

**19 October 2017**

**Community Cohesion Strategy - Update**

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolios:** Cllr I Shires – Community, Leisure and Culture

**Executive summary:**

This report follows on from discussions at this committee's meeting of 6 April 2017 and provides members with an update on the community cohesion strategy.

**Reason for scrutiny:**

The Chair of the Corporate and Public Services Scrutiny Committee has asked for an update report on the latest position regarding the Community Cohesion Strategy.

**Recommendations:**

1. The Corporate and Public Services Scrutiny Committee to note the report.
2. Note the findings of the Community Conversations

**Background papers:**

Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Community Cohesion In Walsall Report dated 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

The Casey Review – executive Summary

**Community Cohesion Strategy Timeline – key dates**

- 13/08/15 – elected members meet regarding cohesion in Walsall
- 14/08/15 – EDL demonstration Walsall
- 10/09/15 – terms of reference agreed
- 10/09/15 - 01/03/16 – consultation (Cohesion working group)
- 01/08/15 – 30/05/16 – Community conversations Consultation
- 14/04/16 - Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting
- 23/06/16 – European Referendum
- 21/07/16 – Full Council report
- 07/09/16 – Cabinet report (update)
- 07/09/16 – Current strategy development.
- 05/12/16 – Casey Review published

## Timeline Detail

On the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2015 English Defence League held a second demonstration in the borough on the grounds that Walsall was a hotbed of Islamic Extremism.

Following the demonstration, it was identified that Walsall did not have a standalone community cohesion strategy. Previously the Cohesion team that was part of the Community Safety services worked to The Sustainable Community Strategy (2013 – 2016)

10<sup>th</sup> September 2017 A working group of elected members was set up which was cross party

- Councillor Aftab Nawaz (Chair - Labour)
- Councillor Ian Shires (Liberal democrats)
- Councillor Stephen Craddock (UKIP)
- Councillor Gurmeet Sohal (Conservative)

Draft terms of reference were discussed and agreed by a meeting of the working group that took place on 13 August 2015. The terms of reference were subsequently agreed by a meeting of the Committee on 10 September 2015. The Working Group has held 11 meetings during its investigations taking into account the views of 41 witnesses to report back the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding a review of community cohesion in Walsall. This review was undertaken by a working group which presented its final report and recommendations to the Committee on 14 April 2016.

In tandem to the working group's consultation the Cohesion Team carried out a broader consultation called *Community Conversations*. The consultation was across the 6 area partnerships and spoke to various individuals through interview, focus groups, staff members, faith groups, LGBT community members, Disabled groups, elderly and young people.

This was completed in May 2016.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 the UK voted to leave the European Union. The decision has seen a number of changes both locally and nationally. There was an increase in recorded hate crime nationally but not locally, however, increased anxiety was expressed locally by some European families through our voluntary sector contacts. There was a fear that families would be asked to leave UK or that they would no longer be welcome by a local community.

Council considered the report on the 21 July 2016 and agreed that:

- a) A new stand-alone, community-driven Community Cohesion Strategy and action plan be created for Walsall. This strategy and action plan should be ready for delivery by April 2017;
- b) The Community Cohesion Strategy should be included in the policy framework as an 'other plan and strategy' under Part 4.01 (a)(ii) of the Walsall Council Constitution;

c) The remaining recommendations of the Community Cohesion Working Group be referred to Cabinet to consider their implementation.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016 Cabinet received a report for the Cohesion Strategy 2017. Cabinet were asked to consider the remaining recommendations of the Community Cohesion Working Group. That Cabinet agree to the proposed responses to the remaining recommendations of the Community Cohesion Working Group, which are detailed below.

1. Partners should pool resources to deliver shared objectives around community cohesion.
2. Community cohesion objectives should be built into commissioning; funding and into wider outcomes related to service delivery.
3. Establishing a Community Cohesion Taskforce of local partners, community representatives and councillors to oversee the delivery of the Community Cohesion Strategy and review it on a quarterly basis.
4. The action plan to deliver the Community Cohesion Strategy should consider creating a Cohesion Centre to be shared by organisations from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds with the focus on learning from each other and educating the wider public.
5. Consideration should be given to establishing a working group in the new municipal year to understand the local impact of the Prevent Programme.
6. Human Resources Services at the Council and Partner organisations should review recruitment and staff development policies to look for opportunities to improve the make-up of their workforces to reflect the demographics of the local community and ensure that senior management positions are more diverse.
7. Staff development at all levels should take place to improve the workforces understanding of minority groups and cultural awareness.
8. Engagement with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities should be improved around education, health and child safeguarding.
9. A campaign of 'mythbusting' around stereotypes of different communities should be undertaken in partnership with schools and faith organisations.
10. Recognise that majority white communities are feeling ignored and equally need to celebrate their own heritage.
11. Support for new communities recently settled in Walsall should be improved.

## Casey Review

On the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016 a document was publicised regarding a review on opportunity and integration carried out by Dame Louise Casey DBE CB.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/575973/The\\_Casey\\_Review\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf)

A summary of the recommendations are given below

1 Providing additional funding for area-based plans and projects that will address the key priorities identified in this review, including the promotion of English language skills, empowering marginalised women, promoting more social mixing, particularly among young people, and tackling barriers to employment for the most socially isolated groups.

2 Developing a set of local indicators of integration and requiring regular collection of the data supporting these indicators.

3 Identifying and promoting successful approaches to integration. Improve the integration of communities in Britain and establish a set of values around which people from all different backgrounds can unite, by:

4 Attaching more weight to British values, laws and history in our schools.

5 Considering what additional support or advice should be provided to immigrants to help them get off to the best start in understanding their rights and obligations and our expectations for integration.

6 Reviewing the route to British citizenship and considering the introduction of an integration oath on arrival for immigrants intending to settle in Britain. Reduce economic exclusion, inequality and segregation in our most isolated and deprived communities and schools, by:

7 Working with schools providers and local communities to promote more integrated schools and opportunities for pupils to mix with others from different backgrounds.

8 Developing approaches to help overcome cultural barriers to employment.

9 Improving English language provision through funding for community-based classes and appropriate prioritisation of adult skills budgets.

10 Improving our understanding of how housing and regeneration policies could improve integration or reduce segregation.

11 Introducing stronger safeguards for children who are not in mainstream education, including those being home schooled.

18 Increase standards of leadership and integrity in public office, by

ensuring that British values such as respect for the rule of law, equality and tolerance are enshrined in the principles of public life and developing a new oath for holders of public office.

## **Current Position**

The Interim Executive Director of Change and Governance recommended stronger links with the Corporate Plan and Walsall Plan and an updated draft entitled the Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2017-2020 has now been produced. The strategy is planned to go to Cabinet/CMT in October 2017.

Throughout the development of the new strategy cohesion work continued with the budget of £74,000.


The Following Projects and activities have been delivered

Caldmore Village Festival  
Shaheedee Football, cricket and Hockey Weekend  
Walsall Pride  
Beachdale Away  
Anti Far Right Web Site support  
Walsall Cohesion Cup (Walsall FC / . CPR)  
Darlaston Multi Faith Partnership developed – 1 each year for last 3 years  
Muslim / Christian Partnership set up  
European Migrants consultations (Nash Dom)  
Caldmore Eastern Europeans Community Safety Project  
Roma and Polish St Nicholas Events  
Refugee Away Day  
Partnership working with Area Managers  
Town Centre Events – Aldridge In Bloom, Brownhills, Darlaston, Bloxwich Town Centre  
BMYG – young people activities  
Various faith events  
Birchills Youth Project  
Cohesion through Cricket  
One Walsall Cohesion Town Centre Event  
Treasured Memories – Cohesion Through Arts  
School Twinning  
Community Conversations Consultation  
Activate against Hate – developed (Youth of Walsall)  
Youth of Walsall supported and developed  
Walsall Multi Faith Forum development day and work  
Holocaust Memorial Days delivered  
Anne Frank Trust Project negotiated for Walsall  
Remembering Srebrenica  
Big Iftar events  
Places of Worship visits developed  
Visit a Mosque / mosque open days  
Anti Hate Project supported

Hate Crime Awareness raising project  
Slovakian Consultation commissioned  
Afro Caribbean consultation commissioned  
Sikh / Hindu / Christian and Muslim consultation  
Standard partnership working across the police / housing / voluntary sectors to  
promote cohesion

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# Walsall Council

## Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2017 - 2020

DRAFT

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Message from Councillor Sean Coughlan  
Leader of Walsall Council



Our geography, people and history have shaped the place that Walsall Borough is today, Willenhall with its locks, Darlaston with its nuts & bolts, Walsall leather and many more industrial trades.

This gave both benefits and opportunity for many, but also challenges and now with newer challenges that need to be addressed especially in the current economic and austerity climate we are facing.

A strategy for Cohesion and Integration is complex and our policies need to be focused on meeting the needs of our changing communities and developing policy led change. This is not about race or religion; this is about PEOPLE & PLACES.

People and Places are at the forefront of that development. How people feel about themselves, their neighbours and where they live is influenced by living standards, employment, welfare reforms, learning provision, skills development and opportunities to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Within this complex and challenging world, Walsall Council is committed to building a fairer society where people feel they are appreciated, listened to and empowered to make their communities prosper.



