

## School Readiness and Early Years Foundation Stage Outcomes

Ward(s): ALL

Portfolios: Education and Skills Councillor Statham

### 1. Aim

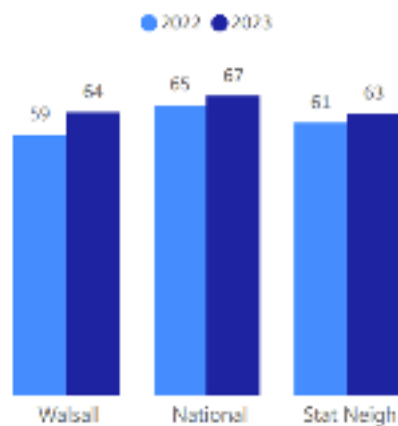
- 1.1. To provide an overview of the outcomes for children in Walsall, at the age of five years, based on the Early Years Profile Outcomes 2023. It also describes the current position regarding the Ofsted Grades of all providers of early years learning.
- 1.2. To provide an overview of Walsall Early 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.

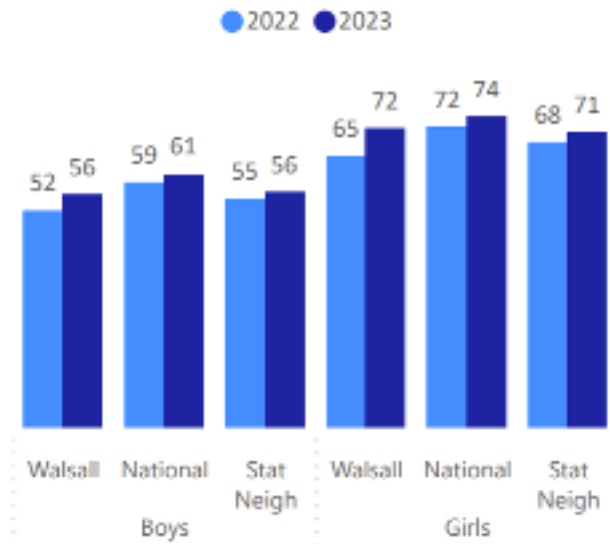
### 3. Report detail – Children’s Outcomes by the age of Five Years

- 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.



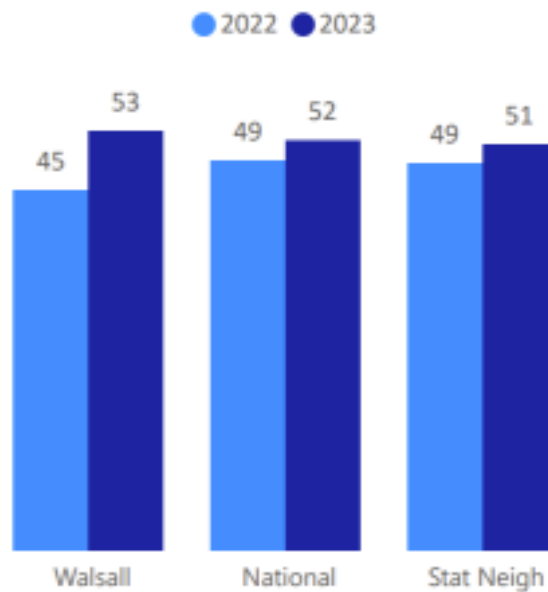
The table above demonstrates the improvement between 2022 and 2023. Walsall improved by 5% compared to a national improvement of 3% and a statistical neighbour improvement of 2%. Walsall is now 3% below national and 1% above statistical neighbours.

### 3.2. Outcomes for Boys and Girls



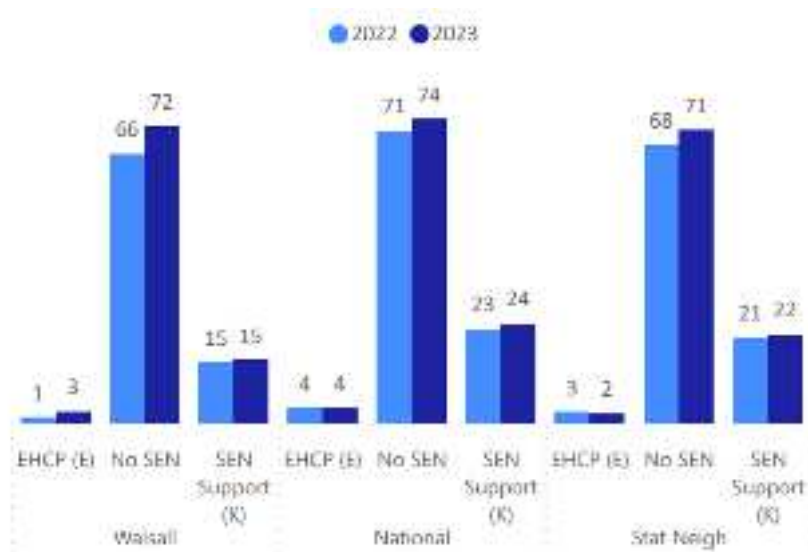
This table demonstrates that in Walsall in 2023, 56% of boys achieved their GLD compared to 72% of girls, giving a gap of 16%, compared to the national gap of 13%.

