense to do so
- focus on connecting practitioners with communities and local resources
- get to know our children and families well to enable them to become more resilient and stay together.

**1.2** Key progress between September 18 and now:

- We have undertaken our restructure within social care to implement locality working (implementing via a phased approach from January 2020) and have secured external funding to help us to implement an evidence-based model as part of our locality working.
- We have refocused resources to create a bespoke evidence-based service to support adolescents who are at risk of coming into care.
- We have implemented Mocking Bird, an evidence-based model to support placement stability for young people in Foster Care.
- We have restructured our Access and Inclusion resources and published our revised inclusion strategy.
- We have held and continue to hold the 'Big Conversation' with our children and families to ensure that their views are listened to and that our transformation is co-produced with them rather than done to them.
- We are implementing Restorative Practice as our unified approach across the directorate and with partners to enable change in culture and leadership in the development of a strength-based approach with children, young people and families.
- We have implemented Right Help Right Time guidance across the partnership
- We have had a drive on Social Work recruitment and have significantly reduced our reliance on agency social workers.
- We have developed our relationship with schools as a key stakeholder, partner and deliverer of provision and services.
- We have rolled out our restorative training to schools ensuring a unified approach in working with children and families
- We have developed an effective holiday wrap around offer for our most vulnerable children including our Keep in Touch Team

## **2. Priorities driven by evidence**

At the start of 2020 we set out 5 key cross directorate priorities as part of our next phase of our transformation programme. These 5 priorities are driven by evidence from our performance framework, Ofsted Improvement plans and our 'Big Conversations' with children, young people and families:

### **2.1 Further develop our locality model to:**

It has been recognised for some time that needs of children and families differ across Walsall. While Walsall is one of the most deprived areas of the country overall, there are some areas that are more affluent whereas others suffer with huge levels of deprivation. The central approach of children's services mean that these differing needs are not always well met or understood.

Workers who are handling caseloads across the whole borough aren't able to build sufficient knowledge of or relationships with community groups and services that are active in local areas that may be able to provide support to children and families within the locality. It is also difficult for workers to fully understand the levels of need that may be based on the particular demographics of an area which can lead to a less than ideal response to need.

Moving to a locality model has already worked well in Early Help and will enable and support a more localised approach to need and relationship building, improving outcomes for children and families across Walsall.

Our key activities to achieve this are:

#### **2.1.1 Co-locate teams across the 4 localities**

Build on the success of the four Family Support Early Help hubs seeking further opportunities to co-locate teams, connecting practitioners with each other, with community resources and the families they work with.

#### **2.1.2 Develop Family Safeguarding in Walsall**

Family Safeguarding Model was launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> September in Walsall and brings a whole-system change approach in Children's Social Care to tackle the impact of the 'trio of vulnerabilities' (domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental ill-health) on children's lives. Adults and children's specialists work in a unified team to share information, to provide support and prevent families reaching crisis stage. This provides better outcomes for children by keeping families together, addressing root causes and preventing children from entering the care system, and there is a wealth of evidence available externally which supports this.

The council and its partners have been given an initial investment by the DfE of £2.4M over 3 years to fund the adult specialist workers in the model with a requirement to make this model sustainable by year 4.

#### **2.1.3 Develop an effective locality partnership offer (linked to Resilient Communities)**

Working Together guidance sets out a clear partnership responsibility of identification and action to effectively support children, young people and their family's needs to prevent

issues from escalation and prevent invasive social care involvement where possible. The WR4C vision is to support development of community resilience to enable us to meet the needs of children and young people preventing or avoiding repeat entry into statutory services (social care and / or youth justice).

We are seeking to move from a reactive partnership model ie waiting for need for support has been identified either by a professional or the family themselves to proactive targeting through the use of data (from the HUB) to predict more accurately which families or communities would benefit from targeted EH and make that offer and in a more proactive way earlier and as a graduated response.

This partnership offer will need to strategically align to the Resilient Communities work stream within the PROUD programme and Walsall Together as well as to the Public Health 'Best Start' strategy and programme and seek opportunities for influencing wider partnership delivery through these two strands.

## **2.2 Develop an effective response to Adolescents**

An inspection of Youth Justice Services in June 2019 found that assessments for youths involved in criminal activity were not joined up or robust enough and that risk of harm was not fully understood. It also found that there was significant disproportionality in the system which had an impact on the outcomes, in particular for boys from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

There is a high number of adolescents on child protection plans or becoming looked after in Walsall and education outcomes are poor. Existing services to support adolescents are being reviewed and strengthened including a review of Turning Point and Safeguarding Partnership work to develop and implement an all age Exploitation Pathway overseen by the Children's Exploitation Panel.

