



WALSALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ALLIANCE – BIG CONVERSATION 2024

"By 2040, Walsall will be a borough where all people feel safe, where communities and people do more to help each other and themselves, and children have the best start in life".

Big Conversation Consultation – Results - We are Walsall 2040

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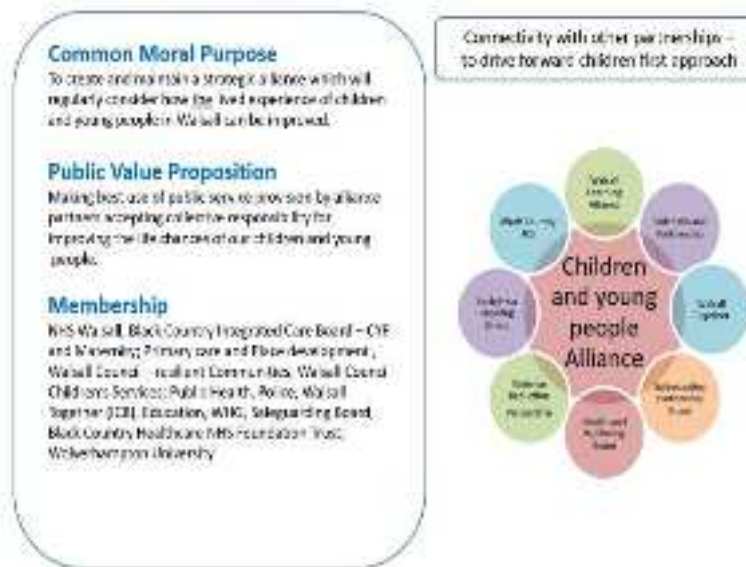
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Children and Young People Strategic Alliance (The Alliance) recognises that “*today’s children are upstream adults*” and is driven through a “Children First” vision to create a collaborative space critical to developing new ways of thinking and new ways of working driven by the voice of children, young people and their families.

Partners, as part of the alliance, have signed up to working to one moral purpose:

“To regularly consider how the lived experience of children and young people in Walsall can be improved.”



The Alliance is currently in the process of developing a **Children and Young People (2040) Strategy for Walsall**. The strategy is aiming to develop Walsall as a **Child Friendly borough – a compassionate, healthy, economically strong, and successful place that has children and young people at its heart**.

Collaboration with children and young people as a key partner on the development and implementation of the strategy is vital to ensure our strategy is effective.

We have made a commitment to collaborate with children and young people in the development and implementation of the strategy through 3 phases:

Phase 1 - January 2024 we will be using our **Big Conversation** approach – A programme of activities, aimed at speaking and listening to children, young people.

Phase 2 – February – Summer 2024 – **Big Collaborate** - Opportunity to collaborate with children and young people on the actions to implement the strategy

Phase 3 – Summer 2024 and beyond – **Big Action** – Co-production on the delivery of the strategy

2. WHAT IS OUR BIG CONVERSATION?

During January 2024 we ran a programme of activities, aimed at listening to what children and families are saying about what they think will be important actions we need to take to ensure we start to work towards a 2040 where:

- ✓ All children in Walsall , irrespective of background or ability, have access to good education and can lead fun, safe and healthy lives.
- ✓ All services are there now and, in the future, to support children and families and that they can access a range of activities to have fun, grow, learn, and thrive locally.
- ✓ Resilient children and thriving families are key to ensure Walsall's children can achieve their potential become successful adults from 2040 and beyond.
- ✓ Close the gap in child poverty and educational inequalities and create a borough of opportunity for children and young people.

During phase one we are running following 3 different activities to engage children:

- ✓ The Big Conversation pack - a simple consultation tool we provided to anyone who was working directly with children and young people to use during January 2024 to gather children and young people's views
- ✓ Future planning workshops in schools, led by MindKind
- ✓ Virtual engagement using Minecraft Education Edition during our HAF activities, led by TENSTAR.

During Phase 1 we engaged with 503 children. This report brings together the information gathered through the 3 activities and provides a overview of the themes and considerations in the development of our strategy and to inform phase 2 and 3 in our collaboration with children and young people.

3. ACTIVITY 1: BIG conversation pack

Methodology:

We requested practitioners to facilitate a conversation with children, young people they were working with to gather their view on a number of key topics.

We provided them with a facilitators pack provides topics and questions to explore children and young people views on during January 2024

When and how they introduced the **conversations** was at the discretion of the practitioner, on the basis they know best from the relationship with the child how to do best introduce this.

TOPIC	QUESTIONS EXPLORED
<u>Life in Walsall Today (2024)</u>	In 3 words describe Walsall as you experience it now <i>Explore a little further on why they chose those words</i> How do they feel about growing up in Walsall?
<u>Belonging in Walsall</u>	What does “ belonging ” mean to you? Please tell us 2 situations or places that give you a feeling of ‘belonging’? Do you feel represented and valued in the community you live in? Are there particular people in your community who help give you a feeling of belonging? How can Walsall make sure all children and young people living in Walsall feel they belong in their area? What can have a negative influence on your feeling of belonging?
<u>Providing all children in Walsall the “Best Start in Life”</u>	“Giving every child in Walsall the best start in life” – what does that mean to you? What prevents children in Walsall having the best start in life? What needs to be done to address these barriers? What actions need to be taken to ensure that by 2040 ALL children have the best start in life in Walsall?
All Children are Thriving	1In 2040 you will be an ‘successful’ adult – Who will you be? Where will you be? What will you be doing? What help and support will children need to grow up to be a ‘successful’ adult in Walsall. What will prevent children in Walsall from becoming a successful adult? What action can we take to overcome these barriers and ensure all children growing up in Walsall can reach their ambition. If you said you were not going to be living in Walsall in 2040, what would need to happen to change your mind and stay (live and work) in Walsall?
Walsall in 2040	In 3 words describe what you think Walsall will be like for children to grow up in by 2040 • <i>Tell me a little more on why you chose those words?</i>
Call to Action	Pretend you are an adult in 2040 and we have given you the power to travel back in time to 2024 (now) - what advice would you give decision makers (bosses of Walsall) on the actions they need to take <u>now</u> to ensure that Walsall becomes <u>the best place</u> for children to grow up by 2040. What actions to you think you could take to make Walsall a better place for children to grow up?

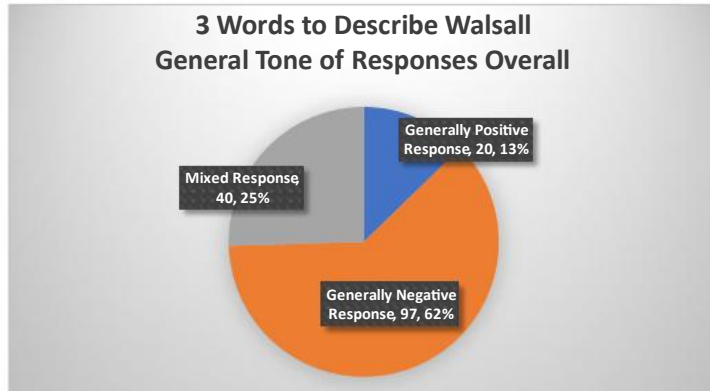
Respondent profile

A total of 181 individual children took part in these conversations.

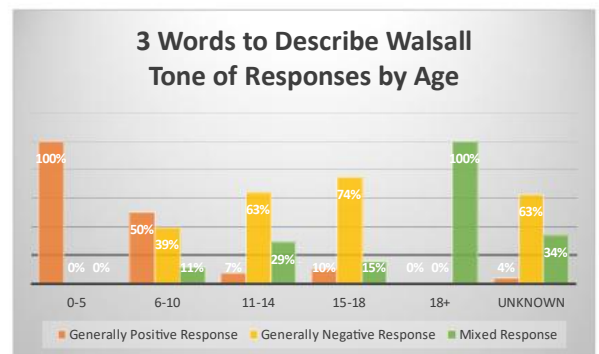
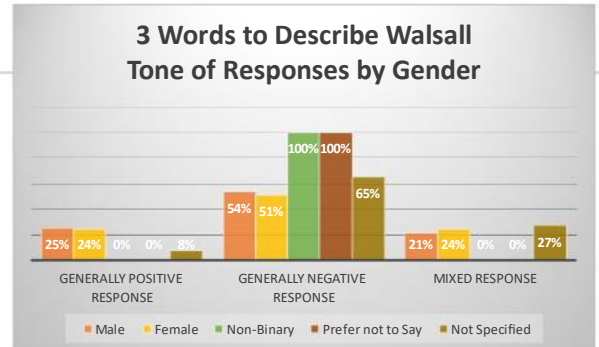
Age	0-5	1.1%
	6-10	13.6%
	11-14	24.3%
	15-18	22.0%
	18+	0.6%
	Unknown	38.4%
Gender	Male	40.1%
	Female	26.0%
	Non-Binary	0.6%
	Prefer not to Say	0.6%
	Not Specified	32.7%
Ethnicity	Arab-Egyptian	0.6%
	Asian/Asian British	5.6%
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	9.6%
	British	1.1%
	Mixed/Multi-Ethnic Group	2.8%
	Prefer not to Say	1.1%
	White British	40.7%
	White Other	1.7%
	White and Black African	0.6%
	Not Specified	36.2%
Additional Characteristics	Additional Need/Disability	15.8%
	Young Carer	0.6%
	Care Experienced	9.0%
	No Response/None of These	74.6%

Big Conversation overview of what children told us: Topic 1; Life in Walsall Today NOW (2024)

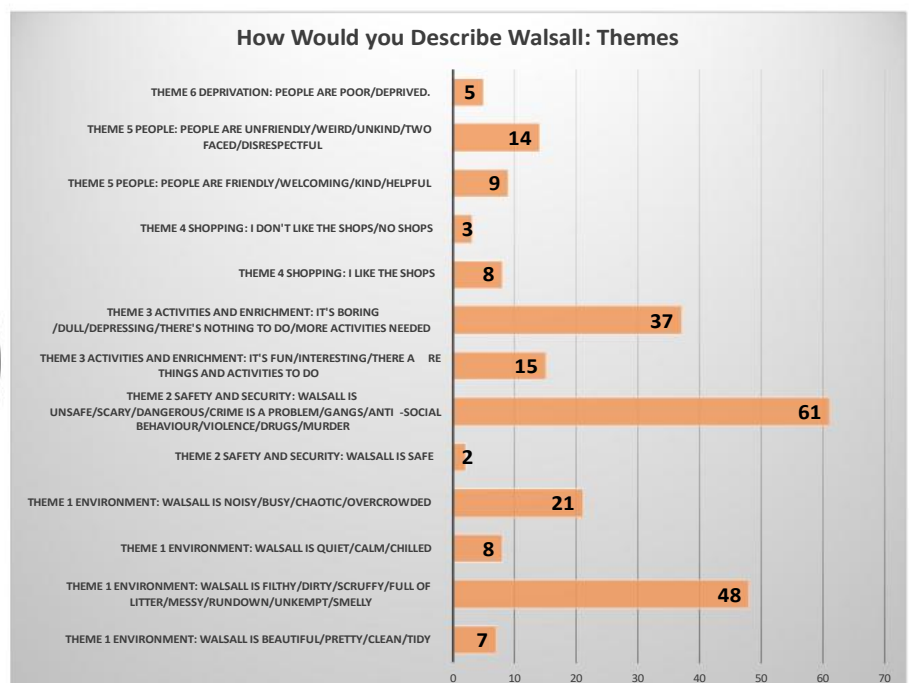
How Would you Describe Walsall in 3 Words?



