

## **Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**26 March 2024 at 18:00**

**Council Chamber at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall**

### **[Livestream Link](#)**

#### **Membership:**

Councillor N. Latham (Chair)  
Councillor P. Kaur (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor S. Ditta  
Councillor P. Gill  
Councillor I. Hussain  
Councillor S.B. Hussain  
Councillor E. Morgan  
Councillor L. Rattigan  
Councillor C. Towe  
Councillors G. Singh-Sohal  
Councillor N. Gultasib.

#### **Non-Elected Voting Members:**

K. Hinton (Archdiocese of Birmingham Representative)  
Vacancy (Diocese of Lichfield)

Vacancy (Parent Governor Representative – Primary)  
C. Pruden (Parent Governor Representative – Secondary)  
Vacancy (Parent Governor Representative – Special)

#### **Non-Elected Non-Voting Members:**

S. Guy (Primary Teacher Representative)  
W. Duffus (Secondary Teacher Representative)

#### **Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor M. Statham – Education and Skills

#### **Quorum:**

Four Members

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

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

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

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

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

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

## **Part 1 – Public Session**

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Substitutions**  
To receive notice of any substitutions for a Member of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.
- 3. Minutes**  
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2024.  
*(Enclosed, Pages 1 - 7)*
- 4. Declarations of Interest**
- 5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**  
To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.
- 6. Early Years and Childcare Expansion Update**  
An update on the Early Years and Childcare Expansion programme including the activities which have been undertaken and future planned activities.  
*(Enclosed, Pages 8 - 15)*
- 7. School Readiness and Early Years Foundation Stage Outcomes**  
An overview of the outcomes for children in Walsall.  
*(Enclosed, Pages 16 - 30)*
- 8. Early Years and Special Educational Needs**  
An overview on the provisions of the SEND Code of Practice as they relate to early years education.  
*(Enclosed, Pages 31 - 43)*
- 9. Recommendation Tracker**  
To consider progress on recommendations from the previous meeting.  
*(Enclosed, Pages 44 -46)*
- 10. Areas of Focus**  
To review the Committees, Work Programme and the Forward Plans for Walsall Council and the Black Country Executive Committee.  
*(Enclosed, Pages 47 -63)*
- 11. Date of next meeting**  
The date of the next meeting will be confirmed at Annual Council.

# **Minutes of the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Walsall Council House**

**Thursday, 15 February 2024 at 6.00 PM**

## **Committee Members present:**

Councillor N. Latham (Chair)  
Councillor P. Kaur (Vice Chair)  
Councillor P. Gill  
Councillor T. Jukes  
Councillor E. Morgan  
Councillor L. Rattigan  
Councillor G. Singh-Sohal  
Councillor C. Towe

## **Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor M. Statham – Education

## **Officers Present:**

C. Male – Executive Director (Children’s Services)  
S. Kelly – Director (Access and Inclusion)  
J. Kaur-Gill – Employment and Skills Manager  
R. Thomas – Head of Access  
A. Nash – Post-16 and Alternative Provision Manager  
J. Nash – Head of Inclusion  
N. Gough – Democratic Services Officer

The Chair gave welcome and introductions.

51. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Ditta and Councillor S. Hussain.

52. **Substitutions**

Councillor T. Jukes substituted on behalf of Councillor S. Hussain.

53. **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

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

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

55. **Minutes**

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on the 11 January 2024 were submitted [annexed].

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024 a copy having previously been circulated, be approved, and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.**

56. **Post-16-provision**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report, and the Post-16 and Alternative Provision Manager highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report provided an overview of the post-16 provision in Walsall and the work of the Post-16 Strategy Group. The main aims of the Group were described - the current priorities of the Group included a focus on the development of a survey to capture the views of year 11 students. This would assist in identifying gaps in provision and further support young people felt they would need. It was noted that a SEND version of the survey would also be produced. The Group would map Walsall's post-16 offer and work with all providers and the SEND team to ensure that young people had successful transitions into post-16 placements.

In response to questions from Members, Officers confirmed that the information and data from the student survey would be ready in September 2024. Members challenged if there were questions within the survey around the career's advice provided by schools, to ensure that students were aware of all post-16 provision in Walsall, Officers confirmed that this was the case. The Director stated that if schools were not fulfilling their statutory

responsibilities in relation to post-16 provision, the Council could use the 'schools' causing concern protocol' to provide additional support. The Employment and Skills Manager clarified that as part of the contract with Prospects Careers Service the destination of students was tracked, to ensure that they were progressing into positive destinations. Another contract was held with the Careers Enterprise Company which monitored if schools were delivering and providing high quality advice and guidance. It was noted that often secondary schools appointed their own careers leaders and did not use Local Authority provision.

A discussion was held around T-levels, and their availability in Walsall. It was noted it was important that there was a mixture of provision both academic and vocational.

A Member challenged how SEND students were supported, the Director stated that the pathway for young people with SEND was the same as for any other child and the support that they may need would be part of their education. The number of children with SEND who were 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) was a focus for the service, and Members agreed that it would be beneficial to receive this as a future agenda item.

The Head of Inclusion provided information on the preparation for adulthood, clarifying that EHCP's focused on independence and aspirations for adulthood from 14 years upwards.

It was agreed that Key stage 5 validated data would be circulated outside of the meeting. Challenge was provided to determine the process if providers were not performing well, Officers provided assurance that where there were concerns around school's support was provided to ensure that standards were met however this was not common. It was reiterated that this would be dealt with through the schools causing concern protocol.

### **Resolved**

- 1. That the post-16 provision report be noted.**
- 2. That a report on children with SEND who are NEET is considered at a future meeting.**
- 3. That Key Stage 5 validated data (full year) is circulated outside of the meeting.**

### **57. Post-16 Employment and Skills Service and Strategy**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report, and the Post-16 and Employment and Skills Manager highlighted the salient points (annexed). It was noted that all young people in England were required to be in education or training until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and Local Authorities had a statutory duty to assist, encourage, support, and enable young people aged 13-19 to participate in education or training.

The Committee was provided with data on those Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET), including the impact of the pandemic. In Walsall (November 2023) there were 2,060 young people classed as NEET and this was higher than the regional average. It was noted that where Young People were from disadvantaged backgrounds this number increased.

Members were informed that the Employment and Skills Service's role was to ensure that Walsall residents aged 16 years and over had the opportunity to reach their full potential. Support was provided through careers information and advice to help improve current skills levels and better connect people to the labour market.

The Walsall Works programme was described to Members – its purpose was to support individuals who were economically inactive and supported local people to find jobs, apprenticeships, and access training. It also supported local businesses looking to expand their workforce. The success of this programme was stressed, achieving 665 positive outcomes for participants during 2023, of which 83 were for young people aged 16-18, it also offered support to NEET young people.

Members expressed concern at the number of young people who were NEET and the consequences for them. The success of Walsall Works was acknowledged. A Member queried the demographic breakdown of the young people who were NEET, Officers agreed to circulate this outside of the meeting.

The Committee was informed that the Black Country Impact programme terminated on 31 July 2023 which had created some challenges in relation to long-term funding. However, Shared Prosperity grant funding had been secured, as part of the work related to this there would be a focus on the reduction of NEETS aged 16-19 years.

The Portfolio Holder provided details of the 'Link' multi-service drop in facility where residents could access guidance and information across a wide range of pathways to access employment. This was located on Park Street in Walsall, encouraging Members to visit.

## **Resolved**

- 1. That the Post-16 Employment and Skills Service and Strategy report be noted.**
- 2. A report updating the Committee be considered in the future.**

## **58. Alternative Provision**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report, and the Post-16 and Alternative Provision Manager highlighted the salient points (annexed). Alternative provision was described as educational settings for children who were not able to attend mainstream school and therefore needed a specialist place. which could be needed for behavioural or medical reasons. In Walsall there



were two Pupil Referral Units, and a wide range of alternative provisions were commissioned to meet the needs of children.

The Committee was provided with information in relation to the robust Quality Assurance processes for alternative provision, and Members were assured that the service worked with providers to ensure that they were operating to best practice and that there were robust safeguarding procedures in place. It was noted that Alternative Providers were receptive to this process.

Officers provided detail to the Committee on the 12-month development strategy for supporting pupils within Alternative Provision. This included building on relationships with alternative providers, robust impact measurement (including gathering the child's voice) and a focus on continual improvement culture.

In response to questions from the Committee, Officers confirmed that not all providers on the framework were based in Walsall, and how students travelled safely to those providers was considered. The main aim of the service was to give access to good quality provision based in Walsall and work was underway to identify gaps in this.

A series of questions ensued, and Officers confirmed that SEND support at alternative provision settings was a key focus of the Local Area Inclusion Board, work had started with New Leaf to consider provision and the needs of children, this model would be built upon and rolled out to other providers. A Member requested an update on this at a future meeting.

## **Resolved**

- 1. That the Alternative Provision report be noted.**
- 2. That an update on SEND support at alternative provision be provided to a future meeting.**

### **59. Attendance Report**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report, and the Head of Access highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report provided an update of school attendance data in Walsall and advised how Walsall continued to meet its statutory responsibilities to improve school attendance. Members were advised that it was a legal responsibility of parents to ensure that children attended school/received an education. The Committee was advised that academic years were made up of three terms, autumn, spring, and summer with publication of data and key absence measures described.

The Committee was informed that the Department for Education monitored pupil absence levels using two key measures which were the overall absence rate and persistent absent rate. These measures were calculated for pupils of compulsory school age. Indicative local data collection for the Autumn term

2023/24 indicated an improvement in overall school attendance and reduced absence compared to data for 2022/23.

Officers stated that the phrase 'avoidable absence' was new terminology introduced by the Department of Education, and this was important in Walsall as data suggested that 'unauthorised absence' needed to be a focus. Officers confirmed that they would circulate attendance data for the academic year in comparison to statistical neighbours.

The Committee asked Officers what advice was being given in relation to attendance fines. The Head of Access stated that the decision to pursue prosecution for absence lay with the Head Teacher, however the team considered all factors within each case.

Challenge was provided in relation to data, noting that in comparison to the rest of the country, there had been less improvement in Walsall. It was questioned what was being done to understand this. The Head of Access assured the Committee that the service was working with the highest performing statistical neighbours to learn from best practice in relation to this and how this could be translated to Walsall.

A Member questioned how many Walsall schools had joined the attendance hubs, Officers confirmed that this information could be circulated outside of the meeting. The importance of raising aspirations of young people was discussed, including the role of private employers and what they can offer within schools. It was stressed that young people also needed support to have confidence and knowledge to achieve such aspirations.

### **Resolved**

- 1. That the attendance report be noted.**
- 2. That the following information be circulated:**
  - a. attendance data for the academic year in comparison to statistical neighbours.**
  - b. how many Walsall schools had signed up to join the attendance hubs.**

### **60. Recommendation Tracker**

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

[Annexed]

### **Resolved:**

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

### **61. Areas of Focus**

**Resolved that:**

The Areas of Focus be noted.

62. **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for 26 March 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 19:16.

Signed:

Date:

## **Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **Early Years and Childcare Expansion Update**

**Wards** All

**Service:** Admissions & Education Sufficiency, Children's Services

**Portfolio:** Councillor Statham

#### **1. Aim**

The aim of this report is to provide the Education Scrutiny and Overview Committee with an update on the Early Years and Childcare Expansion programme including the activities which have been undertaken and future planned activities.

#### **2. Recommendations**

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- are supportive of the programme and in agreement with all activities and proposals.
- decides whether any further information or updates are required.

#### **3. Report detail**

##### **3.1 Early Years Expansion Programme**

In the March 2023 Spring Budget, the government announced a scheme to deliver the largest ever investment in childcare at a cost of £204m. These plans are designed to remove significant barriers to support parents to return to work and help to grow the economy by making childcare more accessible.

All children who meet the eligibility criteria should be able to access a funded place if their parents require one.

Councils have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare for working parents, as far as is practicable, and sufficient children's centres to promote integrated health, early education, and childcare. They must also secure free early education for all three- and four-year-olds, as well as disadvantaged two-year-olds.