### 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

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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
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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.

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- 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.
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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
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- 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 0NF. 90's for adults / 70's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 0-4 yrs.	9.15 – 11.15am Baby & Toddler Group @ The Salvation Army, The Loyal, Deighton. WS10 0NF. 90's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 0-4 yrs.	9.15 – 11.15am Baby & Toddler Group @ The Salvation Army, The Loyal, Deighton. WS10 0NF. 90's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 0-4 yrs.	10am Book Club @ Walsall Library, 1 Walsall St, Walsall. WS10 0NF. Free. No booking required.	28 January 10.30-11.00 Health A. Baby workshop. 90's for adults. 70's for children. No booking required. 0-4 yrs.	9 March 9am & 10am Baby & Toddler Group @ West Family Hub, The Grove, Deighton. WS10 0NF. 90's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 0-4 yrs.
18 March 10.00 Parent Forum @ West Family Hub WS10 0NF	12.30 – 2.30pm Baby & Toddler group @ Walsall Food Centre, Canal Street, Walsall. WS10 0NF. 90's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 0-4 yrs.	9.30 – 11.30am Frankie's Parents and Kids @ The Grove, Deighton. WS10 0NF. 90's for adults / 70's for children. No booking required. 0-4 yrs.			13 January 11.00-12.00pm Baby & Toddler Group @ West Family Hub, The Grove, Deighton. WS10 0NF. No booking required.

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
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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).

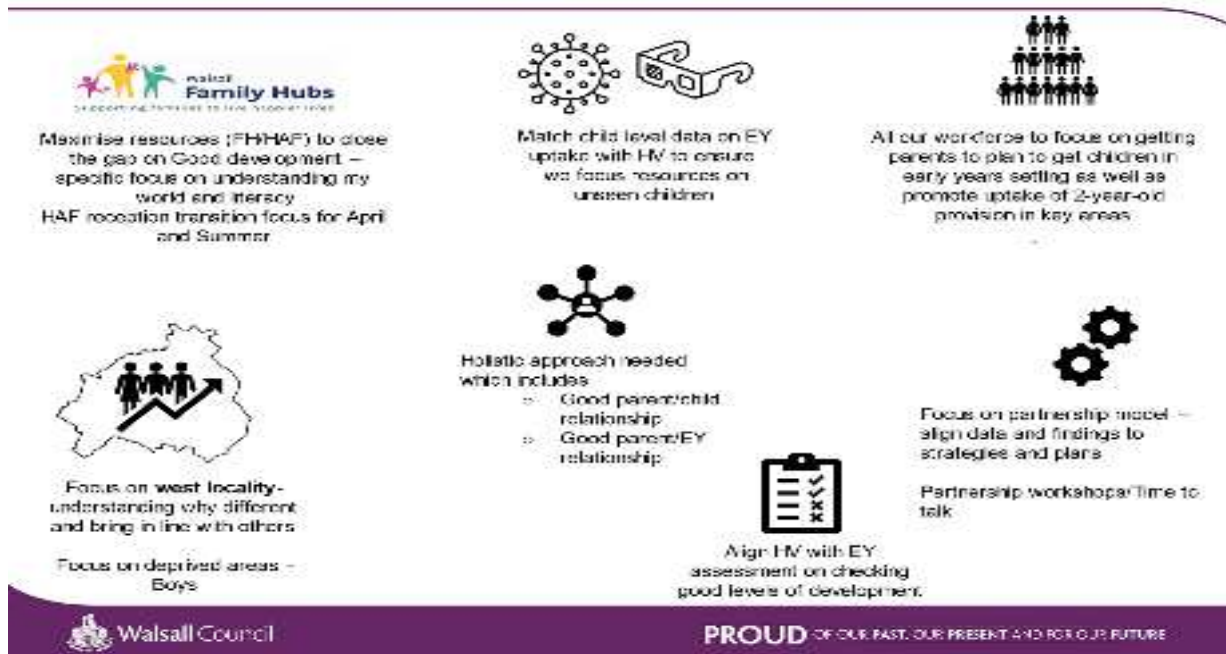
6.12. The Family Hub team are in the process of developing a service directory and have mapped out and secured the sign up of over 79 local organisations who would like to be included in our best start in life directory and our 0-19 directory. 52 of the 79 local organisations offer services to families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

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## 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**

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

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