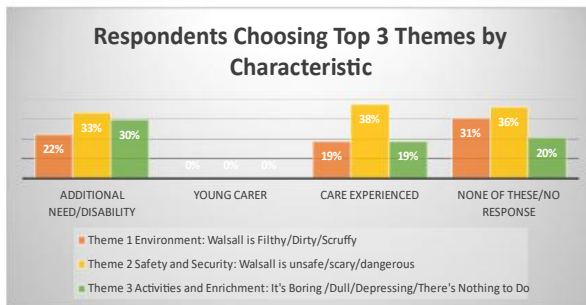
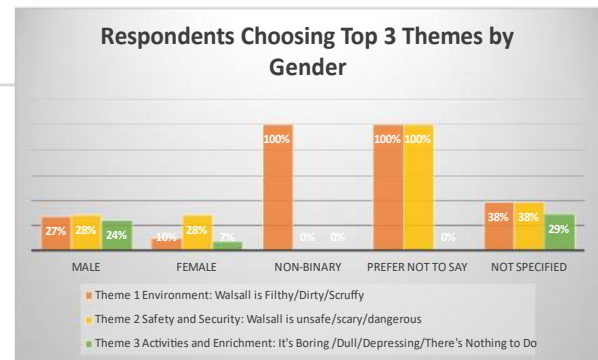
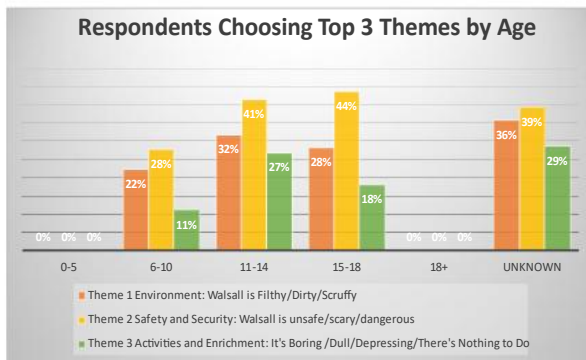
- Most responses were negative in tone.
- There was little difference in positivity vs negativity between male and female respondents.
- However, children and young people in older age groups gave more negative responses than those in younger age groups.



How would you describe Walsall in 3 Words:
Emerging Themes



How Would you Describe Walsall in 3 Words: Respondents Choosing the Top 3 Themes



- A greater proportion of 15-18 year olds said that Safety and Security was a concern than younger age groups.
- A similar proportion of female respondents to male said that Safety and Security was a concern.
- A smaller proportion of female respondents than male said that the environment or lack of activities were a concern.
- Almost a third of those with an additional need or disability said that there is a lack of things to do.
- A lower proportion of care experienced young people than their peers said that the environment was a concern.

How would you describe Walsall in 3 Words: Quotes

“Popular, brilliant schools, fabulous”

“good, boring and funny”

“Rough, filthy, scary”

“Terrible, Unsafe, Deprived”

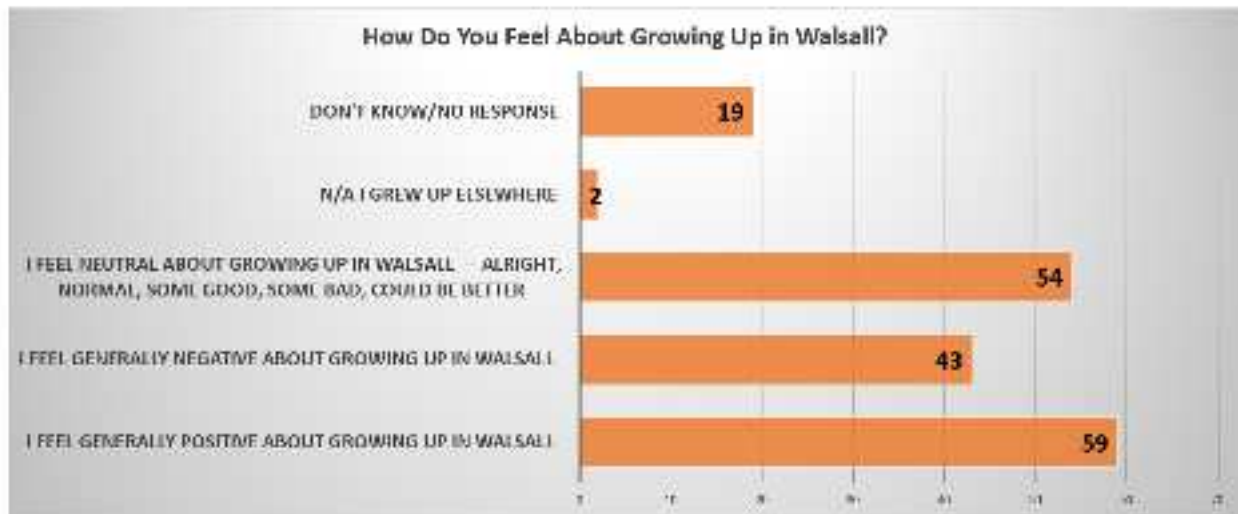
“1, Dangerous, 2, Big, 3, Fun things to do (if you have money to pay)”

“Fun, Expensive, Split”

“Scary, Boring, Crap.”

“It’s very beautiful”

How do you Feel about Growing Up in Walsall?– General



How do you Feel about Growing Up in Walsall: Quotes

“Scared because of crime”

“There’s better places to live can get into a lot of trouble if you can get into the wrong crowd.”

“my local area is quiet but feel worried about going to the town center is dangerous and violent”

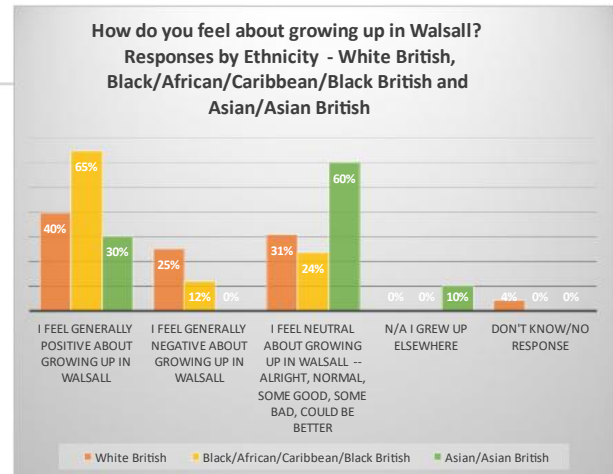
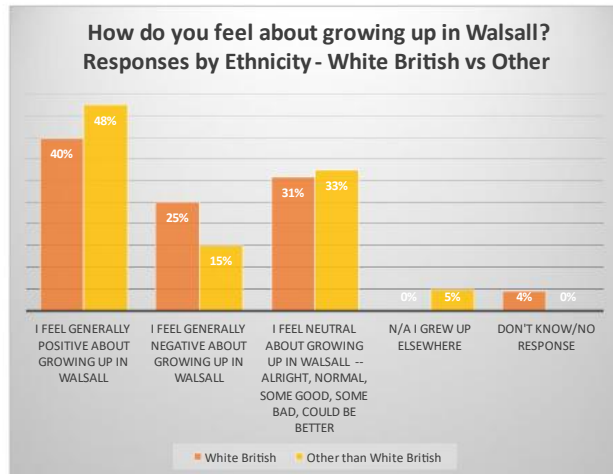
“Good - I love being with my family (foster carers)”

“It wasn't as bad when I was little but it's getting worse (crime)”

“I have lots of memories here - mostly good. I like living in Walsall wood and being with my family.”

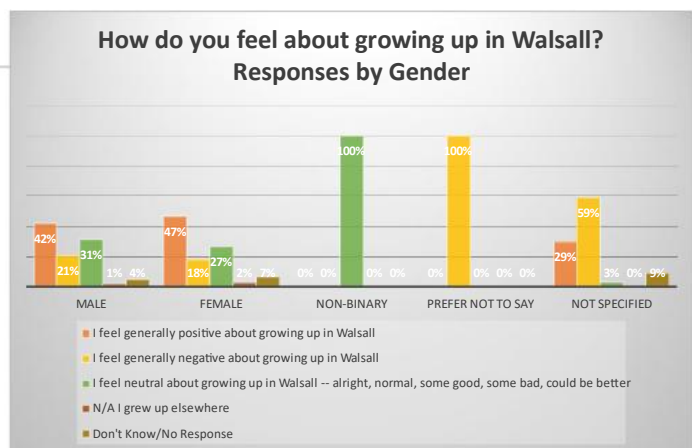
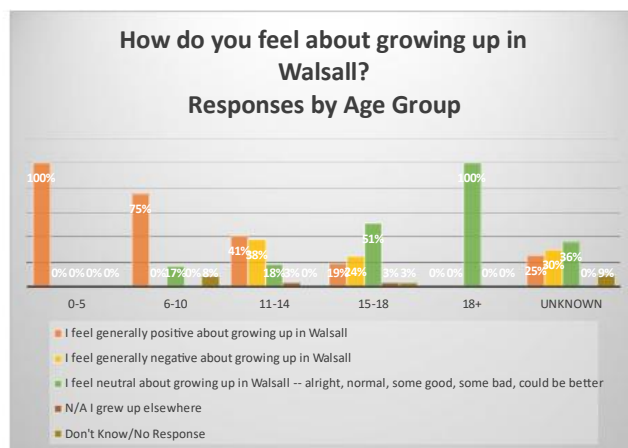
“It is what it is. I will be moving out of Walsall when I'm older.”