- Currently, eligible 2-year-olds and all 3–4-year-olds can access universal hours (15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year) with working parents of 3–4-year-olds being entitled for extended hours (30 hours per week for 38 weeks per year).
- From 1st April 2024, working parents will be able to access 15 hours of funded childcare for 38 weeks per year for all 2-year-olds.

- From 1st September 2024, working parents will be able to access 15 hours of funded childcare for 38 weeks per year from the term after the child turns 9 months old.
- From 1st September 2025, working parents will be able to access 30 hours of funded childcare for 38 weeks per year from the term after the child turns 9 months old until they start school.

This is summarised in the table below.

	9 months – 2 years	2 years	3 to 4 years
Current Offer up to 31/3/2024	N/A	•Eligible children - 15 hours	•All Children - 15 hours •Working parents - 30 hours
From April 2024	N/A	•Eligible children - 15 hours •Working parents - 15 hours	•All Children - 15 hours •Working parents - 30 hours
September 2024	•Working parents - 15 hours	•Eligible children - 15 hours •Working parents - 15 hours	•All Children - 15 hours •Working parents - 30 hours
September 2025	•Working parents - 30 hours	•Eligible children - 15 hours •Working parents - 30 hours	•All Children - 15 hours •Working parents - 30 hours

*15 hours = universal offer / 30 hours = extended offer - both 38 weeks per year*

We have received a section 31, non-ringfenced revenue grant (LA Delivery support funding) of £60,534.27 which is to be used to support LAs to meet programme and delivery costs associated with rolling out the expanded Early Years entitlements. The grant will be used to support the costs of additional resources to aid with project planning for the expansion and the recruitment of an Early Years/Wraparound project lead to ensure that the expansion is delivered effectively.

### 3.2 Wraparound Childcare Programme

In the March 2023 Spring Budget, the government announced an investment of £289m for a national wraparound childcare programme, to support all families who need to access wraparound childcare from 8am to 6pm.

Parents should expect to see an expansion in the availability of wraparound care from September 2024, with every parent who needs it able to access term-time wraparound childcare by September 2026.

It is important to note that wraparound childcare does not include after school clubs such as art club or football club.

We have received a section 31, non-ringfenced capital grant (Childcare expansion capital grant funding) of £430,887. This is intended to be split between the Early Years and Wraparound programme and can be used to enable and/or increase access to childcare places for eligible children which includes expansion of existing childcare provisions, including expanding existing provisions to a different or additional site and the creation of new childcare places, whether via the creation of new settings, or expanding provision in existing providers.

We will also receive another section 31, non-ringfenced revenue grant (Wraparound Childcare Programme funding) of £1,699,316 which is to be used to be used to increase the supply of wraparound places and to ensure or guarantee provision for all parents who may need it, meeting current demand and building further demand. The first grant payment of £17662.98 was received on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The second and third payments (£1,146,837.32 and £534,815.70 respectively) will be paid to LAs once the updated delivery plans have been submitted and agreed by the DfE in May 2024 and May 2025.

## 4. Background

### 4.1 Early Years Expansion Programme

A sufficiency review of all PVI and schools who provide Early Years Childcare was completed in December 2023 and this has been used, alongside the DfE data, to help project the supply and demand of places for 2-Year-olds in April 2024.

- 981 of 2-year-olds who currently attend an early year's setting are eligible, and it has been calculated that there are a further 635 children who are fee paying, and subsequently children of parents who are not currently eligible for a funded place.
- The impact for April 2024 is more significant for the children switching from being fee paying to funded. It is estimated that these children are currently using on average 24 hours per week and that once the funded hours are available, this will increase to 26 hours per week. These children are already accessing places and additional places are not needed to accommodate them.
- With that in mind, we have calculated that there will be 301 surplus 26-hour places available in April 2024 for any new working parents who wish to access a place for their 2-year-old which should be sufficient.

Children aged 2 years (@ December 2023)							
Locality	Number of PVI/MNSs who offer places	Number of Schools who offer places	Total Number of providers who offer 2-year-old places	Total 15-hour places (Dec 23)	15-hour places taken up by disadvantaged children (Summer 23)	24-hour places taken up by funded children (Dec 23)	26-hour places Available for new parents
<b>West</b>	9	5	14	516	266	118	35
<b>North</b>	9	4	13	496	286	115	15
<b>South</b>	17	3	20	747	249	143	156
<b>East</b>	18	2	20	766	188	259	95
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>2525</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>301</b>

The table above includes data collected directly from providers (PVI and Schools) by the School Organisation Team in December 2023. The 'places taken up by disadvantaged children' figure is slightly higher than the actual figures due to rounding when including out of borough.

#### 4.1.1 Proposed future activities for the Early Years Expansion Programme

- A survey has been communicated with childminders to establish exactly what provision they offer for early years so that these places can be factored into the sufficiency document, and this will be analysed and added to the supply figures.
- Initial conversations will be held with providers/schools who have expressed an interest in expansion work.
- Shortfalls to be re-assessed across the localities by completing another provider and school data collection exercise. This will be completed termly going forward.
- Work closely with our bordering Local Authorities to assess what their availability of childcare is within the provisions which border Walsall and how many Walsall children access these provisions.
- Continue to be proactive and share all literature received from the DfE with the right stakeholders.
- Communication and engagement with providers to continue via social media and other forums. The first face-to-face provider meeting is arranged for 13.03.24 where literature will be shared for providers to distribute to parents and advertise in their premises. Frontline services will also be provided with literature to display in their settings.
- Complete a review of the Family Information Service webpage to improve parent and providers journey and enable them to access critical information which will be linked to the local offer page and ensure all forementioned literature is readily available via this platform.
- Continue to attend webinars and development days where the DfE, Corum Hemsalls and Dingley's Promise all offering support and continue to work closely with neighbouring authorities to share best practise.
- SEND workstream being developed with Health colleagues to assess need and impact on delivery to meet children with SEND and Health needs.
- The draft 2024/25 Early Years Funding rates was communicated with all providers on 09/02/2024. This will be shared with schools forum on 05/03/24 and cabinet on 20/03/2024. The final Early Years funding rates for 2024-25 will be communicated to providers on 31/03/24.

## 4.2

### **Wraparound Childcare Programme**

In December 2023 we completed a full review of the wraparound provisions which were offered by PVI's and schools to establish what the supply of wraparound provision looked like across the borough.

- In January 2024, a survey was published for parents and carers to complete which was communicated via the schools own internal communication method. 1,222 responses to this survey were received. This information is essential to map the demand for wraparound amongst parents. These survey results have been shared with schools to ensure 2-way communication and transparency.
- Out of 86 primary schools, 65.1% offer both before and after school provision, 19.8% offer a breakfast provision only and 15.1% offer no wraparound provision.
- 9 schools have reported that they have a waiting list whilst a good proportion of the other schools stated that they struggle to fill their existing provision.
- There is no provision for any children attending a special school.

- The main challenge for provisions to expand is space restrictions and the inability to recruit staff.
- Communication and engagement started with school leaders via bulletin, forums, and heads meetings.

#### **4.2.1 Proposed future activities for the Wraparound Childcare Expansion Programme**

- Recirculate the parent/carer survey to a wider audience to try and capture more results to enable the LA to map demand more effectively.
- Complete a survey for providers to establish the exact demand for wraparound and also investigate the barriers for providing wraparound care for SEN children.
- Run locality sessions for schools to discuss provision and demand.
- Investigate mainstream provisions who have waiting lists and discuss what support they need to expand.
- Investigate further with mainstream schools who do not offer wraparound childcare to understand barriers.
- Engage with Head Teachers of Special Schools to learn more about the challenges and restrictions of providing wraparound childcare.
- Develop an application process for settings to apply for funding.
- A review of the Family Information Service webpage is underway to improve parent and providers journey and enable them to access critical information which will be linked to the local offer page.
- Further develop the engagement and communications strategy plan.
- Continue to attend webinars and development days where the DfE, Corum Hemsalls and Dingley's Promise all offering support and continue to work closely with neighbouring authorities to share best practise.
- Work with HAF and Family Hubs Colleagues to align programmes.
- SEND workstream being developed with Health colleagues to assess need and impact on delivery to meet children with SEND and Health needs.
- Potential impact of transport highlighted as possible barrier to access - to be further investigated.

#### **4.3 Risk Management**

Following the DfE guidance, as detailed above, a strategic Early Years and Wraparound Assurance Group has been setup, which consists of key workflows and internal members.

The assurance group meet every three weeks to discuss the Early Years and wraparound requirements. Within this group, detailed highlight reports are shared which include information regarding key achievements of the last period, key activities planned for the next period, upcoming key milestones and any relevant risk factors to the projects. Deadlines are allocated to all planned tasks in line with the DfE timelines provided with sufficient time for review and approval and to allow internal governance procedures to be completed as the project progresses.

The group has developed various workstreams dedicated to specific areas such as communication and engagement, which help to ensure the efficient and effective progress of the project.

Governance has also been agreed including updates to DMT, Portfolio Holder and Childrens Capital Board for example.



Early Years and Wraparound expansion project plans have been developed and shared. Appendices 1 and 2 provide the overview of the project plans. Detailed action plans and data analysis underpin both documents.

Any items that require Capital funding are referred to the Capital & Asset Board Meetings.

Any items that require Revenue funding are managed through Walsall Councils internal governance processes for sign off, including as appropriate, SMT, DMT and CMT.

#### 4.4 Financial Governance

The below table shows funding which has been allocated to Walsall as part of the Early Years and Childcare Expansion Programme.

Workstream	Revenue/ Capital	Grant Name	Amount	Received
EY	Revenue	LA Delivery support funding	£60,534.27	13/11/2023
EY & Wrap	Capital	Childcare Expansion Capital Grant	£430,887	01/02/2024
Wraparound	Revenue	Wraparound Childcare Programme funding	£1,699,316	17662.98 received 13/12/2023
EY	Revenue	Financial incentives pilot funding	Approx. £251,935	

*To note, the £1.7m wraparound grant in the table above will only be received following the full completion and submission of a costed delivery plan.*

The below tables show the governance which is required throughout the Early Years and Childcare Expansion Programmes.

Early Years Expansion Programme Governance		
Date Due	Document	Action
Feb 2024	Financial incentives pilot grant determination letters are published and issued to the local authorities with the memorandum of understanding.	N/A – Received by LA 08.02.24
21/02/2024	Local authorities sign and return the Financial incentives pilot MoU and the completed delivery plan to DfE.	MOU returned 8/2/24 DP returned 21.2.24
w/c 26/02/2024	DfE notify LAs if their Financial incentives delivery plans have been approved.	Agreed by DfE 26.2.24
Mar 2024	Financial incentives grant payment 1 FY 2023-24 – the first instalment of the S31 grant funding paid when MoU is signed and delivery plan is approved.	
29/04/2024	Financial incentives - End of FY 2023-24 Statement of Grant Usage	Return to DfE
Apr/May 2024	Financial incentives evaluation activity and reporting	Return/Report to DfE
Jun 2024	LAs submit their financial incentives progress reports to DfE	Reports to DfE
14/06/2024	Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Assurance data	Return template to DfE
28/06/2024	DfE agree financial incentives progress reports with LAs	N/A
Jul 2024	Financial incentives grant payment 2 FY 2024-25 – the second instalment of the S31 grant funding paid when DfE agrees progress report	N/A
Jul/Aug 2024	Financial incentives evaluation activity and reporting	Return/Report to DfE
Sep 2024	LAs submit their financial incentives progress reports to DfE	Reports to DfE

30/09/2024	DfE agree financial incentives progress reports with LAs	N/A
Oct/Nov 2024	Financial incentives evaluation activity and reporting	Return/Report to DfE
Dec 2024	LAs submit their financial incentives progress reports to DfE	Reports to DfE
02/01/2025	DfE agree financial incentives progress reports with LAs	N/A
Jan/Feb 2025	Financial incentives evaluation activity and reporting	Return/Report to DfE
28/04/2025	Financial incentives End of FY 2024-25 Statement of Grant Usage	Return to DfE
Apr/May 2025	Financial incentives evaluation activity and reporting	Return/Report to DfE
17/06/2025	Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Updated assurance data	Return updated template to DfE
31/03/2026	Childcare Expansion Capital Grant – Final expenditure	Provide details to DfE

RAG Rate: Red – Overdue / Amber - risk to non-compliance / Green - on track

<b>Wraparound Childcare Programme Governance</b>		
<b>Date Due</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Action</b>
14/12/2023	Local authority capacity funding – Grant Payment 1	Received at LA 13.02.2024
01/02/2024	Childcare Expansion Capital Grant	Received at LA 01.02.2024
23/02/2024	Submit Local authority capacity plan	Returned 22.2.24
29/04/2024	Submit Statement of Grant Usage (End of FY 2023-24)	Return via portal to DfE
May 2024	Grant payment 2 FY 2024-25 (once LA capacity plan approved)	N/A
14/06/2024	Local authority programme delivery plan	Return template to DfE
14/06/2024	Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Assurance data	Return template to DfE
31/07/2024	Grant payment 3 FY 2024-25 (once LA programme delivery plan approved)	N/A
21/02/2025	Local authority programme delivery plan update 1	Return template to DfE
28/04/2025	Submit Statement of Grant Usage (End of FY 2024-25)	Return via portal to DfE
May 2025	Grant payment 4 FY 2025-26 (once delivery plan update approved)	N/A
17/06/2025	Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Updated assurance data	Return template to DfE
Nov 2025	Local authority delivery plan update 2	Return template to DfE
31/03/2026	Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Final expenditure	Provide details to DfE
Apr 2026	Grant payment 5 FY 2025-26 (paid in arrears upon completion of final reporting requirements)	N/A
28/04/2026	Statement of Grant Usage (End of FY 2025-26)	Return via portal to DfE

## 5. Decide

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee are supportive of the Early Years and Childcare Expansion programme and agree with the proposed activities and the approach to the programme. We also ask for the boards support in rolling out this programme for Walsall.

