

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

24 September 2024 at 6:00PM

**Meeting Venue: Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Lichfield Street,
Walsall**

[Livestream Link](#)

Membership:

Councillor A. Hicken (Chair)
Councillor E. Morgan (Vice-Chair)
Councillor J. Chapman
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor T. Jukes
Councillor N. Latham
Councillor S. Nasreen
Councillor W. Rasab
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham
Vacancy

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor S. Elson – Children's Services

Quorum:

4 Members

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

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

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.

Part 1 – Public Session

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. Minutes of the previous meeting

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2024.

(Enclosed, Pages 1 - 4)

4. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

To receive declarations of interest or the party whip from Members in respect of items on the agenda.

5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):

To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.

6. Portfolio Holder priorities

To receive a presentation on the Portfolio Holder priorities.

(Verbal)

7. Complaints Annual Report – Children and Young People 2023-24

To receive information about the numbers and types of complaints and other representations relating to Children's Services made to the Council during the financial year 2023/24

(Enclosed, Pages 5 - 15)

8. Update on Children's Alliance and Children and Young People 2040 Strategy

To receive an update on the Children's Alliance and Children and Young People 2040 Strategy.

(Enclosed, Pages 16 - 83)

9. Areas of focus – 2024/25

To review the areas of focus for 2024-25.

(Enclosed, Pages 84 -85)

10. Forward Plans

To receive the latest Forward Plans in respect of the following:

- Walsall Council Executive Forward Plan.
- West Midlands Combined Authority Board.

(Enclosed, Pages 86 -103)

11. Recommendations Tracker

- a. To consider progress on recommendations from the previous meeting.
- b. To receive correspondence relation to a previous action.

(Enclosed – Pages 104 - 107)

12. Date of next meeting

To note that the date of the next meeting will be on 5 November 2024.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25 June 2024, 6:00pm

In Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members present:

Councillor Hicken (Chair)
Councillor Morgan (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Chapman
Councillor Rattigan
Councillor Russell
Councillor Jukes
Councillor Harrison
Councillor C. Statham
Councillor W. Rasab

Portfolio Holder

Councillor S. Elson

Officers present:

R. Homer	Director (Children's Social Care).
I. Vanderheeren	Director (Early Help)
N. Gough	Democratic Services Officer

70 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Latham.

71 Substitutions

Councillor E. Russell substituted for Councillor Latham for the duration of the meeting.

72 Declarations of interest and party whip

No declarations of interest or party whip were received.

73 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

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

74 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 11th March and 16 April 2024 were considered.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th March and 16 April 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

75 **Walsall as a Families First Pathfinder**

The Director spoke to the presentation (annexed) and highlighted the salient points. Members were informed that as a wave 2 pathfinder, Walsall would design and test wide-ranging reforms to family help and children's social care. This would enable the government to understand the delivery implications of reforms ahead of a national rollout.

The ambition for multi-agency safeguarding arrangements was to establish clear, equitable and shared safeguarding arrangements, and embed a clear line of sight between strategy and practice. It was stressed that families should be able to access the right help at the right time from the right people, so that they could overcome challenges, and stay together. The Committee was informed that establishing family help would result in a new approach to the way families accessed and received support. This was alongside family networks to support families to stay together and thrive. The next steps for the pathfinder were described.

A series of questions ensued; Officers explained how families were supported, particularly if they were reluctant to accept help. Members were informed that the number of Looked After Children would be reduced through the pathfinder project and ensuring that support was delivered at the earliest opportunity.

In response to challenge about the ambition of the scheme, Officers stated that Directorates worked well together, and this hard work would be continued to achieve desired outcomes.

Resolved that:

The Walsall as a families first pathfinder presentation was noted.

76 **Walsall Right for Children (WR4C) Refresh**

The Director presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed) and informed the Committee that the Walsall Right for Children transformation programme was developed in 2018 and set out its original vision to ensure that the right children were in the right place with the right support for as long as it was needed to ensure that they were safe from harm, happy and learning well.

Members were advised that the WR4C vision, foundation and priorities were reviewed in December 2023 to ensure alignment to both the current Plans and the 'Child Friendly Borough' and 'Feel Safe' themes within We are Walsall 2040.

A Member questioned how the success of summer activities would be measured, the Director stated that performance indicators would be monitored – and provided the example of measures relating to anti-social behaviours and young people at risk of exploitation. Officers responded to stated that the Marmot principles were vitally important and would drive how services would be delivered.

In response to challenge the Portfolio Holder stated that she was confident that success would be achieved and informed the Committee that she had confidence in her team and the Council's Partners.

Resolved

- 1. That the Walsall Right for Children Refresh be noted.**
- 2. That an update on the Holiday Activity Fund and summer programme be provided at the Committee in November/December.**

77 Areas of Focus – 2024 – 2025

The Directors presented an overview of the Children's Services directorate (annexed). Members considered the report and potential agenda items.