Message from Councillor Ian Shires

Message from the Chief executive

## **Walsall Council Community Cohesion and Integration Priorities 2017-2020**

There have been considerable demographic changes in terms of increased diversity of the population. Additionally local, regional, national and international events have influenced people's attitudes. This has created increasing challenges around fostering good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who don't.

Numerous factors such as austerity, lack of affordable housing, private rented accommodation rent increases, Brexit, increasing diversity, global population shifts, rises in extremism across Europe and reduced Council budgets are all contributing to increased pressure on residents and changes in attitudes towards immigrants.

The findings of the community cohesion consultation, along with some of the findings of the Casey Review which were relevant to Walsall, evidence the need for a pragmatic, fit for purpose cohesion and integration strategy.

Following the consultations with residents, Walsall Council identified the following outcomes and objectives it sets out to achieve through the Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy. Detailed action plan of activity relating to each objective is provided in Appendix xxx

- That our district centres residents are encouraged and offered opportunities to meet with others from outside of their locality.
- That all communities have opportunities to discuss their perceptions and anxieties regarding an increasingly diverse world.
- That members from minority groups within localities feel empowered to shape their area and contribute positively to their locality.
- That communications are improved with communities to identify and reduce community tensions, misinformation and promote integration.
- That the numbers of hate crimes that go unreported are reduced.
- That Walsall residents feel safe which ever community they live in or visit.
- That opportunities to discuss the Prevent Agenda are increased.

- Communities feel confident to discuss and report extremist concerns.
- That residents aspirations are not reduced by where they live, their age, their gender, their religion, their racial heritage, their sexual orientation or their disability.
- That tangible equality of opportunity exists for all.
- That our residents have raised aspirations, improved skills and qualifications which increase opportunities for social mobility.
- That the take up of ESOL is improved and social isolation reduced due to language barriers.
- Strong and effective partnerships with different faiths and places of worship.
- That opportunities to listen to our communities are delivered in ways that meet the needs and lifestyles of the different communities.
- A workforce that is confident in delivering services which consider the needs of the individual.
- That Elected Members are further informed about different minority groups and better informed about disadvantage that various groups experience.
- That community projects use a Cohesion Impact Assessment in the planning stage and develop inclusive projects that promote wider inclusion outcomes
- That the faith, voluntary and community sector have the skills and opportunities to positively contribute to integration outcomes.

### **Community Cohesion Priority 1 Improving Understanding and Challenging Myths in communities**

Improved dialogue and early identification of myths is required to reduce suspicion of different communities and mitigate the perception that “other groups” receiving better treatment.

The influence of the media and social media, while acknowledged, has not been fully appreciated in just how widely, and strongly, some of the negative sentiments are held regarding different minority groups.

Adding this to lack of integration opportunities in certain wards, it is apparent that work is required to facilitate more opportunities to air concerns, discuss any misconceptions that work against integration and increase the offer to meet new and different communities.

Improving regular dialogue between elected members, council officers and community activists is an essential element of building trust and developing

meaningful discussions to capture our minority and majority community perceptions, experiences and early identification of any myths that are being propagated.

## **Community Cohesion Priority 2 Parallel Lives; Reduced Opportunity and Parochialism**

The lack of social mobility and residents' parochial thinking around town centre districts and wards is stifling wider integration. Opportunities for cross boundary activities and increasing opportunities for people to meet are essential to promote understanding. Further opportunities to ask questions, share commonalities, minimise misunderstandings, myth bust and reduce negative stereotyping are required.

There is in Walsall a clear divide driven in part by deprivation and locality which is having an impact on self esteem and aspirations. Data sets clearly demonstrate the physical impact of the differences in terms of health inequalities. Consideration is required regarding the psychological impact hence a need to raise aspirations and facilitate increased opportunities for those communities living in the most deprived areas.

The issue of low self esteem was a common theme in areas of deprivation and more needs to be done to negate the impact. This materialised itself in low aspirations, poor educational attainment, poorer health, reduced life expectancy which were all more prevalent in our most deprived wards.

In the wards which are in some of the UKs highest quartile of least deprived areas, there was higher self esteem, higher aspirations and also higher expectations to achieve.

## **Community Cohesion Priority 3 Extremism / Hate Crime**

The impact of extremism has been felt in Walsall with terrorist arrests, recent English Defence League demonstrations and the bombing of a mosque by a right wing terrorist.

The national threat of terrorism is severe, meaning that an attack is highly likely. The methodology of attack has evolved with the use of guns and vehicles most recently used, compared to a historic use of bombs. In Walsall a number of convictions were made around travel to Syria and returning fighters from that region are becoming an increasing concern at a national level. Since June 2013 12 terror plots in the UK have been foiled by the intelligence services.

In Walsall there have been a small number of terror related arrests and subsequent convictions. These arrests are within the context of the vast majority of our communities being law abiding citizens who deplore extremism. However the internet and commitment of extremists to their cause, means that communities need to remain vigilant to the continuing threat. The use of the internet and social media to communicate extremist ideology has proven to be a very effective method of engagement for extremists.

The media coverage of international terrorism and the small number of individuals convicted in Walsall which attracted local media attention, has had a negative impact on attitudes. The cohesion consultation indicated that negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims existed across the borough. More activities are required to mitigate the impact of the media and social media through myth busting and creating opportunities for people to discuss their perceptions and concerns through open dialogue. The impact on the Muslim communities has been one of feeling targeted and treated with suspicion. These feelings are not conducive to encouraging integration and run the risk of more polarised living as individuals feel vulnerable to accusations.

The rise of right wing extremism across Europe, including the UK, requires communities and service providers to better understand their methodologies. There are wards in Walsall which have the conditions for right wing extremists to exploit. These same wards have the highest number of recorded hate crime incidents and more is required to challenge such views.

Walsall Council and statutory partners have been very effective in delivery of their legal duties around extremism through the Prevent delivery plan under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. It is essential that our communities and service providers continue sharing information and remain vigilant to the continuing threat and report concerns to the police authorities. Further work is required to discuss the Prevent agenda in the communities which they mostly effect and ensure that residents fully understand the aims and objectives of the agenda.

Hate crime does occur but not in significant numbers. The majority of hate incidents are racially driven and occur in North Walsall. It is acknowledged that while there are a number of different ways for residents to report hate crime the consultation found significant under reporting of incidents especially in the faith, LGBT and disabled communities.

A more proactive approach is required to address the under reporting to ensure that support services are aware of the prevalence of hate crimes, support victims who have not informed the police and to reassure residents that hate crime is taken seriously.

#### **Community Cohesion Priority 4 Indigenous Communities and Minority Communities**

Through the consultation it was made clear that majority indigenous communities often felt ignored, especially within areas of deprivation. The attitudes were often built on misinformation around minority communities receiving more or receiving preferential treatment.

Conversations on social media around housing, immigration and employment indicated anger towards newly arrived communities. The consultation found these grievances to be held across the borough. There existed a strong feeling of “charity begins at home” and a perception that minority groups get preferential treatment.

The consultation indicated that numerous indigenous communities had limited interaction with ethnic minorities and did not have any desire to mix. In minority communities, there was a willingness to mix but there was anxiety regarding the welcome that might be received. There were numerous examples of multi faith events where cultural mixing was successful and had positive outcomes regarding integration.

If events are to be one of the methods to bring people together from across the borough, then consideration to town centre events which would be considered a “neutral venue” which attracts people from different wards across the borough. Events which are held in wards generally attract significantly higher numbers from the locality and does not break the parochial attitudes that were found through the consultation.

Skin colour was an indicator of whether a person was perceived, or accepted as, being British. This was regardless whether the person, or group, perceived themselves to be British. The consultation found that the African – Caribbean communities, Muslims, Hindus and Sikh communities were generally proud to be identified as British. However the wider indigenous communities communicated that being “white” was a pre requisite of being considered British.

More work is required to ensure people of all our communities feel valued, have raised aspirations, empowered to change their localities and to fulfil their potential. Only then will residents be able to change their lives, and communities, in a positive way. Opportunities to share perceptions and anxieties about different communities will be required to ensure that community tensions or misconceptions can be identified.

Those with disabilities, especially those with learning disabilities, were some of the most disengaged in the wider community. Often those with disabilities develop their own networks of support. It was noted that those with disabilities were not a singular harmonious community but a very diverse group with distinct needs with differing life experiences. Those who had a disability and were from an ethnic minority suffered further disadvantage.

In terms of locality influence and empowerment, those with disabilities felt they had very limited influence and were often ignored. While hate crime did occur very few were reported and often carers, family or friends were most likely to be informed.

The LGBT communities were insular in terms of mixing and being “out” in the wider community. Faith communities were consistent in their views regarding holding the view that marriage between a man and a woman is sacred. So while no negative views were made directly against the gay community it was apparent that prejudice may inadvertently occur. Young people expressed that sexual orientation was not an issue for them. The general consensus was that a persons sexual orientation is becoming less of an issue and prejudice is reducing.

Walsall has a thriving gay community and the Walsall Pride events are well supported with increasing numbers attending. The perception of the Council by the LGBT communities has improved significantly. Concerns were raised regarding the

prejudice held by newly arrived communities, with increasing numbers of hate incidents reported through informal channels.