The Committee may decide to note the current position and request further information or assurance in respect of the progress of the programme.

## 6. Respond

Any recommendations made by the Committee will be assessed against the Assurance Groups planned work and added to the programmes highlight reports to monitor.

## 7. Review

The work of the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team is subject to constant monitoring and assessment. The Early Years and Wraparound Assurance Group monitors all risks and milestones associated with the expansion programme.

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## School Readiness and Early Years Foundation Stage Outcomes

Ward(s): ALL

Portfolios: Education and Skills Councillor Statham

### 1. Aim

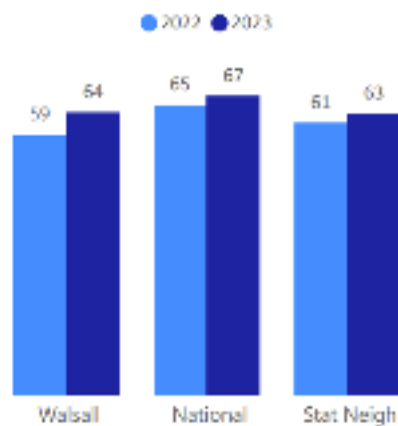
- 1.1. To provide an overview of the outcomes for children in Walsall, at the age of five years, based on the Early Years Profile Outcomes 2023. It also describes the current position regarding the Ofsted Grades of all providers of early years learning.
- 1.2. To provide an overview of Walsall Early Help Partnership offer and interventions for 0-5 and Family Hub Model, specifically the Best Start for Life, Early Language, Home Learning Environment & school readiness for children supported by the partnership.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. For the committee to note the improvement in children’s outcomes and in early years provision since the covid pandemic and to see the importance of the monitoring, challenge and training provided by the Early Years Improvement Team.

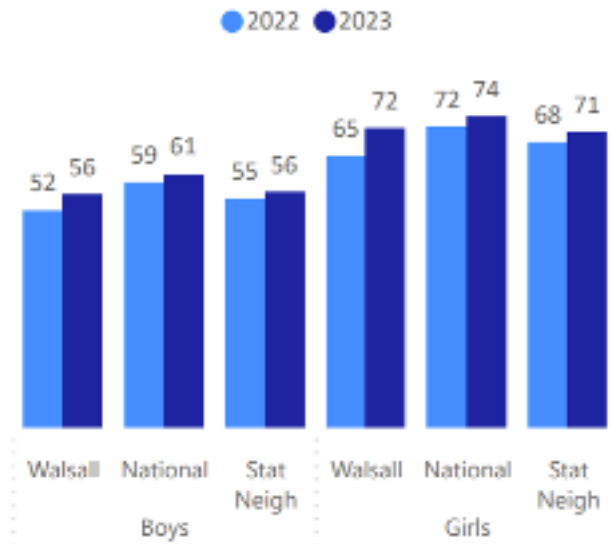
### 3. Report detail – Children’s Outcomes by the age of Five Years

- 3.1. Children are assessed in their Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development. Literacy and Maths to determine whether they have met the expected level of development at five years, called a Good Level of Development.



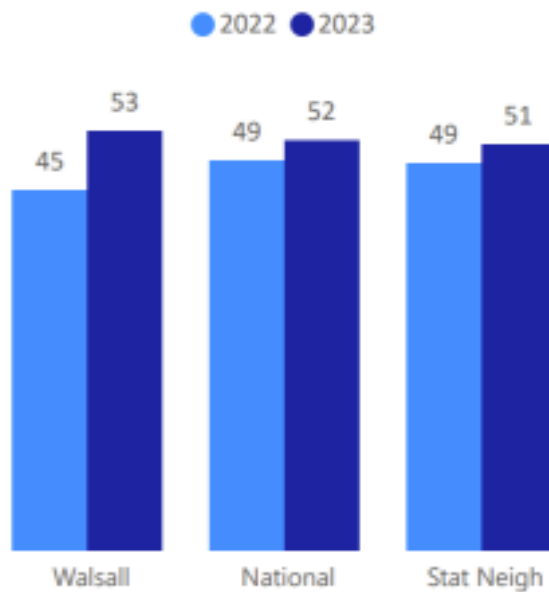
The table above demonstrates the improvement between 2022 and 2023. Walsall improved by 5% compared to a national improvement of 3% and a statistical neighbour improvement of 2%. Walsall is now 3% below national and 1% above statistical neighbours.

### 3.2. Outcomes for Boys and Girls



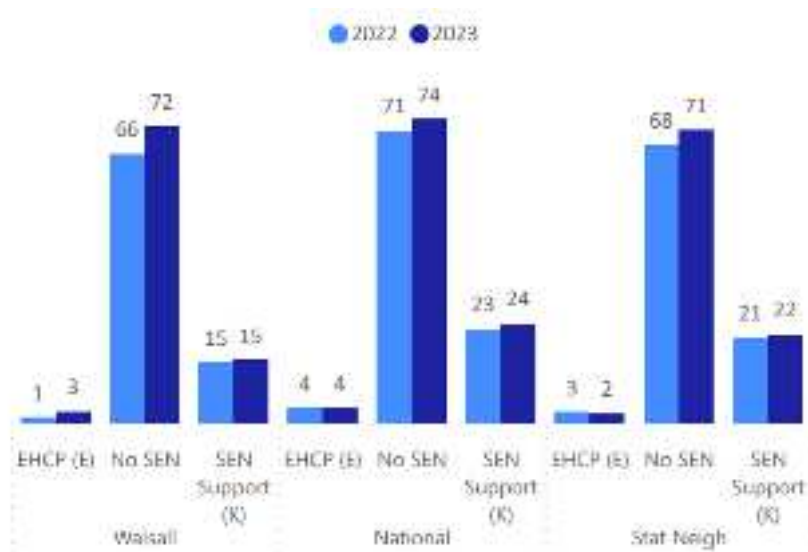
This table demonstrates that in Walsall in 2023, 56% of boys achieved their GLD compared to 72% of girls, giving a gap of 16%, compared to the national gap of 13%.

### 3.3. Outcomes for children receiving Free School meals compared to National



In Walsall 53% of children receiving Free school meals achieve their good levels of development which is 1% higher than National and 2% higher than statistical neighbours.

### 3.4. Outcomes for children with SEND.



4. The outcomes for children on an Education, Health and Care Plan 3% compared to National at 4%. In terms of children with SEN support needs only 15% achieve a Good Level of Development in Walsall compared to 24% nationally. There is a 9% gap between Walsall and National. For children with no SEN needs Walsall is 3% below national.

### 4.1. Girls and Boys achievement in each area of learning.



Achievement in Expressive Arts and Design is **80%** (5% below national), Physical Development is **82%** (3% below national), Personal, Social and Emotional Development is **79%** (4% below national) and Communication and Language is **74%** (6% below national), Maths is **72%** (5% below national) and Understanding the World is **72%** (8% below national). The lowest achievement is in Literacy at **65%** (5% below National).

4.2. The biggest gaps in the areas that impact children’s good levels of development are in Communication and Language (6%), Literacy (5%) and Maths (5%). Boys are below girls in all areas but particularly in Literacy with a 15% gap.

4.3. The local authority has worked in collaboration with Billesley EEF Research School, as part of the DfE's priority education investment area (PEIA) on delivering their 'Making a difference for Pupils with SEND' and Oracy in Early Years programme. These programmes are aimed at reducing the gaps within Early Years and giving our children the best start in education.

These programmes have supported school leaders and practitioners in Walsall to:

- Understand the role of evidence in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Explore the 'tiered approach' to ensure effective provision for pupils with SEND.
- Explore effective strategies for making the best use of Teaching Assistants
- Apply the principles of effective implementation to embed and sustain the processes, practices, and programmes in your strategy.
- Understand the research relating to early literacy and oracy and what it explicitly means.
- Know how to promote oracy in the classroom.
- Be able to promote tiered and direct vocabulary.
- Understand the key role that adults play in learning.
- Apply the principles of effective implementation to embed and sustain the processes, practices, and programmes in your strategy.

4.4. Detailed analysis of each school's data enables the EY team to identify which schools have lower attainment and in which area of learning. The EY team will then contact and work with leaders and early teachers to offers support and challenge via CPD, signposting of school-to-school support and targeted action planning to improve the EY provision in that setting.

4.5. The team works with schools with low GLD, low literacy and low maths scores to improve children's outcomes. Evidence from previous improvement projects that the EY team have administered, demonstrates that those participating schools, make an average increase of 6% in their EY profile scores, compared to an average of a 2% increase from other schools.

## **5. Inspection outcomes in the Early Years Sector**

5.1. There are 46 private group-based settings who have been judged by Ofsted. 95.2% have a grade of Good or Outstanding compared to 96% nationally. There are two settings that are not yet good. One who is working with their Improvement Officer to return to good and one who is currently not operating. It is expected that the one with children will be given a good grade at their next inspection, which will take our percentage to above national.

5.2. 100% of childminders are judged as good or outstanding.

5.3. 100% of nursery schools are judged as outstanding.

5.4. 90.6% of schools with an Early Years Foundation Stage judgement from Ofsted are Good or Outstanding compared to 91.4% national. Our internal RAG rating tells us that

of the 1 school that was inadequate in Early Years it is now good with some elements that still require improvement. Of the 4 others that require improvement 3 are now back to good and one is working with their improvement advisor.

- 5.5. There is a clear process in place to monitor, challenge and action plan with schools and settings if they drop below good. There is also a preventative offer where private settings receive three visits a year, each with a different focus to improve quality, from their improvement advisor. Schools can also receive monitoring, support, and action planning if they are identified with low attainment.
- 5.6. Each year new school leaders and new setting managers can access a comprehensive training programme. Over the last two years Walsall has actively promoted and targeted schools and settings to access DfE training programme through a range of providers including The Stronger Practice Hub in Walsall.
- 5.7. DfE training has included the Experts and Mentors Programme, The Professional Development Programme focussing on Communication and Language, Literacy and Maths, Level Three SENCO Award, National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leaders and Child Development Online.
- 5.8. The Senior Quality Assurance Manager, from the Early Years Team, is part of the Stronger Practice Hub Board and has been able to influence the training programmes, selected for delivery, to address Walsall's priorities. The evidence-based programmes offered include: Learning Language and Loving it, Number Sense, Early Talk Boost, Wellcomm, SMILE, Webinar Wednesdays – Literacy, Maths, PSED, C and L, PD and SEND focus, Twitch, Talking Time, Baby Room and a Conference focussed on Cultural Capital with two national speakers.
- 5.9. In addition to the above training Walsall has also commissioned Maths Training specifically for Reception Teachers in the Autumn Term, promoted the Oracy Project which now with 28 schools enrolled from Walsall and the EY's Team continue to deliver leaders training and EYFS Profile Training.
- 5.10. Walsall EY's team continues to promote and signpost to local training, including from Walsall Safeguarding partnership, Autism Education trust, Family Hubs and Health Teams.

