

**September 2024**

**8.**

**Children and Young People Alliance and We are Walsall 2040 Children and Young People Strategy**

**Ward(s):** All

**Portfolios:** Cllr Stacey Elson  
Portfolio Holder

**1. Aim**

- 1.1 To provide members with an overview of the work of the Children and Young People Alliance.
- 1.2 To provide members with an overview of the 2040 Children and Young People Strategy aligned to We Are Walsall 2040 and progress against the 4 priorities.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That members endorse the Strategy
- 2.2 That members are assured the Alliance are making good progress in the development of a meaningful 2040 Children and Young people Strategy that will respond effectively to issues identified for children and young people growing up in Walsall.
- 2.3 That members consider how we can maximise opportunities to ensure we continue to respond to what children and young people have told us are key priorities to improve outcomes for all growing up in Walsall. Particularly in terms of opportunities in involving children and individuals in decision-making processes and holding us accountable.

**3. Report detail – know**

- 3.1 Walsall's Children and Young Peoples Strategic Alliance is a partnership group that is responsible for the delivery of our Children and Young Persons Strategy. The Alliance was launched in March 2023 and involves Walsall Council, West Midlands Police, Walsall NHS Healthcare Trust, Black Country Integrated Care Board, Black Country Healthcare NHS Trust, Walsall Together, Walsall Housing Group, Walsall College, University of Wolverhampton, and Community Organisations. Recognising that today's children will be adults in 2040, its objective is to develop new ways of thinking and new ways of working informed by the voice of children, young people and their families.

- 3.2 This report continues from a previous one presented to the Children scrutiny in , which detailed the vision, purpose, and focus areas of the children and young people Alliance.
- 3.3 After a comprehensive public consultation, Walsall has set itself an ambitious vision for where it wants to be by 2040. The We are Walsall 2040 Strategy seeks to make Walsall the most improved borough in the region, a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents in all neighbourhoods have the same life chances. The key ambitions underpinning this strategy are that we want to be Healthy and Well, Thriving and Happy, Prosperous and Innovative, and Proud of Our Borough.
- 3.4 The Children and Young People Alliance has taken on the responsibility of developing a 2040 Children and Young People Strategy to achieve the above outcomes.
- 3.5 On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2023 the Alliance held its first 'Children First' organisational leaders' Summit, bringing together 55 leaders from across a diverse range of organisations in Walsall to start a collaborative approach in developing a meaningful Children and Young Persons Strategy 2040 for Walsall that will create a compassionate, healthy, economically strong, and successful place that has children and young people at its heart.

The Summit used scenario planning as a strategic planning tool to ensure that the Strategy is setting our flexible long-term plans to achieve our set out goals. Scenario thinking is a group activity which encourages knowledge exchange and development of mutual deeper understanding of central issues important to the future of the way in which we deliver services and specifically in our case, the develop our collective Children and Young People 2040 strategy.

- 3.6 In February 2024 the Alliance used the insight of the scenario mapping to consult with children and young people. The consultation engaged with 503 children and young people through 3 activities:
- The Big Conversation pack - a simple consultation tool we provided to anyone who was working directly with children and young people to use during January 2024 to gather children and young people's views
  - Future planning workshops in schools, led by MindKind
  - Virtual engagement using Minecraft Education Edition led by TENSTAR.