How do you feel about growing up in Walsall? Responses by Ethnicity.



- Caution recommended in drawing conclusions from the data due to the low number of respondents in ethnic groups other than White British (39), and the high number of respondents who didn't provide information on their ethnicity (64).
- However, responses show a greater proportion of White British respondents saying that they feel negative about growing up in Walsall.
- Responses indicate that respondents of Black/African/Caribbean/Black British heritage are more likely to say that they feel positive about growing up in Walsall than White British or Asian/British respondents.
- No Asian/British respondents said that they felt generally negative about growing up in Walsall.

How do you feel about growing up in Walsall? Responses by Age/Gender



- A greater proportion of 11-14 year olds felt negative about growing up in Walsall than other age groups.
- No children in the 0-5 or 6-10 age groups felt negative about growing up in Walsall.
- Positivity reduces as age increases.
- A slightly higher proportion of female respondents felt positive about growing up in Walsall than male, although feelings are broadly similar amongst male and female respondents.

Topic 2 - Belonging in Walsall

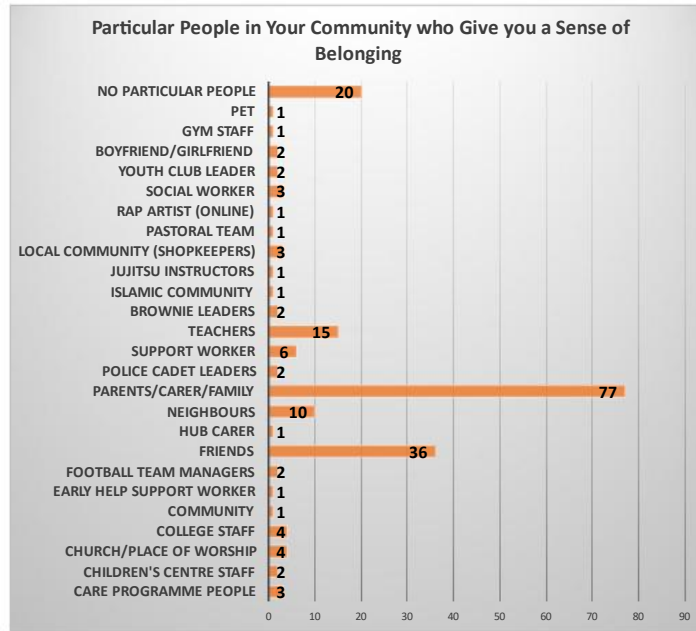
What does belonging mean to you?



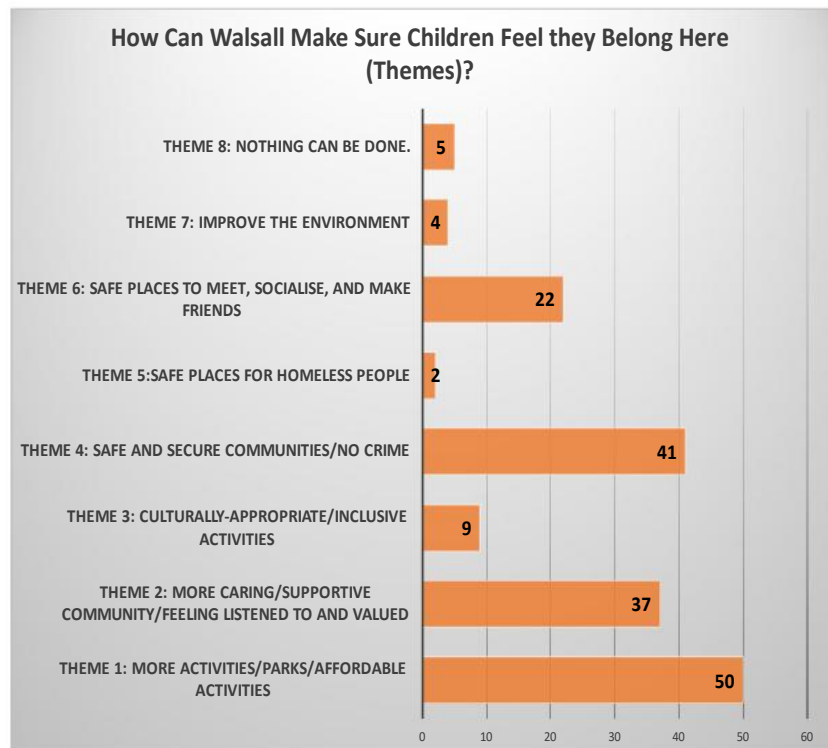
Situations or Places that give you a sense of Belonging



People who give you a Sense of Belonging



How can Walsall make sure all children and young people living in Walsall feel they belong in the city?



How can Walsall make sure all children and young people living in Walsall feel they belong in the city?
Quotes

"Get rid of Knife Crime, Something to Do, I like the Bowling Alley."

"Have fun things to do. Places to go and make friends."

"Crack down on crime, More police, Safe places for young people to go"

"Clean up the streets, less rubbish, more parks, fix the parks, community areas, youth clubs."

"Having family close by, Having choices, Listening to us"

"Give children and young people more opportunities to take part in community activities"

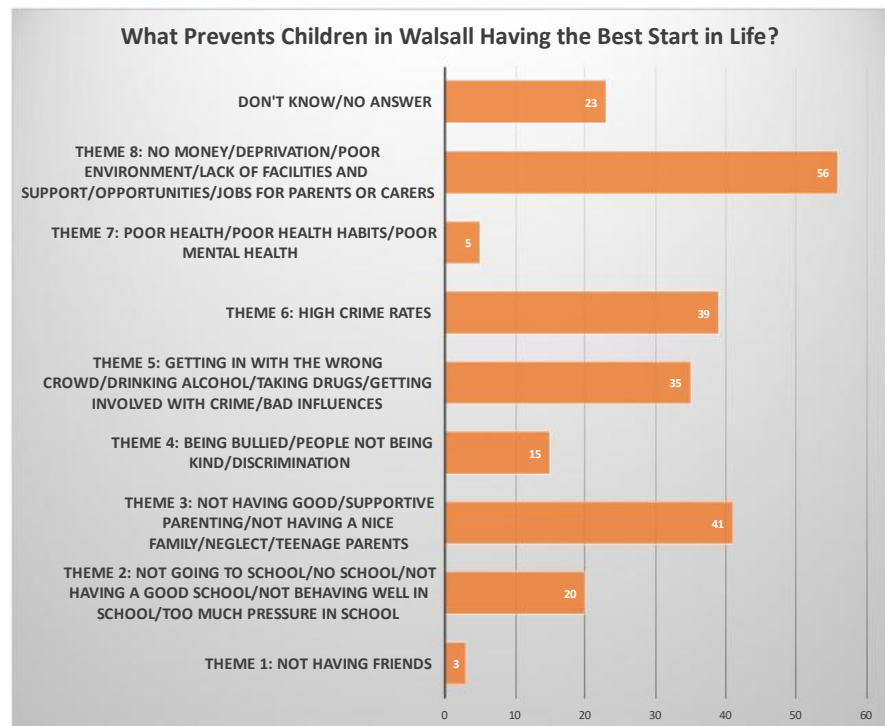
"More activities and places to meet for children with disabilities. Greater accessibility in the area."

"There needs to be things available for the kids. Everything boils down to money. Kids are bored, they cause destruction because there is nothing better for them to do."

Topic 3: Providing all children in Walsall the "Best Start in Life"



What Prevents Children in Walsall from Having the Best Start in Life?



"More life lessons and involving parents more in their kid's lives"

"That everyone has a good education"

"Educational system a lot of teachers don't have patience with challenging students"

"Buy them food so they don't have to starve and get them toys. Hot water so that they can have a bath and shower"

"Make it a nicer and safer environment so that they would feel comfort in themselves to do better. Environments play a big role in how you act as a character."

"Give out nappies and milk formula for free"

"More things helping before it happens and goes wrong."

"Better schools, less racism and more understanding of cultures"

"Not overlooking the fact that just because that a child is in a high earning family, they may be struggling. These sorts of families seem to fall through the cracks."

What Actions are Needed to ensure All Children have the Best Start in Life? Quotes

Topic 4: All Children are Thriving

In 2040 you will be a successful adult -- who will you be? Where will you be? What will you be doing?

84 Respondents **Specified the Career** they would like to Pursue.

13 Respondents said they would definitely **stay** in Walsall.

33 Respondents said they would definitely **leave** Walsall, but stay in the UK.

17 Respondents said they would **live overseas**.

7 Respondents said they would live where their **family** is.

Children and Young People's Aspirations

Business Owner	8
Footballer	6
Mechanic	4
Social Worker	4
Artist	3
Construction Worker	3
Doctor	3
Gamer	3
Paramedic	3
Police Officer	3
Actor	2
Nurse	2
Teacher	2
Accountant	1
Animal Therapist	1
Art Teacher	1
Bar Worker	1

Barrister	1
Beautician	1
Boxer	1
Bricklayer	1
Builder	1
Business Manager	1
Car Rental Company Worker	1
Care Worker	1
Carpenter	1
Celebrity	1
Celebrity Chef	1
Chartered Accountant	1
Chef	1
Clothes Designer	1
Computer Game Designer	1
Dance Teacher	1
Dentist	1

Engineer	1
Financial Analyst	1
Horse Owner & Trainer	1
Interior Designer	1
Lawyer	1
Midwife	1
Navy	1
Neurosurgeon	1
Rapper	1
Salon Owner	1
Self-Employed	1
Sportsperson	1
Supercar salesman	1
Uber driver	1
Vet	1
Working with Horses	1
Youtuber	1

What will you be
doing in 2040?
Quotes

"A footballer, I will be where my parents live"

"I will be a kind adult, I will be in the Holland. I will be studying Theatre art"

"If the world's still going I'll be going out with friends, doing football training, working as a builder or something like that, have a relationship, still living with nan."