Homophobic comments and bullying in schools was cited as a concern and that Section 28 was influencing the poor response from schools. It was felt a larger piece of consultation was required specifically with the LGBT communities.

## **Community Cohesion Priority 5**

### **Changing Demographics**

The profile of Walsall communities is changing and becoming more culturally diverse in line with globalisation and changes in the European Union. These demographic changes have occurred in a short space of time and in reasonably significant numbers.

These changes in population bring cultural differences which are often not fully understood by the established communities. This has caused an increase in low level community tensions. Newly arrived residents have sometimes struggled with integration and various low level criminality has been blamed on those newly arrived communities which have added to negative perceptions.

The Brexit decision has seen a rise in anxiety from those that have newly arrived to Walsall around a feeling of not being welcome in the UK. The majority of those that are newly arrived have moved to Walsall for economic reasons. The consultation has indicated many are in private rented accommodation in the Walsall South area and are in employment positively contributing to the economy and are not reliant on benefits. There is evidence of cases of employment exploitation and newly arrived individuals not knowing their rights in terms of accommodation and employment. Language barriers are a constraint to support, advice and guidance around numerous issues.

Increased understanding of the needs and impact of newly arrived communities is required to provide opportunities to better integrate into local communities. Myth busting around some of the rumours that exist and facilitating participation in community groups will start the process of improved integration. Creating safe spaces to mix and share cultural norms, on a consensual basis which is not forced, to allow learning and discussions to develop will be key to reducing tensions.

## **Community Cohesion Priority 6**

### **Faith Communities**

The faith communities of Walsall are very diverse however they all share similar objectives one been making a difference in the community and for the most vulnerable. One of the findings through the consultation was the amount of projects that are being delivered through a multi faith approach.

This aligns very closely to the British Values promotion by the Department of Education around the mutual respect for, and tolerance of, those with different faiths and beliefs.

The 2011 census in terms of religion and belief indicated that the majority faith community were Christian at 59%. The next largest group were secular, having no

faith, at 20%. This more secular society aligns to UK trends and needs to be considered around engaging with secular individuals to attend multi faith events.

#### Walsall Religious / Belief Faith Breakdown Census Data

	2011(%)	2001 (%)
Christian	59.0	72.1
Muslim	8.2	5.4
Sikh	4.3	3.0
Hindu	1.7	1.6
Buddhist	0.2	0.1
Jewish	0.0	0.0
Other religion	0.5	0.2
No religion	20.0	10.0
Not stated	6.0	7.6

[http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/2011\\_census](http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/2011_census)

The consultation indicated that faith communities were the most likely to volunteer in their locality. The diverse activities delivered included youth provision, homeless services, dementia support and social gatherings. These activities make a tangible difference to the quality of lives of some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents.

The various faiths deliver important social functions as well as practical support within localities. The borough wide activities through the strong networks of faith communities are less restricted by boundaries or parochialism.

Many ethnic minority groups felt faith to be an integral part of their lives and the faith sector are a vital source of support and opportunity to integrate. The successful inter faith initiative, Near Neighbours, a Christian based initiative, has seen significant outcomes regarding integration between faiths and those of non faith with strong partnerships developed.

It was apparent that young people were often ill-informed regarding different faiths and had a number of beliefs that were both inaccurate and not conducive to integration. This was also the case in many adults. The media had negative influence on the views regarding Islam and Muslims and opportunities to learn facts and myth bust is essential.

More needs to be done to challenge myths in communities around faith and within schools making the learning relevant and current. The faith communities indicated very clearly their support for refugees seeking sanctuary from their countries of origin which were often from places of war and persecution.

All of the faiths recognised that secular society was growing and that people were becoming more focused on “self” rather than on the wider community and older family members. It was clear that time was the biggest constraint to giving time to volunteering or the wider community.

### **Community Cohesion Priority 7 Representative Workforce / Workforce Development**

Walsall Council has a strategic objective to employ a workforce that is representative of the communities it serves. Increased diversity of the senior management of the

Council, elected members and staff would ensure that the residents of Walsall are confident that equality is important to the organisation.

West Midlands Police are recognised as being very proactive in terms of increasing the diversity of their workforce and in terms of staff development. It is important that the sharing of best practice in recruitment and staff development is adopted when required.

Service providers are required to keep pace with the rapid change in the diversity of Walsall and the cultural differences that they now face. Considering the reductions in resources this challenge is even more difficult.

The discussions held with minority members of staff indicated further exploration around their experiences and views regarding employment and service provision are essential.

Walsall Council annually publishes the Employment Monitoring Report with analysis of the Council workforce by groups with relevant equality characteristics [http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/council\\_and\\_democracy/equality-2/equality\\_documents.htm](http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/council_and_democracy/equality-2/equality_documents.htm)

For a number of years, the data sets have shown under-representation of black and minority ethnic staff in the workforce as a whole but in particular when broken down to certain directorates and grades. In addition, some parts of the organisation have considerable under-representation of women in senior and leadership management roles.

According to the Walsall Census 2011, 23% of Walsall local population are from minority ethnic background. We are aware that Census data may not fully reflect changing demographics. According to ONS, 10% of current residents of Walsall were born abroad, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, South Asia, Middle East and Central/West Africa.

It is therefore not surprising that our residents use over 75 community languages in their communication with the Council. Most frequently used languages, other than English, have been Polish, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Mirpuri and Slovak.

With this in mind, Walsall Council is very keen to understand how we can build more diverse workforce, representative of the local communities. We recognise that in order to identify effective interventions we will require support from organisations with appropriate expertise.

## **Community Cohesion Priority 8 Gypsy, Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Roma Communities**

Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma are legally recognised ethnic minority groups with a centuries old cultural tradition of nomadism. While all have distinct identities with



different needs, the different groups have very similar life experiences in terms of racism, discrimination, poverty and social exclusion.

The majority of the UK's 150,000 to 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers are part of their local communities and live in either 'bricks and mortar' housing or on authorised Traveller sites, the majority of which are privately provided.

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers continue to face high levels of discrimination and racism, contributing to and exacerbating the inequalities they experience in education, health, accommodation and employment. Policies that successfully address these issues will be underpinned by the principle of bringing communities together, rather than driving them apart.

Sir Trevor Phillips (in his role as Chair of the Equality Human Rights Committee) described discrimination against Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities as "the last respectable form of racism". Nine out of 10 gypsy, traveller or Roma children in the UK have suffered racial abuse, a study from the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups and Anglia Ruskin University shows.

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2014/Experts-by-Experience--JRTF-Report-Oct-2014.pdf>

In Walsall there are Gypsy, Roma, Showpeople and Traveller settled communities, and while only in small numbers, the community is growing. The settled traveller and gypsy communities are well established and accepted by residents in the Willenhall and Bloxwich localities with a history of integration and good community relations.

The following tables are taken from the 2010 needs assessment and show the estimated number of gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople families in Walsall and the other Black County Authorities. The information is presented with the caveat that it is only an estimate as no reliable secondary data exists on exact numbers.

#### Estimated Number of Gypsy and traveller families

Area	Authorised site	Unauthorised site	Housing	Total
<b>Walsall</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>324</b>
Dudley	29	4	158	191
Sandwell	15	3	50	68
Wolverhampton	40	10	74	124
No Fixed accommodation	0	8	0	8

#### Estimated Number of Travelling Showpeople families

Area	Authorised site	Unauthorised site	Housing	Total
<b>Walsall</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>56</b>
Dudley	10	0	52	62
Sandwell	13	3	7	23
Wolverhampton	5	0	3	8

[http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/gtts\\_site\\_assessment\\_-\\_march\\_2013.pdf](http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/gtts_site_assessment_-_march_2013.pdf)

Recently Walsall has experienced an increasing problem of anti-social behaviour caused by a number of people who follow a travelling lifestyle setting up unauthorised encampments within the borough. It is important to acknowledge that not all of those who set up an unauthorised encampment cause anti social behaviour. The anti social behaviour has caused increased locality based tensions which often reduce when the individuals have moved on. Due to the nature of the anti social behaviour the response of the settled housed community in the locality can be a wider prejudice. This often is then increased through social media and local media news coverage which increases the hostility against those who are from a nomadic heritage.

Walsall has a long established settled traveller community based in the borough. The biggest concentration is in the Willenhall area with 34 plots for a caravan and then numerous families have settled into housing in and around the Bloxwich area. In terms of travelling showpeople the main concentration is in the Goscote area with approximately 41 plots.

Most recently Walsall has experienced an increase in Romanian Roma, Slovakian Roma, Czech Roma and Hungarian Roma. The life expectancy; health inequalities and education attainment of the Roma communities are significantly below national averages. It is positive that in a short space of time the Roma communities are embracing education and sustaining employment.

Nomadic communities will remain a challenging group to work with due to the limited amount of time spent in Walsall. It has been recognised that the challenges presented to Local Authorities caused by the anti social behaviour exhibited by some occupants of Unauthorised Encampments affects all authorities and the police across the West Midlands. To that end, the Chief Executives have established a group of officers to look at how the authorities can work together and with the police more effectively in managing unauthorised encampments. This work includes support for local businesses and communities and the travelling families with the aim of reducing tensions and improving outcomes for all as well as improved efficiency in service delivery. In the meantime, more needs to be done by service providers to deliver culturally sensitive services which meets the needs of these particular disadvantaged groups and training of staff to better understand some of the cultural barriers that can

exist to effective service delivery.