## **6. Early Help & Family Hubs**

- 6.1. Early Help: The 0-19 (25 for young people with additional needs) Walsall Early Help Partnership recognises that early intervention and early years support are crucial



components of ensuring the well-being and development of children and their families. The Early Help prevention approach aims to identify and address issues before they escalate into statutory services, preventing potential long-term negative outcomes for children and families. Family support for babies, infants and young children provides families with access to resources, guidance, and services to promote positive parenting practices and family well-being, this inclusive practice supports and promotes inclusivity by addressing the diverse needs of children and families, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special educational needs.

6.2. Infants and young children aged 0-5 years are consistently in the top 2 age ranges of children being referred for support, as at 31st January 2024 the Early Help Partnership were supporting 426 infants, young children and their families, with the main needs being around domestic abuse, emotional wellbeing concerns associated to abuse & neglect.

The key principles of Early Help & Early Years Support are:

- Holistic approach: recognising the interconnectedness of various factors influencing child development and family well-being.
- Partnership working, collaboration among professionals, agencies, and communities to provide coordinated support tailored to individual needs.
- Early identification: timely identification of concerns and risk factors to intervene effectively and prevent escalation.
- Strengths-based approach: building on the strengths and resilience of children and families to promote positive outcomes.
- Empowerment: empowering families to actively participate in decision-making and accessing support services.

6.3. The partnership has a range of interventions that support emotional wellbeing, attachment and development including dedicated Early Help 0-19 Health Partners, co-located with the Early Help Practitioners within our four Family Hubs along with the dedicated Early Years/School Readiness Practitioners whose primary role is around the 0-5yrs.

6.4. These practitioners work with parents/carers promoting evidence based early years development initiatives including:

6.4.1. Look, Say, Sing, Play (LSSP), the NSPCC have endorsed and developed the LSSP intervention as part of their responses to supporting parents to build children's brain development, building strong early attachments and keeping children safe and free from abuse and neglect. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that building parental behaviour that promotes early secure attachment will lay the foundation for social- emotional, cognitive, and moral competencies across a child's life. By working with parents/carers the programme promotes everyday parenting skills, language, attachment, and development and comprises of 6 weekly group sessions for parents/carers and their babies and infants under the age of 2.

- 6.4.2. The groups are known as ‘targeted groups’ available to parents/carers supported by Early Help or Childrens Social Care it also includes an additional session covering feeding, sleeping and toileting, routines, and boundaries. Since April 2023, ten separate parents have attended these sessions which resulted in all parents reporting from the self-reporting evaluation measures complete pre and post the group delivery, increased confidence to interact and play with their children, increased parental emotional wellbeing and feelings around coping as a parent/carer, 95% found the group had helped them and all would recommend the group to others.
- 6.4.3. Early Years practitioners also complete a follow up contact with parents/carers to ensure confidence remains, all parents/carers reported that they had seen positive change stating: “we took on board the interaction with the children and now play more with them doing an activity each day, we approach mealtimes differently, we have made sensory bottles at home xx particularly like the rice one”.
- 6.4.4. First Words Together a National Literacy Trust programme that supports babies and infants who may need early help with speech, language, and communication support before the age of two. We know that babies communicate long before they start to talk, through gestures, showing and giving objects, pointing, and vocalising. Sharing books and interacting through books from when babies are very young supports communication and language development. This universal programme builds parents’ and carers’ awareness and confidence in supporting early communication leading up to babies’ first words. The programme also builds knowledge and confidence in early years practitioners and professionals. Practitioners are trained to deliver weekly sessions that include evidence-based, fun activities based around five top tips, to build the foundations of communication that parents/carers can easily repeat in the home. This then encourages positive change to a child’s home learning environment. Each week families are gifted a free book linking with the session, so by the end of the programme families will have built a mini library in their home.
- 6.4.5. Since June a universal group has been delivered in each locality with 9 separate parents/carers with their children attending. In addition, Walsall Early Help have worked with the Literacy Trust to develop and pilot the programme to be delivered on a one-to-one basis in a family’s home, as it was noted that parents/carers were reluctant to initially attend the universal groups.
- 6.4.6. Between November 2022 and March 2023 all Early Help practitioners were trained in the delivery model and use of a bespoke toolkit to help identify appropriate activities to model with parents/carers to show each talking tip in action at a weekly visit, the pilot commenced April 2023 and to date we have delivered 5 bespoke one to one sessions, the overall data for Early Years is currently being built by the Bi Hub which will support the pilot evaluation as a model in April 2024.

6.4.7. You, Me and Mum – a bespoke domestic abuse group delivered by the Early Help Domestic Abuse Practitioners, given the consistent need for support associated to domestic abuse concerns. The work supports the effects of domestic abuse on women, infants, young children, and young people. The programme aims to empower mothers in furthering their understanding of their role as a mother and in addressing the needs of their children who have lived with and been significantly impacted by domestic abuse. Since April 2023, twenty-four mothers have attended the 4 locality based groups, all have reported improved emotional wellbeing, individual feedback includes,

6.4.8. “I have attended the 5-week Mom & Me course based at the North Hub. When Emma initially telephoned me and discussed the course with me, I was very sceptical and concerned as I have attended counselling for domestic abuse in the past and found that I would be encouraged to talk about traumatic events and then left to deal with the emotions on my own. This group is so far removed from that, the staff were immediately reassuring and so supportive. Each week built on the previous week to help me understand the pattern of abuse and the impact that it can have not only to myself but also to my children and how it can affect their behaviour not only and home but at school also. The other session that I found a true revelation was the first week looking at gas lighting, the way that the session was conducted was very sensitively and tactfully delivered as it was a revelation to everyone in the room that everyone had been a victim of gaslighting at some point or another..” Jessica

6.4.9. Targeted Play & Stay Groups – delivered in each locality since September 2023, supports parents/carers with attachment concerns, financial difficulties, and parental conflict. To date 15 parents/carers have attended the group and all have reported a positive impact and from a follow up all have continued to utilise the strategies learnt at home. Bespoke one to one support in the home, given that families with 0–5-year-olds are a high proportion of families requiring support there is also a dedicated and bespoke offer as part of the Early Help Support Plan, for up to 6 weeks Early Years Practitioners will work with families in their homes around communication, development, routines, boundaries, eating, sleeping, attachment etc. Since April 2023 the team have supported 19 families on a one basis as at of either the Early Help Plan or Child in Need Plan.

6.5. Website, Self-Help & Newsletters – Early Help Website for Parents & Carers holds information, top tips and advice for parents, including access to a range of free On line parenting programmes including;

- Understanding your pregnancy, labour, birth and your baby
- Understanding your baby
- Understanding your child: from toddler to teenager
- Understanding your child with additional needs
- The site also offers parents/carers self-help, advice, and guidance where ‘tip sheets’ can be downloaded to help parents/carers within topic such as:
- How to support your child’s emotional wellbeing

- How to have fun
- Routines & Boundaries
- Being a parent

6.6. Each term the Early Years team within Early Help also produces and widely distributes a newsletter which provides parents/carers with a wide range of information including a locally based activity timetable:

**West Locality**  
 Serving: Walsall North & Walsall South, Bentley & Deighton North, Deighton South January – March 2024  
 \*\*Always contact groups before attending in case of any changes.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9.15 – 11.15am Baby & Toddler Group @ The Salvation Army, The Loyal, Deighton. WS10 0NP. 90's for adults / 70's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 01699 664904	9.15 – 11.15am Baby & Toddler Group @ The Salvation Army, The Loyal, Deighton. WS10 0NP. 90's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 01699 664904	9.15 – 11.15am Baby & Toddler Group @ The Salvation Army, The Loyal, Deighton. WS10 0NP. 90's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 01699 664904	10am Book Club @ Walsall Library, 1 Walsall St, Walsall. WS10 0JX. Free. No booking required	28 January 10.30-11.00 Health A. Baby workshop. 10.30-11.00 Health A. Walsall Choir. Booking required. Email familyhub@walsall.gov.uk	9 March 9am & 10am West Family Hub. 10.30-11.30am West Family Hub. 10.30-11.30am West Family Hub. 10.30-11.30am West Family Hub. WS10 0AE. To book your place call 01699 662903
18 March 10.00 Parent Forum @ West Family Hub WS10 0AE	12.30 – 2.30pm Baby & Toddler group A @ Walsall Food Centre, Canal Street, Walsall. WS10 0NG. 90's for adults. No booking required. 01699 664904	9.30 – 11.30am Frankie's Parents and Infants @ The Loyal, Deighton Family Hub, The Square, Deighton Road, New Deighton. Walsall. WS10 0EA. 90's for adults. No booking required. 01699 664904			13 January 11.00-11.30am Deighton & Bentley West Family Hub, 100 High House, Deighton Road, WS10 0AE. No booking and free to go

6.7. Ideas of activities to do at home with babies, infants and children and easy cost-effective recipe ideas. Family Hubs: In February 2023 the Department for Education (DfE) confirmed that Walsall one of 75 Local Authorities who would receive the Family Hubs Start for Life funding of £3,869m from 2022-2025. This provided an opportunity to build on the strong foundations of our locality model to develop our Walsall Family Hub programme. Our 4 locality hubs were transformed into Walsall's 4 Family Hub's, launched in July 2023. They aim to provide a welcoming space where babies, infants, children, and young people aged 0-19 and up to 25 for those young people with additional needs along with their families can go to get advice and support when they need it. Our Family Hubs are in the heart of vulnerable local communities where services have come together providing one 'front door' access to get help and to talk to someone in a safe space about sensitive things that maybe worrying them. Our Family Hubs are currently working towards becoming UNICEF Baby Friendly.

6.8. [Family Hub Model and Start for Life Programme](#) includes investment for essential service crucial from conception through to an infants second birthday as well as

services that support parents to care for and interact with their children as part of the school readiness initiatives.

6.9. The Family Hub Model has 5 core activities:

1. Parenting Support
2. Perinatal mental Health Support
3. Parent-infant relationship Support
4. Feeding Support
5. Home Learning Environment Support

The programme continues to develop, in addition to the 4 core Family Hubs there are also 10 'Community Spokes' which offer advice on a range of local community activities for families, babies, infants children and young people, providing a space for local families to come together, for services to deliver group work or meet on a 121 basis with families, to provide sessions such as play and stay, baby weighing clinics, digital support services as well as providing foodbanks.

As part of the on-going development there are 5 multi-agency subgroups each working on an action plan associated to the core activities above.

We have commissioned a number of apps to help families to get the right support around giving their children the best start in life, for example:

- Easy Peasy App a smartphone app for parents of preschool aged children. It is designed to improve early child development through increasing positive parent-child interactions and learning at home. The app sends regular game ideas to parents that they can play with their children, combined with information on child development. The design of the app applies behavioural insights to help seed positive habits of play and interaction at home by sending tailored prompts, encouragement, and reminders to parents).

To date we have reached 915 families.

- Buddy App (Best Beginnings' free, advert free multi-award-winning, interactive pregnancy and parenting app, Baby Buddy, has been created to support parents, co-parents and caregivers, and to augment and enrich the work of frontline practitioners. Baby Buddy provides trusted, evidence-based information and self-care tools, based on the latest research and is endorsed by eight Royal Colleges, including the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Baby Buddy is the first parenting app to provide daily content for fathers and other non-birthing parents.

To date we have reached 125 families.

- DadPad (Dadpad is commissioned by Walsall Public Health Services and produced as an app and also written information aimed at engaging and supporting new fathers as they make the transition to parenthood. Through a

supply of guides (DadPad) and digital application (DadPad app) new and prospective dads will understand how to access local support as well as be provided with national information specifically aimed at fathers e.g. safe sleep, how to cope if their baby cries, building a relationship with their baby. This supports perinatal services in engaging and upskilling new fathers in readiness for the postnatal period and build familial relationships to help new babies thrive and co-parental relationships develop with their babies needs in mind. In Walsall it will be taken forward mainly through the Health in Pregnancy Service who aim to reach 15,000 men over 4 years.