Improved support for adolescents will not only reduce the risk of Walsall's youth becoming involved in or the victims of crime, but will also improve the possibility of the remaining safe at home and achieving better educational outcomes and improving their future employment and health prospects.

Our key activities to achieve this are:

### **2.2.1 Embed our Turning Point service**

Turning Point was established at the end of 2019. The service is a multi- disciplinary team using an evidence-based model called AMBIT to support young people at risk of coming into care.

We will embed the approach as well as explore how we can flex Turning Point resource to increase capacity and extend services being provided across Children's Services benefitting more young people. We will also support the service in developing better relationships with SEND, housing support services and voluntary youth provision.

### **2.2.2 Develop an effective partnership offer around contextual safeguarding and exploitation.**

Development of a multi-agency Exploitation Hub that is supported by an Exploitation Pathway, Risk Assessment Tool and an Exploitation Panel to promote the early

identification and support of those young people at risk of exploitation . Internally this will include developing clear pathways between Youth Justice and the Exploitation Hub Secondly, we will work with partners to develop a comprehensive offer across localities to respond effectively to demand related to contextual safeguarding/exploitation

### **2.2.3 Develop an effective offer of support focused on securing placement stability for young people**

Firstly, we will consider the potential upscaling of Mockingbird (from 3 to 6 constellations) A pilot was implemented in 2018 in Walsall and is an innovative method of delivering foster care using an extended family model which provides sleepovers and short breaks, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities.

The programme improves the stability of fostering placements and strengthens the relationships between carers, children and young people, fostering services and birth families. Evidence from the evaluation of this pilot will inform our plans for upscaling including the potential development of Mockingbird for connected carers.

Secondly, we will consider developing an in-house foster care support team with additional support made to mainstream foster carers – movement of 2 p/t CAMHS SW's. Identification of 1 Targeted Youth Worker and 1 FSO.

To support carers, reduce foster placement breakdown and children moving to higher cost placements.

In addition, we will work with Walsall independent placement providers to ensure all meet at least good Ofsted standards and we secure placements for Walsall young people enable to keep them close.

Lastly, we will undertake a review of our internal Residential Review to ensure we have good placement sufficiency, which meets local need.

### **2.2.4 Maximise resource to prevent young people from offending**

We will explore how we can flex Youth Justice resources to increase capacity and extend specialist crime reduction and intervention knowledge and expertise being provided across Children's Services benefitting more young people.

Review of the Youth Justice/Social care working protocol to ensure pathways are effectively aligned (including MASH, exploitation Hub and Turning Point) and effective working practice is in place for those young people who touch both services.

Explore the development of effective partnership work with key voluntary sector providers to maximise locality resources though supporting them to secure additional funding to deliver on the crime prevention agenda (aligned to Resilient Communities).

## **2.3 Reduce exclusions**

Exclusions from Walsall schools were significantly higher than statistical, regional and national comparators and attendance rates were lower.

Relationships between schools and the Local Authority were not robust and exclusion rates, feedback from parents and inspection evidence demonstrated that schools were not inclusive places for children with additional support needs or behavioural issues.



Professionals in schools did not feel supported and parents were unable to access the right support to ensure that their children remained in education.

Supporting and challenging schools to be more inclusive and supporting children and parents to remain in education will ensure better educational outcomes and improve future employment and health prospects for Walsall's young people.

Our key activities to achieve this are:

**2.3.1** Consultation with schools during April and May identified that schools are absolutely committed to being inclusive, but confused about what is available or how to access the right support to meet the needs of their pupils.

The Walsall emotional and wellbeing framework was developed in collaboration with education settings and partners and provides a consistent approach to communicate the strategies and menu of support available that schools can access to ensure they can create the best conditions for every child to thrive and ensure no child misses out of education.

**2.3.2** We will also continue to develop Restorative Practice to ensure an inclusive response internally and across the partnership to meeting the needs of children and young people at risk of exclusion.

**2.3.3** Building on our Summer Partnership programme, including our keep in Touch team we will continue to offer a wraparound support during School holidays to continue to provide positive engagement opportunities for our most vulnerable pupils and families. This will include the implementation of the Holiday Activity and food programme funded by the DfE (see appendix 2 for detailed information on the programme)

## **2.4 SEND offer**

In February 2019 Walsall received an Ofsted / CQC joint Local Area Inspection of SEND services. This inspection found significant weaknesses in Walsall's delivery of services for children, young people and families with SEN and the areas implementation and adherence to the SEN Code of Practice.