## **Community Cohesion Consultation**

### **Methodology**

The methodology of the community conversations consultation followed guidance from The Consultation Institute.

Stage 1 – Face to face interviews with numerous community members from a range of diverse borough wards. This was carried out to better understand any trends that existed which were attributed to any localities or specific characteristics.

Stage 2 – a set of questions that included the 5 factors to improving cohesion plus additional questions which related to localities and protected characteristics which were identified through the stage 1 process.

Stage 3 – face to face interviews with community members and focus groups using the stage 2 questions.

Stage 4 - reviews of data sets around health, economy, crime and education. Analysis of consultations pertinent to community cohesion in Walsall were undertaken.

The consultation was designed to explore experiences of community life with community members; groups; service providers and key individuals. The questions asked were designed to be meaningful to the indigenous majority communities and those communities which are either disadvantaged or from a minority group.

The focus of the consultation was on understanding how people get on with one another, their views on people who are different to themselves, equality of opportunity and how empowered residents feel to effect change in their locality.

The community conversations consultation was in addition to the interviews held by Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Community Cohesion Working Group. The report can be viewed on the link below;

<https://cmispublic.walsall.gov.uk/cmis/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2330/Committee/327/Default.aspx> Agenda Item 14 Community Cohesion Strategy.

### **What is Community Cohesion?**

The level of diversity and speed of change in community demographics in Walsall means that the creation of good community relations must be worked at, proactively supported, any community tensions quickly identified and reduced. These activities are what community cohesion is about, on a locality level and a borough wide level.

Integration is slightly different relating to the established host communities and how well new, and sometimes, well established minority groups, are accepted and interact in the locality and the wider borough.

Generally integration is a slower process for those newly arrived communities, who naturally migrate to similar ethnic peers. It is acknowledged that a key barrier to integration is language skills. There are individuals in Walsall who have lived in the borough for decades and who cannot speak English. Often in these instances family members or friends act as informal translators however the ideal position is that everyone in the borough has the skills to integrate with their neighbours irrespective of ethnic heritage.

## **Cohesion and Integration Statutory Duties**

Cohesion and Integration are also part of the General Duty of the Equality Act 2010 (Section 149) which states;

“in carrying out its functions The Council has a duty to foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those who do not share them”

In essence, ensuring that everyone has similar life opportunities, and that services are designed and delivered considering any disadvantage a particular group may suffer.

We know that the majority of time the communities of Walsall have good community relations. On the rare occasions that community tensions have increased, most recently, they have been linked to external influencers from outside of the borough. These increased tensions are monitored through a network of key individuals, partners and stakeholders. Through a partnership approach between the statutory, voluntary, faith and community sectors, when tensions do increase, a coordinated response is delivered to mitigate any negative impact and quickly return back to our normal good community relations.

It has to be recognised though that not all hate attitudes and actions perpetrated or experienced in our communities are reported. Our strong partnerships across the borough indicated increased incidents of hate crime and increased anxiety being expressed by newly arrived communities in Walsall after Brexit, despite no actual increases of reported hate incidents.

The strategy needs to deliver improved opportunities to reassure communities around fear of crime, proactively find out any unreported hate crimes to develop a richer picture of actual locality experiences beyond official reported hate crime.

Hate crime, does and can, increase community tensions. Walsall has a detailed community resilience plan to respond if community tensions significantly increase. The plan is a multi disciplinary response which includes the support of key community members and groups to disseminate messages out into the community, gather “community dialogue”, monitor social media and communicate reassurance messages. A number of high profile events which increased community tensions were mitigated through successful delivery of the community resilience plan. The Resilience Team are the service which manages community tensions <http://walsallemergencyplanning.co.uk/community-emergency-planning/>

On 14 April 2016 the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report from its Community Cohesion Working Group. A number of key recommendations were made with a new strategy being one of them.

- 1) That a new standalone, community driven 'Community Cohesion Strategy' and action plan be created for Walsall. This strategy and action plan should be ready for delivery by April 2017.

One of the key aspects of the recommendation was that the strategy should be community led and respond to the issue that are important to our residents. Walsall Council's Community Cohesion team worked with a range of stakeholders to develop questions that were relevant to the communities and linked directly to the Governments strategic priorities in developing integration.

## **The National Strategy - Creating Conditions for Integration**

The government recognise 5 key factors to improving integration

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-the-conditions-for-a-more-integrated-society>

1. Reinforcing a sense of shared aspirations, core values and common ground.
2. Promoting a strong sense of personal and social responsibility.
3. Enabling people to realise their potential and raise aspirations.
4. Empowering everyone to participate in local and national life.
5. Tackling intolerance and extremism.

Considering the governments strategic approach the 5 factors above were used as the basis of the community conversations consultation which was undertaken across the borough with numerous stakeholders between January 2016 to November 2016

## **The Casey Review 2016**

In December 2016 Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, released a review of integration called "A review into opportunity and integration".

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration>

The 199 page review interviewed 800 individuals and over 200 written statements were also considered. The Casey Review set out 12 initial recommendations for action, based around the themes of the review and designed to build local communities resilience in towns and cities where the challenges of integration were most acute.

Some recommendations had national implications, such as taking an oath of allegiance to the UK while others had a more localised impact. The localised recommendations are the ones which Walsall has considered to fit the findings of the Walsall community integration consultation are provided in **Appendix xxx.**

## **The Corporate Plan 2017-2020**

Walsall Council as a local authority has a statutory duty to deliver specific services within the borough boundaries for all people and communities in Walsall. Ultimately the Council exists to serve the people and communities of Walsall, by representing and working with them to protect and improve the quality of life for all, particularly the most vulnerable.

Our purpose is to:

### **Reduce inequalities and maximise potential**

Our population is more ethnically diverse than ever before, with just less than a quarter of residents from a minority ethnic background. The Council continues to spend time understanding its new and emerging communities as this informs our service delivery in meeting the specific needs to these different communities.

The borough's demographic profile has changed as economic migrants supply our economy with the labour it needs to replace old industries. According to ONS country of birth statistical analysis from December 2015, 11.6% of Walsall population was born abroad. It is estimated that about 8.4% were born in the countries outside of EU and about 2.9% in EU, majority of those (about 2.2%) in the countries of EU8 (new member states since 2004).

Our relationship with the voluntary and community sector is particularly important and will become more so as we strive to design services around local need, especially helping to empower communities to increasingly support themselves.

### **Our priorities**

The Council is aware of the challenges our communities face and therefore the areas the council needs to focus on when planning and delivering services. Within the purpose of reducing inequalities and maximising potential, the Council recognises the importance of securing inclusive economic growth for people of all ages from the very young to the very old and providing clean, safe and healthy places for communities to thrive. These three elements of 'place' economy and 'people' are intertwined and interdependent, meaning the delivery of services will continue to become more collaborative and joined up.

In considering where resources should be focussed and where improvements can be made the corporate priorities have been updated and themed into four broad areas.

These are to

Pursue inclusive economic growth

Make a positive difference to the lives of Walsall people

Children are safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best

Safe, resilient and prospering communities

## The Walsall Plan

### Knowing Our Needs

Assessment of needs in Walsall is predominantly tackled through three key assessments, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), the Economic Needs Assessment and the Strategic Assessment to inform the Community Safety Plan. The needs identified in these assessments have been used to inform the development of the Walsall Plan.

### Knowing Our Priorities

A number of strategies, based on these needs assessments, are already in place across the Partnership in Walsall. The cross cutting themes identified within partnership and organisational strategies have been used to identify three overarching priorities for the Walsall Plan where value can be added by working together in partnership:

1. Increasing economic prosperity through increased growth
2. Maximising people's health, wellbeing and safety
3. Creating healthy and sustainable places and communities

Reducing inequalities will be a core action within and underlying each of these priorities. The principle of "proportionate universalism" will be applied ie the scale and intensity of effort will be greatest where our need in Walsall is greatest. A Marmot



life-course approach has been applied to the three overarching priorities, and key priorities within these have been identified.

Here, we provided only those priorities that directly relate to the Community Cohesion 2017-2020:

Increasing Economic Prosperity Through Increased Growth	Children	Young People	Adults	Older People
Reduce inequalities				
Increase opportunities for volunteering, increase take up of volunteering				
Develop strong and sustainable infrastructure				

Maximising People's Health, Wellbeing and Safety	Children	Young People	Adults	Older People
Reduce inequalities				
Improve emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people				
Enable children and young people to be better protected and safeguard themselves				
Enable and empower individuals to improve their physical and mental health				
Ensure services recognise cultural barriers, and are inclusive and accessible for existing, new and emerging communities				
Protect communities and individuals from the threat caused by extremist behaviour				

Creating Healthy and Sustainable Places and Communities	Children	Young People	Adults	Older People
Reduce inequalities				
Support a sustainable third sector through individual and collective engagement				
Empower connected, inclusive and resilient communities				

## Equality Implications

Walsall Council has legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to ensure the residents and service users of Walsall have equitable services provided. The approach of Walsall Council goes beyond the legal duties, and Walsall Council is committed to doing the right thing for all our communities through the design, evaluation and delivery of the corporate plan and the priorities driven by what our customers have told us.