"i will be a police officer and will live in Dubai and i will be relaxing with family"

"Living in a new area like Blackpool. Nice and generous person. Doing mechanics."

"I will be in this house or living nearby to my friends. I will be a football player and be a builder or the same as my friends."

"Move to a nice area, have a good job, have my own place and money. Not have to rely on other people or different service. Have really good mental health."

"i will be a engineer with a good job far away from Walsall, possibly a nice area of London"

"I will be in Brownhills, I will be with my family, I will be working with horses"

What help and
support will
Children need to
grow up to be a
successful adult in
Walsall?? Quotes

"Better role models and less fear on the streets"

"More jobs, opportunities, education levels, teachers."

"more help in school to point you in the right direction"

"Kids need to spend more time with mature teenagers and adults"

"better mental health help, more help in school and education"

"Depends on the support that the individual needs as everyone is different"

"Someone to talk your worries with, encourage them to be what they want to be when they grow up"

"To help choose their jobs or what they want to be when there older."

"Talk more about knife crime and how bad it is. People do not realise that the victims have a family."

"Kids with Special Needs get the job they want with better support and education for them to get more help"

"money will help a lot as people can't afford things. price drops on things that are essential."

Topic 5: Walsall in 2040



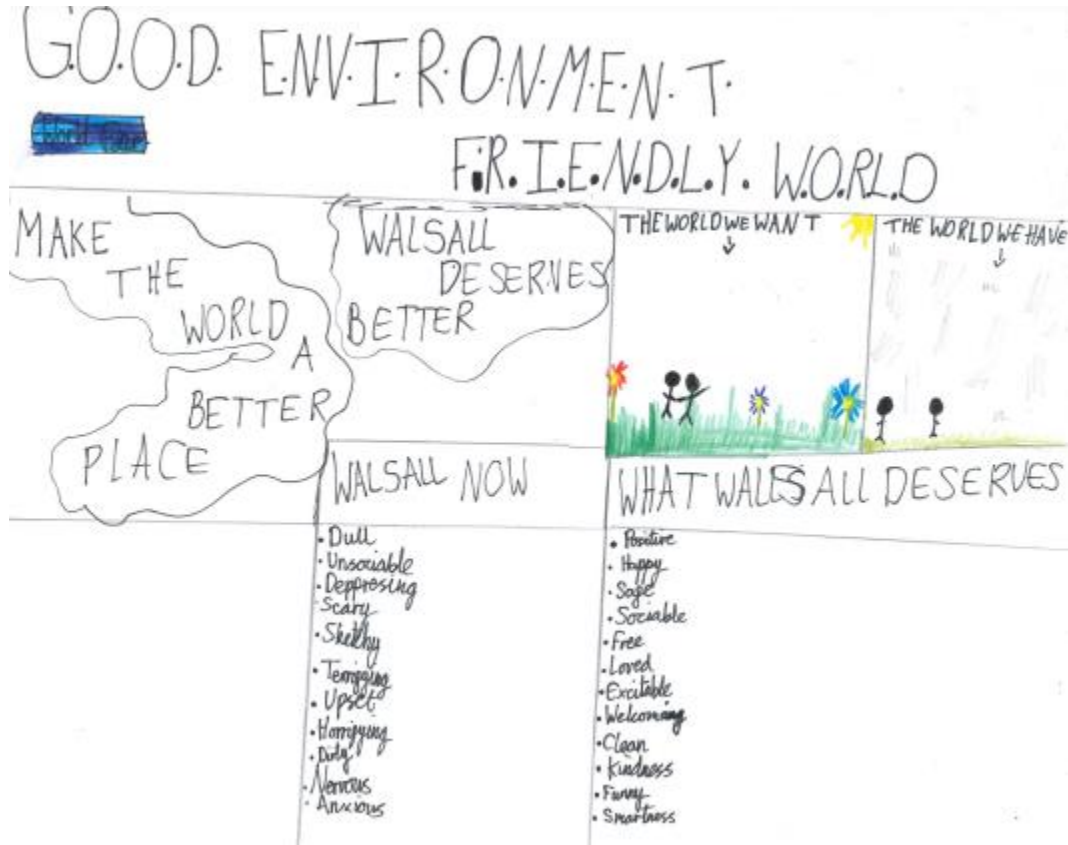
Topic 6: Call to Action



We asked children what actions leaders in Walsall should take to ensure Walsall becomes a better place for children to grow up. The themes for actions children identified:

1. Make Walsall Safer
2. Make Walsall greener and cleaner
3. Provide me with places where I can connect with others
4. Support children to get good education opportunities
5. Listen to us

4. ACTIVITY 2 - Walsall 2040 – Future planning workshops in schools



WORLD FOUR Walsall

This world is
Amazing

Everyone's
the best

Anyone can be
friends

You can do
anything

beauty is
everything

Your
beautiful

Everyone
loves this
world



Research background

The Walsall Council led "We Are Walsall 2040" is a strategic vision aimed at ensuring Walsall will be the "most improved borough in the region, a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents in all neighbourhoods have the same life chances."¹ This collective vision, informed through consultations with residents and cross-sector allied organisations and professionals is a means of ensuring the success, health and wellbeing of future residents.

The "Children and Young People (CYP) 2040 Strategy" is currently being developed, focusing specifically on the needs and aspirations of the younger generation. in line with the wider partnership work of the Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance and the wider 2040 strategy. .

In June 2023 the inaugural 'Children First' summit took place bringing together members of the Walsall's Children and Young People Strategic Alliance and other allied organisations to begin planning for the future generations of Walsall residents. Within this summit participants were asked to future scenario plan based upon current and potential future drivers of change. Within these in-school workshops children were asked their thoughts and the likelihood of these potential 4 scenarios that were created from the summit :



¹ <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/WAW2040>

In order to ensure that the CYP 2040 Strategy gives young people a voice and influence in shaping their future and the future of the borough The MindKind Projects have conducted seven in school workshops with over 250 participants. These workshops were designed to invoke and understand how young residents currently view Walsall, what their own personal visions of Walsall 2040 currently is and what they feel needs to happen to ensure that Walsall is a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents in all areas of the borough.

Our Approach

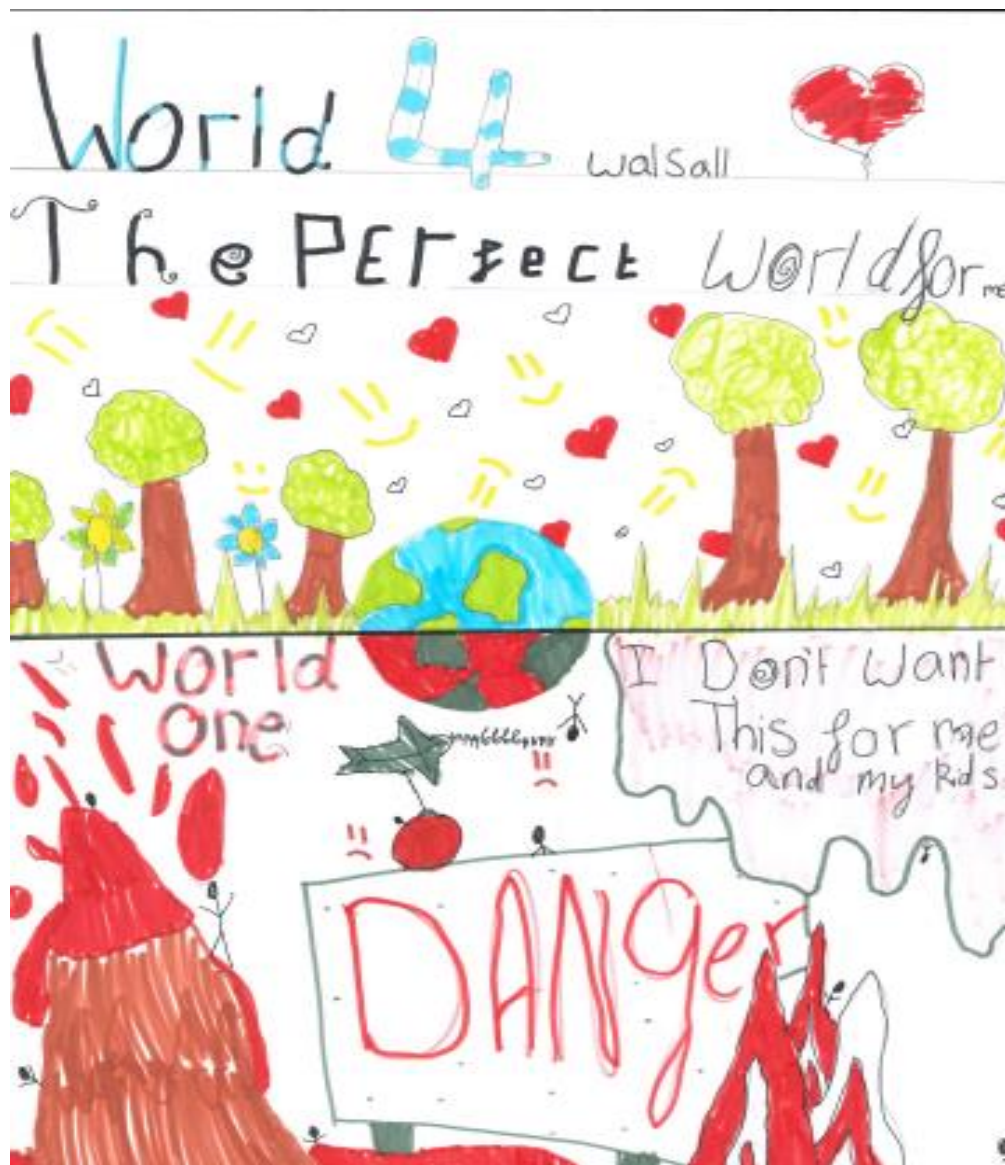
The MindKind Projects used a quantitatively and qualitatively-driven multiple-method approach to collecting insights from participants. Opinions and insights were gained by working through a workbook that included open questions, future vision drawings, group discussions and whole class opinion polls.

