



Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on: **Thursday 8 December 2022 at 6.00 p.m.**

Meeting at: Walsall Council House.

Public access to meeting via: <http://www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com>

MEMBERSHIP:

Chair:	Councillor. Hicken
Vice Chair:	Councillor. Jukes
	Councillor. Garcha
	Councillor. Harrison
	Councillor. Horton
	Councillor. Kaur
	Councillor. Mazhar
	Councillor. Nasreen
	Councillor. Rattigan
	Councillor C. Statham
	Councillor. Waters

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor T. Wilson.

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Democratic Services, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TW
Contact: Nikki Gough ☎ 01922 654767 E-mail: nikki.gough@walsall.gov.uk

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AGENDA

1.	Apologies To receive apologies for absence from Members of the Committee.	
2.	Substitutions To receive notice of any substitutions for a Member of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.	
3.	Declarations of interest and party whip To receive declarations of interest or the party whip from Members in respect of items on the agenda.	
4.	Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda (if applicable).	
5.	Minutes of the previous meeting To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting that took place on 3 November, 2022.	<u>Enclosed</u>
<u>Scrutiny</u>		
6.	Early Help Young Carers Support To provide a national and local overview of Young Carers	<u>Enclosed</u>
7.	Private Fostering To provide assurances around how Walsall Safeguarding partnership has delivered its duties and functions in relation to private fostering.	<u>Enclosed</u>
<u>Overview</u>		
8.	Recommendation Tracker To review progress with recommendations from previous meetings.	<u>Enclosed</u>
9.	Draft letter For the Committee to review the draft letter to the Department of Education.	<u>To follow</u>
10.	Areas of Focus 2022/23 To agree the Committees Work Programme and review the Forward Plans for Walsall Council and the Black Country Executive Committee.	<u>Enclosed</u>
11.	Date of next meeting To note that the date of the next meeting will be 30 January 2023.	

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Specified pecuniary interests

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

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

Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Conference Room 2, Walsall Council House

Thursday 3 November 2022 at 6.00 p.m.

Committee Members Present

Councillor A. Hicken (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice Chair)
Councillor A. Garcha
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor C. Horton
Councillor P. Kaur
Councillor S. Nasreen
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham
Councillor V. Waters

Portfolio Holder

Councillor T. Wilson

Officers Present

Sally Rowe	-	Executive Director Children's Services
Isabel Vanderheeren	-	Director Early Help and Partnerships
Tanya Collier	-	Lead Accountant, Children's Services
Antony Schaffarczyk	-	Principal Social Worker
Nikki Gough	-	Democratic Services Officer
Reena Farmah	-	Democratic Services Officer

20/22 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor F. Mazhar.

21/22 Substitutions

There were no substitutions.

22/22 Declarations of interest and party whip

There were no declarations and no party whip of interest.

23/22 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

Minutes

24/22 The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022 were considered by the committee.

Resolved

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 September be approved as a true and accurate record subject to the amendment of the typing error in the penultimate paragraph on page 8, to read ‘A Member asked whether the number of families requiring help had increased due to cost of living pressures’.

25/22 Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Position for 2022/23

A report was submitted which provided an overview of the budget monitoring position for quarter 2 financial 2022/23.

[see annexed].

The Lead Accountant introduced the report, highlighting the outturn position for Children's Services. She reported an overspend of £3.68 million for Children's services as at August 2022. . The forecast revenue position for the services under the remit of this committee was an overspend of £3.28 million at period 5, after the net use of reserves of £2.34 million. The key reason for the overspend related to children in care placements. She explained the number of children in care had reduced from 661 at the end of 2020/21 to 651 in July 2022 due to successful implementation of service transformation plans. The demand for higher cost placements had increased in-line with the national picture and as such costs continued to increase, extensive work had been undertaken to effectively manage demand. The use of reserves included the use of £1.04 million general Covid grant to offset increased costs of children in care linked to delays in court hearings and assessments, delays in young people leaving care, increases in personal allowance payments and placement sufficiency issues. Members were asked to note risks to the monitoring position, if materialised these would increase the overspend further.

The Lead Accountant highlighted the service transformation plan for 2022/23, which included approved efficiencies of £5.46 million.

The Chair welcomed questions from the Committee. The Portfolio Holder commented that the finances for Children's Services were complex, whilst any overspend was regrettable, it was justified as delivering services for young people was paramount. The Portfolio Holder responded to questions from members, during which time he confirmed that concerns regarding the budget had been raised with Walsall's Members of Parliament, encouraging them to raise and challenge the issues nationally.

The Executive Director commented that initiatives to make efficient use of resources were in progress, for example the authority were exploring plans to make Walsall a fostering friendly council, encouraging employees and local businesses to support foster care. A discussion was held about writing to the government to discuss and share the challenges faced by Children's Services.

Resolved

- 1. To note the revenue and capital forecast for the financial year end 2022/23 for the services under the remit of the committee.**
- 2. A draft letter, to the Department of Education, be considered by the Committee at its next meeting which highlights the financial challenges faced by Children's Services.**

26/22 Social Worker Recruitment and Retention

A report was submitted which provided an overview of social worker staffing in Children's Social Care, outlining activities undertaken to support the recruitment and retention of social workers.

[see annexed].

The Principal Social Worker introduced the report and informed members that social worker recruitment and retention was a key priority and progress had been made to stabilise and develop the workforce. Members noted the national and regional challenges faced by the profession, the number of social workers leaving was at a five-year high resulting in a crisis both financially and in the capacity to deliver services. There was significant demand for experienced social workers, and agencies were able to offer attractive rates of pay, resulting in experienced staff leaving the profession entirely or moving to agencies.

The Principal Social Worker explained a range of measures had been used to promote retention;

- Extensive consultation and engagement with the workforce.
- Use of retention payments.
- The introduction of a new Senior Specialist Social Worker role as a progression opportunity and defined social worker career pathway.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that social worker caseload had been an issue in the past, and had been recognised as one of the reasons behind social workers leaving. Caseload was continually monitored to ensure it was manageable for staff.

A discussion took place regarding the role of exit questionnaires and the importance of understanding the reasons behind social workers leaving the employment of the Council. The Committee were informed of the support in place for new starters who had a reduced caseloads, access to weekly supervision and co-working with senior practitioners.

The Principal Social Worker responded to questions relating to social worker pay, he explained that a review had taken place and the authority couldn't compete with agency rates due to the council's pay structure. The authority recognised that staff needed reward and career progression opportunities and therefore a senior role had been introduced to encourage staff retention through progression opportunities.

The Executive Director explained that the issues relating to social workers were complex and related to a supply and demand issue. Nationally there were gaps in the sector with high numbers of vacancies and agencies capitalising on the shortage and often demanding high salaries. The Association of Directors of Children's Services were aware of the issues which are being raised with the Department for Education. Walsall offered social workers levels of competitive pay and additional benefits.

The Portfolio Holder commented that the issues had been raised with local MPs who were supportive, it was suggested that the government should regulate social worker agencies. Members noted that some agency workers were needed to support service delivery and that costs were likely to increase in the future.

In response to a question the Executive Director outlined the memorandum of understanding in place across the West Midlands region which included fundamental principles for Councils to work in collaboration to resolve issues and to not adversely affect other neighbouring authorities.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the report and sector-wide challenges facing the recruitment and retention of social workers.**
- 2. To support the continued work and positive trajectory in the recruitment and retention of social workers.**

27/22 Recommendation Tracker

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the committee work programme had been circulated.

Resolved

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

28/22 Areas of Focus 2022/23

Members noted the committees work programme and the forward plan for Walsall Council and the Black Country Executive Committee.

The following areas of focus were agreed by the committee to be added to the work programme for the 2022/23 municipal year:

- Youth Justice priorities and Disproportionately
- Children at Risk Exploitation

- Young Carers
- Placement Sufficiency
- Child Neglect Strategy
- Transition from Children's Services into Adult Services - Update

Resolved

That the areas of focus be agreed for the municipal year 2022/23 with the inclusion of the following items:-

- **Youth Justice priorities and Disproportionately**
- **Children at Risk Exploitation**
- **Young Carers**
- **Placement Sufficiency**
- **Child Neglect Strategy**
- **Transition from Children's Services into Adult Services - Update**

29/22 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as 8 December 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business this meeting was terminated at 7:16 p.m.

Signed:

Date:

Early Help Young Carers Support

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Stacey Elson. Children's

1. Aim

To provide a national and local overview of Young Carers, detailing the Walsall Early Help Young Carers Support, the ongoing co-production and collaboration as part of the commitment to improving the support for young carers, along with further opportunities and planned improvements.