The PSED consists of a general equality duty and specific duties, which help authorities to meet the general duty.

The aim of the general equality duty is to integrate considerations of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public authorities. In summary, those subject to the equality duty, must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.
- Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.

Protected characteristics are the following;

- Age
- Disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex (gender)
- sexual orientation

As part of the Community Cohesion consultation single parents were additionally considered as this particular group can suffer prejudice and disadvantage.

As a service provider we have responsibilities to ensure all our employees deliver services free from unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation. We aim to ensure that our services are both proactive and responsive, to meet the needs of Walsall's diverse communities through targeting those groups who may be disadvantaged, listening to our customers, redesigning services, constantly monitoring and by making decisions that meet the needs and priorities that have been communicated to us by our service users. To do this it is essential that we ensure that all members of Walsall communities have equal opportunities to contribute and have their opinions heard.

All the Council's service delivery, policies and strategies are developed using a robust equality impact assessment (EQIA). This process considers the effect and whether any groups are disadvantaged, and if they are, recommendations made to reduce or mitigate any negative impact.

To further enhance community integration and to empower officers to consider cohesion outcomes a Cohesion Impact Assessment will be developed.

## Conclusion

Walsall community relations have generally been good with only occasional increased community tensions. These occasional times have been linked to external influences or locality based issues. These quickly reduce through people working together to provide solutions and display unity.

The good community relations at a locality level is partially due to individuals parochialism attached to their respective district centres and lack of ethnic diversity. When there is limited ethnic diversity this is impacting on attitudes that undermine integration on a borough wide level. In wards where there is lack of diversity there are reduced opportunities to mix with, and subsequently have a deeper understanding of, minority groups. More work needs to be done to work in such wards to discuss parochial attitudes and offer opportunities to mix with people from other localities.

The impact of austerity; Brexit and increased diversity may well influence hardened attitudes towards minority groups. While immediately after the Brexit decision there was no increase in reported hate crime or increased tensions, anxiety levels did increase. It is important for all the communities of Walsall, majority and minority communities to have increased opportunities to understand one another and to feel that they all have an equal stake in their locality and the Walsall borough as a whole. If we are to continue with our history of good community relations, individual and collective responsibility will be the key. The demographics and diversity of Walsall are changing, so together in these times of uncertainty, unity will be more important than ever.

Those with disabilities are at increased risk of feeling disempowered to influence change. Through working with those different groups, their advocates and their carers their views need to be considered to shape locality changes and empower individuals to improve participation in civic life.

It is important moving forward that any forms of hatred are reported and tackled pro actively rather than reactively. By creating a network of trusted individuals, and groups, who engage regularly with Walsall diverse communities, a more accurate picture of levels of hate incidents can be achieved.

International terrorism and extremism remains a continuing threat which has directly impacted Walsall. Through continuing the effective delivery of the Prevent Duty work with all stakeholders, including our communities, will be the key to remaining resilient to extremist ideology. Increased opportunities to discuss the Prevent strategy in those communities which are impacted the most by the strategy is an essential aspect of on going dialogue.

It is essential that we recognise and consider the impact that the media, and social media, is having in shaping peoples thoughts and raising suspicion of Muslim communities. The Muslim communities are feeling anxious, unfairly scrutinised and not recognised for the work done to challenge extremist ideology and build peoples resilience.

Numerous myths were found to exist by many community members about other groups. The growth in social media use has heightened the impact that myths can have through social media posts that have the ability to reach unprecedented numbers. Extremist groups and individuals use social media to heighten anxieties and suspicion of groups. The dissemination of factual information must be the stepping stones to integration on both a face to face basis and through social media.

The voluntary, community and faith and sectors carry out vital work in communities and are often at the heart of supporting community cohesion. As the local Council for Voluntary Services, One Walsall exist to support a strong, effective and vibrant voluntary, community and faith sector and to facilitate local social action. One Walsall will be supporting residents, community, voluntary and faith groups to identify and take action to address challenges in their community. Supporting a diverse range of people and groups to participate in community and social action, and unlocking the potential they hold is at the heart of One Walsall's mission, and empowering people regardless of their faith, gender, age, ethnicity, or other personal characteristic is central to their approach. One Walsall provides advice and support for new and existing groups and supports opportunities to discuss any concerns in an open, but safe way, without fear of judgement with an intension of promoting good community relations and promoting integrated communities.

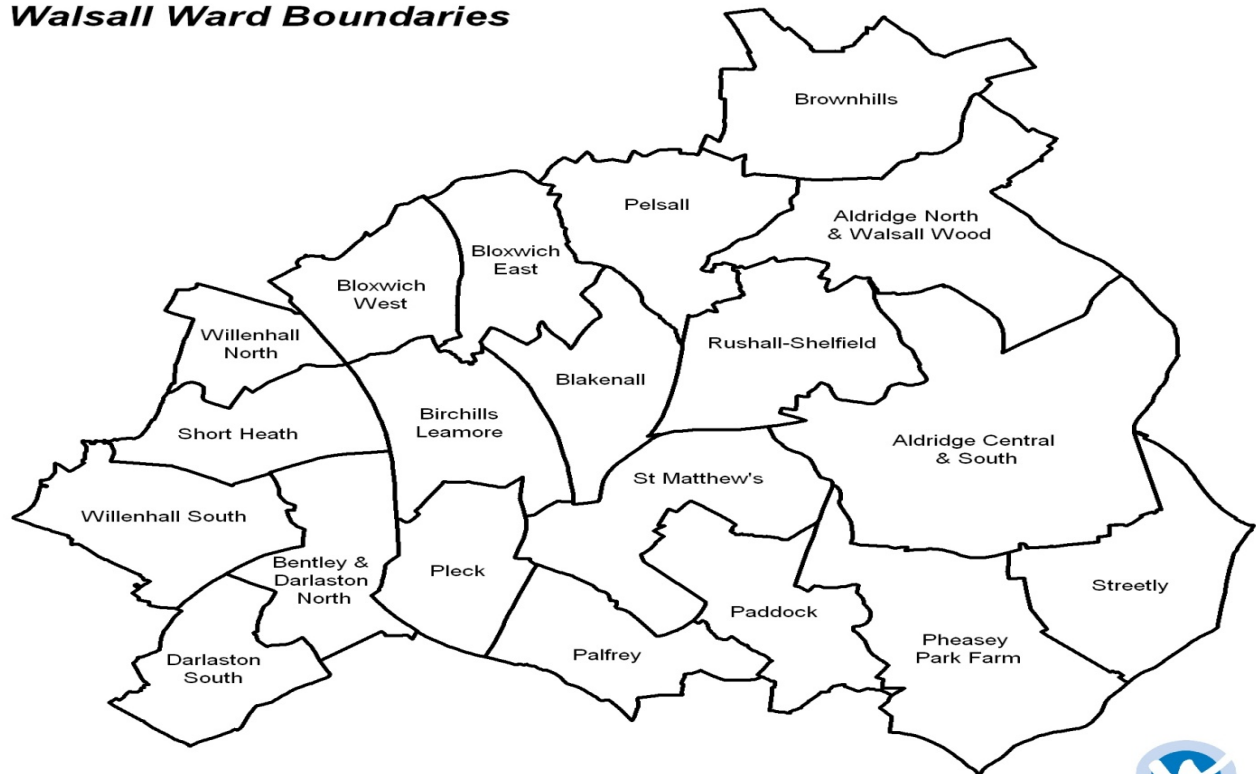
## **Appendix x – Supporting Data**

### **The Borough of Walsall**

The borough is split into 20 wards and these boundaries which are shown in Figure1

Figure  
1

## Walsall Ward Boundaries



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.  
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The 2011 CENSUS indicated that the population of Walsall was 269,300. In terms of neighbourhood integration it is evident that the diversity profile has changed in terms of the population increasing and more diverse with increasing numbers of newly arrived individuals. Nearly a quarter (23.1%) of the population are from an ethnic minority, an increase of 9% since 2001.

While Walsall town centre is the strategic and economic centre of the borough, there are the five key district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall, which influence integration across the borough.

**These distinct areas differ in terms of population density, deprivation, population profile, and age.** The differences in ethnic profile of wards has an impact on the opportunities to integrate. A number of wards have very low ethnic diversity which limits opportunities to meet and mix with people who are from a different ethnicity. Other wards have a high percentage of ethnic minorities, which is having an impact in terms of social isolation through mother tongue languages routinely spoken and people feeling safer and more comfortable in their locality. This combination has resulted in a perception that good community relations exist.