Whilst the exact delivery for each workshop changed to meet the needs and allotted times dictated by the schools hosting each workshop loosely followed this itinerary.

Activity	Approach	Notes
Introduction and Ice-Breaker - Sit down/stand up - 'Ice Cream or Cake', 'Invisibility or Flying' and 'Cats or Dogs', 'Walsall - Good or Bad Place To Live?'	By beginning by asking questions unrelated to the strategy - such as we were able to create an environment in which individual opinions were central.	The icebreaker involved asking participants to sit down or stand up depending on their opinions.
Workbook Questions - 'What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?' and Positive and Negative Questions and Pie Chart Priorities Now Activity	These questions were generally unprompted to ensure answers were not guided and data gained was reflective of participants' genuine opinions.	In some workshops prompts and support was given. Prompts were general such as "What don't you like? What do you like? What are the best things?" etc. We advised that it can be feelings, places, people, events.
Workshop Questions - What	By placing participants in the	We asked participants to first

will you look like in 2040? What will you be doing? Pie Chart Priorities 2040 Activity	future, at the age they will be and draw their futures invoked unrestricted imagination and ambition.	work out their ages (with support) and draw what they will look like doing whatever job they were in .
Workshop Questions - What Will Life Look Like In Walsall in 2040?	Participants were asked to think about the wider Walsall population in order to remove any personal positivity bias towards their future (invoked previously).	Worksheet prompts - Think About If People Are Healthy? Have Money? Have Jobs? What Kind? Talk to Each Other? Feel Safe? Use Technology and How? Think About Climate Change Are People Happy?
Walsall 2040 4 Scenarios Read and Write	Please see appendix for scenarios.	Narratives were read out based upon the 4 scenarios created within the initial Children's Summit and participants were asked to give their thoughts. It was reinforced that these scenarios are not more important or likely than participants thoughts.
Walsall 2040 4 Scenarios Diary Entry		Participants were asked to choose 2 scenarios and write a short diary entry based upon what it would be like living in this scenario.
Walsall Of The Future Poster Design		Participants were asked to draw the future they want for Walsall in 2040 or their likely future.
'King of Walsall' Future Thinking Activity	An activity designed to empower participants to make aspirational suggestions unrestricted by current systemic challenges by evoking a character with unlimited resources and strategic power.	
Walsall 2040 Pledge	An activity to invoke a sense of collective ownership and call to action to young participants	Participants were asked to make pledges linked to making Walsall 2040 a positive place.

In order to address the fact that the workshops were undertaken in school settings it felt necessary to address the idea that participants were being 'tested.' Across all sites the importance of individuals' opinions and insights and the idea of no 'right' or 'wrong' answer were reinforced. Our participants were told that "There is no such thing as a right or wrong answer today. Only your answer." When participants asked if they could write a certain answer it was reinforced to the whole group that the answer was always yes.. We reinforced this message by allowing the participants to address the facilitators by their first name and shout answers out during some sections.



Participants

A total of 7 workshops were conducted across 5 schools. Across all of these workshops 251 participants took part. These participants were approximately 52% White British and 48% from ethnic minority backgrounds with an almost even split between participants that identified as male and those that identified as female. In order to ensure that the results were representative schools with catchment areas that covered different levels of deprivation were chosen. The ages and school years of participants were dictated by school availability.

Rushall Primary School -

28 Year 6 children took part in the workshop. Around 82% of participants were White British. . The school falls within an area in the 20% most deprived in England and has a catchment area ranging from areas belonging to the 50% least deprived areas in England to the top 10% most deprived area in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019²

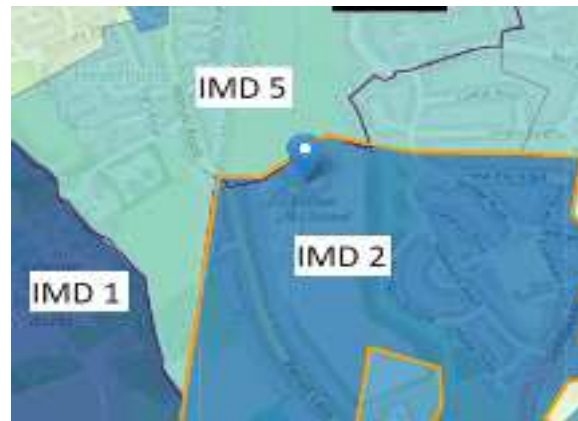


Figure 1 - Map showing location of Rushall Primary School and Indices of Deprivation

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Croft Academy

29 Year 6 children took part in the workshop. Around 60% of participants were from ethnic minority backgrounds and the majority of participants were British Asian, in line with the local population. The school is within an area of high deprivation, falling within an area in the 10% most deprived in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.



Figure 2 - Map showing location of Croft Academy and Indices of Deprivation

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

56 Year 4 children took part in the workshop. Over 80% of participants were White British. The school is within one of the least deprived areas of Walsall and is situated in one of the 40% least deprived areas in England and parts of its catchment zone includes areas belonging to the 50% most deprived according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.

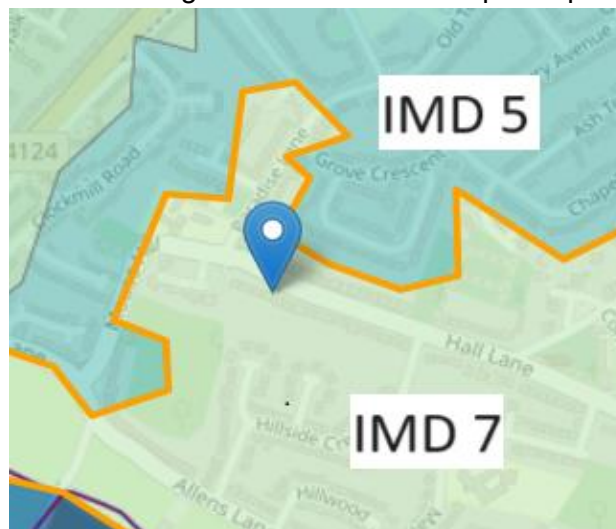


Figure 3 - Map showing location of St Michaels and Indices of Deprivation

Whitehall Junior School

83 Year 6 children took part in the workshop. Around 79% of participants were from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has a catchment area containing areas that individually are shown to be within the 10%, 20% and 40% most deprived in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.

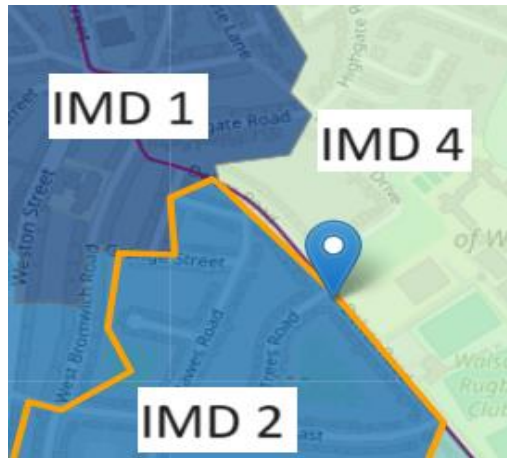


Figure 4 - Map showing location of Croft Academy and Indices of Deprivation

Blakenall Heath Junior School

55 Year 6 children took part in the workshop. Around 67% of participants were from White British backgrounds. The school is within the top 10% most deprived in England and has a catchment area containing areas that individually are shown to be within the 10% and 20% most deprived in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.



Figure 5 - Map showing location of Blakenall Health Jnr School and Indices of Deprivation



Findings

Current Views of Walsall

Demographics and Intersectionality

Just over 65% of all participants stated that Walsall was not a good place to live when asked the closed question of if Walsall was an overall good place or bad place to live. When asked to write answers to the question “What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?” around 60% of respondents wrote an answer that was overwhelmingly negative with 65% of respondents writing answers that were generally negative with some positive aspects. Schools that were in areas of higher deprivation or had catchment areas that contained areas of higher deprivation generally correlated with more negative responses to these questions. For example at Croft Academy, a school in the 10% most

deprived areas of the country just over 75% of participants gave predominantly negative responses compared to 40% of participants from St Michaels Primary School.

Participants who were from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to give negative responses to the question 'What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?'. The majority of participants from ethnic minority backgrounds participated in workshops delivered within schools that were within deprived areas. Findings pointed towards negative responses not simply being linked to deprivation. For example participants from ethnic minority backgrounds within the St Michael's Primary School workshops, a less deprived area of Walsall, approximately 10% more likely to give a negative response compared to their White British classmates. This was mirrored within the Blakenall Heath Junior School workshops, a workshop conducted within an area of higher deprivation with a predominantly White British cohort in which ethnic minority participants were 5% more likely to give generally negative responses.

The data suggests that gender does not play a decisive role in whether present day Walsall is viewed in a positive or negative manner, as evidenced by an early even gender distribution observed across the workshops. Despite minor variances, the consistency in gender splits reinforces the conclusion that gender is not a significant determinant in this context.