2. Recommendations

1. For the direction of travel for the Early Help Young Carers to be supported
2. For progress and planned improvements to be endorsed and ask members to support the on-going awareness raising of young carers

3. Report detail – know

3.1 National Context

What do we mean by young carer: Definition: "Young Carers are children and young people under the age 18 who provide **regular** and **ongoing** care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally disabled or misuses substances".

The Children's and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 both significantly strengthened the rights for young carers and outlines the requirements of local authorities, along with the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995, there has been a clear and gradual shift in the focus for local authorities to deliver support to young carers and their families including carrying out a young carers needs assessment, taking a whole family approach and the need to improve the support for young carers transition to adulthood.

3.2 What do young carers do: Young carers carry out a range of practical home tasks such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing, overseeing medication, personal care such as helping with bathing, dressing and often look after younger siblings.

3.3 How many young carers are there: National Context: According to the 2011 census data released 16th May 2013 there are 166,363 young carers in England, compared to 139,000 in 2001, where for the first time census questions were asked about whether there were young carers in a household.

The Children's Society however believe this to be the 'tip of the iceberg', within their report [Hidden from View 2013](#) they state that many children and young people remain 'hidden' from official sight for a host of reasons, including family loyalty, stigma, bullying and not knowing where to go for

support or who to speak to and that 1 in 12 young carers spends more than 15 hours a week looking after a parent or sibling.

- 3.4 What do we know about these young carers? : The table below shows the changes in number of children and young people in the population, in the number and proportion of young carers recorded and in the overall proportion of young carers age group between the 2001 and 2011 census

Age group	2001			2011			% change	
	Overall population	Number of young carers	% of young carers	Overall population	Number of young carers	% of young carers	Overall population	% of young carers
5-9 years old	3,118,934	12,386	0.4%	2,970,186	20,744	0.7%	-5%	+67%
10-15 years old	3,812,511	78,026	2.0%	3,696,524	89,969	2.4%	-3%	+15%
16-19 years old	2,261,676	97,878	4.3%	2,490,524	116,694	4.7%	+10%	+19%
20-24 years old	2,805,853	135,961	4.8%	3,411,283	176,196	5.2%	+22%	+30%
All years (5-24)	11,998,974	324,251	2.7%	21,568,517	403,603	3.2%	+4.7%	+24%

Source: Census tables M205 CT0415, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

We also know that girls are slightly more likely to be carers than boys.

- 3.5 What is the impact of being a young carer? : Being a young carer can have a big impact on the things that are important to growing up. It can, according to research

- Have an impact on their ability to attain and achieve with education or training, many young carers struggle to juggle their education and caring which can cause pressure and stress
- 27% of young carers aged 11-15 miss or have difficulties at school due to their caring responsibilities. (*Childrens society 2021*)
- The COVID-19 pandemic risks exacerbating the situation, stopping young carers from reaching their full potential.
- With the added complications of COVID-19, young carers are missing even more school than before and urgent support is needed if they are not to be left behind their peers
- Caring can have a dramatic detrimental effect on the education and aspirations of young and young adult carers, so urgent support is essential.

The Carers Trust carried out a survey (2017) with young carers, findings reported

- 39% of young people who took part in a survey reported that their school were not aware of their caring role and
- 1 in 20 said they missed school because of their caring responsibilities
- 26% said they have been bullied at school because of their caring role

Young carers overall development can be significantly and negatively impaired, irrespective of the type of care or frequency of care provided. Many young carers report feelings of isolation and are rarely 'stress free' from the pressures of home tasks, taking on adult 'responsibilities' both practically and emotionally and miss out on opportunities that other children have and take for granted such as seeing friends, playing, having hobbies, having opportunities to learn.

However that said there is also some good things about being a young carer, again according to the Carers Trust survey findings said that young carers

- Had a sense of accomplishment

- Are more independent - a quote from a young carer "As I was a Young Carer, I had to grow up fast. I was left to do everything by myself, but as a result, I am more mature for it. I knew how to pay bills and run the house by the time I was 8 years old. I was doing the weekly shopping and cooking everyone's meals (every night) by the age of 10, (I had been doing much of it since I was about 5 but full blown, just me on my own from about 10 years old).

Have the ability to handle different situations, having the confidence to cope and take 'charge'.

3.6 Local context

Young carers service review: Over the past 2 years there has been a review and refocus around the young carers support and services available, in collaboration with young carers, their families, key partners including school nurses, adults social care, Walsall Manor Hospital, Walsall College, Walsall Carers Service, GP's and a cohort of both primary and secondary schools the Walsall Young Carers Support service has been refreshed and relaunched as part of the National Young Carers Action Day in March 2021 and further enhanced and shared as part of the National Young Carers Action Day March 2022.

To support the review and refresh a number of consultation events have been held including

- a) A questionnaire designed by the young carers sent out to schools, partners and other young carers who were not involved at the time in the young carer groups. The questionnaire aimed to get a baseline understanding from schools and the wider partnership about the knowledge and approach they had around young carers, as well as ensuring opportunities for strengthening the support service available.

The response received:

- Whilst the questionnaire was sent to every school within the borough, it was disappointing that only 6 school completed and returned it, however they did acknowledge the lack of approach to young carers and this has subsequently lead to a wider piece or work with schools, detailed below
 - 7 partners returned the questionnaire and a presentation was delivered to the Early Help steering group, this has helped formulate the young carers champion role, detailed below
 - The young carers fed back a range of area's for action, all of which were addressed in the action plan, detailed below
- b) Activity days providing opportunities to really listen to our young carers, capture their voice and views on how their services could be improved.

Through the questionnaires and events held our young carers raised:

Issues discussed	Action to date
Raise awareness of young carers	<p>Early Help have met with young carers, their families' and partners in collaboration produced leaflets, developed a bespoke young carers website Young_carers(walsall.gov.uk), visited schools, held assemblies and meetings with the senior leadership team to discuss the impact on education for young carers.</p> <p>Joined the annual national action days in 2021 theme Protecting Our Young carers Future and 2022 theme Taking Action to Reduce Isolation, where over 200</p>

	attended the local webinars raising awareness and impact of being a young carer.
<p>Improve information available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce training resources • Let people know how to make a referral 	<p>Produced promotional material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically for schools and colleagues, distributed to all schools within the borough and presented awareness session at Heads briefing sessions • Adult Social Care purchased a bespoke training package to include young carers , this has recently been updated with local information and was due to be launched September 2022, there has been a slight delay and now looking at launch January 2023, the package will provide all schools and partners free training resource and legislative updates for all • Refreshed the Young Carers assessment and introduced a referral pathway via MASH • Added the referral, assessments and reviews onto the Mosaic database
<p>Improve support available, consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young carers champions • Young carers ID card Scheme • Consider other opportunities for young carers • Young carers group 	<p>Young Carers Champions: developed a young carers champion project along with awareness material and bespoke training package, which resulted in training and bespoke young carers champions being recruited as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 47 schools being trained and now having a named 'School Young Carers Champion' ➤ School Nurse Young Cares Champion ➤ Walsall College Young Cares Champion ➤ The Beacon Young Cares Champion ➤ Manor Hospital Young Cares Champion, with a Paediatric Liaison Nurse within A&E ➤ Adult Social Care Young Cares Champion ➤ Walsall Housing Group Young Carers Champion ➤ Turning Point Young Carers Champion ➤ Police Cadets Young Carers Champion ➤ 1 GP practices having a Young Carers Champion (Sycamore House Medical Practice) <p>ID Cards: Young carers wanted to develop an approach with schools and public health specifically where they could be formally recognised as a 'Young Carers', following consultation and an agreement across schools and public health we have together designed, printed and issued a total of 145 cards for young carers to use if school and when having any liaison with parents/carers with the hospital or with GPs.</p> <p>Leisure Passes: In partnership with leisure services we have developed a partnership and secured leisure passes for all of our young cares which gives them free access to gym facilities and swimming, promoting emotional health and wellbeing along with physical</p>