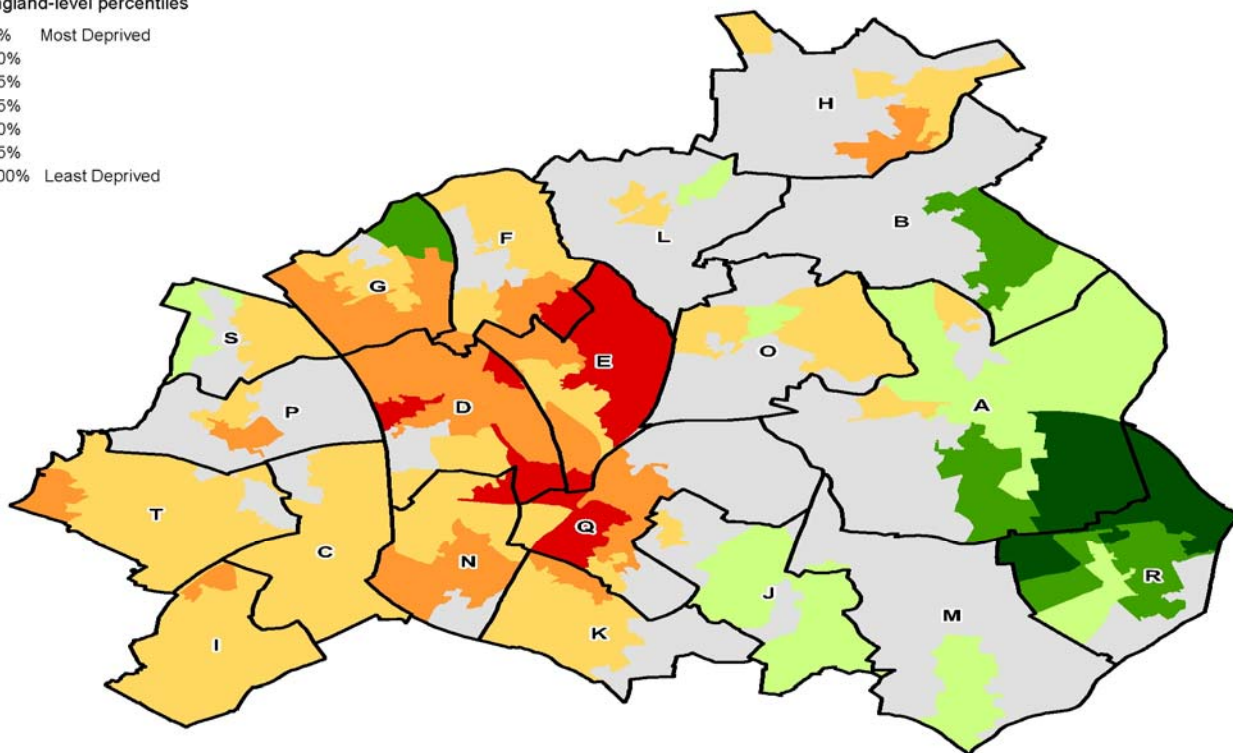
## Ethnic Profile of Wards 2011 CENSUS data

	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Ethnic Population</b>	
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	13,207	845	(6.3%)
Bentley and Darlaston North	13,479	3,950	(29.3%)
Birchills Leamore	14,775	3,512	(23.7%)
Blakenall	13,773	2,748	(19.9%)
Bloxwich East	12,155	666	(5.4%)
Bloxwich West	13,246	709	(5.4%)
Brownhills	12,676	715	(5.6%)
Darlaston South	14,342	2,749	(19.2%)
Paddock	13,006	6,427	(49.4%)
Palfrey	16,532	10,729	(64.9%)
Pelsall	11,505	422	(3.7%)
Pleck	15,014	8,843	(58.9%)
Pelsall / Shelfield	11,871	1,346	(11.3%)
St Mathews	15,088	7,083	(46.9%)
Short Heath	11,449	1,297	(11.3%)
Streetly	13,934	2,013	(14.4%)
Willenhall North	12,697	1,469	(11.6%)
Willenhall South	15,783	3,951	(25.0%)

Walsall has an overall figure of 23.1% who are from an ethnic minority (2011 Census).

# Neighbourhood-level deprivation

LSOA by England-level percentiles



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## Ward-level deprivation

Table 11: Ward-level summary measures for Walsall

Ward	2015 Rank	Average IMD Score	England Decile	2010 Rank	Map Key
Blakenall	1	52.9	1	1	E
Birchills Leamore	2	48.1	1	2	D
Pleck	3	44.0	2	3	N
Bloxwich East	4	41.4	2	4	F
Darlaston South	5	39.9	2	5	I
St Matthew's	6	38.9	2	8	Q
Bentley & Darlaston North	7	38.3	2	7	C
Palfrey	8	37.6	2	6	K
Willenhall South	9	37.4	2	9	T
Bloxwich West	10	35.0	2	10	G
Brownhills	11	26.7	4	11	H
Short Heath	12	24.5	4	13	P
Willenhall North	13	23.8	4	14	S
Rushall-Shelfield	14	23.5	4	12	O
Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	15	17.8	5	15	B
Pelsall	16	17.4	5	16	L
Aldridge Central & South	17	13.9	6	17	A
Paddock	18	13.8	7	18	J
Pheasey Park Farm	19	11.6	7	19	M
Streetly	20	5.5	10	20	R

The levels of deprivation correlate with areas that suffered low self esteem and low aspirations. A number of wards have an overall low deprivation however these wards also have pockets of severe deprivation. These small pockets of deprivation do suffer from negative attitudes of the surrounding localities in the wards which has a negative impact on integration.

The 5 district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall have distinct identities in terms of the local community attaching themselves strongly to their localities. This has both benefits in terms of local pride and activity in the community, however creates challenges in terms of wider community integration with people from other areas in the borough.

The demographic make up of the borough wards has a direct impact on opportunities to mix with people of a different racial heritage. The cohesion consultation findings indicated that there are wards with very small percentages of ethnic minorities. This has resulted in reduced opportunities to mix with people from different cultures and had a negative impact on people's perceptions of those of a different racial heritage.

## **Appendix x The Casey Review 2016**

In December 2016 Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, released a review of integration called "A review into opportunity and integration".

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration>

The 199 page review interviewed 800 individuals and over 200 written statements were also considered. The Casey Review set out 12 initial recommendations for action, based around the themes of the review and designed to build local communities resilience in towns and cities where the challenges of integration were most acute.

Some recommendations had national implications, such as taking an oath of allegiance to the UK while others had a more localised impact. The localised recommendations are the ones which Walsall has considered to fit the findings of the Walsall community integration consultation are provided in **Appendix xxx**.

At the time of writing no additional Government funding had been allocated to respond to the recommendations.

Recommendation 1:

*Central government should support a new programme to help improve community cohesion. This could back area-based plans and projects addressing the key priorities identified in this review. It would see targeted support provided for projects, ideally evidence-based, that would help build more resilient communities. The government should agree a final list of project criteria but these should include:*



- *the promotion of English language*
- *emancipating marginalised groups of women*
- *raising employment outcomes among the most marginalised groups*
- *increasing participation of women in the labour market*
- *improving IT literacy among parents in segregated areas*
- *boosting out of school mixing between young people – including through sporting activity*
- *other programmes with a clear focus on reducing segregation identified with local areas*

Walsall Council is supportive of working with all groups to give them the linguistic skills to integrate and will be working with both providers and service users to match need with provision. Walsall Council recognises the negative impact on integration when individuals cannot speak English and have been championing further investment into ESOL provision after cuts nationally of £45million in 2015.

A number of employment and training initiatives already exist to support marginalised groups and this will continue to develop and grow.

Walsall does observe that integration in schools is good, but then reduces after school when at home in localities. More needs to be done to continue the school environment and positive achievements regarding integration.

The benefits of sports in achieving positive integration has been observed and more will be done to encourage out of school activities including the development of a “Cohesion Cup” linked to sport for young people and adults.

Recommendation 2:

*It is also vital that all local authorities are able to pick up and act upon signs that integration is breaking down at the earliest stage. Central and local government should develop a list of indicators of a potential breakdown in integration. These might include incidences of hate crime or deficiencies in English language. Local authorities should collect this information regularly.*

Walsall already monitors hate crime and recognise that under reporting exists, especially in the LGBT, the disabled, European migrant and religious communities. Walsall Council will be developing key individuals and groups to proactively engage with all communities and ask them to identify hate crime rather than waiting for reports.

Walsall monitors the different languages spoken in schools and will be working with the various diverse communities to help identify any groups who are not using English language and supporting them to improve and reduce isolation.

The identification of language deficiencies and potential isolation will require time to fully understand. The reasons why an individual cannot speak English may be numerous and only through building trust with key community members can we better begin to understand the full picture.

While the Casey review makes reference to cultural influences and patriarchal attitudes in certain racial heritages impeding integration, there may well be cases of patriarchal influence, however further discussions need to take place with women from the communities named to give a detailed analysis.



Recommendation 4:

*The promotion of British laws, history and values within the core curriculum in all schools would help build integration, tolerance, citizenship and resilience in our children. More weight should be attached to a British Values focus and syllabus in developing teaching skills and assessing schools performance.*

Walsall already promotes British Values through schools and is keen to explore the relationship between religious values, which in many respects are very similar. The current promotion of British Values is inadvertently perceived that some British residents are somehow “less British”. This perception needs to be considered and additional thought given to develop projects that are more inclusive.

Walsall recognises the benefits of a broader delivery of history can contribute to improved integration. Walsall Council, through Joseph Leckie School, celebrated the contributions that ethnic minorities made to the allied forces against Nazi Germany in the Second World War. The minority groups who fought shoulder to shoulder with British armed forces included many heritages that are now living and working in Walsall.