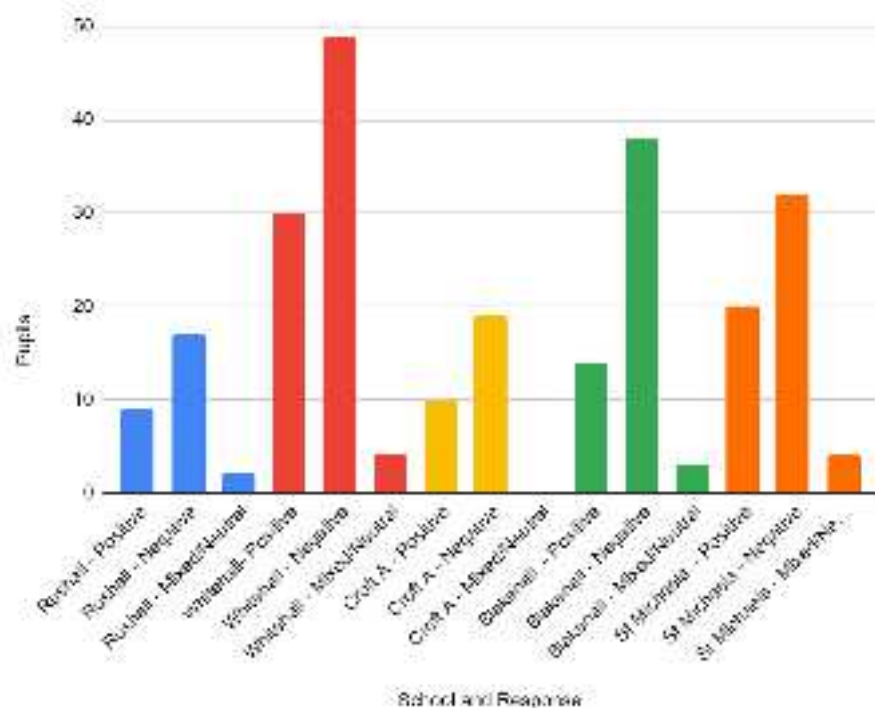


Figure 7- Chart Showing Nature Of Responses To The Question - 'What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?'

What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?

<p>Good Things</p> <p>the good thing is family</p>	<p>Bad Things</p> <p>litter</p>
<p>Best Thing</p> <p>shopping with friend and family</p>	<p>Worst Thing</p> <p>Murder homicide</p>
<p>Good Things</p> <p>Its a nice quiet place and peaceful, shops like town</p>	<p>Bad Things</p> <p>litter Racist people &</p>
<p>Best Thing</p> <p>→ The nice nature and my house, friends.</p>	<p>Worst Thing</p> <p>Crimes</p>

Good Things	Bad Things
shops schools	litter vandalism
best Thing	Worst Thing
home family	death shootings stabbing

It really difficult because of following reasons : lots of pollution, lots of violence, stabbing and lot bad medical.

What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?

small	Bad	unsafe	I hate it
dirty	unsafe	too many people doing crime	unpleasant
crime		killings	

Key Themes

Key positive factors that transcended localities were linked to food, shopping and leisure infrastructure, particularly within Walsall town centre. Town centre facilities such as the 'Ninja Warrior' adventure site, swimming pool, Tenpin bowling, cinema and shops were all mentioned across workshops as well various takeaways and restaurants within localities. School was also mentioned as a key positive factor by a number of participants in every workshop.

Social connections through family and friends were also seen as one of the key reasons participants would feel positively towards Walsall as well as a sense that being born and/or raised in Walsall was a key factor in feeling positively towards it. Again the importance of social connections were detailed in the majority of workshops as being one of the key positives for Walsall's children regardless of where the children lived and went to school.

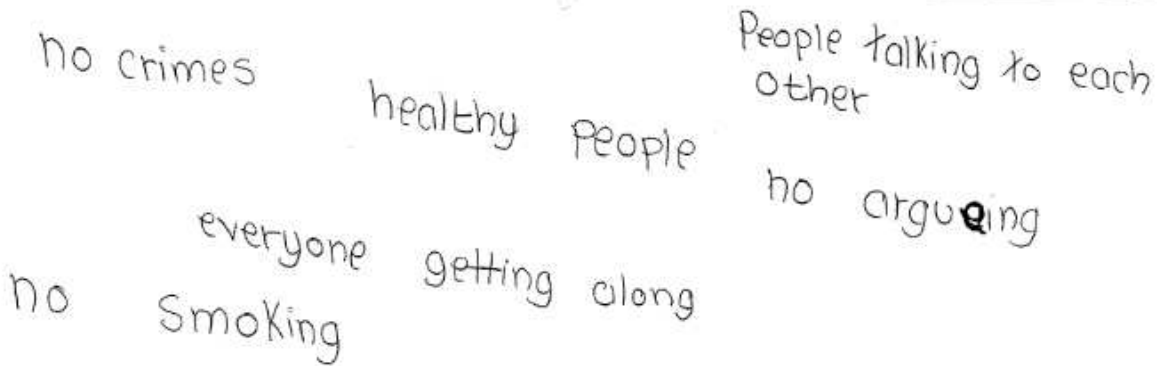
Across localities there was a tangible sense of feeling unsafe as a key driver for negative responses towards Walsall. Crime in various forms featured heavily in responses including murder, stabbings and gang activity. Whilst this sense of danger was present across all localities it was clear that participants in certain areas of Walsall felt the impact of this more strongly and this resulted in a more negative view. Between 60 and 70% of participants within the Rushall Primary and Whitehall Primary workshops and 70% to 80% of participants within the Croft Academy and Blakenall Heath Primary School workshops cited some sort of violent crime as one of the bad or worst things about living in Walsall now. Within all localities apart from St Michaels Primary School crime was the primary reason Walsall would be seen in a negative light and these answers transcended demographic considerations including ethnicity and gender although worth noting is that a small number of participants from ethnic minorities mentioned racism within the Blakenall Heath, Whitehall Juniors, Rushall Primary and Croft Academy workshops.

Litter and a sense of Walsall being 'dirty' or 'unclean' was heavily represented across localities also. Around 60% of participants who filled in the 'bad and worst things about Walsall' section stated that littering was an issue. This was also represented within class discussions at all workshops. Pledges made by participants also showed that Walsall children that took part in the workshops directly link litter with their visions of Walsall in the future with just under 50% of participants pledging that they will make Walsall a happier, healthier place in the future by litter picking.

Beyond this a small number of children also mentioned that living away from family members was also a key reason they didn't like Walsall. This included 6 pupils across

workshops that cited family members living in another country as being a key reason they may feel negatively towards Walsall.

Walsall 2040 - Participants Views on The Future and Suggestions For Change



Handwritten notes on a lined background, likely from a workshop, listing suggestions for change in Walsall 2040. The notes are written in a casual, cursive style and include:

- no crimes
- healthy people
- People talking to each other
- no arguing
- everyone getting along
- no smoking

Across all workshops approximately 60% of pupils felt that Walsall would not be a positive place to live in the future. When asked which of the 4 future scenarios would be most likely 60% stated that scenario 1 - 'Poor Environment, Less Friendly World' would be most likely with the only exception being with the St Michaels workshops. Whilst this number generally correlates with that given to the current view of Walsall it is worth noting that a number of participants' view of the future was not impacted by their current view of Walsall. As such a number of participants that felt that Walsall was a negative place to live now felt that Walsall in 2040 would be a better place to live and vice versa. Many of the key future changes and drivers for future change (such as A.I/Technology) were the same regardless of if the future overall vision of Walsall was a positive or negative one, although the impact and effect of these drivers differed .

When asked specifically "What Will Life Look Like In Walsall In 2040?" positive, negative and mixed responses were represented across all workshops, regardless of location. As represented below the percentage of participants who responded with an overwhelmingly negative response ranged from approximately 57% within the St Michaels workshops to 69% within the Blakenall Heath workshops, again pointing towards deprivation having an impact upon perspectives of the future.

Future Safety and Crime

One of the primary responses from participants across all workshops related to feelings of safety and future occurrence of crime. The majority of responses around this theme were negative. Ranging from a generalised feeling of 2040 Walsall being unsafe and

feeling 'dangerous' to more specific responses relating to an increase in murder, stabbings, gangs and violence. Whilst the majority of responses were negative a smaller percentage of participants felt that the future would feel safer with more police, less crime and a generalised feeling of future safety. Many workshops were conducted in schools with catchment areas within wards³ with higher crime and anti-social behaviour rates including Croft Academy (Birchills-Leamore), Blakenall Heath and Whitehall Junior School (St Matthews/Palfrey). Participants within these areas were marginally more likely to mention crime and safety concerns when envisioning Walsall in 2040. When asked to write postcards to the 'King of Walsall' many suggestions were related to decreasing crime including hiring more police and punishing people for crimes.

I don't think it will not be more because its just too old.
Maybe I think it will be a murder scene.

Finance and Jobs

Children from areas of high deprivation were more inclined to focus on issues relating to employment and money, although similar responses were represented across locality. Approximately one third of respondents across all workshops mentioned finances and/or employment when discussing Walsall in 2040, pointing towards primary aged children being aware of the impact that finances will have on their lives in the future. Around a third of all participants across localities mentioned the need to either create more jobs, ensure workers get paid more money or reduce costs within 'King of Walsall' responses.

The majority of participants that mentioned jobs or finances felt that these issues would negatively impact life in Walsall, pointing out that people will have less financial resource due to a lack of money and/or jobs (with some connecting this to A.I./robots) and things costing more. However a minority of participants felt that the future will result in people having more money and/or jobs. Those that discussed the drivers for future prosperity generally pointed towards this being linked to future technological advances.

Homes and Homelessness

³<https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/home/profiles/ward-profiles/#:~:text=Walsall%20Borough%20comprises%20%20wards,services%20that%20they%20may%20require.>

The need for adequate homes and to address the perception of homelessness in the future is clearly important to participants. Just under 15% of all participants cited the need for homelessness to be addressed by the fictional 'King of Walsall' and a number of participants pledged that they would directly address this to ensure that the future of Walsall is positive. Across all workshops only a very small percentage of participants directly detailed the feeling that residents in 2040 will have less adequate homes than today, although an increase in the financial drivers of homelessness was detailed by a large cohort of participants, as detailed above. When asked "What Will Life Look Like In Walsall In 2040?" answers directly relating to homes and homelessness were generally seen through a positive lens with some participants feeling that Walsall in 2040 will be better positioned to address these issues.

Dystopian Visions Of Walsall 2040

Approximately 8% of responses to the question relating to what Walsall in 2040 will look like felt that Walsall would either not exist or be a 'war-zone.' These visions of Walsall in 2040 were shared amongst participants across all workshops with only very slight variations based upon ethnicity, gender or levels of deprivation. Reflecting upon workshops it was noted by facilitators that when asked about this view participants who were of Asian British heritage were more inclined to link these concerns directly to current world events, particularly the current conflict in Israel/Palestine compared to drivers of this view being more generalised amongst other ethnicities. However the anecdotal nature of these observations underscores the complexity of the issues at hand and highlights the diversity of experiences within the community. While these individual accounts provide depth to our understanding, they do not necessarily constitute a comprehensive or statistically significant dataset from which broad, generalisable conclusions can be drawn.