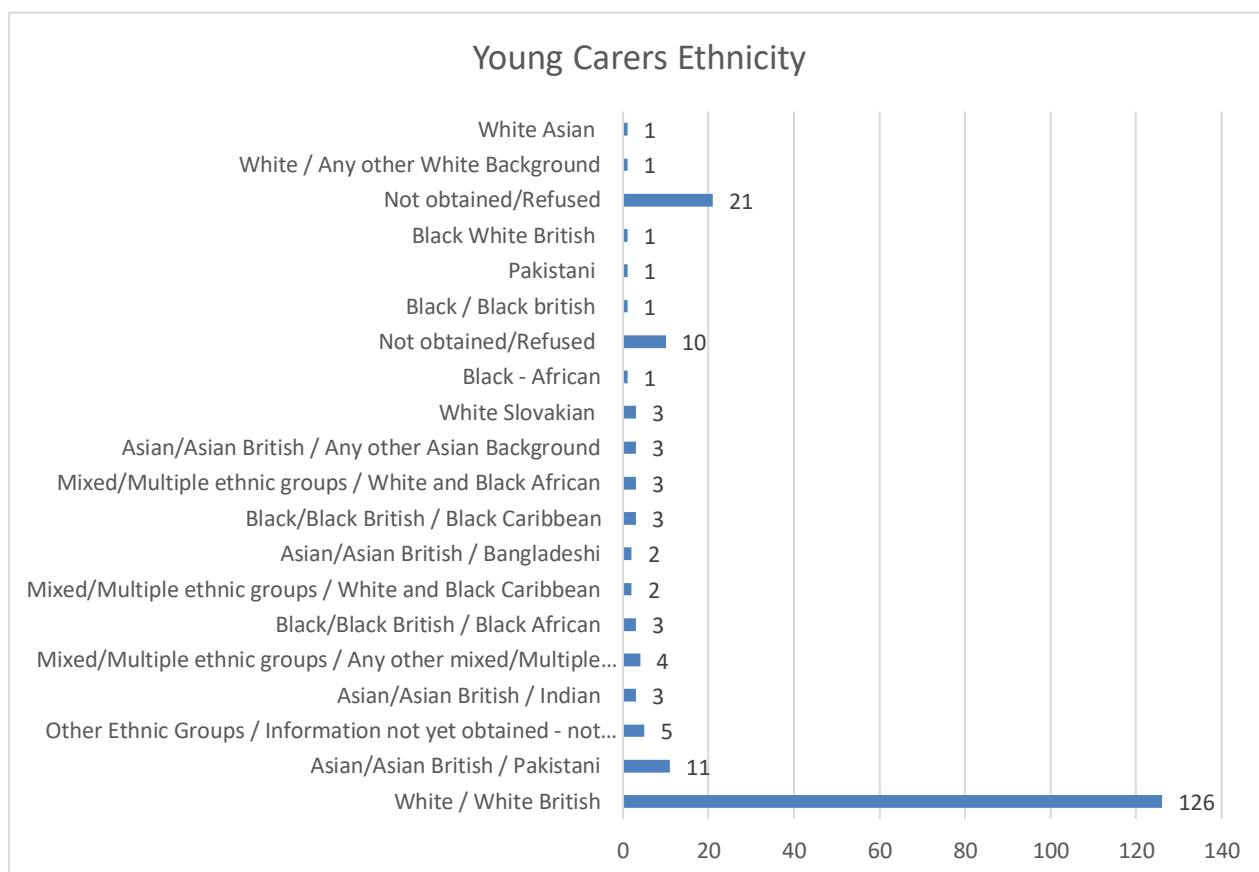
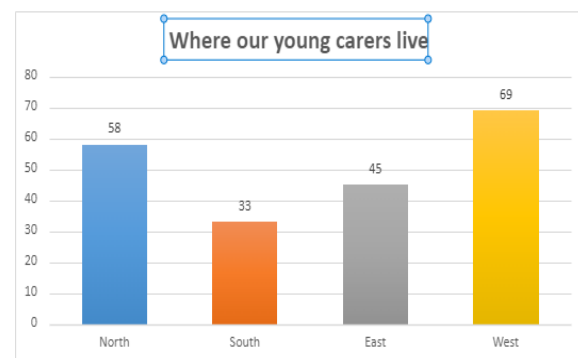
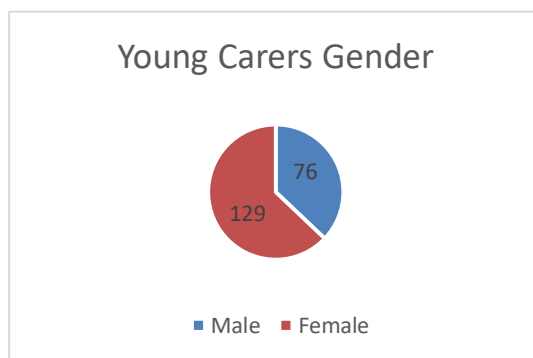
	<p>fitness, the passes also enable their family members to access the facilities at a reduced rate. To date we have issued 145 passes.</p> <p>Holiday Activity Fund (HAF): young carers have been included in the Walsall HAF programme, irrespective of their entitlement to free school meals, all young carers can attend the holiday provision</p> <p>Young Carers Group: My Place delivery of a support and fund two young carer groups monthly, one for 8 to 12 year olds and one for 13 + year olds</p> <p>Secured a £10k fund for delivering young carers group work and consultation</p> <p>Secured a part time dedicated Early Help Young Carers Practitioner (started Monday 14th November 2022)</p>
Regular focus and consultation events	<p>Young Carers Action Group: A multi-agency group of partners have formed an 'action group' and meet quarterly with young carers to review and update the action plan.</p> <p>Young Carers Group: as part of the delivery of the Young Carers group at My Place we have joined force with the Walsall Carers Centre where we come together and hold monthly evaluation around the support group and activities held which shape both the service improvements.</p>

- c) A strength based approach, taken to understand and promote from their perspective not just the roles and responsibilities they have but what skills they feel this gave them, this is what they told us

1. Cooking, cleaning, money management, administering medication, confidence, resilience, ability to communicate to a wide range of people, time management, empathy

Many incredible skills our young carers have developed through being a carer, how many other children and young people have these transferrable skills prior to starting a career.

- 3.7 Walsall Young Carers: what do we know? We are currently aware of and actively supporting 205 young carers aged between 8 and 18 yrs, this has significantly increased from 2019 when we were supporting 62 young carers, this increase is due to the awareness campaigns and specific focus on young carers. We know however this work needs to continue as we feel still many children and young people go unrecognised as young carers.



3.8 What needs to happen next: In consultation with young carers the Young Carers Action Group have agreed to

1. Look at delivering the Young Carers Group across various localities within the borough we know that at time transport and accessibility of My Place can be a barrier for young people to attend the group
2. Connected to the wider Adult Carer strategy being drafted, include a section around young carers with agreed longer term action plans and themes to support young carers
3. Continue being part of and delivering the National Young Carers Action Day, 2023 theme is 'Making Time for Young Carers', where webinars events and a celebration will be held, recognising the valued role of our young carers
4. Strengthen the support available, linking further to the Carers Centre to enable wider range of support to be available, including support with homework, emotional health and wellbeing, exam revision and transition support
5. Actively recruit young carers' volunteers as part of the wider Early Help volunteering service.

4. Financial information

There is a budget of £30,000 within the Early Help Young Carers service, this includes a 0.5FTE Early Help Practitioners and a budget of £10,000 per year to deliver a programme of support and consultation for your carers.

5. Reducing Inequalities

Effective and timely support to young carers is essential to not just avoid poor outcomes but to have ambition and thrive, work continues to support schools and health services in identifying, as early as possible a child or young person who maybe carrying our caring roles and responsibilities, to reduce a range of issues including poor educational attainment, isolation and bullying, further work is planned with adult social care to consider the wider impact on child and young people when an adult carers assessment is made along with a focus on transition support from being a young care into becoming an adult carer.

6. Decide

The Early Help Young Carers partnership has set out key priorities for 2022/23, as detailed in section 3.8 above based on the needs of and feedback from our young carers. Whilst there is no decision for scrutiny to be made around the priorities, scrutiny are asked to support the direction of travel and endorse the achievements made so far.

7. Respond

The Early Help Young Carers Service and multi-agency action group is responding to the needs of young carers, the Early Help Steering group oversees the delivery of the action plan and will oversee the young carers strategy and has this as an agenda item for update reports to be taken quarterly, with an annual review planned September of each year. Achieving and evidencing the outcomes secured for young carers continues to be a priority along with further identifying children and young people who carry out caring roles and responsibilities and who should be supported as a young carers.

8. Review

A review report to scrutiny is scheduled for 12 month, detailing the achievements, barriers, the changes to the early help process and payment by results.

Author

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Early Help Group Manager
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8th December 2022

Title of the Report Private Fostering

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Stacie Elson

1. Aim

To provide an update to Scrutiny Committee in respect of Private Fostering. To provide assurances around how Walsall Safeguarding partnership has delivered its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and how the welfare of privately fostered children has been safeguarded and promoted during the last 12 months period. This report also outlines the activities which have been undertaken to promote awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are privately fostered.

To support proposals for the ongoing implementation and development of Private Fostering both internally and across the wider partnership.

2. Recommendations

1. Note the progress made to date since the Ofsted recommendation was made in October 2021 and identify any further information required.
2. To support the safeguarding partnership in driving accountability across the wider partnership and community in raising awareness of children who reside in Private Fostering arrangements.