**What children and young people told us:**

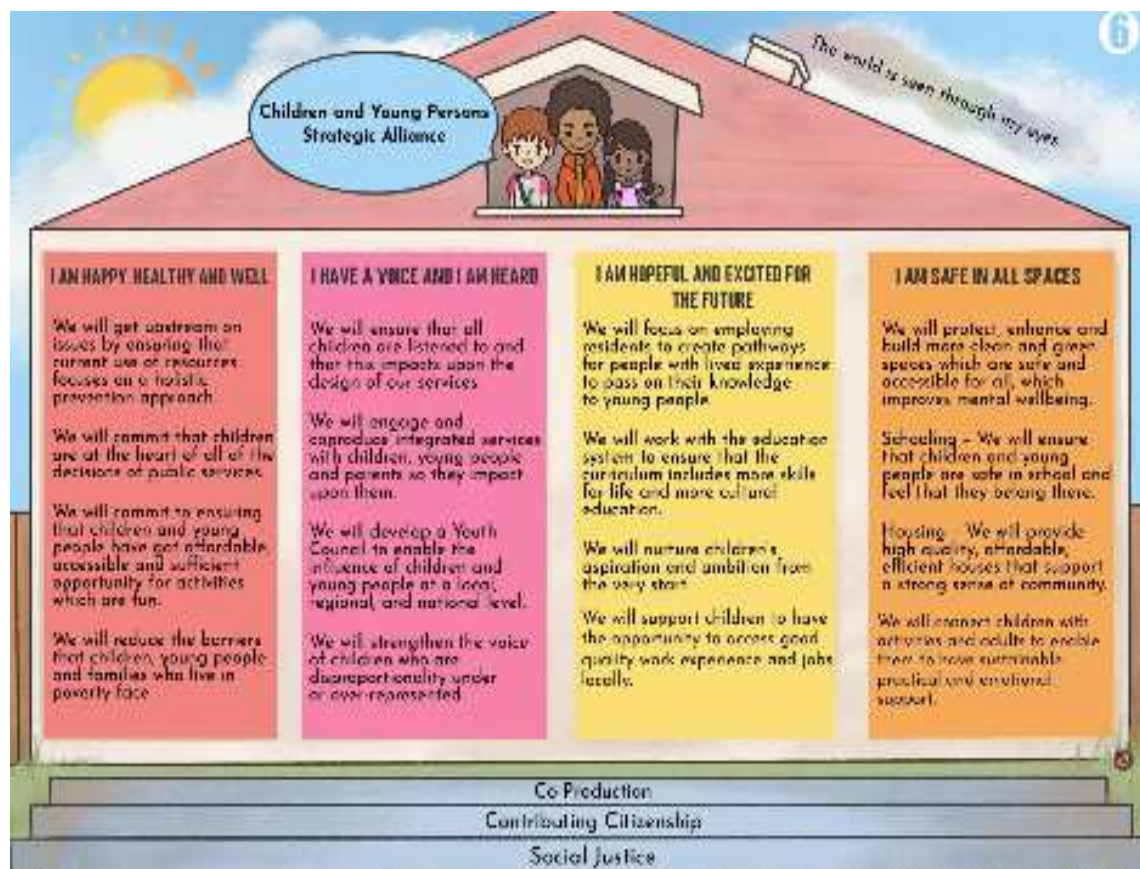
- Children's main worries/concerns around growing up in Walsall are being safe, their environment, including living in and having access to clean and green, opportunities to good education that meet need and jobs for the future.
- Children in more deprived areas feel more negative about how they feel about growing up in Walsall now and about their future opportunities.



- Children are sceptical about whether we will take positive action as a result of what they say and secure more positive outcomes.
- Children identified that having a good and sustainable network of support (through friends, Family and trusted adults) provides them with the foundations of the best start in life as well as feeling safe and developing into a successful adults.
- Some of our children conveyed a level of discouraged acceptance that they are treated differently in various settings and that racism was a part of their everyday lives.
- Help and support is not always easy to get or is not provided in a way that is engaging or meet their needs. Having access to support that will help with meeting children and their families basic needs (food, clothes, education housing) is as important as supporting children with more complex issues.
- Children want to be an active part of making change

### 3.4 We Are Walsall Children and Young People Strategy:

Based on what children have told us and the learning from scenario planning, strategy development is focusing on 4 key areas:



The strategy document has been designed by 2 Care experienced young people. The strategy will be formally published in October 2024 – **see appendix 1**

### 3.5 Progress against the strategy

Despite the strategy not yet being released, the Children Alliance has advanced specific programmes of work to drive forward the four priority areas:

<b>I am Happy, Healthy and Well</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refreshed infant feeding strategy and plan</li> <li>Establishment of a best start for life offer including family hubs</li> <li>Development and implementation of the Family first for children pathfinder</li> <li>Climate Action Fund – our shared future bid</li> </ul>
<b>I am Safe in All Spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic Summer Planning to reduce risk of youth ASB, Violence and Exploitation</li> <li>Development of a youth offer</li> <li>Development of a belonging Strategy with schools</li> <li>Cohesion and Integration Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>I have a Voice and I am Heard</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer Youth Engagement programme around creating safe spaces and clean and green spaces</li> <li>Participation Summit "Shaping my Tomorrow"</li> <li>Development of a Walsall participation strategy and implement a Youth Council</li> </ul>
<b>I am Hopeful and Excited for the Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walsall Learning Alliance Belonging Conference</li> <li>Building Aspirations and Developing Local Workforce Working Group</li> </ul>

### 3.6 Collaboration with children and young people

During the development of the Strategy, the young people we worked with clearly expressed their desire to be actively involved in decision-making and be part of taking action to enhance outcomes for children growing up in Walsall. Therefore the Strategy, in addition to its 4 priorities, sets out 3 key foundations:

- Co-production
- Contributing Citizenship
- Social Justice

As a response we held an ‘Shaping My Tomorrow’ Youth Summit on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2024 as an opportunity for young people aged 9- to 25-year-olds to come together to explore their priorities for action. We additionally explored the opportunities of forming a Youth Council that would authentically represent the perspectives of children and young people in Walsall.