To date we have reached 309 fathers.

6.10. In addition to the self-help tools above we have also commissioned the Speech & Language Service to have a new local presence within the Family Hubs, since April 2023 we are already seeing a positive impact from this approach with children & families being seen at the most appropriate local venue for them. The service achievements to date:

Number of pre-school new referrals seen since start of March 2023	449
Number of children receiving enhanced transition support into school	193
Additional number of children who have received assessment, advice to parents/ carers and setting staff	337
Training Spring 23 – to Health Visitor team to run Communication Workshops	This has resulted in significant reduction of number of referrals for specialist intervention: As a comparison 6 months previous October 2022 to March 2023 saw 473 referrals, from the start of the locally based service the following 6 months April 23 to September 23 saw 134 referrals
Training Autumn 23 – standalone nursery schools	Setting up new referral process, advice and support to settings on providing targeted intervention prior to referral for specialist SLT support. Scoping of training needs to be delivered in Spring term.

6.11. Services delivered from the Family Hubs continue to develop, including reviews for individual children and new referral sessions and groups supporting their speech & language development.

Since September 2023 we have been able to deliver group work in all four Family Hubs with parents/ carers and early years setting staff invited – specific figures to be collected at end of term, the data will include:

#### One to One Delivery

- Number of Reception children seen for 1:1 review
- Number of Nursery children seen for 1:1 review
- Number of Reception children not seen

#### Group Delivery

- Number of children invited to group and attended.
- Number of families who declined group/ WNB
- Length of group delivery
- Parental confidence rating pre-group (mean score)
- Parental confidence rating post-group (mean score)
- Parental confidence level of change

#### Capacity building figures

- How many settings have had some form of training.
- How many staff attended SALT groups at Family Hubs from settings.
- How many groups have been set up in various Hubs and Spokes.

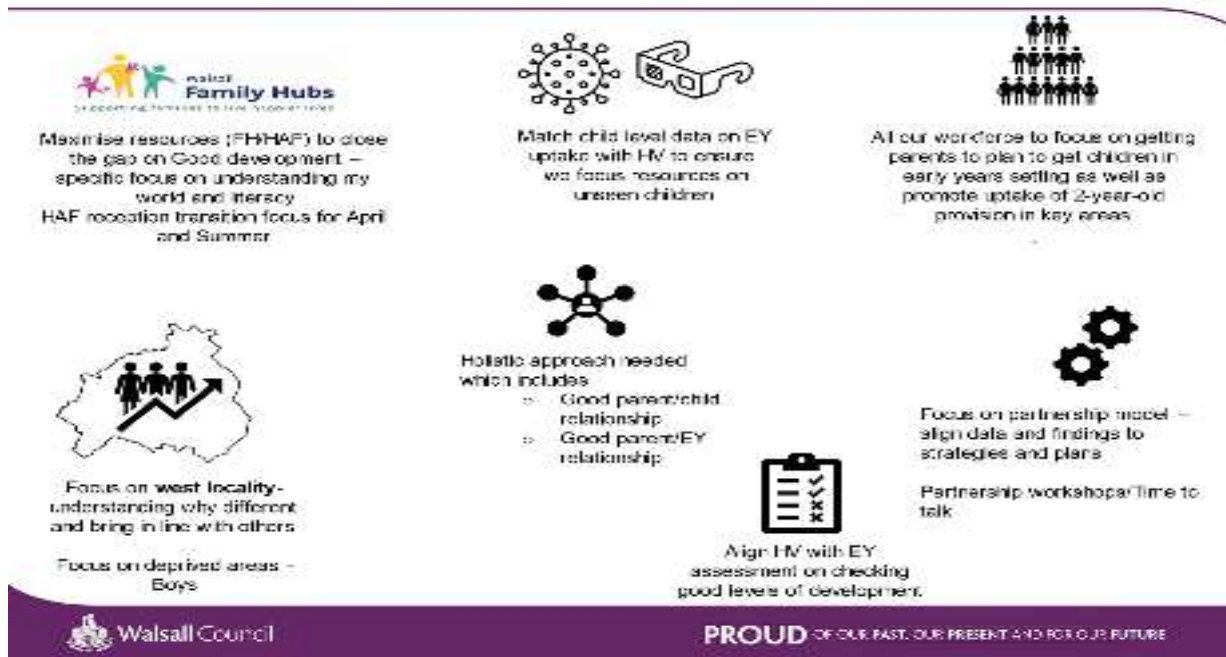
The team have also produced a new early year setting communication pathway (copy attached below).

6.12. The Family Hub team are in the process of developing a service directory and have mapped out and secured the sign up of over 79 local organisations who would like to be included in our best start in life directory and our 0-19 directory. 52 of the 79 local organisations offer services to families with children 0-5 in Walsall.

#### Next Actions

As part of the on-going development and following a 0-5 deep dive audit the following actions are planned

## December Performance Board 0-5 deep dive



## 7. Conclusions

- 7.1. Children's outcomes have improved between 2022 and 2023 but there are still gaps that need to close, particularly for boys, disadvantaged children and those with SEND.
- 7.2. Schools and settings have improved their overall quality as measured by Ofsted. When the 5 schools and 2 private settings are next inspected Walsall are aiming for 100% good or outstanding in all sector types.
- 7.3. Early Help & Family Hubs continue to develop and strengthen the offer of support to all parents/carers in the borough, both play a crucial role in promoting the well-being and development of children and families. The demand for Early Help services specifically for those families with babies and infants aged 0-5 continues to increase and the partnership by adopting a holistic, collaborative approach in addressing challenges proactively can enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of early intervention services, ultimately improving outcomes for all children and families. Family Hubs are a promising approach to supporting families and individuals by providing holistic, accessible, and collaborative services within the community. By leveraging partnerships, empowering families, and fostering community engagement, family hubs contribute to building stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities. Some barriers remain that require a partnership approach to overcome in promoting early intervention and utilisation of the Family Hubs, social stigma and cultural barriers may prevent families from seeking early help or engaging with support services and require further work.

## 8. Reducing Inequalities



8.1. Closing the gap for vulnerable groups to include boys, children having free school meals or in areas of disadvantage, children with SEN support needs and children known to social care services continues to be central to Early Years Team Planning. The data is shared annually with all partner schools and settings so that they too work to address inequalities and give more to the children that need the most.

8.2. Effective and timely Early Help that improves parental relationships, family function and learning behaviours in children can help children learn and have ambitions as well as preventing or reducing a range of issues that result in or exacerbate inequality including exclusion from school, parental conflict, youth offending, and children reaching a crisis requiring interventions by social workers.

## **9. Decide**

9.1. The committee may decide to request further information about the EY's team plan or the Early Help Plan.



## **10. Respond**

10.1. Any recommendations made by the committee will be responded to by the appropriate service area.

## **11. Review**

10.1 The actions and outcomes within this report are monitored by Access and Inclusion Senior Management Team.

## **Background Papers**

<b>Early Years Pathway</b>	 Early%20Years%20Se ttings%20-%20Comm
<b>Family Hub Leaflets &amp; Posters</b>	 Family Hub Leaflets and Posters.pdf

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26 March, 2023

## Early Years and Special Educational Needs

Ward(s): ALL

Portfolios: Education and Skills Councillor Statham

### 1. Aim

- 1.1 This report focuses on the provisions of the SEND Code of Practice as they relate to early years education, highlighting key practices that have been developed within Walsall to ensure young children with SEND receive the support they need from the earliest possible stage.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 For the committee to note the impact of the work carried out by the SEND Service including the developments specifically within early Years (EY) and the EHC (Education Health and Care) Systems.

### 3. Report detail – know

#### 3.1 Information to know and understand regarding Early Years and Special Educational Needs

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 emphasises early identification and support in early years settings. It outlines the duties of early years providers, schools, colleges, and local authorities to meet the needs of children with SEND. The SEND Code of Practice promotes a child-centred approach, ensuring that children and their parents are actively involved in decision-making processes. The SEND Code of Practice sets a clear framework for early years providers to support children with SEND effectively. By emphasising early identification, inclusive practices, partnership with parents, and integrated support, it ensures that all children, regardless of their needs, have access to the opportunities they need to thrive in their early years and beyond.

#### Key Principles for SEND Practice in Early Years

The SEND Code of Practice advocates for a coordinated approach to supporting children with SEND, involving collaboration between early years providers, local authorities, health services, and other professionals. This ensures a holistic approach to meeting the child's needs. The legislation relates to all children from birth to twenty-five years old. It is important to recognise children aged 0 to 5 years with SEND must have their needs identified and met with appropriate provision regardless of not being in education. This highlights the importance of pathways between social and health care providers and

Walsall SEND services. A strong partnership with parents is also vital. Parents must be fully informed about their child's needs, the support available, and involved in decision-making processes regarding their child's education and care.

Once in education, early years providers are required to identify children with SEND as early as possible to ensure timely support. This involves regular monitoring of children's progress and working closely with parents and professionals to identify any concerns. All early year's providers must be inclusive ensuring that children with SEND can participate fully in the settings alongside their peers. Providers must make reasonable adjustments to their practices and environments to accommodate the needs of all children.

### Requirements for Early Years Providers

- SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator): Early years settings are required to appoint a qualified SENCO to oversee the implementation of support for children with SEND. The SENCO plays a crucial role in coordinating support, advising staff, and liaising with external professionals.
- SEN Support Plans: For children with identified SEND, early years providers should develop individual support plans in collaboration with parents and relevant professionals. These plans outline the child's needs, the support to be provided, and the expected outcomes.
- Local Offer and EHC Plans: Early years providers contribute to the local authority's Local Offer by providing information on their SEND provision.

## 3.2 What do we know about Early Years children with SEND in Walsall

### Early Years Children with an EHC Plan in Walsall

As at 29 February 2024, there were 4,543 CYP with an EHCP maintained by Walsall's SEND Team, 487 are children aged 0 to 5 years old. This equates to 10.7% of the EHC population. There are significantly more boys aged 0 to 5 (7.5%) with an EHC plan than girls (3.2%). This includes children in Reception year of primary school.

Age	No. with EHCP	% with EHCP (of overall total of CYP with an EHCP)
0	0	0%
1	0	0%
2	7	0.2%
3	69	1.5%
4	176	3.9%
5	235	5.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>10.7%</b>

Age	Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%
0	0	0%	0	0%
1	0	0%	0	0%
2	4	0.1%	3	0.1%
3	22	0.5%	47	1.0%
4	61	1.3%	115	2.5%
5	58	1.3%	177	3.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>7.5%</b>

There has been an increase in children aged under five with an EHC plan in early years settings before entering Reception.

Age	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Under 5 years</b>	68	91	71	87	82	125	252
<b>%</b>	3.9	4.5	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.7	5.5

Although the numbers of children with an EHC plan in preschool settings has increase since 2018, this has been mostly in line with the overall increase in all children and young people in Walsall with an EHC plan. However, there has been a significant increase in early years children with an EHC plan throughout 2023 this is partially due to improvements in service delivery and the removal of a long-standing backlog. Within early years, this was highlighted further in 2023 due to the SEND service improving the identification and assessment process through new way in which Early years funding was issued. Previously children were funded through a high needs amount and were not expected to have an EHC plan until entry to formal education. The SEND service recognised this was causing delays in appropriate provision being in place. As a result, settings are now required to make applications for EHC assessments alongside requests for high needs funding resulting in robust identification from the earliest opportunity.