3. Report detail

The number of identified private fostering arrangements in Walsall remains extremely low and it is believed that this is due to non-identification rather than non-existence of such arrangements. Whilst children in Private Fostering arrangements may be being safely cared for by Private Foster Carer's, there is the need to be alert to children who are 'hidden' from the gaze of statutory services. These could include children who are being trafficked or the victims of modern day slavery. There may also be children in private fostering arrangements who are left in unsafe situations. The identification of such children requires an alertness across organisations and a commitments from the Safeguarding Partnership to support awareness raising and inter agency training required to enable appropriate notification to the Children's Services.

We currently have five children whom are subject to a private fostering arrangement in Walsall.

A Private Fostering toolkit has also been developed with the aim was to assist in identifying and assessing children whom are privately fostered for when children are identified as being subject to a Private Fostering arrangement. The toolkit has a number of documents to support the assessment and clearly outlines the responsibilities of Walsall Local Authority when a child is privately fostered. The documents and resources include power point presentation- briefing for all professionals on Private Fostering, processes to be followed when undertaking Visits and Assessments and best Practice Guidance, Coram BAAF Guidance- Completing good private fostering assessment and Private fostering leaflets for children and carers. A Private Fostering Annual report is also a requirement that has been complied with.

Throughout the year of 2022 the following activities were undertaken:

- Input and awareness raising to healthcare trust employees as part of their standard safeguarding training.
- Private foster awareness training was undertaken to all Walsall GP's
- Launch of Private Fostering Toolkit within Children Services
- Private Fostering is included within any induction programme for a new starter in Children Services
- A Private Fostering scenario has been included within the Right Help Right Time multiagency training
- BAAF awareness training video "somebody else's child : a film about private fostering" was published on safeguarding website for partners to access
- Presentation at the DSL workshop and Headteachers forum
- Presentation at each locality Time to Talk event
- Private Fostering was included in Children Services "weekly brief."
- Private Fostering was added as an agenda item to all DSL's during supervision

To strengthen the oversight of children who are subject to a private fostering arrangement we have developed a tracker in which all children are regularly reviewed at permanency panel and tracked. Positively audit activity has evidenced there is a recognition of what constitutes a private fostering arrangement when referred into MASH. There is evidence of robust safeguarding activity taking place. There is evidence that assessments are being completed jointly with the Fostering Service. DBS medicals and references are being obtained more timely although this could be further improved.

Evidence that the private fostering toolkit is having a positive impact. There is evidence of assessments paying attention to the cultural needs of families and identification of community resources that can support these needs. All children have safeguarding checks in place. There was no child who was left at risk in the private fostering arrangement and safeguarding action has been undertaken where there were issues emanating from the Private Fostering assessment.

4. *Financial information*

Privately fostered children do not receive a fostering allowance from the Local Authority. The guidance stipulates that financial sustenance for the carers is the responsibility of the parents. There may be a requirement to provide services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

5. *Reducing Inequalities*

The number of identified private fostering arrangements in Walsall remains extremely low and it is believed that this is due to non-identification rather than non-existence of such arrangements. Private Fostering remains an area of practice that brings challenges in both workforce understanding, awareness across partnerships and the wider Walsall community. There is emerging understanding of process around private fostering assessments and the roles and responsibilities of the children's social worker and the fostering social worker. There is evidence of robust safeguarding activity taking place and no child has been left at risk in a private fostered arrangement.

Children in private fostering situations can be invisible as has previously been stated. Whilst it is important that we act promptly and follow due process when a child has been identified, it is equally important to raise awareness and urge both the public and professionals to report signs of informal care arrangements for children who are being cared for by a person who is not their parents.

6. *Review*

There are two central issues which must remain the focus when reviewing private fostering. One is awareness raising throughout the partnership. The leaflets and redesign of posters is currently being undertaken and following this will be a media campaign. It is hoped that this will lead to increased referrals for children whom are privately fostered. Secondly, children services are now in a much improved position in respect of responsibilities and duties when a private fostering referral is made. The toolkit, tracker, audit activity and awareness raising has had a positive impact meaning that should demand increase children services has the capacity to ensure that appropriate safeguarding checks are undertaken and robust assessments undertaken by both childrens and fostering social workers.

Background papers

Private Fostering Annual Report

Author

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Group Manager Manager, Safeguarding and Family Support

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Walsall Council

Private Fostering

Annual Report 2021/2022

Produced by:

Jade Read

Group Manager, Safeguarding and Family Support

Children and Young People Service

Walsall Council

For further information, please contact: Jade.Read@walsall.gov.uk

This is the Annual Private Fostering Report covering 2021 and 2022.

This report details how Walsall Safeguarding partnership has delivered its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and how the welfare of privately fostered children has been safeguarded and promoted during the last 12 months period. This report also outlines the activities which have been undertaken to promote awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are privately fostered.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005) and the Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering (2005):

The local authority is required to:

- Promote awareness of the notification requirements for private fostering
- Publish a written statement on private fostering
- Safeguard and promote the welfare of the privately fostered children
- Provide advice and support to privately placed children, young people, parents, and carers.
- To consider the implications of these new regulations, national minimum standards, and guidance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Children Act 1989 defines private fostering as occurring 'when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is placed for more than 28 days in the care of someone who is not a close relative, guardian or someone with parental responsibility'.



Private fostering is not the same as mainstream fostering services, which is delivered by the public, private or voluntary sector. Private fostering is an arrangement between a parent/s and someone who they nominate to care for their child or children.

The Children's Act 2004 introduced a tighter framework for private fostering and the children (Private arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 20015 and the amended S67 of the Children Act 1989 strengthens the duties upon local authorities in relation to private fostering. This includes a duty for parents and private foster carers to notify the local authority about their proposed or current private fostering arrangement.

DEFINITION OF PRIVATE FOSTERING

A Private Fostering arrangement is essentially an arrangement between families/households, without the involvement of a local authority, one that is made privately, for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. Private Foster Carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt, or they may be a friend of the family or other non-relative, such as the parents of the child's friend. A person who is a close relative of the child, as defined by the Children Act 1989 (a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether by full or half blood or by marriage, civil partnership or step-parent) will not be a Private Foster Carer.

Examples of private fostering arrangements are:

- Children sent from abroad to stay with another family, usually to improve their English or for educational opportunities.
- Asylum seeking and refugee children.
- Teenagers who, having broken ties with their parents, are staying in short term arrangements with friends or other non-relatives.
- Children living with host families, arranged by language schools or other organisations.



- Children of Prisoners placed with distant relatives.
- Children living with members of the extended family, e.g. great aunt.
- Children attending a Football Academy and residing with extended family/friend

The primary responsibility of the local authority is to safeguard and promote the welfare of these children and young people by:

- Meeting the duty to promote public awareness of the requirement to notify the local authority of private fostering arrangements and, therefore, to reduce the number of 'unknown' private fostering arrangements.
- Responding to notifications and assessing the private fostering arrangements; and meeting the duty to support private fostering arrangements. This responsibility is underpinned by the Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering; Children Act 2004 (Section 44 amends Section 67 in the 1989 Act); the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005.