As a result we were required to develop a written statement of action (WWSOA) to outline how improvements would be implemented to ensure that children, young people and families with SEN receive the services and support that they need.

10 Areas of concern (AoC) were identified including the quality of EHCP provision, the quality of the Local Offer, the way in which parents and children were involved in co-production of services and poor outcomes for children with SEND.

Improving the identification of and services for children and families with SEND will not only ensure families receive the support that they need, but will improve the outcomes for children with SEND, giving them the most opportunity to move into an independent adulthood or transition into appropriate adult services.

Our key activities to achieve this are:

**2.4.1** Publishing a Local Offer is a LA statutory requirement and provides information

for children and young people with special educational needs (SEND) and their parents or carers in a single place. It shows families what they can expect from a range of local agencies including education, health and social care. An effective Local Offer contributes to a graduated response to support children with SEND.

**2.4.2 Implementation of the Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) hub**  
Use of the Connected Working Programme and the implementation of an effective electronic system will assist us to increase performance and provide timely plans of support for children who meet the threshold for an EHCP

**2.4.3 Outsourcing of SENDIASS**  
Outsourcing has provided an effective and impartial service for parents, set out in the SEND code of practice and a requirement in our WWsoA

**2.4.4 Review of Social Care – Children with Disability team and Short Break provision**  
Review will include:

Thresholds to ensure the right children receive the right packages of support  
Improve transition planning with Adult Social Care  
Staffing structures to enable effective practice  
Packages of support interlinked with other parts of the council (SEND/Short break)  
Establishment of an All Age Disability Service

## **2.5 Big Conversations/Big Collaboration**

The 2017 Children's Services Inspection found that children did not have a sufficient voice in the development of services. Data that is collected in relation to children's participation in their child protection planning and looked after children's reviews shows that children do not actively participate enough in the development of their care plans and decision that are made about the support that they will receive but we know that there is more work to be done in this area.

The 2019 SEND Local Area Inspection found that co-production between the LA and parents and carers was weak and was a key area for improvement.

In 2019 Walsall began the 'Big Conversation' with children and families – this enabled children and families to provide feedback about how they felt about services and the way that they were treated. This led to some immediate changes in the way that professionals interacted with children and families and also demonstrated the power of supporting children and families to have their voices heard.

Our Child Journey Audit process now considers the views of parents, carers and children where appropriate to inform service improvement. For children and in care and care leavers, we have worked with young people to develop a series of commitments and are implementing our care leaver's local offer.

Giving children and families a voice in service design and development will provide assurance that the services that are in place are the right ones to meet the needs of families in Walsall. By ensuring that children, young people and families have a say in and contribute to the development of their plans, interventions will be more effective and outcomes more positive and robust.

Our key activities to achieve this are:

**2.5.1** Develop volunteering opportunities for parents to deliver parenting support - linked to Resilient Communities and Public Health

**2.5.2** Development of Family Led decision making as part of early help and social care planning to empower families to drive through the change needed and secure better outcomes for their children.

### **3. PROUD capabilities and enablers**

Our WR4C programme will be depending on the PROUD cross cutting capabilities to support us to deliver the transformation and securing the benefits:

- A cross-cutting customer capability (**CAM**) that will help our customers (families, partners and external people) to access quality information easier and enable them to self-service where appropriate.
- A **Hub**, bringing together strategy, insight and data, commissioning and procurement helping us to drive evidence-based decision-making.
- More consistent business support capabilities able to provide both strategic and transactional support.
- Investment in enabling technology to continue the learning from COVID19 and develop effective and efficient practice.

### **4. How will we know we have made a difference?**

Our newly developed outcomes framework sets out how we will provide assurance of delivery against the outcomes via a combination of:

- quantitative indicators to provide information about demand, performance and outcome and
- qualitative assurance of practice via audit activity and feedback from children, young people and families.

All available information will be drawn together and analysed in order to present a rounded view of whether outcomes are being met and provide the information needed to enable evidence informed decision making.

Indicators have been categorised into three distinct categories:

**How Many** – these are indicators that relate to demand and enable us to monitor whether the demand for services is in the right place and reducing or increasing where expected.

**How Well** – these are indicators that relate to performance and look at whether children, young people and families are receiving services and support on time.

**So What** – these are indicators which measure outcomes for children, young people and families. As outcomes are often difficult to measure on a quantitative basis, qualitative data from audit activity and in particular feedback from children, young people and families will provide additional evidence of outcomes.