By educating children about the contributions that ethnic minorities made in the first and second world wars will help undermine the right wing extremist narratives of a “them and us” ideology.

Recommendation 8:

*The introduction of Universal Credit will bring a much wider range of people into contact with support in finding work for the first time. The government should build on classes to tackle English language deficiencies with the development of classes to tackle cultural barriers born out of segregation which are identified as a barrier to work, supporting both employment and integration goals.*

Recommendation 9:

*A shared language is fundamental to integrated societies. The government should be supporting further targeted English language provision by making sufficient funding available for community-based English language classes, and through the adult skills budget for local authorities to prioritise English language where there is a need. It should also review whether community based and skills funded programmes are consistently reaching those who need them most, and whether they are sufficiently coordinated.*

Walsall has experienced a reduction in funding for Adult Education which has impacted negatively on classes for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The consultation has shown an increasing demand for ESOL which currently is not being met. This includes flexible delivery for those who are working, and flexibility in terms of locations as delivery in the community increases take up of the classes.

A European funded employment project, called the Impact Project is been delivered to maximise local take up of training and employment across all communities. Through integrated delivery and ensuring that all disadvantaged groups are targeted, increasing numbers will move into employment, volunteering and training.

Recommendation 10:

*Where we live can be both a cause and effect of isolation and segregation. The government should work with local government to understand how housing and*

*regeneration policies could improve or inhibit integration locally, and promote best practice approaches.*

*“A community where future generations will aspire to live, a vibrant and safe place with unique identity, permeated by green open spaces which link homes to the countryside and the rejuvenated canal network.”*

WHG is the largest social housing provider in the borough and strategically plan developments to be fully inclusive and promote integration. The Goscote Lane Corridor Regeneration Framework Plan was finalised in June 2007 with a vision of promoting integration through mixed tenure opportunities and regenerating the area.

WHG secured over £12m in HCA grant funding to build 590 new homes between 2015 and 2018. In November 2015 some of the residents moved into the accommodation and this has included a number of European migrant families moving into the Blakenall and Bloxwich East area. This project is not only physical capital development but also includes a new tenancy agreement promoting social responsibility for wider community integration and pro actively working with new tenants to integrate into the locality.

Recommendation 11:

*It is extremely concerning that children can be excluded from mainstream education without sufficient checks on their wellbeing and integration. The government should step up the safeguarding arrangements for children who are removed from mainstream education, and in particular those who do not commence mainstream schooling at all. All children outside mainstream education should be required to register with local authorities and local authorities' duties' to know where children are being educated should be increased. It should also consider the standards against which home education is judged to be clear that divisive practices are not acceptable in any setting. While every parent has the right to choose what is best for their child, local authorities must be satisfied that children are not put at risk. Ofsted and the Charity Commission should be resourced to support additional central and local government action to ensure the safeguarding of all children in mainstream and supplementary educational environments.*

Walsall Children's Services, through the education services provision, have been working with schools on a number of initiatives to ensure children, who are excluded or are at risk of exclusion, have their education and wellbeing prioritised. The child's education, wellbeing and safety are at the forefront of the process.

The Exclusion Service challenges schools to consider all options available, with permanent exclusion n the last option taken. Ongoing support is put into place for permanently excluded children, via the pupil referral centre. Any primary aged children, who are at risk of exclusion, are supported through intervention plans developed through the Integrated Behaviour Support Service who offer guidance, advice and support and will work through an integrated approach across children services when required to do so.

Elective Home Education is a service which is part of the Access Team and who makes sure all home educators fulfil their statutory obligation to their children's education. Walsall has some very good home educators. Some are able to supplement their education with alternative providers to meet the high standards expected.

Walsall approach is one that offers flexibility designed to meet the needs of the child considering their individual circumstances. The Government's recommendation of having the appropriate resources, in these times of austerity and increasing challenges, is one that is needed and welcomed.

The Casey Review highlighted a number of issues which require detailed analysis at a local level to find out the local position. The aspect of forced social isolation through patriarchal attitudes has not been experienced in Walsall. Reduced access to education and employment is often a choice made by families through child care and extended family elder care. However further exploratory work around this specific issue will be undertaken.

## **Appendix x: Overview of Main Faiths Currently Present in Walsall**

*Appendix 1 gives all the places of worship and contact details.*

### **Christianity**

Christian communities were delivering essential services to localities and supporting some of Walsall's most vulnerable people. Social isolation was recognised as a key challenge in communities and places of worship were an opportunity for social interaction and worship. It was felt that local authorities and Government did not fully appreciate the difference that faiths make in communities and more needed to be done to engage with faiths.

The Christian communities are very active in terms of inter faith initiatives and a number of successful Love Your Neighbour events were delivered which facilitated people mixing regardless of faith or no faith. Walsall has benefitted by the Near Neighbours project which is part of the Church Urban Fund and has delivered numerous integration projects around the borough.

Church leaders expressed differing experiences in working with schools in their locality. The more supportive a school was of faith, the better the relationship was with a place of worship. Evidence was presented that indicated where a head teacher was less open to faith in general, reduced interaction with local places of worship was indicative and resulted in missed opportunities for integration.

Some high profile, and highly regarded projects, were delivered by Christian based initiatives which targeted some of Walsall most vulnerable. These included Street Teams, Street Pastors, The Glebe Centre, The Small street Centre, Street Associations, Food Banks, The Big Feed, Walsall Money Advice Project, Ablewell Advice Services, St Pauls at the Crossing, the Open Door Project, Green Lane Baptist Church Mend – It Project, numerous Scouts and Girl Guides groups and additionally numerous locality based church projects.

### **Hinduism**

The Hindu communities, who are well established living in Walsall for over 5 decades, consider themselves British and fully integrated into Walsall communities. Hindus attended numerous community and inter faith events and are keen to encourage all communities to visit the temple open days. More was needed from the Council to support such events.

Incidents of hate crime were very few and it was felt that prejudice was equally very rare. In line with the other minority faiths of Walsall the Hindus felt that more should be done by the local authority to engage with the Hindu communities and the temples.

Hindus lead lives which are shaped by their faith and have delivered several projects in the wider community. The Sewa weekend is an annual time where Hindus volunteer in the community. Over the weekend several projects have been delivered for the benefits of the wider community including the clean up of a community project in Bloxwich, painting and decorating in an old peoples care home, a park clean up in Leamore and delivering items of clothing and food for a Muslim homeless project. Hindus often volunteer in different areas of work out in the community and the helping of others is important to Hindus.

The Council needs to do more to recognise the work of not only Hindus, but all faiths, for the positive difference they make to peoples lives and communities.

The threat of terrorism was recognised as being dangerous to integration and Hindus fully supported the approach of government to tackle terrorism through the Prevent strategy. Faith leaders need to do more to safeguard those who are vulnerable to extremist messages. All faiths were against murder and terrorism and faith leaders need to publically state that fact more often.

It was felt that the way an area looked had an impact on integration. The Council needed to do more to work with Hindus to develop projects that improved community safety, community pride and integration. The planning and licensing function needs to consider the impact on cohesion that decisions can have.

As austerity increases it is important that the Council works with faith based organisations to capacity build and offer support to help organisations to be more effective. The increasing diversity in communities is raising tensions and increasing pressures on service providers.

## **Islam**

Muslims were well established having lived in Walsall for over 50 years and were keen to integrate. It was felt that the wider borough communities were reluctant to integrate partially as a response to negative press.

The Muslim communities lived their lives integrally shaped by Islam which was deemed a positive influence in every area of their lives. The communities are very diverse in terms of their faith and racial heritage and are not one harmonious community. Elders expressed concerns that younger people were vulnerable to not following the traditions of Islam and this did create low level inter generational tensions. Muslims expressed their commitment to the UK and gratitude for freedom of religious worship.

The majority of Muslims felt disempowered within the community to make a difference in their locality. While most liked where they lived there was a consistent

theme regarding the concerns around the use of, and impact of, drugs on neighbourhoods. Prostitution and alcohol consumption was also cited as a concern. Younger people expressed a desire to leave Walsall to enhance their opportunities while others cited that family and friends made them more likely to remain where they lived. One of the issues faced by Muslim communities in densely populated localities is that the areas were perceived to be untidy and unsafe.

A strong willingness to mix with other religions and racial heritages was expressed. However concerns about the willingness of others to mix with Muslims was stated. This was perceived to be a consequence of the negative impact on peoples attitudes towards Muslims through media coverage of international terrorism.

More needed to be done to ensure that in schools and communities people know the truth about Islam and that terrorists were criminals. It was felt that mosques and Muslims needed to do more to promote all the good things they did, amount of volunteering and the positive difference this made in the community. The impact of right wing extremism was seen as threatening cohesion and increased community tensions. Concerns were expressed that this might lead to young people becoming radicalised through suffering abuse or threats.

Extremist groups were damaging normal Muslims and Islam. Those interviewed felt that as Muslims a combination of factors resulted in a perception of suffering extra suspicion linked to international terrorism, the Prevent Agenda, negative news stories in the media and the influence of social media.

All those interviewed stated that terrorism was against Islam and that the threat of extremism was an issue in Walsall. The Prevent agenda was not fully understood by the majority of respondents and the majority felt that Government needed to have something in place to manage the threat of terrorism.