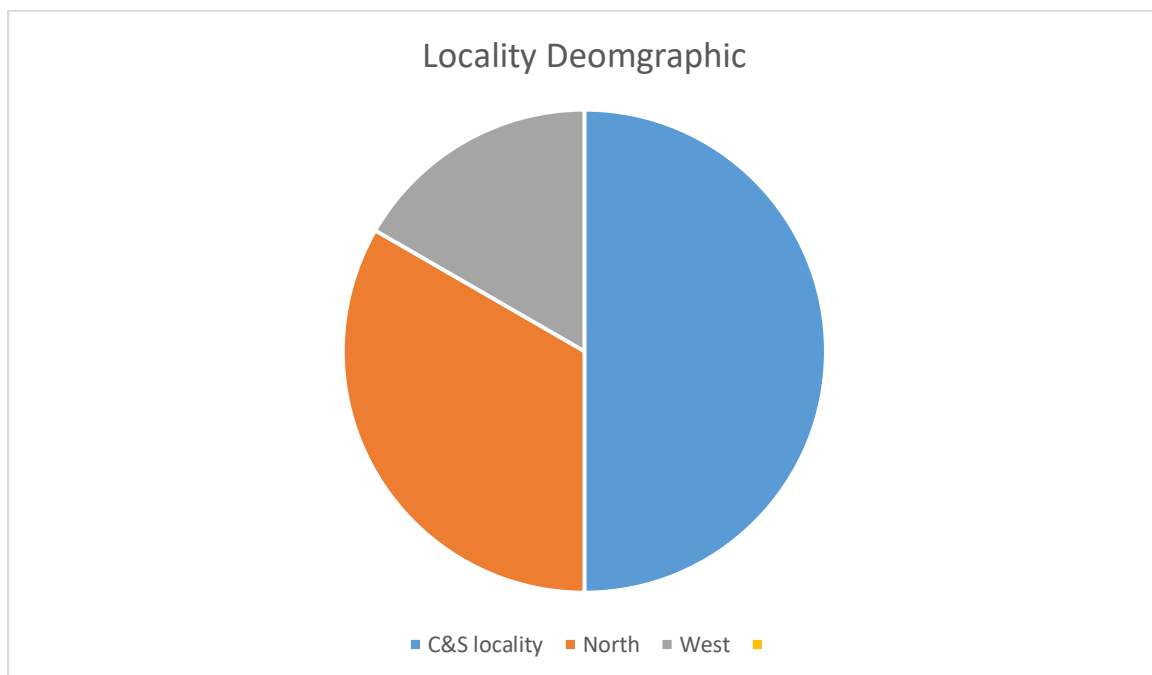
PERFORMANCE

Between November 2021 and January 2022 there have been eight private fostering referrals identified in the borough, of this number six children have been authorised and classified as a private fostering arrangement. In respect of the remaining two referrals, the children were no longer in a private fostering arrangement and returned home.

Referral rates are historically low and as has been stated in previous years it is highly unlikely given the demographics of the borough that this number of referrals is a true reflection of the situation and it is likely that the local authority will not have been notified of most private fostering arrangements. Whilst private fostering referrals have remained the same from seven in 2020/2021 this remains lower than

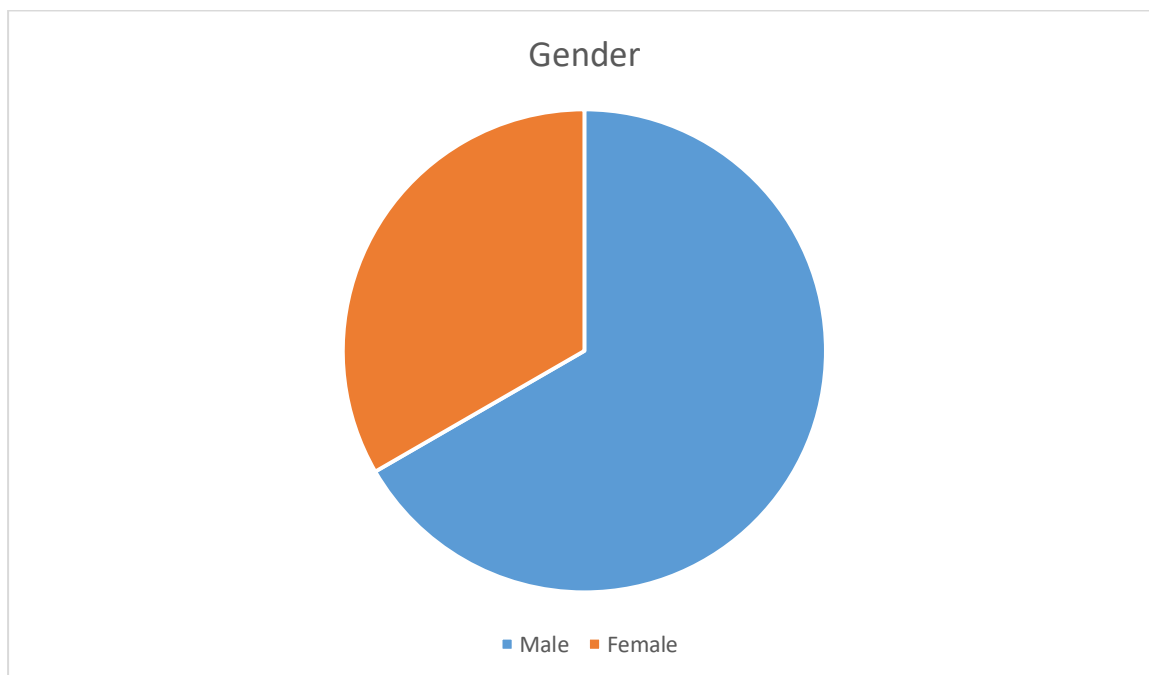
expected, however we are confident that understanding of private fostering is increasing amongst the local authority, partners and the wider public.

Three of the children identified in as being privately fostered live in the Central and South locality, two live in the North locality and one in the West Locality.

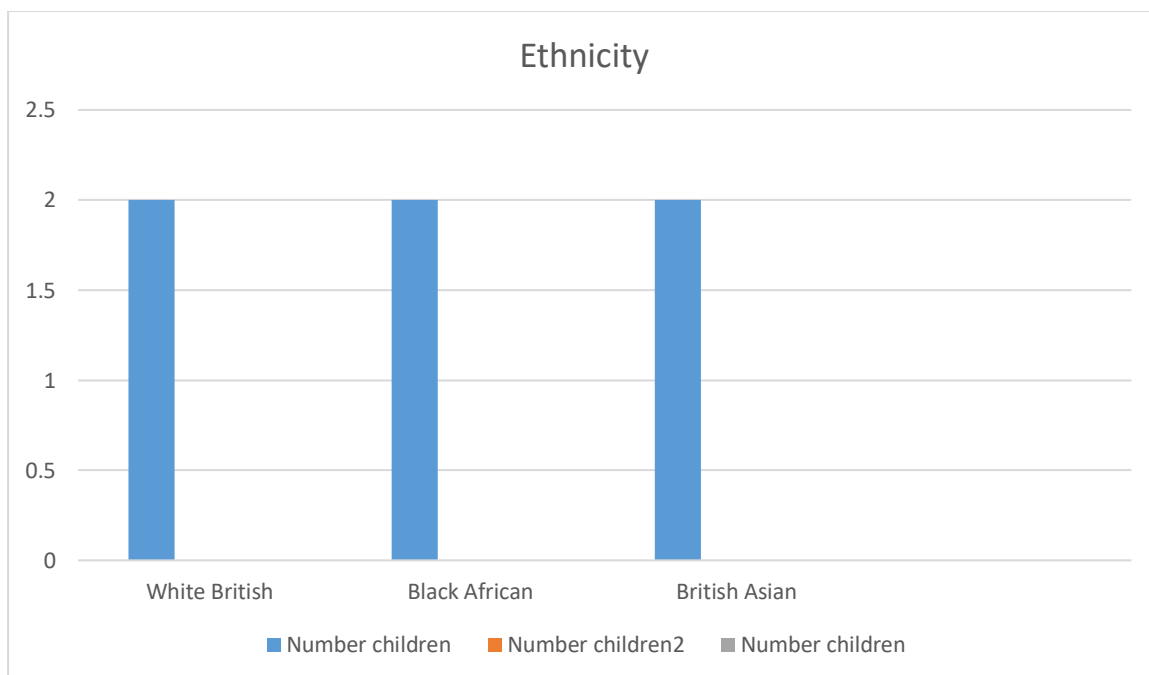


The children range in age from 10-15. There is only one child who has been in a private fostering arrangement for a year.

Two of the children are female and four of the children male.



Two of the children are white British, two of the children are black African and two of the children are British Asian.





Notifications / Referral source

- 1 x Carer.
- 1 x A and E (Walsall Manor)
- 2 x Another LA notification that children moved to Walsall.
- 1 x Community Neighbourhood coach
- 1 x SW identified due to change in care arrangement

The number of identified private fostering arrangements in Walsall remains low and it is believed that this is due to non-identification rather than non-existence of such arrangements. Whilst children in Private Fostering arrangements may be being safely cared for by Private Foster Carer's, there is the need to be alert to children who are 'hidden' from the gaze of statutory services.

It is recognised that the six children in a PF arrangement were not at risk of harm.

Staffing

There are revised protocols in place to ensure that private fostering arrangements are appropriately assessed. The assessment is undertaken jointly by the Locality Social worker and the fostering social worker. This assessment should be completed within 42 days. There has been a review and amendment of the private fostering mosaic workflow procedure. The impact of the changes is significant as it means when a child is recognised as being privately fostered, the fostering team will also be notified and the Private Fostering assessment on the adult is opened and subsequently allocated.

Prior to the commencement of the Private Fostering assessment a meeting will take place between the locality social worker and the fostering social worker to plan out the assessment and ensure there is clarity around roles and responsibilities. The Group Manager for Provider Services continues to give authorisation for the suitability of this arrangement.



If, at any stage of the assessment of the private foster carers, information is obtained, which suggests that a child already placed with the private foster carer may be a Child in Need, the manager may authorise services under a Child in Need Plan and/or a child and family Assessment is to be carried out alongside the assessment of the private foster carer. The Child and Family Assessment is undertaken by the Child's Locality Social Worker.