A small number of participants also expressed concerns over technological advances having a very negative, almost dystopian impact upon Walsall with concerns around 'robots taking over' expressed.

Environment and Nature

Across all workshops nature and the environment was a key aspect of the young participant's vision of the future with around 20% of participants mentioning these issues through answers given within the 'What Will Walsall Look Like in 2040?' task, the 'King of Walsall' activity and 'Participants' Pledges'.

A small minority of participants felt that Walsall would have more green spaces, parks and nature and that issues relating to pollution, global warming and the climate crisis

would be 'resolved' and improved from today's position. In most responses a general optimistic view of the future was given without elaboration on the reasons for these changes. When key reasons and drivers were given participants put this down to improvements in technology such as electric cars and society coming together to address these issues.

The vast majority of participants that mentioned 2040 environmental issues and nature within the 'What Will Walsall Look Like in 2040?' task presented these themes through a negative lens. These participants felt that Walsall will be more polluted, with less parks and the detrimental impact of global warming being felt. Participants suggestions within the 'King of Walsall' task include less trees being cut down, more parks being created and pollution being addressed.

The importance of nature and it's necessity for a positive 2040 was reinforced within posters created by a number of participants. The majority of drawings and posters completed that envisioned and wished for a happy, healthy Walsall in 2040 included a clear depiction of nature including trees, parks and fields.

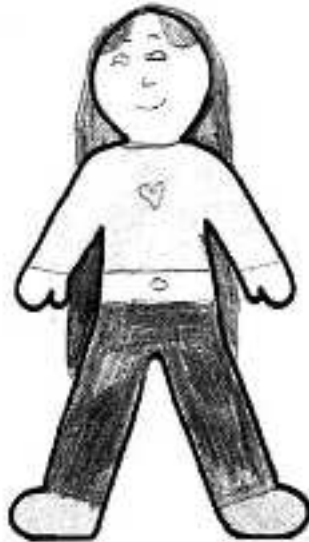
Leaving Walsall

Just under 10% of participants advised that they will be looking to leave Walsall in the future. Those that envisioned leaving all detailed overwhelmingly negative feelings towards present day Walsall with crime and antisocial behaviour often noted. Around three quarters of those that stated they would be looking to move away from Walsall were from schools with catchment areas in high deprivation.

Future Ambitions

How Old Will You Be in 2040.....

26



...What Will You Look Like?

Nurse to help people

Footballer



debet card
cash: +~~000~~9999999999
due - 50000

£7 mil


...What Will You Look Like?

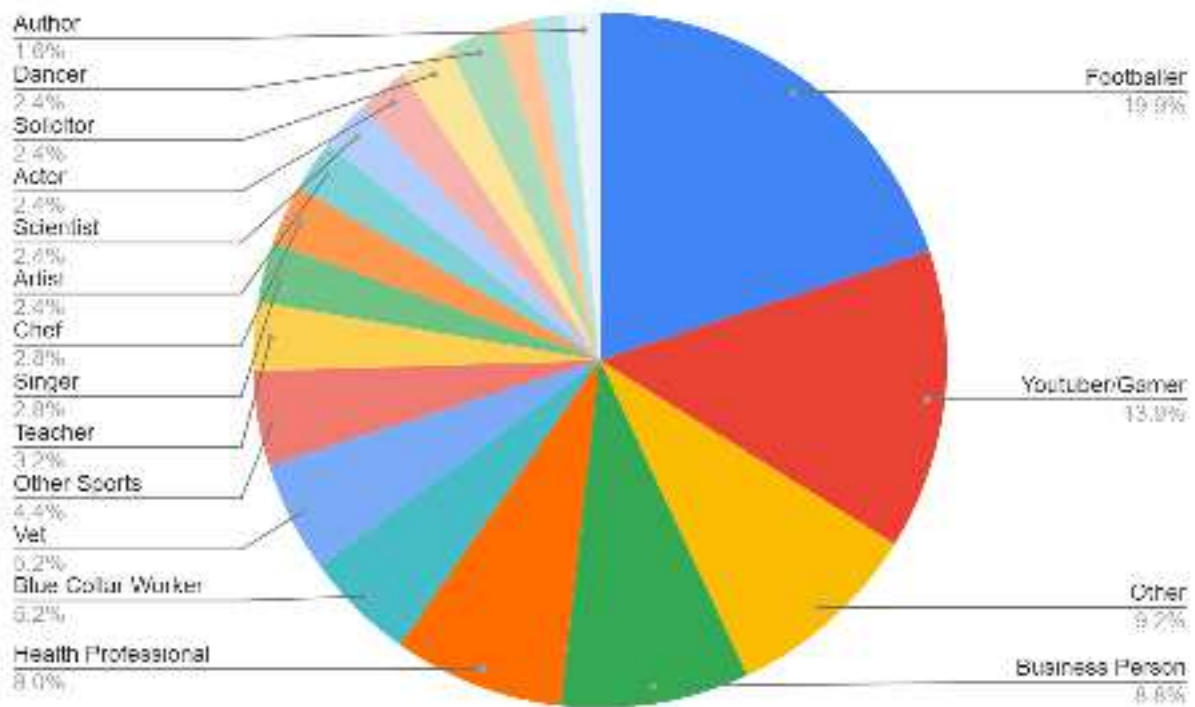
How Old Will You Be in 2040.....

26



...What Will You Be
Scientist

Across all workshops participants were ambitious about what jobs they wanted in 2040. Just under 20% of participants wanted to be a footballer when they grow up, the most represented answer for boys. Just under 14% of participants stated that they would like to be Youtubers or gamers in the future. Around 8% of participants stated that they wanted to be health professionals including doctors, surgeons, nurses and dentists and around a similar percentage wanted to be some kind of a 'businessperson.'



Social Connectedness and Kindness

A key theme running throughout each aspect of the workshop was the importance of the nature of human connectedness to present feelings towards Walsall as well as opinions on what the future will look like. This theme runs throughout concerns related to crime and antisocial behaviour, family and friendships seen as positive factors influencing opinions on Walsall and other key themes including but not limited to homelessness and concerns around social breakdowns. One of the key ways in which this is evidenced is found in the fact that of those that made pledges approximately 45% of respondents advised that they will ensure that Walsall 2040 is a happy, healthy place by interacting with those in their community in a positive manner. Examples of this include but are not limited to acts of charity, generally being kind to one another and helping others.

POSTCARD

I think they need to talk to others about getting along with each other and respecting one another and how to spend money to upgrade Walsall.



To the king of Midlands
Walsall Castle
Walsall, UK

Your Pledge To Making Sure Walsall in 2040 is A Happy, Healthy Place

I, [redacted] will help make Walsall a friendly, happy, healthy and environmentally friendly place to live in the future.

I will do this by.....
donating a house, postbox, shop, littering, pick up litter



I will do this by..... no littering and respecting this town/city



I, [redacted] will help make Walsall a friendly, happy, healthy and environmentally friendly place to live in the future.

I will do this by..... *don't drop litter and give to charity.*

I, [redacted] will help make Walsall a friendly, happy, healthy and environmentally friendly place to live in the future.

I will do this by..... *Work together because ~~none~~ none cares about walsall*



Hello, to make this earth better you can make more advanced technology, make a law to stop crimes, throwing litter. Also, give what every country need.

POST

MAKE Walsall a better place

have you ever
wondered how
2040 will
be like?
well today
's your day!!!
well its your
opion not
mine.



this is
my opinion
of how
2040
will look
like.

(hoffely
good).

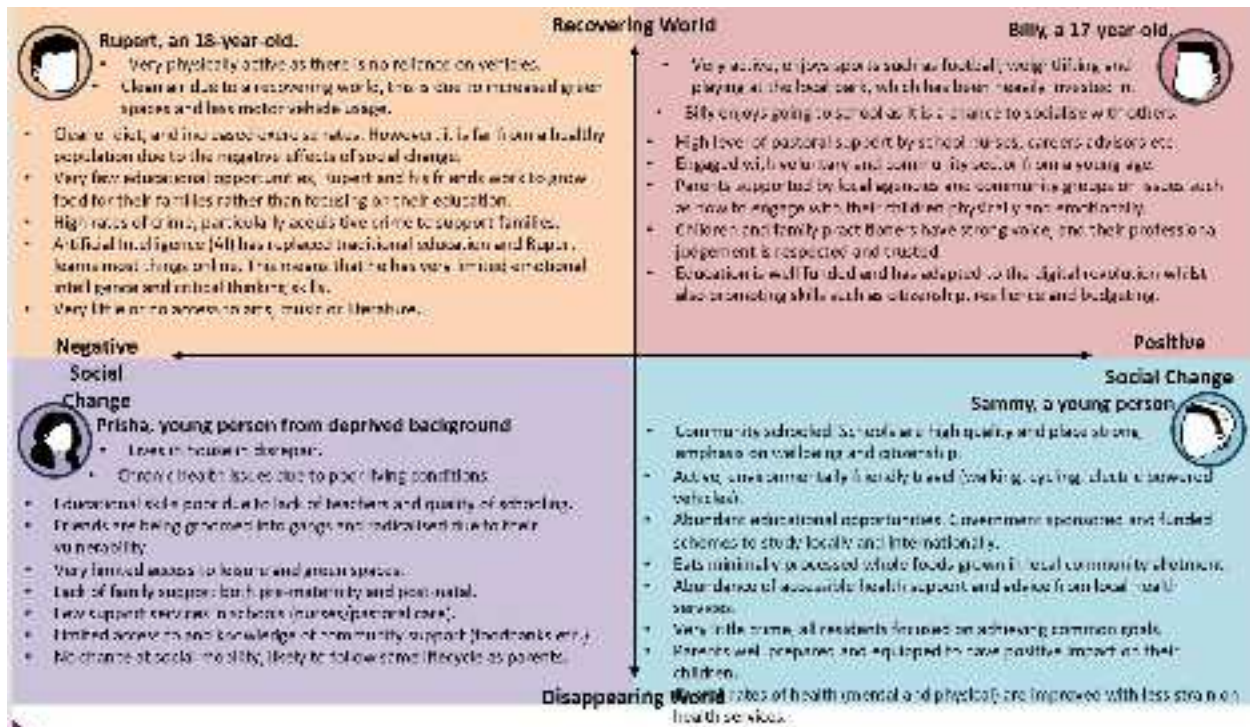
here



5. ACTIVITY 3 : Virtual engagement using Minecraft Education Edition led by TENSTAR

Methodology

TENSTAR is a local provider who uses gaming to engage children in positive and educational activities. They used Minecraft Education to engaged children virtual in our 4 scenario's created through the Children Summit. In each world they created a Character the player would take on their lives off.