### **Early Years EHC Requests**

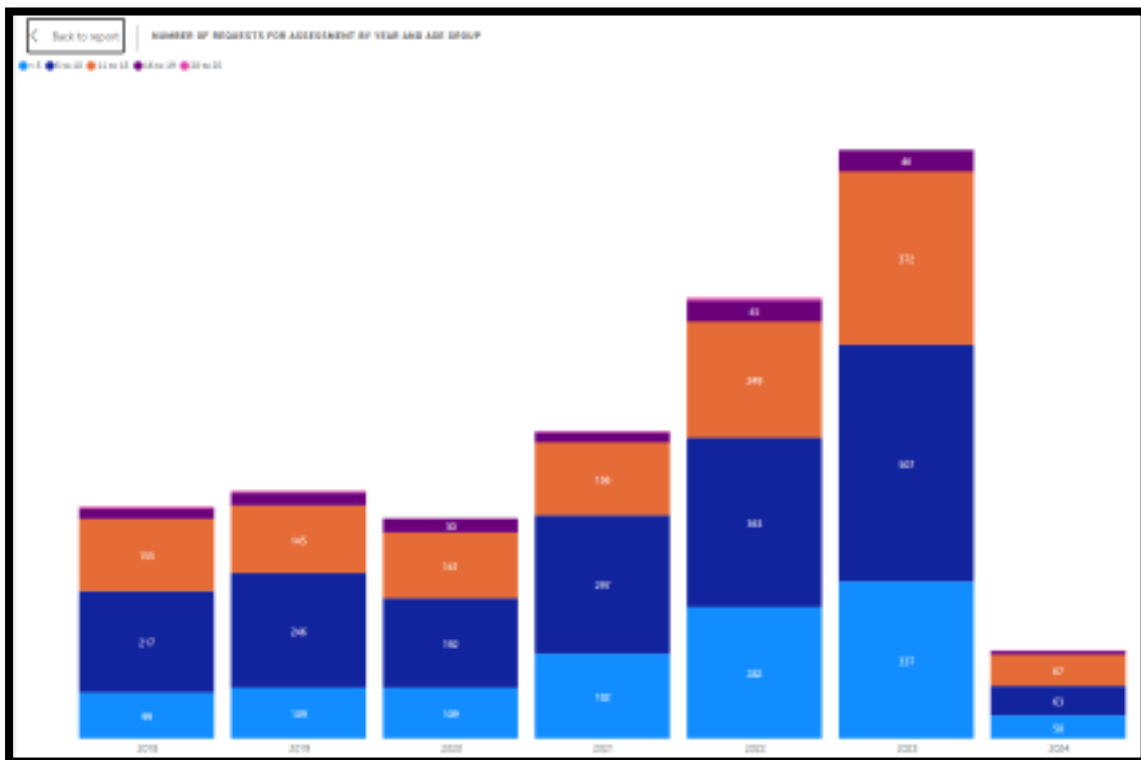
#### **Number of 0-5 year olds with requests for an EHCP assessment, as at 29 February 2024**

In total there are 328 EHC statutory assessment requests in progress for children and young people aged 0 to 25 years. As at 29 February 2024, 93 (28.4%) of these are for children aged 0-5, with the majority of these being for three year olds. This connects with children starting formal education.

Age	No. with a request for an EHCP in progress	% with EHCP (of overall total of requests in progress)
0	0	0%
1	0	0%
2	4	1.2%
3	22	6.7%
4	43	13.1%
5	24	7.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>28.4%</b>

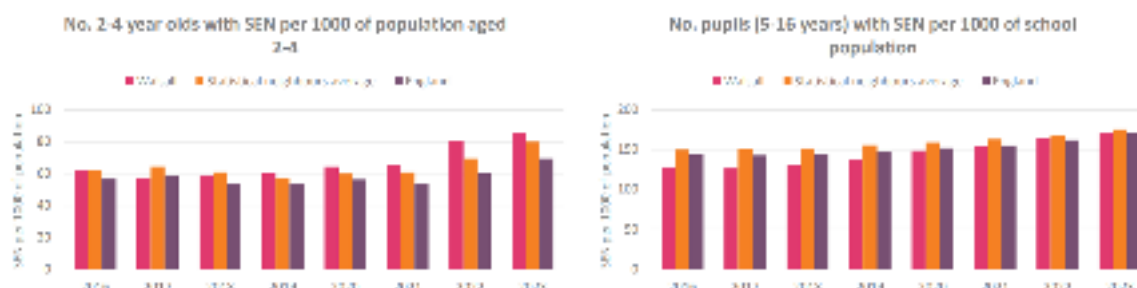
75% of statutory assessment requests come from schools, 15% from parents and 10% from Early Years teams and professionals. Our statutory assessment requests for Early Years children continues to grow yearly.

**Number of Requests by Year and Age Group**



## Early Years and SEN Support

### SEN Rate | Walsall has a higher rate of identification at Early Years compared to statistical neighbours and national averages



Walsall has a higher rate of identification at Early Years (2- to 4-year-olds) than the national average; whereas it has a similar proportion of 5-16-year-olds pupils with SEN needs, when compared to the national average.

Access and Inclusion key stakeholders reflected that this highlights the focus they place on being a service for 0-25-year-olds.

We are working with health partners on early identification. We have already seen an increase in two year olds being identified as having SEN Support. We are working with health colleagues to design a 0 to 2 year old pathway.

Number of children with SEN Support. Source – Walsall school census October 2023.

Data	Schools					
	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	PRU	Total
SEN Support	45	3,826	2,783	0	49	<b>6,703</b>

Age breakdown for SEN support:

Age	No. with SEN Support	% with SEN Support
0	0	0.00
1	0	0.00
2	12	0.18
3	98	1.46
4	297	4.43
5	437	6.52
Total	844	12.6

### 3.3 Funding and Support available for Early Years Children in Walsall with SEND (SEN Support or an EHC Plan)

Our overriding outcome is that the children who have the highest needs identified at birth or prior to entering education are supported by adults and professionals to ensure they are equipped with appropriate provision and transition to start school. Alternatively, settings can proceed to statutory

assessment by gathering a carefully planned graduated approach, involving professional advice. This should demonstrate actions taken over time to meet the child's needs. The LA are working with SENCOs to ensure robust understanding of the graduated approach, removing some of misconceptions that have been established and making sure that early and correct identification is a strength within the 0 to 3 years pathway.

### **Team Around the Child**

"Team Around the Child" (TAC) plays a pivotal role in Walsall's approach to early years support and offers a multidisciplinary model designed to deliver a holistic support system for children with SEND or those in need of additional help. The TAC approach ensures that the educational, health, and social needs of children are met in a comprehensive and cohesive manner.

At the core of the TAC approach is a child-centred focus, where every decision and action taken by all the professionals involved is aimed at promoting the child's well-being, development, and educational achievement. The approach recognises parents and families as experts on their child's needs, actively involves them in the decision-making processes, and allows their insights and preferences to help shape the support plan. The TAC model ensures multi-agency collaboration to provide a comprehensive support network around the child and identified needs. This team may include teachers, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and social workers.

A support plan is developed collaboratively by the team to address the child's needs across different areas of development. This plan is reviewed regularly reviewed and adjusted to reflect the child's evolving needs. Walsall ensures that effective communication and coordination is central to team members with regular meetings and updates ensuring everyone is informed of progress or changes in needs or circumstances. The TAC approach empowers the child and family with knowledge, skills, and resources to promote development and well-being.

Walsall have seen many benefits of the TAC approach. This system has been well embedded for several years and the Early Years SEND team have much experience in offering holistic support. The Team Around the Child process is recognised as a central mechanism for accessing Walsall's statutory assessment pathway.

### **SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF)**

The SEN Inclusion Fund is for two-, three- and four-year-old children in school nurseries or private and voluntary settings including childminders, who are accessing their early education entitlement. SENIF will focus on emerging and lower level SEN i.e. where a child requires some provision in addition to or different from the settings usual graduated approach to help children learn. This funding is a one of payment of £800.



## **Disability Access Fund (DAF)**

Disability Access Funding is for any three or four year olds who receive disability living allowance (DLA). This funding can help providers make their settings accessible to children with special needs. The funding can help providers make reasonable adjustments to their settings. They could purchase specialist equipment and or seek specialist training that would help them meet the child's needs. This funding is paid at a rate of £800 per term.

## **Health Needs**

Where identified additional needs are health based, providers are encouraged to engage with available health professionals for help with supporting those children, i.e. school nurse, health visitor, GP's and to actively make referrals to Early Help where appropriate.

## **Family Hubs and Early Help**

The early help offer in Walsall has undergone significant developments over the last 2 years with Walsall's Early Help Partnership Strategy, Approach and Response to Children, Young People & their Families. This is focussed on getting the 'Right help' at the 'Right time' to families. Children are supported by a multi-agency early help offer that enables them to access a range of support and services when they need it.

Walsall's Early Help Offer includes:

On-line evidence-based parenting programme available for all parent/cares living within the borough, including:

- Understanding your child
- Understanding your child with additional needs
- Cygnet programme
- Supporting your child with autism

Family Hubs were launched last year offering support to Walsall families through four locality hubs. Each hub has a SEND Early Help Practitioners based within the Family Hub. The 'Best Start in Life' strategy for Family Hubs is a robust offer that includes early intervention in Speech and Language development for 3-4 year olds from dedicated professionals assigned to the family hubs. The 0-5-year-old offer continues to be developed within family hubs with a view to 95% of families benefiting from speech and language home learning support by March 2025.

## **Early Years SEN Team**

The Early Years Advisory Team comprises of three Early Years teachers and three Learning Support practitioners, who all play a pivotal role in ensuring that children in Walsall receive the best possible start in education. The Early Years Teachers act as Area SENCos supporting Early Years settings as per the SEND Code of Practice.

- providing advice and practical support to early years providers about approaches to identification, assessment and intervention within the SEN Code of Practice
- providing day-to-day support for setting-based SENCOs in ensuring arrangements are in place to support children with SEN
- strengthening the links between the settings, parents, schools, social care and health services
- developing and disseminating good practice

The strategic initiatives and support systems introduced by the Early Years Advisory Team during 2023 have improved inclusive early years education for all children with SEND. The Early Years Assessment Toolkit and the review of Early Years High Needs Funding have been pivotal in ensuring early identification, assessment, and support. By aligning these developments with the SEND Code of Practice and the Children's and Families Act 2014 (CAFA 2014), the SEND service have been able to implement a solid foundation for inclusive education that meets the diverse needs of children in our community.

### **The Early Years Assessment Toolkit**

Throughout 2023, significant developments were made to support early years providers, particularly in the areas of SEND assessment and funding for children with SEND. The Early Years Assessment Toolkit was launched in February 2023, and has been a critical resource for early years practitioners. Its primary function is to facilitate the early identification and assessment of children's needs or potential SEND, adhering to the SEND Code of Practice's emphasis on a graduated approach to support. Settings are required to use the Toolkit when requesting support from the Early Years SEND team or when seeking additional funding. This has ensured a more robust and standardised approach to assessing children's needs and enabling tailored support strategies that align with the individual child's requirements.

There is an ongoing commitment to reviewing Early Years High Needs Funding. This has led to the implementation of a funding system which focuses on good quality provision being made from the earliest opportunity and ensures that requests for High Needs funding for children undergoing an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) assessment are supported. Coproduction and collaboration with Early Years Headteachers has been central to developing this effective funding system through forums and working groups.

### **Portage Offer**

The Early Years SEND teachers facilitate a portage service that is focussed on getting 0-3 year olds with cognition and learning needs school ready. The child is assessed by the teacher and a programme of support is developed and delivered by the Learning support Practitioners to support parents with supporting their child with their learning. This service also allows teachers to assess whether an EHCP would be relevant for the child to ensure the resources will be available to support them in a setting and if this is the case an application will be submitted with the support of the parent.

## **Education Health and Care requests**

Walsall have been exploring solutions to ensure children receive the correct support ensuring the graduated approach includes carefully planned cycles of assess, plan, do, review and utilises advice from professionals including Educational

Psychologists. Following on from the SEN support pathway, for the most complex children who may require an EHC plan, the SEND service have worked closely with partners in health and social care to ensure there are timely and effective routes to getting an EHC assessment. The TAC process has become central to this as well as early identification through health professionals such as paediatric doctors and health visitors.

### **EYSEND Working Group**

A working group was created and led by SEND Service Manager and consultant primary Headteacher and includes wide representation from a range of providers. The intention of the group was to look at appropriate criteria to fund support for children with complex needs who do not yet have an EHCP, which could potentially be funded from the High Needs Block. This has been implemented throughout the financial year of 2023/24 but is dependent on funding availability and the level of available resources. The working group includes representatives from the Maintained Nursery Schools, the private and voluntary sector and from primary schools with nursery classes.