In the event of a refusal of any person to cooperate with the making of the necessary checks, the social worker should advise the private foster carers that they cannot be recommended as suitable and advise the parents of the reason why alternative arrangements will have to be made for the child. Any action required by the local authority to secure the child's safety should be considered and legal advice sought as necessary.

If any information comes to light during the course of the private foster carer assessment, for example as a result of the Disclosure and Barring Service checks, which may preclude the person from fostering a child, the social worker should prepare a report to the Designated Manager (Private Fostering). Immediate consideration should also be given to the arrangements for the child and if necessary child protection procedures should be followed.

3. Procedures

National Minimum Standard 1: The local authority has a written statement or plan which sets out its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out.

Private Fostering arrangements in Walsall are set out in the Statement of Purpose. These were updated in October 2021 to reflect the changes in responsibilities in Children's Services and is available on the Children's Services website.

The Statement of Purpose meets the requirements of Standard 1 and provides guidance for professionals, members of the public and other agencies on the policy and procedural requirements relating to Private Fostering.



A Private Fostering toolkit has also been developed with the aim was to assist in identifying and assessing children whom are privately fostered. The toolkit has a number of documents to support the assessment and clearly outline the responsibilities of Walsall Local Authority when a child is privately fostered. The documents and resources include power point presentation- briefing for all professionals on PF, Private Fostering - Visits and Assessments – Practice Guidance, Coram BAAF Guidance- Completing good private fostering assessment and Private fostering leaflets for children and carers.

National Minimum Standard 2:

2.1 The local authority:

2.1.1 Promotes awareness of the notification requirements and ensures that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification;

2.1.2 Responds effectively to notifications; and

2.1.3 Deals with situations where an arrangement comes to their attention, which has not been notified.

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to promote public awareness in their area of the statutory notification requirements regarding Private Fostering. The Designated Manager for Private Fostering is responsible for developing a strategy with the support of the Safeguarding Partnership to raise public and professional awareness about private fostering.

The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 outlines the requirement for anyone involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify the relevant local authority.



Parents and carers often fail to notify the local authority because they are unaware of these requirements and believe this is a private family arrangement.

As soon as a local authority becomes aware of a proposed arrangement to privately foster a child or young person within their area, or where a child or young person is being privately fostered within their area, the local authority must assess the suitability of the arrangement.

Whilst local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers, they have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of a privately fostered child or young person within their area is being safeguarded and promoted.

Parents making such an arrangement should inform the local authority of their intention before the start of any private fostering arrangement. In reality, across the country, most parents do not do this.

Therefore the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership must be able to rely on GP's, teachers, primary health, faith organisations and other staff working with children to make a referral to the local authority's children's social care if:

- They become aware of a private fostering arrangement which is not likely to be notified to the local authority
- They have doubts about whether a child's carers are actually their parents, and there is any evidence to support these doubts

Throughout the year of 2021, the following activities were undertaken:

- Input and awareness raising to healthcare trust employees as part of their standard safeguarding training.
- Launch of Private Fostering Toolkit within Children Services



- Private Fostering is included within any induction programme for a new starter in Children Services
- A Private Fostering scenario has been included within the Right Help Right Time multiagency training
- BAFF awareness training video “somebody else’s child : a film about private fostering” was published on safeguarding website for partners to access

To support this wider awareness raising a media and communication strategy is in the process of being developed.

National Minimum Standard 3: the Local Authority determines effectively the suitability of all aspects of the Private Fostering arrangements in accordance with the regulations

Following an initial suitability assessment, the assessment of potential private foster carers is undertaken jointly with the child’s social worker and a worker from Family Placements.

The decision making and authorisation regarding the ongoing suitability or otherwise of these arrangements is now consistently undertaken by one of the local authority Agency Decision Makers. This can include making a determination that the arrangements and the carer are not suitable for the child.

All children have their own allocated worker who will support and work with the child and their carers during assessment and following agreement regarding the suitability of the placement.

We have identified that our approach to seeking consent to, progressing and obtaining DBS checks for Private Foster Carers has not been consistent. Like all other assessments for prospective Foster Carers, permission to seek a DBS and request other statutory checks are triggered on completion and submission of the WSS302 (internal document) by the child’s Social Worker.



In order to assist social worker understand the process better, a private fostering took kit was developed to assist in understanding the processes and contained the forms that are required to be completed at each stage of the PF process.

In addition to this, any PF referral that is made to Walsall Children Services will be subject to full MASH screenings on all adults- this will include police checks to be undertaken.

National Minimum Standard 4: the local authority provides such advice and support to Private Foster Carers and prospective Private Foster Carers as appears to the authority to be needed

As with other families, the allocated social worker will provide advice and guidance in relation to parenting, managing boundaries and any challenging behaviours. They also provide advice and support to private foster carers regarding securing a permanent arrangement for a child by way of a legal order if appropriate. There would also be assistance with practical issues for carers around benefits, housing and immigration status if required. Children Services would ensure that all carers had support in accessing education and health provision for the child or young person. Any training that may be appropriate to private fostering carers is considered on a case by case basis.

National Minimum Standard 5: the local authority provides advice and support to the parents of children who are Privately Fostered within their area as appears to the authority to be needed.

The child's social worker will also support the child and birth parents to repair their relationship as far as possible and, on a number of occasions in the last 12 months; they have been instrumental in enabling children to re-establish a relationship with an estranged member of their birth family.



Where possible all parents are seen and spoken to during the course of the private fostering assessment. One child's parent is living abroad and there is regular communication taking place.

A leaflet designed for parents, the private foster carers and the placed child is provided.

National Minimum Standard 6: children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately Fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.

The child's social worker must visit a privately fostered child and regularly see the on their own. Visits take place in the family home and at school, dependent on the age of the child and what is most appropriate for that child. This enables the child's views in relation to the living arrangements to be sought and reflected both in their record and in subsequent discussions with their carers and birth parents.

Private fostering arrangement assessments should be updated after 12 months and each year thereafter for the duration of the arrangement. One child has been subject to a PF review.

Standard 7:

The local authority has in place and effectively implements a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. It improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system:

All information pertaining to children and young people is placed onto Mosaic. Information stored on this system can be utilised for performance reports. This includes age of the child, place of birth, ethnicity, first language and any disability. As

part of the Quality Assurance Framework any private fostering arrangement is subject to an auditing process and the qualitative and quantitative information obtained is reported to the quality assurance subgroup. Throughout the year of 2021 concerns have been raised about DBS delays and practitioners confusion regarding the procedure that needs to be undertaken. Changes to the mosaic workflows and the launch of the PLO toolkit have supported in practice improving in this area.

During 2021 an Audit tool has been developed and going forward private fostering arrangements will be audited quarterly by lead Group Manager.

A main priority is to ensure on-going promotion to maintain awareness around the notification process of private fostering for professionals, carers, and young people.

Advice and support must be provided to private foster carers, parents of privately fostered children and to the children themselves. This may include advice on child development, religious or cultural issues, relevant training opportunities and accessing universal benefits/ finances. All children who are subject to private fostering arrangements remain an open case and are subject to regular monitoring and support services.

7. Conclusions

Private Fostering remains an area of practice that brings challenges in both workforce understanding, awareness across partnerships and the wider Walsall community.

There is emerging understanding of process around private fostering assessments and the roles and responsibilities of the children's social worker and the fostering social worker however this is not consistent. Given the small numbers of children privately fostered this is not routine for many social worker.



It is important that Children's Social Workers understand and are able to recognise a Private Fostering arrangement. The PF toolkit, training and changes to the mosaic workflow all support the development of this.

The number of identified private fostering arrangements in Walsall remains extremely low and it is believed that this is due to non-identification rather than non-existence of such arrangements. Given COVID many children will not have been as routinely seen as prior to COVID which may result in children being hidden from the sight of statutory services.

To increase awareness and understanding of private fostering, and to increase the number of referrals, many promotional activities are required and a communication strategy is in the process of being developed which has explored the following recommendations:

Targeted communications through professionals:

- Twice annually re-distribute electronic version of PF toolkit for professionals who are in regular contact with children and families including details of who to contact to report a case of private fostering.
- Each quarter to include information on the weekly brief for all staff reminding them of their responsibility to report cases of private fostering arrangements to the MASH.
- Twice yearly, include information on Walsall Safeguarding Partnership website/newsletter reminding practitioners of their responsibility to report cases of private fostering arrangements to the MASH. Repeat this during the year.