Children were given tools appropriate to each world and a task to complete. At the start of each session children were all asked to describe Walsall now and in the future.

At the end of each session the players were asked a number of questions.

participants

71 individual children aged 5-19 engaged in the Minecraft Programme through 5 youth club sessions:

CARE group - 9

Lifegate - 18

North locality Early Help - 6

South locality Early Help - 5

Young carers youth group - 33

Findings

How would you describe Walsall Now:

Dirty* (49)
Dangerous* (32)
Scary (24)
Boring (22)
Sh**Hole (19)
Nice (14)
Big (11)
Gangs (10)
Fun* (9)
Home (4)



What do you think Walsall in 2040 will be like–

Fun (17)
Boring (14)
Sh**hole (9)
Futuristic (7)



Children feedback on each of the worlds:

World 1 saw the person explore a future scenario where green spaces are limited by class and sparse.

39 young people completed this world.

Questions explored with young people in this world:

How did Prisha's house make you feel? (No green space)

37 Negative reactions to Prisha's house 2 Positive

How did Kofi's house make you feel? (Green space)

39 Positive Reactions to Kofi's house 0 Negative

Name 3 things you changed to Prisha's house?

Most used changes -

Greenery (32)

A bed (29)

Food (19)

Would you like to see more green spaces in Walsall?

36 Yes 3 No



World 2 The young people explored a future 2040 Walsall with positive social change.

28 young people completed this world.

Questions explored with young people in this world:

How does the village make you feel?

Positive (26) Negative (2)

Name the village

23 kept the name Walsall with some small additions.

How is the 2040 school different to your own? Do you like it?

Enjoy the idea (24) Did not (2) Unsure (2)

World 3 ; The young people were faced with a 2040 world impacted by AI and technology.

29 young people completed this world.

Did you choose to destroy the AI?

Yes (27) No (2)

Do you use social media over 3 hours a day?

Yes (17) No (11) N/A (1)

Do you think AI poses a risk in 2040?

Yes (24) No (4) Unsure (1)

How did the future world controlled by AI make you feel?

Positive (0) Negative (27) Unsure (2)

World 4 - Here young people were instructed to build a representation of what they would see in a 2040 Walsall.

69 young people completed this world.

List of builds-



Homeless Shelter (4)	Family (2)
Race Track (2)	A shopping mall (3)
Free Gym (6)	A time machines (1)
A fishing Pond (2)	Trees (3)
Football pitches (4)	Lights in parks (2)
Parks (14)	Skatepark (2)
A safe place (like the way) (4)	Roads (1)
A science amusement park (2)	Basketball court (1)
An ice rink (4)	Esports centre (1)
Clean (1)	Tesla factory (1)
Police station (1)	Flowers (1)
Better Houses (4)	Schools (3)

An underground house for the homeless

Themes are seen throughout the builds with Parks, green spaces, safe places, and housing being stand-out options.

Summary of key issues identified through the activities:

The key issues highlighted from the 2040 Minecraft Project are:

Litter/Dirt

Young people used 'Dirty' as a descriptive word for Walsall both now and for the future almost more than any other.

During world #1 and #4 they decided to prioritise green space and nature over anything else.

We also gathered verbal feedback from countless young people who showed distaste for the litter in their area. The stand-out word especially from those aged 11-16 was 'ashamed'.

We feel this feedback shows a focus on the environment and litter maybe even involving young people would benefit the community and younger generations.

Safe Places

A focus on safe places to socialise was also a focus. This includes gyms, youth centres with more to do and even more lighting in parks so they can go there.

Young people on the whole feel bored and as if the council do not care. We feel focusing on the previous point of litter and the environment may encourage maintaining spaces that usually would be seen as dangerous.

Danger and knife crime were also hugely pointed to – with young people as young as 5 scared to play out due to gang activity.

As you know – this is a cycle. The would-be gang members need intervention and places to go and feel safe and have fun when younger to combat this.



“My family safe”

Overall

The overview seems to be mostly negative.

Smaller issues seem to pile up and cause a true dislike for their areas.

They seem keen to get involved with things such as litter picks, green spaces, and community efforts.



“A safe space to Chill”

6. Reflections on what young people have told us through this consultation:

This reports encapsulates the collective insights and aspirations of over 503 children aimed at shaping the strategic vision for Walsall's future. The Big conversation, through the three separate activities, sought to directly engage with a wide range of children about their current lived experiences of Walsall and their hopes for the borough by 2040. This consultation has illuminated the concerns, desires, and priorities of Walsall's younger generation, providing a crucial perspective to enable to develop the borough's strategic planning processes.

Key findings from the workshops reveal a nuanced view of life in Walsall, with a significant proportion of participants expressing concerns over safety, environmental cleanliness, and the need for more inclusive recreational and vocational opportunities where they have the opportunity to learn and connect with others. Despite these challenges, there was a strong sense of community and a desire for positive change, particularly in relation to creating safer, greener, and more vibrant public spaces.

The themes highlighted by children in this consultation are consistent with those highlighted through other consultation we have done in Walsall since 2020 [\(can put a link to the overview here\)](#) and this is an important issue leaders will need to reflect on. Children are not convinced that their voice will make a difference and leaders will act on the findings of the consultation.

In Walsall, we have worked hard over the last 2 years to develop strong foundations through the development of the Children and Young People's Alliance, to establish effective collaborative leadership and long-term decision making, across the Partnerships with a collective focus on improving the lived experiences of children growing up in Walsall.

This consultation and the development of the 2040 Children and young people strategy provides a pivotal moment for the Children Alliance to come together and maximise power and resource in identifying and ACT on solutions that will address the key issues identified by children that prevents them from thriving.

By doing so, The Alliance can ensure that the borough evolves into a place that not only meets the current needs of its residents but is also prepared to support the well-being and success of future generations.

7. Recommendations

This consultation demonstrates that on the whole Walsall's children and young people are committed to ensure that Walsall 2040 is a positive and thriving place to live, learn and work. Whilst our young people are on the whole feeling pessimistic about the town's future and skeptical that leaders will take positive actions, it is an opportunity to galvanize our collective powers and resources to create system change to create the outcomes children and young people **want and deserve**:

1. Relentless focus on ensuring young people feel safe in all spaces.

Develop community-Led Initiatives by implement and expand community-led safety initiatives that empower residents, including young people, to contribute to a safer Walsall. This could involve the development or enhancement of neighborhood watch programs, youth advisory councils to local police, and children and young people community forums where residents can voice concerns and collaborate on solutions. Investing in lighting, surveillance, and other infrastructure improvements in key areas could also enhance public safety.

Develop a strategic focus on belonging in education. Children identified that when education settings provides them with a sense of belonging it creates solid foundations for the future.

Therefore, it will be important to develop a belonging strategy for education with a focus on

- Supporting education settings to provide culturally responsive teaching practices that honor students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities. Encourage the integration of culturally relevant content and perspectives into the curriculum to promote engagement and relevance for all students.
- community-building activities and events that foster positive relationships among students, teachers, and families and connect students with the right support beyond the school environment.
- Empower students to take an active role in shaping their school and community environment

2. Protect, Create, Enhance and Expand Safe Green Spaces in the Community

Children said that their environment has an important impact on their emotional wellbeing and future aspirations. Green spaces do not only encourage children to be physically active, but also provides them with an opportunity to connect with others and learn in an unstructured way.

Develop stewardship programs through encouraging residents, schools, and community groups to take an active role in caring for green spaces and creating a sense of ownership. This could include volunteer opportunities for planting, clean-up days, and educational programs on environmental conservation. Special consideration must be made to ensuring these green spaces are seen as safe community assets.

Foster Collective Ownership and Pride through Litter Reduction Initiatives by Launching a borough-wide campaign that positions litter reduction as a cornerstone of community pride and future well-being. This initiative should include school-based programs where students lead litter

clean-up efforts and recycling projects, linking these activities to broader lessons on environmental stewardship and civic responsibility. Encourage local assets and community leaders to support and participate in these efforts, showcasing litter reduction as a shared goal that benefits everyone. Incentives to support

3. Social Connections

Children identified that having a good network of support (through friends, Family and trusted adults) provides them with the foundations of the best start in life as well as feeling safe and developing into a successful adult. Therefore following will be important key in the development of an effective strategy:

- Creating activities and places where children can safely interact and explore with peers in leisure time
- Implement peer mentoring programmes where children and young people can develop meaningful and sustainable relationships with role models and trusted adults providing them with the earliest support
- Leverage technology to facilitate social connections in safe and monitored ways

4. Children as active citizen

This consultation clearly demonstrated that children and young people don't want to be passive bystanders, they want to play a active role in creating a better future for their peers and future generation of children.

Development of a youth council as a key link to the Strategic Alliance to enable continuous involvement of children and young people in decision making.

Empower Youth Leadership in Educational and Vocational Training and Development through youth-led educational and community service projects and programs and training opportunities that are directly aligned with the future career interests expressed by young people, such as in sports, gaming, vlogging, healthcare, and business. This is essential given the documented concerns relating to job and financial prospects. These projects not only provide practical experience and may support future prosperity but will also instill a sense of civic responsibility and community engagement, particularly when linked to wider future drivers of change including environmental.

Future focused activities such as litter picks should be linked to the leisure commodities pinpointed by children and young people.