## **3.4 Where we are now – Our Key Achievements**

### **Creating a 0 to 2 Identification Pathway – complex needs from birth (CNFB)**

We have been working in collaboration with our health and social care partners to design a 0- to 2-year-old identification pathway which is now in operation. Paediatric doctors, children with disabilities teams and health visitors now have a seamless pathway where they can confirm any child born with complex needs, or where complex health needs are identified in the first 12 to 18 months. This raises a flag to the EHC team, although would not necessarily trigger a statutory assessment. The health professionals gather information about the child throughout their initial stages of development. This is stored with the SEND service, until such a point when the health professionals or education professionals decide that an EHC plan would be required. At this time, the SEND service uses all the known information to begin to draft the plan. This makes the process succinct and efficient ensuring that the child does not need to wait to benefit from the EHC plan.

### **Implementing a Early Years Inclusion Framework for 3 to 5 year olds**

Walsall's Inclusion Development Lead (IDL) has overseen the co-production and implementation of the 'Early Inclusion Framework'. The Early Inclusion

Framework outlines Walsall's local area approach to improving setting-based support, pathways and provision for children and young people with SEND. This programme of improvement incorporates a range of resources, tools and training opportunities which support the implementation of a coherent and consistent Graduated Approach.

Central to the framework is the Baseline Provision Audit, which facilitates shared professional learning and development. It enables the SEN/Inclusion Team to grasp the challenges local schools face in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, pinpointing best practices and areas requiring additional support. Another key component is the Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance, expected by the local authority to be accessible in educational settings. This guidance benefits all learners and outlines strategies linked to the four areas of SEND, aiding professionals in crafting personalized plans that escalate in intensity according to need. The framework also includes the SEN Profile of Need Guidance, serving as a profiling tool to better understand individual needs and the level of provision required. Additionally, the Walsall SEN Support Plan outlines how resources and services can support a child or young person, encouraging educational settings to use this document for requesting statutory needs assessments. The High-Quality Teaching Audit aims to improve the consistency of teaching skills and confidence, fostering an inclusive environment for learners with SEND.

To foster collaboration and sharing of best practices among SENCOs and Inclusion Leads, the framework has introduced termly SENCO Forums, a dedicated SENCO Forum Teams Page for ongoing support and communication, and the SENCO Triad Programme, which encourages peer-to-peer collaboration to enhance inclusive practices. Furthermore, a recent review of the EHC Plan Annual Review process has led to the introduction of actionable checklists and a pre-recorded training video to guide SENCOs and Inclusion Leads through this process, ensuring a streamlined and effective approach to supporting children and young people with SEND.

### **Implementation of Revised Early Years High Needs Funding Systems**

In response to a review of High Needs Block spend levels and increasing demand for specialist places for primary and secondary age children, a strategic decision was made to cease high needs funding for non-EHCP children in early years in September 2022. The context behind this decision was around sustainability, as per the financial data below. In the academic year of 2022/2023, over half of the allocated funding had been spent or committed within in one term, leaving a significant shortfall for the remaining two terms. This level of spend was not sustainable within the overall funding available within the DSG. In addition, it was noted that a high proportion of children who had the Early Years high needs funding went on to receive an EHC plan at a later stage. The EHC pathway is a 0 - 25 system and, the SEND service recognised that children should be identified as early as possible if they may need a statutory plan to start school, ensuring that correct outcomes and provision were in place before starting school. In Walsall, the spend against the Disability Access Fund (DAF) and SEN Inclusion Fund (SENI), which should

be the two main sources of additional funding to support children with additional needs, was consistently low. Settings relied on the High Needs Funding to secure additional support instead.

	£	£	% of budget
Budget – Financial Year 2022/23		1,091,922	
Actual Spend – Summer 2022	503,281		
Committed Spend – Autumn 2022 & Spring 2023	95,970		
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>599,251</b>		<b>55%</b>

Through the IDL and Inclusion Framework, it was recognised that the majority of children with special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) will not require specialist resources or additional staffing to be successfully included in a setting; most settings meet the additional needs of children very well. However, some children with ‘emerging or lower level’ SEND may benefit from some additional funding to further support their identified needs for a period of time. In order to meet future demand, the IDL worked with SENCOS and Headteacher to develop and launch the new graduated approach and ordinarily available provision specifically for Early Years settings. This has ensured that most children can have their needs met without high needs funding.

The initial impact to the removal of the EY High Needs Funding, was that settings applied for Education, health and Care plans for their most complex children. Although this created a spike in statutory applications, it was recognised that these children were complex, and the old system had simply delayed the start of the EHC pathway. The SEND service was able to meet the increased demand whilst retaining the timeliness and quality of EHC plans. High needs funding is a resource that is now used by settings to support during the statutory 20 week assessment process when an application has been made for an EHCP. Settings can apply for funding when an application for an EHC needs assessment is received and will end when a plan is agreed and finalised.

### **Linked working with health and Social Care colleagues**

Health and the Local Authority have developed a Health EHC pathway known as ‘The Gateway’ where all EHC applications are considered, and quality advice is returned through the same route. This has proved pivotal in improving timeliness. Social Care are set to join the ‘Gateway’ ensuring this becomes an holistic approach. Health teams are starting to scope out a new project called ‘Little SEN Voices’ which focuses on the engagement and involvement of the lived experience of children with SEND who access the Child Development Centres.

A scrutiny of the Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) pathway is underway to explore the referral route through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

(CAMHS) for an autism diagnosis for under-fives with an aim to reduce the waiting times and understand the patient journey.

Both health and social care are actively involved in developing Walsall's 'Additionally Vulnerable Strategy' by linking together and joining known information to safeguard the most vulnerable children at risk from failure to achieve outcomes.

#### **What we plan to do in 2024**

- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the Early Years Assessment Toolkit and the interim funding system to identify areas for improvement and ensure they meet the evolving needs of children and practitioners.
- Provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for early years practitioners to fully utilise the Inclusion Agenda and understand the nuances of the revised funding system.
- Enhance collaboration with all stakeholders, including parents, early years practitioners, and local authorities, to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive approach to supporting children with SEND.
- Develop clearer and more open lines of communication regarding the assessment process and funding decisions to foster trust and partnership between early years settings and families.
- Continue to develop the funding pathways for Early Years SEND children to ensure the right support is being received at the right time.
- Develop the portage offer to include training for early years settings where the assessment and development of school readiness for children can be widened across Walsall.

#### **4. *Financial information***

- 4.1 Whilst the content in this report doesn't have immediate financial ask, the growing demand of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan in the early years will have an ongoing demand on the overall high needs fund and place pressure on the dedicated schools grant (DSG)

#### **5. *Reducing Inequalities***

- 5.1 Reducing inequalities for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan is an essential commitment in inclusive education. It involves providing tailored support, resources, and opportunities to ensure that every child, regardless of their individual needs, has equitable access to a high-quality education. By prioritising early identification and intervention, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment, and promoting collaboration between educators, specialists, parents, and carers, we can help level the playing field for children with SEND. Reducing inequalities for these children is not only a legal and moral obligation but also an investment in their future, empowering them to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

## **6. Decide**

- 6.1 The committee may decide to request further information on the education outcomes of children within Early Years education aged between 0 to 5 with or without an EHC plan.

## **7. Respond**

- 7.1 Any recommendations made by the committee will be responded to by the appropriate service area.

## **8. Review**

- 8.1 The actions and outcomes within this report are monitored by Access & Inclusion SMT and Children's Services DMT and through a monthly performance board.

### **Background papers**

**SEND Code of Practice 2014**

**Early Years SEND Assessment Toolkit**

**Early Years SEND Assessment Toolkit progress record**

**Walsall SEN Support Plan**

**Walsall Early Help Strategy Approach and response 2021-2024**

**Walsall's Local Offer [Welcome to Walsall's SEND Local Offer | Send](#)**

## Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Recommendation Tracker (23/24)

Meeting date	Agenda item	Action/Recommendation	Officer	Status	Target date	Notes
15 February 2024	<b>Post 16 provision report</b>	That a report on children with SEND who are NEET is considered at a future meeting.	Nick Perks	In progress	To be considered for inclusion in work programme 24/25.	
		That Key Stage 5 validated data is circulated outside of the meeting.	Nick Perks	In progress	April 2024.	(Full year data when published at end of March).
	<b>Post-16 Employment and Skills Service and Strategy</b>	A report updating the Committee on Post-16 Employment and Skills Service and Strategy report be considered in the future.	Jane Kaur-Gill	In progress	To be considered for inclusion in work programme 24/25.	
	<b>Alternative Provision</b>	That an update on SEND support at alternative provision be provided to a future meeting	Amy Nash	In progress	To be considered for inclusion in work programme 24/25.	
	<b>Attendance Report</b>	That the following information be circulated: - attendance data for the academic year in comparison to statistical neighbours.	Rob Thomas	In progress	Tbc.	DfE asked for full list of attendance hubs. tbc when in



		- how many Walsall schools had signed up to join the attendance hubs.				public domain.
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## Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Work programme 2023/24

Main agenda items	05/09/23	03/10/23	21/11/23	11/01/24	15/02/24	26/03/24
<b>Theme: Children not in School</b>						
Attendance	X					
Children Missing in Education (CME)	X					
Exclusion and Suspensions	X					
<b>Theme: Inclusion</b>						
SEND Developments inc EHCPs		X				
Inclusion Hub		X				
Transitions		X				
Learning Recovery		X				
<b>Theme: School Place Planning</b>						
Specialist Provision Plan inc SEN school places			X			
Mainstream Pupil Place Planning and Capital Strategy			X			
School Admissions			X			
Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring & Budget Setting 2024/25			X			
<b>Theme: Outcomes</b>						
School Attainment Data				X		
Ofsted Data and Outcomes				X		
Schools Causing Concern				X		
<b>Theme: Skills and development</b>						
Skills Strategy and Development					X	
Post 16 Provision					X	
Alternative Provision					X	
Attendance – full term update report					X	
<b>Theme: Early years</b>						
School Readiness and EYFS (Early Year Foundation Stage) Outcomes						X
Early Years SEN Development						X

Childcare Sufficiency and Plans						X
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## **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

**Council House,  
Lichfield Street,  
Walsall, WS1 1TW**  
[www.walsall.gov.uk](http://www.walsall.gov.uk)

**4 MARCH 2024**

## FORWARD PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS  
APRIL 2024 TO JULY 2024 (04.03.2024)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
20/24 (4.3.24)	<p><b>Walsall Proud Programme: Next Stages of Transformation</b></p> <p>This report details the key outcomes, achievements and progress of the Council's Proud transformation journey and outlines the approach to service transformation going forward.</p>	Cabinet  Non-key decision	Caroline Brom  <a href="mailto:Caroline.Brom@walsall.gov.uk">Caroline.Brom@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	20 March 2024
18/24 (4.3.24)	<p><b>Public Sector Equality Duty:</b></p> <p>To note the Public Sector Equality Duty annual report which will be published in March 2024 in accordance with our obligations with the Equality Act 2010.</p>	Cabinet  Non-key Decision	Karen Griffiths  <a href="mailto:Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk">Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	20 March 2024
7/24 (5.2.24)	<p><b>Darlaston Long Term Plan for Towns:</b></p> <p>To authorise the Executive Director for Resources and Transformation, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to act as</p>	Cabinet  Key Decision	Philippa Venables  <a href="mailto:Philippa.Venables@walsall.gov.uk">Philippa.Venables@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	20 March 2024

	Accountable Body for the Darlaston Long Term Plan for Towns.					
8/24 (5.2.24)	<b>Fixed Penalty Notices:</b>  Cabinet to consider law changes allowing the increase of penalties for litter, fly tipping and duty of care and approving the new penalty limits in Walsall.	Cabinet  Key Decision	David Elrington  <a href="mailto:David.Elrington@walsall.gov.uk">David.Elrington@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	20 March 2024
9/24 (5.2.24)	<b>West Midlands Local Transport Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme 2024/25:</b>  To approve the West Midlands Local Transport Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme 2024/25.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Matt Crowton  <a href="mailto:Matt.Crowton@walsall.gov.uk">Matt.Crowton@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	20 March 2024
2/24 (8.1.24)	<b>Acquisition of a Strategic Town Centre Development Site:</b>  To approve the acquisition of a strategic town centre development site.  <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet  Key Decision	Nick Ford  <a href="mailto:Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk">Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	20 March 2024
15/24 (5.2.24)	<b>Acquisition of a Town Centre Property for Strategic Regeneration:</b>  To approve the acquisition of a town centre property for strategic development.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Nick Ford  <a href="mailto:Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk">Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	20 March 2024