- Private fostering has been incorporated into the mandatory RHRT safeguarding training for all social workers, early help practitioners and staff through the Walsall Safeguarding partnership
- Printed and electronic information to be distributed through existing channels for professionals including GP safeguarding bulletins, CCG intranet/website and communications group, school safeguarding contacts, Head teacher forums, NHS Trust e-bulletin, School Health Nurse staff briefings, Schools e-bulletin, Voluntary Sector Council, Religious groups, Refugee and Migrant Centre, Police intranet/e-bulletins, West Midlands Fire Service.
- Each Locality has a Time to Talk Partnership event which occurs bi monthly, PF awareness to be included within this and revisited twice per year.
- Each Locality also has a lead early help participation officer whom is able to consistently raise the awareness of PF when meeting with the locality professionals.
- Revisit training to GP's
- Engage the wider sector voluntary agencies and faith organisations. Current pathways to utilise are Walsall together, HAF and resilient communities

Communication to members of the public:

- Posters to be redistributed to GP's surgeries, Dentist surgeries, Libraries, Community Hubs, Children's Centres, Housing Association Offices, NHS walk in centres, Schools, Nurseries, playgroups, childminders, mother and toddler groups, Scout and Girl Guide groups, Churches and other religious buildings, Refugee and Migrant Centre, and Wolves Community Trust/Academy.
- Private Fostering webpage to be updated.

Schools & childcare settings:

- PF to be discussed in DSL workshops and Head Teacher forums.



- Work with the School Admissions Team to identify where the adult making the application was not the parent or close family member.
- Work with Head Teachers and Safeguarding Officers to identify children whose next of kin details are not the parent or close family member.
- For Independent Schools who do not manage their admissions process through the council, request that the school supplies details of students whose next of kin does not appear to be the parent or contacts them directly and makes them aware of their legal responsibility to inform us about private fostering arrangements.
- Revisit information about private fostering on schools e-bulletin with a reminder to school staff that they need to let us know of any private fostering arrangements they become aware of.

Online and social media:

- Undertake a Facebook and Twitter advertising campaign to raise awareness of private fostering and the need to make referrals to MASH.

Private fostering continues to be a priority for 2022 and is an identified area for improvement following the recent OFSTED inspection in October 2021. Arrangements are in place to evidence how we will continue to raise awareness. It is recognised that understanding private fostering is complex and therefore a collaborative approach is essential in developing relationships across each sector.

Committee Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action/Recommendation	Officer responsible	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
	Areas of Focus	The glossary and summary data in relation to children in care, starters and leavers to be shared with the committee via e-mail	Colleen Male	Complete		
		A work programme for the municipal year be produced containing agreed areas of focus, for agreement by the Committee.			26 September 2022	
27 September 2022	Areas of Focus	A progress report on the Youth Justice Service be heard at future a meeting.	Philip Rutherford	Date to be agreed by committee		Committee to agree date against the Work Programme 2022/23
3 November 2022	Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Position	A draft letter, to the Department of Education, be considered by the Committee at its next meeting which highlights the financial challenges faced by Children's Services.	Clerk		8 December 2022	

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022/23

Committee date	27 September	3 November	8 December	30 January	13 March 2023	18 April 2023
Report Deadline	16 September	25 October	29 November	19 January	2 March	5 April
Budget setting process		xx		xx		
Locality Hubs and working				xx		
Early Help Strategy	xx					
Social Worker recruitment and retention		xx				
Private Fostering			xx			
Youth Justice priorities and Disproportionately	xx				xx	
Children at Risk Exploitation and Safeguarding Annual Report 2021/22						xx
Family Hubs update and progress and Early Help Update				xx		
Children and Young People Alliance					xx	
Young Carers			xx			
Placement Sufficiency						
Child Neglect Strategy					xx	
Transition from Children's Services into Adult Services - Update						



Walsall Council

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

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

7 November 2022

FORWARD PLAN

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

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

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

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. The forward plan will show where this is intended and the reason why the reports are confidential. Enquiries regarding these reasons should be directed to Democratic Services (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
DECEMBER 2022 TO MARCH 2023 (7.11.22)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
110/22 (6.6.22)	Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2026/27: To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2023/24 to 2026/27, including savings proposals, and to set out the process and timescales for setting a legally balanced budget for 2023/24.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Public Internal Services	Cllr Bird	14 December 2022
121/22 (8.8.22)	Corporate Financial Performance 2022/23: To report the financial position based on 7 months to October 2022, including the impact of Covid-19.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	14 December 2022
123/22 (8.8.22)	Treasury Management Mid Year Position Statement 2022/23: The council is required through regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce a mid-year position statement reviewing	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Lloyd Haynes Lloyd.Haynes@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	14 December 2022

	treasury management activities and prudential and treasury indicator performance.					
135/22 (10.10.22)	Renewal of the Council's insurance arrangements from 1st April 2023: To seek delegated authority to renew the Council's insurance arrangements from 1 April 2023	Cabinet Key Decision	Cabinet Report 14 February 2018 - Renewal of the Council's Insurance Arrangements from 1 April 2018 Marc Cox Marc.Cox@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	14 December 2022
157/22 (7.11.22)	Streamlining Black Country Ways of Working – Black Country Consortium: To provide an update on finalising an agreed way forward for streamlining ways of working across the Black Country, many of which have historically been coordinated through and by Black Country Consortium Ltd (BCC Ltd). The report builds from the agreements to date on the transition of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and the collaborative Black Country based approach for the future accountability of LEP legacy funds utilising Association of Black Country Authorities as a mechanism if and when required. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Sarah Middleton (Chief Executive, Black Country Consortium Ltd.) Sarah_Middleton@blackcountryconsortium.co.uk	Association of Black Country Authority Leaders	Cllr Bird	14 December 2022

107/22 (6.6.22)	Procurement of Corporate Landlord Strategic Partner: To seek approval to the appointment of a strategic partner to support the programme of capital schemes related to the council's property portfolio.	Cabinet Key Decision	Nick Ford Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	14 December 2022
136/22 (10.10.22)	Black Country Enterprise Zone-Gasholders Site: To update on the direction of travel and seek approvals in relation to the preferred delivery approach, project funding and next steps to bring forward the site for employment generating uses. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Caroline Harper Caroline.Harper@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	14 December 2022
137/22 (10.10.22)	Willenhall Framework Plan: Phase 1 Developer Partner Procurement Approach and Funding Update: To provide an update on the preferred developer partner procurement approach and funding position. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Kauser Agha Kauser.Agha@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Legal (External)	Cllr Andrew	14 December 2022
144/22 (7.11.22)	UK Shared Prosperity Fund: To authorise officers to accept funding allocation for UK Shared Prosperity	Cabinet Key Decision	Philippa Venables Philippa.Venables@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services	Cllr Andrew	14 December 2022

	Fund and to utilise for project activity aligned with UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.					
145/22 (7.11.22)	Town Centre Theatre Project: To agree next steps for the Town Deal Theatre project, setting out funding implications and options. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Philippa Venables Philippa.Venables@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services	Cllr Andrew	14 December 2022
158/22 (07.11.22)	Walsall Economic Strategy To approve an economic strategy for the borough.	Cabinet Key Decision	Philippa Venables Philippa.Venables@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services	Cllr Andrew	14 December 2022
126/22 (8.8.22)	Strategic acquisition of a freehold heritage building in Walsall Town Centre: To seek approval to the freehold acquisition of a heritage property in Walsall Town Centre to support the preservation of the property. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Nick Ford Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk Bryte Legister Bryte.Legister@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	14 December 2022
125/22 (8.8.22)	Housing First contract award: To approve the contract award enabling the continuation of flexible support to former rough sleepers housed through the Housing First initiative.	Cabinet Key Decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services, service users, external stakeholders	Cllr Ali	14 December 2022