It was felt that the Prevent agenda inadvertently was causing increased suspicion of Muslims, especially in schools and the new Duty which subsequently damaged integration. Alternatives to the current approach were not forthcoming and more discussion is needed to understand both the threat of extremism, the methodology that extremists use and the thoughts of the Muslim communities have on the Prevent agenda is having on Muslim communities.

In terms of hate crime the experience was significantly different. Those living in the south of the borough experienced very few incidents. However those living in and around the north of the borough suffered regular incidents. Taxi and private hire drivers suffered racist and religious hatred on a weekly basis, especially around the night time economy.

All of those interviewed expressed that they are British with younger people also bringing in their historic heritage, such as British Bangladeshi. All expressed that they felt the indigenous population would not consider them as “fully or totally British”. The British Values in schools was raised as an indicator of not been fully accepted as being British. This caused significant hurt and upset which was detrimental to integration especially as driven by government policy.

In terms of volunteering, older people volunteered more whereas younger people were doing less volunteering saying that time constraints stopped them.

## **Sikhism**

The Sikh community are well established in Walsall having lived here for over 50 years and live their lives directly influenced by their faith. Although young people seemed to be less involved in the gurdwara, parents used the principles of Sikhism to guide their children. There are language barriers in the gurdwara but children are positively influenced by Sikh channels on satellite TV.

The Sikh communities wanted to be considered Sikh as an identity and not British, British Indian or Indian. It was clear however that the identity label had no impact on the commitment to Britain and Walsall which was very apparent. While British values are promoted in schools it was felt that faith values should also be discussed more in schools as they all give key moral values and guidance for the benefit of all communities and neighbours.

The Sikh faith was integral to how Sikhs lived their lives. While the Sikh communities are renowned for being entrepreneurial it was felt that the local authority needs to engage more with the gurdwaras and the wider Sikh communities in terms of service provision, consultation and funding opportunities. It was recommended that a specific Sikh consultation should be delivered to develop a richer picture of Sikhs in Walsall.

The issue of family shame remained very strong and a barrier to engagement with external support. Issues such as domestic abuse, alcohol, sexual abuse, grooming and racism were specifically named. It was disclosed that the issue of caste seemed to be reducing especially with young people but stronger views were held by elders. Social isolation was less of an issue in the Sikh community due to extended families and the value that elders have within the Sikh faith.

There is a long history of multi faith working and sport has been very successful in bringing Pakistani and Indian heritage people together. The Shaheedee Sports Weekend was specifically named as been effective in terms of community integration.

Whilst politics remains important it was not an area where often Sikhs considered due to how busy peoples lives were. It was felt that Sikhs were confident to raise issues with their local councillor but often would seek advise initially from the Sikh Elected Members, rather than the elected member for their locality.

There are a number of faiths with smaller numbers, namely the Ravidass and Ahmadiyya faith communities. Both communities are committed to working for improved integration and have a history of cross religious and community activism for the benefits of the wider community. These 2 faith communities do suffer prejudice. Heightened anxiety and low level tensions exist in the borough regarding these particular faiths.

# Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2017 – 2020

## Action Plan

Area of Activity	Stakeholders	Output	Indicators
<b>Improving Understanding and Challenging Myths</b>	Faith, Community & Voluntary Sector West Midlands Police Social Landlords Walsall Council Primary Schools / Academies	Training Sessions	5 Equally Yours Trainers Trained 40 Equally Yours Sessions delivered in statutory organisations / social landlords 24 Equally Yours Sessions delivered in community 25 Equally Yours sessions delivered in schools / youth clubs 10 Cultural Awareness Sessions Developed and Delivered Cultural awareness E-learning Developed
		Key individual network	A network of a minimum of 8 key individuals in each area partnership who feedback on integration related conversations / issues / myths
		Integration Working Group	Bi monthly meeting of Elected members, community groups, key officers
		Cohesion Conference	1 annual cohesion event to promote best practice good news stories challenges

		On line	Daily monitoring of social media and pro active messaging to communicate factual messages
Priority	Stakeholders	Output	Indicators
<b>Improving Understanding and Challenging Myths</b>	Community / Voluntary / Faith sector	Increased take up of ESOL classes	ESOL Strategy Developed ESOL take up increased by 30%
	Walsall Adult Community College Walsall College Walsall Council	Raised aspirations increased social mobility	Improved qualifications Increased take up of education and training by those living in areas of highest indices of multiple deprivation Reduced worklessness in areas of multiple deprivation 5 self esteem projects delivered Delivery of the Walsall Economic Plan
	Walsall Council Faith based organisations One Walsall	Using Data sources to identify isolated individuals. match volunteers aspirations with volunteering opportunities	Reduced social isolation by Increased locality networking Increase volunteering by 500 persons Increase volunteering opportunities by 300
	Schools Places of worship Community Groups	Reduce Social Isolation Targeted promotion of events to isolated / disadvantaged groups	capacity build 120 new and existing voluntary groups in communities 40 Cohesion Impact Assessments delivered School twinning X 20 schools



	Walsall Council	Empower marginalised groups and individuals	
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Extremism / Hate Crime</b>	Voluntary sector	Identify key individuals to ask about incidents of hate	20 community members identified and trained to pro actively find out about hate incidents and hate crime 25% increase in hate reported to police
	West Midlands Police Walsall Council One Walsall Social Housing Staff	Frontline staff tasked with asking about hate incidents	25% increase in hate reported to police
	One Walsall faith sector Walsall Council West midlands police	Hate Crime Working Group	4 meetings per annum
	Walsall Council One Walsall	Build knowledge of extremism threat in organisations Increase Prevent	Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent training delivered to All schools 4 community Prevent discussions events held per annum

		agenda knowledge in the community Appropriate channel referrals	Prevent Delivery Plan delivered
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
<b>Majority Communities and Minority Communities</b>	Walsall Council Community, Voluntary and Faith sectors Walsall College	Encourage and promote the global language of smiling to promote friendliness. Reduce community tensions	2 smile back weeks delivered per annum
	Walsall Council One Walsall Elected Members	Increased participation in civic life by those with protected characteristics.	All community group meetings consider increase participation by minority individuals.
	Faith and community sectors	Promote faith sector activity	Faith Covenant Developed and adopted 1 Faith Based Showcase Conference Delivered per annum
	Community Sector One Walsall	communities hold discussion around their views on cohesion	Cohesion monthly agenda item on area partnership meetings
	Walsall FC Community Sector	Cross borough tournament	1 annual under 18's cohesion cup football and cricket tournament 1 annual walking football cohesion cup
	Walsall Council	Improve social mobility opportunities raised aspirations through education	Key Stage 4 – to meet or exceed national expectations by July 2018. Key Stage 5 – to meet or exceed national expectations by July 2018.

		attainment	To improve the outcomes of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils and narrowing the gap between their and the rest of pupils' attainment by July 2018. The proportion of young people entering higher education, further education, training and apprenticeships – to be at or better than the national average by July 2018. The proportion of young people who are NEET to be at or lower than the national average by July 2018.
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
<b>Changing Demographics</b>	Walsall Council	Quarterly monitoring of admissions of schools	Twice yearly school admissions data capture Increase diversity of schools Review admissions policy and appeals procedures
	Voluntary Sector Walsall Council One Walsall	Increased engagement with newly arrived communities	Existing community groups increase diversity of attendance by 20% 1 Development officer employed
	One Walsall	Set up newly arrived to Walsall groups Capacity build groups who support newly arrived communities	5 new groups set up per annum 10 community groups include new to Walsall residents 25 existing protected characteristics groups capacity built
	Walsall Council	More accurate	Monthly returns around hate incidents and hate crime from

	West Midlands Police  One Walsall  Faith and voluntary sector groups	recording of hate crime  Accurate recording of attendance and use of community groups and community projects	community members.  Monthly data sets of community groups involvement and attendance profile
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>		<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Faith Communities</b>	Places of worship  Faith based groups	Promote the difference the faith communities make in localities	1 annual showcasing event  25 School places of worship visits per annum
	Faith communities	Increased inter faith work	1 town centre multi faith event
	Walsall Council  Faith community  Places of worship  SACRE Group	Increase the understanding of faith in schools	25 School places of worship visits per annum
	Walsall Council	Council to have a	Closer working and consideration of faith communities in the

		faith convent	commissioning process
	Places of worship	Promote understanding of faith	10 open days per annum at churches, temples, gurdwaras and mosques
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
<b>Representative Workforce / Workforce Development</b>	Walsall Council	Accurate data sets of diversity in recruitment and development	Quarterly data sets to corporate equalities group
	Walsall Council	Equally Training Yours	12 sessions per annum
	Walsall Council	Improve the Diversity of Senior Management	20% increase take up of coaching and mentoring scheme by minority groups.
	Walsall Council	Workforce Development Cultural Competencies training	12 sessions delivered per annum

	Walsall Council West Midlands Police	Best Practice Recruitment adopted from West Midlands Police	Attendance at quarterly West Midlands Police Recruitment
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>		<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Communities</b>	Walsall Council One Walsall Walsall Adult Community College	Identify key individuals undertake consultation to identify needs Improve cultural awareness of staff	Develop working group Consultations with all of the nomadic heritage communities Identify key individuals network 4 awareness training session delivered