	<i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>					
11/24 (5.2.24)	<p><b>Connected Gateway:</b></p> <p>To approve delegations to enable continued delivery of the external grant funded programmes/ projects in line with the agreed governance and assurance framework.</p> <p><i>This will include a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i></p>	Cabinet  Key Decision	Simon Tranter  <a href="mailto:Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk">Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	20 March 2024
14/24 (5.2.24)	<p><b>Healthy Levelling Up Partnership:</b></p> <p>To agree to the Healthy LUP proposal and agree delegations to bring forward proposals for funding under the scheme.</p>	Cabinet  Key Decision	Simon Tranter  <a href="mailto:Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk">Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	20 March 2024
17/24 (4.3.24)	<p><b>Strategic Acquisition in Pheasey:</b></p> <p>To approve the use of Compulsory Purchase powers to bring forward the development of a derelict site.</p> <p><i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i></p>	Cabinet  Non-key decision	Nick Ford  <a href="mailto:Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk">Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	20 March 2024
16/24 (14.02.24)	<p><b>Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy:</b></p> <p>To adopt a new strategy and establish a council led steering group to</p>	Cabinet  Key Decision	Jaki Brunton-Douglas  <a href="mailto:Jaki.Brunton-Douglas@walsall.gov.uk">Jaki.Brunton-Douglas@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	20 March 2024



	undertake ongoing monitoring and annual update.		Black Country PPOSS - Overarching Strategic Framework  Walsall PPOSS - Assessment Report			
65/23 (4.12.23)	<b>Contract for Multiple Recyclable Materials:</b>  To award off-take and processing contracts for multiple recyclable materials.  <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet  Key Decision	Katie Moreton  <a href="mailto:Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk">Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk</a>  Alan Bowley  <a href="mailto:Alan.Bowley@walsall.gov.uk">Alan.Bowley@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Murphy	20 March 2024
6/24 (8.1.24)	<b>Alternative Provision Contract:</b>  To approve the award contracts for the provision of Alternative Education.  <i>This will include a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet  Key Decision	Laura Wood  <a href="mailto:Laura.Wood@walsall.gov.uk">Laura.Wood@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	20 March 2024
58/23 (6.11.23)	<b>High Needs Funding Formula 2024/25:</b>  To approve changes to the High Needs Funding Formula, as agreed by Schools Forum, to be used for the allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block to schools in Walsall for the 2024/25 financial year.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Richard Walley  <a href="mailto:Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk">Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Schools Forum, Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	20 March 2024

59/23 (6.11.23)	<b>Early Years Funding Formula 2024/25:</b>  To Cabinet approve the Early Years Funding Formula, as agreed by Schools Forum, to be used as the allocation of funding to early years providers in Walsall.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Richard Walley  <a href="mailto:Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk">Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Schools Forum, Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	20 March 2024
46/23 (4.9.23)	<b>SEN Place Requirement:</b>  To approve finance for additional special educational needs school places.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Alex Groom  <a href="mailto:Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk">Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	20 March 2024
14/23 (6.2.23)	<b>Growth Funding for Schools:</b>  To enable the Local Authority to fulfil its duty to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places, through the adoption of a policy for the application of revenue funding for school growth.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Alex Groom  <a href="mailto:Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk">Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services, Schools Forum	Cllr M. Statham	20 March 2024
66/23 (4.12.23)	<b>Waste Management Strategy Update - Fryers Road Household Waste Recycling Centre redevelopment (HWRC):</b>  That Cabinet approve the pre-tender budget for the redevelopment of a larger Fryers Road HWRC and agree to use the Pagabo framework (design and build stages) for the procurement of Fryers Road HWRC.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Katie Moreton  <a href="mailto:Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk">Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk</a>  Stephen Johnson  <a href="mailto:Stephen.Johnson@walsall.gov.uk">Stephen.Johnson@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew  Cllr Murphy	17 April 2024

67/23 (4.12.23)	<b>Council Plan 2022/25 – Q3 23/24:</b>  To note the Quarter 3 2023/24 (outturn) performance against the Markers of Success in the Council Plan 2022/25.	Cabinet  Non-key Decision	Elizabeth Connolly  <a href="mailto:Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk">Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	17 April 2024
20/24 (4.3.24)	<b>Protective Characteristics for Care Leavers:</b>  To agree that ‘care experience’ be treated as if it were a Protected Characteristic under the Equalities Act 2010, so that decisions on future services and policies made and adopted by the council consider the impact on people with care experience.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Zoe Morgan  <a href="mailto:Zoe.Morgan@walsall.gov.uk">Zoe.Morgan@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Elson	17 April 2024
13/24 (5.2.24)	<b>Multifunctional Devices leasing contract:</b>  To consider the award of a 5-year contract for the leasing of multifunctional devices (MFDs) and production print devices.  <i>This will include a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet  Key Decision	Sharon Worrall  <a href="mailto:Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk">Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Ferguson	17 April 2024
19/24 (4.3.24)	<b>Compact Sweeper Hire Contract:</b>  Award of contract for 5 hired compact sweepers (plus a spare) for 6 years. Street Cleaning – Clean & Green.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Den Edwards  <a href="mailto:Den.Edwards@walsall.gov.uk">Den.Edwards@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal services	Cllr Murphy	17 April 2024

	<i>This will include a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>					
21/24 (4.3.24)	<b>Healthwatch Contract Extension:</b>  For Cabinet approval to extend the current contractual arrangements for Healthwatch under Reg 72 to allow for full design, tendering and implementation.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Grace Charles  <a href="mailto:Grace.Charles@walsall.gov.uk">Grace.Charles@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Pedley	17 April 2024
10/24 (5.2.24)	<b>Surveillance and Access to Communications Data:</b>  To review the authority's performance as regards directed surveillance and to approve an updated policy for surveillance and the interception of communications data.	Cabinet  Key Decision	David Elrington  <a href="mailto:David.Elrington@walsall.gov.uk">David.Elrington@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	17 April 2024
12/24 (5.2.24)	<b>Walsall Safer Streets – Palfrey Big Local and General Update:</b>  To cover the work of Palfrey Big Local, their resident led approach and the outcomes they have achieved.	Cabinet  Non-key Decision	Paul Gordon  <a href="mailto:Paul.Gordon@walsall.gov.uk">Paul.Gordon@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services  Palfrey Big Local	Cllr Perry	17 April 2024
57/23 (6.11.23)	<b>Walsall Net-Zero 2041 Climate Strategy:</b>  To approve the Walsall Net-Zero 2041 Strategy.	Cabinet  Key Decision	Katie Moreton  <a href="mailto:Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk">Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk</a>	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	July 2024

**Black Country Executive Joint Committee**  
**Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

**Published up to June 2024**

<b>Date Created</b>	<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>	<b>Main consultee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>
	No decisions scheduled.			



# West Midlands Combined Authority

## Forward Plan

## Forthcoming key decisions

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Portfolio Lead	Employee to contact:
<p><b>WMCA Financial Monitoring Report - March 2024</b> To update on the latest financial position</p>	WMCA Board 15 March 2024	Open	Councillor Bob Sleigh Deputy Mayor	Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant
<p><b>Investment Zone Gateway Ratification / Investment &amp; Delivery Plan</b> To consider updates on Gateway Ratification and the Investment &amp; Delivery Plan.</p>	WMCA Board 15 March 2024	Open	Councillor Stephen Simkins Portfolio Lead for Economy & Innovation	Steve Bowyer Partnerships and Engagement Strategic Lead
<p><b>Investment Zone Finance &amp; Funding Plan (including Business Rates Retention Memorandum of Understanding)</b> To approve the Finance &amp; Funding Plan and Business Rates Retention memorandum of understanding.</p>	WMCA Board 15 March 2024	Open	Councillor Stephen Simkins Portfolio Lead for Economy & Innovation	Carl Pearson Head of Major Funding
<p><b>Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding</b> To consider the ratification of the Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding.</p>	WMCA Board 15 March 2024	Open	Councillor Sharon Thompson Portfolio Lead for Levelling Up / Devolution	Jonathan Gibson Head of Policy & Public Affairs
<p><b>Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation</b> To consider the latest BCIMO update.</p>	WMCA Board 15 March 2024	Open	Councillor Bob Sleigh Portfolio Lead for Finance	Linda Horne Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub

<p><b>Skills Funding</b> To agree delegations for the commissioning of skills funding.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 March 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor George Duggins Portfolio Lead for Skills &amp; Productivity</p>	<p>Dr. Fiona Aldridge Head of Insight &amp; Intelligence</p>
<p><b>Cycle Hire Scheme Update</b> To endorse the additional funding requirements to operate the scheme to October 2025.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 March 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Portfolio Lead for Transport</p>	<p>Andrew Thrupp Head of Operational Assets</p>
<p><b>Bus Service Improvement Plan Additional Funding Allocation</b> To consider additional funding received in respect of BSIP.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 March 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Portfolio Lead for Transport</p>	<p>Adam Lane, Jon Hayes Consultant SPM, Head of Bus</p>
<p><b>Request by Warwick District Council to become a Non-Constituent Authority of WMCA</b> To consider the request submitted by Warwick District Council that it should be granted equivalent status as the non-constituent councils with the right to be represented on the WMCA Board and other boards.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 March 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Julia Cleary Head of Corporate Support &amp; Governance</p>
<p><b>Arrangements for Mayoral Question Time with MPs</b> To agree the arrangements for mayoral question time sessions with the region's MPs.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 March 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Andy Street Mayor of the West Midlands</p>	<p>Jonathan Gibson Head of Policy &amp; Public Affairs</p>
<p><b>Penalty Fares for Midland Metro</b> Following public consultation, to agree a new penalty fare amount and to consider moving to a proposed two-tier penalty structure, where the fee amount will reduce for early payment.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 14 June 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Portfolio Lead for Transport</p>	<p>Chris Hopkinson Owner Representative - West Midlands Metro</p>



<p><b>Private Sector Representation</b> To consider retaining existing private sector representation on WMCA boards until such time as the future Single Settlement governance structure is known.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 14 June 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Stephen Simkins Portfolio Lead for Economy &amp; Innovation</p>	<p>James Hughes Member Relationship Manager</p>
<p><b>Bus Options Report</b> To consider options for the future delivery of the region's bus network.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 19 July 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Portfolio Lead for Transport</p>	<p>Steven Hayes Head of Network Transformation</p>
<p><b>Key Route Network Review 2023/24</b> To approve the amended Key Route Network within the WMCA area.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 19 July 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Bird Portfolio Lead for Transport</p>	<p>Rachel Ing Corridor Manager</p>

## **The Forward Plan**

This document sets out known 'key decisions' that will be taken by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) over the coming months.

Forthcoming key decisions are published online to meet the statutory 28 day notification rule for each meeting where a key decision will be taken. Where it has not been possible to meet the 28 day rule for publication of notice of a key decision or an intention to meet in private, the relevant notices will be published as required by legislation as soon as possible.

### **What is a key decision?**

A 'key decision' means a decision of the Mayor, WMCA or officer which is likely:

- (a) to result in the WMCA incurring expenditure, making savings or generating income amounting to £1m or more; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the WMCA

The report relating to a decision, together with any other documents being considered, will be available five clear working days before the decision is to be taken (unless the documentation contains exempt information).

The forward plan also provides notice of when the WMCA may decide to exclude the press and public during consideration of a particular matter due to the potential for disclosure of confidential or exempt information. The grounds upon which local authorities can exclude the press and public are specified by law and details of the exempt categories are available on request from the Governance Services team ([governance.services@wmca.org.uk](mailto:governance.services@wmca.org.uk)).

Councillors or members of the public wishing to:

- make a representation about why a matter should be heard in public, or
- submit information to the decision-making body about an item in the forward plan, or
- request details of relevant documents, or
- seek advice about the WMCA's decision-making arrangements,

should contact the Governance Services team: [governance.services@wmca.org.uk](mailto:governance.services@wmca.org.uk)