	<i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>					
146/22 (7.11.22)	Home Upgrade Grant (HUGs) Round 2 Procurement and Update: To approve the use of a Framework to appoint contractors to deliver government funds to help residents with retro-fit works where they are not on the gas network.	Cabinet Key decision	David Lockwood David.Lockwood@walsall.gov.uk	Public, Internal Services	Councillor Ali	14 December 2022
138/22 (10.10.22)	Food for Life Contract: Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to enter into appropriate contractual arrangements from 1 st April 2023 until 31 st March 2024, and subsequently authorise the sealing or signing of associated contracts, deeds or other related documents for the Food for Life contract.	Cabinet Key Decision	Esther Higdon Esther.Higdon@walsall.gov.uk Paul Nelson Paul.Nelson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services	Cllr Flint	14 December 2022
130/22 (6.9.22)	Sexual Health and 0-19 Contracts: To approve the extension of the integrated sexual health service, contract delivered by Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust from 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024; and To delegate authority to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing to extend contracts on behalf	Cabinet Key Decision	Tony Meadows, Interim Director of Commissioning Tony.Meadows@walsall.gov.uk Page 45 of 55	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	14 December 2022

	of the Council and to subsequently authorise the variations to the contractual arrangements for the services should this be required at any time during the term, in line with Public Contract Regulations and the Council's Contract Rules to 31 March 2024.					
156/22 (7.11.22)	Healthy Lifestyles Contract and Smoking Cessation Contract Extensions: To delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing. This will allow them to extend contracts on behalf of the Council and to subsequently authorise the variations to the contractual arrangements for the services should this be required at any time during the term, in line with Public Contract Regulations and the Council's Contract Rules.	Cabinet Key Decision	Joe Holding Joe.Holding@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	14 December 2022
147/22 (7.11.22)	We Are Walsall 2040: Consultation Feedback: To note the key findings from the consultation activities carried out over summer/autumn 2022, which will inform the We Are Walsall 2040 strategic borough plan.	Cabinet Non-key decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk Policy & Strategy Unit (policyandstrategy@walsall.gov.uk)	Internal Services, Local partners/ stakeholders	Cllr Perry Cllr Wilson	14 December 2022

148/22 (7.11.22)	Food Law Service Plan: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires all local authorities to prepare an annual service delivery plan to reflect the work required of food authorities by the FSA, under the requirements of the Food Standards Act 1999 and the framework agreement on local authority enforcement. In accordance with this requirement a Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2022/23 has been prepared and a decision is required from members to obtain authority to approve this plan	Cabinet Council Non-key decision	Paul Rooney Paul.Rooney@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry 	14 December 2022 Council, 9 January 2023
129/22 (5.9.22)	Update on Resilient Communities Safer Streets Programme: To report back on Safer Streets activity and recommend any adjustments/additions to the programme.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Paul Gordon Paul.Gordon@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry 	14 December 2022
149/22 (7.11.22)	Electronic Calls Monitoring Contract Extension: To approve the extension of the ECM contract with Access UK Ltd.	Cabinet Key Decision	Tracy Simcox Tracy.Simcox@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Pedley 	14 December 2022
124/22 (8.8.22)	Schools Mainstream Local Funding Formula 2023/24: That Cabinet approves the Mainstream Local Funding Formula, to be used for	Cabinet Key Decision	Walsall Schools Forum report December 2022 – Proposed Schools Local Funding Formula 2023/24. 	Internal Services Schools Forum	Cllr M. Statham 	14 December 2022

	the allocation of mainstream funding to schools in Walsall		ESFA – Schools revenue funding operation guide. Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk			
159/22 (7.11.22)	Secondary School Sufficiency: To approve funds for the creation of an additional 150 places in three Secondary Schools.	Cabinet Key Decision	Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Local partners/stake holders	Cllr. M. Statham	14 December 2022
160/22 (7.11.22)	Special School Sufficiency: To begin feasibility works to create to additional places in SEN Schools to meet additional demands.	Cabinet Key Decision	Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Local partners/stake holders	Cllr. M. Statham	14 December 2022
141/22 (10.10.22)	Corporate Financial Performance 2022/23: To report the financial position based on 9 months to December 2022, including the impact of Covid-19.	Cabinet Non-key decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Corporate Management Team and Internal Services	Cllr Bird	8 February 2023
142/22 (10.10.22)	Corporate Budget Plan 2023/24 – 2026/27, incorporating the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management and investment Strategy 2023/24: To recommend the final budget and council tax for approval by Council.	Cabinet Key Decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Public Internal Services	Cllr Bird	8 February 2022 Council, 23 February 2023

150/22 (7.11.22)	Payments Project Contract Award: To award a contract to Capita/Pay360 Ltd (soon to be Access Group Ltd) for the provision of Pay 360 Licences and Capita/Pay360 Ltd services.	Cabinet Key Decision	Janice Freeman-Phillips Janice.Freeman-Phillips@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	8 February 2023
155/22 (7.11.22)	Council Plan: Review of Achievements 2021/22: To note the Review of Achievements for 2021/22, highlighting successes and progress towards achieving our Council priorities.	Cabinet Non-key decision	Meresh Kumari (meresh.kumari@walsall.gov.uk) Elizabeth Connolly (elizabeth.connolly@walsall.gov.uk)	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	8 February 2023
151/22 (7.11.22)	Introduction of Council Tax Premium on unoccupied but furnished properties: Levy the premium on properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished for more than 12 months. Effective from 1 April 24.	Cabinet to make recommendation to Full Council Key Decision	Mark Fearn Mark.Fearn@walsall.gov.uk	Part of budget consultation	Cllr Ali	8 February 2023
140/22 (10.10.22)	High Needs Funding Formula: 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 2023/24 financial year.	Cabinet Key Decision	Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk Schools' Forum reports October 2022, December 2022 and January 2023. Page 49 of 55	Internal Services, Schools Forum	Cllr M. Statham	8 February 2023

152/22 (7.11.22)	Renewal of the Council's Oracle Cloud Licenses: To renew the Council's Oracle cloud Licenses required for the operation of the Council's One Source system for HR, Payroll, Finance and Procurement from May 2023.	Cabinet Key Decision	Ian Tuft Ian.Tuft@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird Cllr Ferguson	22 March 2023
153/22 (7.11.22)	Walsall's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2027: To approve Walsall's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2022 to 2027.	Cabinet Key Decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services, service users, external stakeholders	Cllr Ali	22 March 2023
154/22 (7.11.22)	Early Years Funding Formula: To approve the Early Years Formula, as agreed by Schools Forum, to be used for the allocation of funding to early years providers in Walsall.	Cabinet Key Decision	Cabinet Report 17 March 2022 Early Years Funding Formula Walsall Schools Forum report March 2022 – Proposed Early Years Funding Formula Cabinet report 8 February 2017 Early Years National Funding Formula Walsall Schools Forum report 20 September 2016 - Update on National Funding Formula Original consultation document from government regarding the	Schools Forum Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	22 March 2023

			<p>implementation of a national early years funding formula</p> <p>Government's response to the early years consultation and fact sheet</p> <p>Richard Walley</p> <p>Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk</p>			
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Black Country Executive Joint Committee

Forward Plan of Key Decisions Published up to March 2023

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	Black Country Executive Joint Committee Governance			
09/05/2022	Future working arrangements of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee Consider the future working arrangements in light of the receipt of Government correspondence dated 31 March 2022: Integrating Local Enterprise Partnerships into local democratic institutions.	Sarah Middleton Sarah_Middleton@blackcountryconsortium.co.uk	Dudley MBC Sandwell MBC Walsall MBC City of Wolverhampton Council	01/02/2023
06/06/2022	Governance Principles: Enterprise Zones Approval of the amended Supplemental Deed of Governance Principles: Enterprise Zones, relating to the Black Country Executive Joint Committee Collaboration Agreement.	Simon Neilson Simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	01/02/2023

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF)			
03/10/2022	Willenhall Garden City - Phase 1 (Moat Street and Villiers Street) Approval for the Accountable Body for the Land and Property Investment Fund (Walsall Council) to proceed to enter into a Grant Agreement with Green Square Accord Ltd, to deliver the Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF), funded elements of the Willenhall Garden City – Phase 1 (Moat street and Villiers Street) with delivery to commence in the 2022/23 financial year.	Simon Neilson Simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	01/02/2023
03/10/2022	Dudley Brownfield Land Programme Approval for the Accountable Body for the Land and Property Investment Fund (Walsall Council) to proceed to enter into a Grant Agreement with Dudley Council, to deliver the Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF), funded elements of the Dudley Brownfield Land	Helen Martin Helen.Martin@dudley.gov.uk	Dudley Council	01/02/2023

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	Programme with delivery to commence in the 2022/23 financial year.			
07/11/2022	<p>Wolverhampton Stowheath Redevelopment for Housing</p> <p>Approval for the Accountable Body for the Land and Property Investment Fund (Walsall Council) to proceed to enter into a Grant Agreement with Wolverhampton City Council, to deliver the Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF), funded elements of the Stowheath Redevelopment for Housing project with delivery to commence in the 2022/23 financial year.</p> <p>Where the full grant amount cannot be met with LPIF grant funding, the balance will be made up of residual BC LEP funding and investment.</p>	<p>Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk</p>	<p>City of Wolverhampton Council</p>	<p>01/02/2023</p>

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	Local Growth Fund (LGF)			
07/11/2022	YMCA Cleveland Road Approval for the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending its Grant Agreement for the YMCA Cleveland Road project, to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the YMCA Cleveland Road project with delivery to continue in the 2022/23 financial year.	Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk	City of Wolverhampton Council	01/02/2023