95 young people attending the event identified the most important issues they would like to have a say on are:

- Crime and Safety
- Environment – including clean and green spaces and climate
- Education and learning
- How organisations spend their money
- Support services

We asked young people if they felt that adults in key decision making positions made sure their views and opinions are heard and taken into account. They responded as follow:

- 82% of young people said they felt that parents did

- 63% of young people said they felt teachers did
- 58% of young people said they felt Community Leaders did
- 33% of young people said they felt managers of service did
- 22% of young people said local Councillors or MP's did

This demonstrate the need to drive forward the strategies priority "I have a voice and I am heard"

The majority of young people said that the development of a youth council as a way to get young people involved in decision making and hold leaders to account was a key priority for Walsall. But in doing so they thought it was important to consider following:

- Connectivity and maximising opportunities through existing participation groups
- Create many chances for participation to make sure that all voices are represented – including those who are rarely heard and individuals who do not yet feel confident to speak up.
- Make it fun
- Ensure the right support is in place to ensure it is not just a one off.
- Emphasizing communication with all - even if young people are not interested in decision-making roles, they may still have opinions and want to know how their feedback has led to improvements. This, in turn, might increase their confidence in the system and encourage future participation.



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

4.1 The children and young people Alliance provides opportunities for maximising resources across the partnership as well as securing additional external funding. For example, the alliance is currently applying for Big Lottery funding to secure additional resources to develop participation work and the youth council. Additionally, the alliance is supporting a bid to the Climate Action Fund for the development of community gardens.

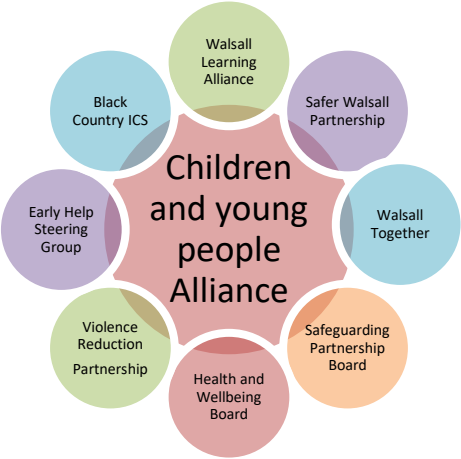
#### **5. *Reducing Inequalities***

5.1 The We Are Walsall 2040 Children and Young strategy aims to secure better outcomes for all children growing up in Walsall, however by including a foundation on Social Justice sets out the partnerships commitment through the implementation of the Strategy to closing the gap on inequalities that exist for children throughout the borough.

5.2 By focusing on improving children's long-term outcomes through our 4 strategic priorities it will ensure that actions taken are fundamentally ensuring the partnership reducing health inequalities and enhancing the quality of life for all individuals in the borough.

**6. Decide**

6.1 As a partnership the Alliance agreed to focus on making the right connections and maximising opportunities rather than focus on formal governance arrangements. In order to do this the alliance are joining the dots to ensure they maximise opportunities to advocate and influence the right issues/topics in the right place in relation to children:



- 6.2 The Alliance formally signed off the Strategy on the 6th of September and activity to launch the strategy will include
- Socialisation of the strategy across all partnership boards to ensure good understanding of the priorities and reflection on what each partnership board can contribute.
  - Developing pledges on how leaders and organisations will contribute to progressing the priorities
  - Mapping of the strategies which will contribute on the delivery of the priorities to ensure we maximise opportunities to influence
  - Communication to children and young people to ensure we tell them how we are responding to what they told us in February 2024.

**7. Respond**

7.1 The next step in implementing the strategy is the development of a SMART action plan that sets out key activities to progress the 4 priorities in the strategy in the first 18 months. This comprehensive plan will consolidate activities gathered through the partnership board and individual organizations, along with specific actions driven by the Alliance itself.

**8. Review**

8.1. The Alliance has developed following outcomes framework to help measure the impact of the strategy:



8.2 The Alliance will be producing a yearly report outlining the progress against the 4 priorities and the impact against our outcomes framework.

8.3 In addition the Alliance will be undertaking “My Tomorrow Yearly Conversation” aiming to engage families and communities in Walsall in meaningful conversations about their experiences of raising children in the borough. By gathering insights from a diverse range of families, this yearly exercise will seek to understand the aspirations, challenges, and concerns they face.

Additionally, the project will be part of how the Alliance will evaluate the effectiveness of support services and system changes implemented under the “We are Walsall 2040 Children’s Strategy” alongside surveys and data gathering. These conversations will be held annually, providing a consistent and evolving understanding of the community’s experiences and the impact of local policies on family life.

### Background papers

Big Conversation report  
Children and young people Strategy.

### Authors

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