Resolved

That, the following items be included in the work programme for the municipal year 2024 – 2025:

- **HAF and Youth Summer Programme.**
- **Young Carers.**
- **Pathfinder Update.**
- **Children at Risk of Exploitation.**
- **Family Hubs – Sustainability.**
- **Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report.**
- **Complaints Report.**
- **Child Sexual Abuse within the family environment.**
- **Youth Justice.**
- **Budget consultation.**
- **Private Fostering Annual Report.**
- **Update on Children's Alliance and Children and Young People 2040 Strategy.**

78 Forward Plans

The Forward Plans were considered by the Committee.

Resolved

That the forward plans were noted.

79 Recommendation Tracker

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

[Annexed]

Resolved:

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

80 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be 24 September 2024.

There being no further business this meeting was terminated at 8.55 pm.

Signed:

Date:

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Agenda
Item No.**

DATE: 24 September, 2024

7.

Complaints Annual Report – Children and Young People 2023-24

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Elson – Children and Young People

Report:

This report contains information about the numbers and types of complaints and other representations relating to Children's Services made to the Council during the financial year 2023/24.

It also provides an overview of statutory and corporate complaint procedures which are appropriate for complaints received from or on behalf of children and young people.

The report provides detail and analysis of all complaints and complaints received in relation to Children's social care services and summarises trends, issues and complaint outcomes. It also includes examples of learning from complaints which supports service improvement.


Recommendations:

That:

Committee notes and reviews the information provided within the report and considers any issues arising.

Contact Officer:

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Walsall Council

Complaints and Representations Annual Report

Children and Young People

April 2023 - March 2024

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1. Introduction

This report contains information for the attention of the public, members of the Council and officers about the numbers and types of representations relating to Children's Services made to the Council during the financial year 2023/24.

It is a statutory requirement to produce an Annual Report (regulation 13(3)) and make it available to the public, staff and elected members.

The process of dealing with complaints regarding Children's Social Care through statutory procedures is set out in legislation.

- **Children's Complaints – Statutory and Corporate as set out in legislation**
The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and accompanying guidance '[Getting the best from Complaints](#)'.

This annual report covers the period of 1 April 2023 through to 31 March 2024 and reports on complaints made by, or on behalf of children and young people who receive support and services from Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Service in Walsall.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response. Anyone who is in receipt of a service or think they should be in receipt of a service may complain, or a representative may make a complaint on their behalf.

The Complaints Manager has the key responsibility for managing the statutory process for complaints from children and young people (or their representatives). The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and analysis of all complaints and compliments received during the period and to summarise the issues that have arisen, providing a mechanism by which the quality and effectiveness of services, the complaints procedure and responses can be scrutinised.

2. Staffing

The Assurance Team administers non-statutory and statutory social care representations and complaints received by the Council relating to both Adults and Children's services.

Officers are responsible for ensuring children's complaints are logged, processed and responded to at Stage 1 of the process, and where a complaint progresses to Stage 2 or 3, the team is responsible for recruiting independent investigators and panel members and for facilitating any investigations and panels which take place.

In addition, the Assurance team is responsible for dealing and responding to any enquiries by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) for complaints across all council services that reach this stage, including Children's Services complaints. The Council's LGSCO link officer role sits within the Assurance

Team and leads on dealing with all LGO contact – initial enquiries, assessments, investigations and ensuring that the council responds accordingly to the findings of any LGSCO investigations.

Also, the team is responsible for processing and responding to Freedom of Information Requests (FOI's), Environmental Information Requests (EIR's) and Subject Access Requests (SARs).

In addition, the team delivers training sessions on the complaints process and in 2023/24, delivered training to senior managers, residential homes staff and foster carers.

3. Reporting and monitoring systems

All statistical information within this report has been taken from the bespoke data base system 'Respond.' This data base provides a reporting and monitoring system to ensure accurate recording/logging of complaints in accordance with the statutory guidance.

Management information from the system was shared with service managers during 2023/2024 via reports to relevant meetings on request, and a regular 'live' complaints report is produced which enables managers to focus on responding to all active complaints in timescale wherever possible.

4. Complaints procedures

4.1 Overview – Stages 1-3

There are three stages to the formal statutory complaint's procedure:

- **Stage one - local resolution.** Intended to be swift, focussed resolution taking no more than 20 working days. The intention is that the majority of complaints can be dealt with at this stage.
- **Stage two - independent complaint investigation.** Where a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their stage 1 complaint, they can request a stage 2 complaint investigation. Carried out by an investigating officer (IO) with an independent person (IP). The IO produces a comprehensive report resulting in a complaint issue being upheld, partially upheld, inconclusive or not upheld. It is the expectation of the statutory guidance that the stage two investigations will be completed in a maximum of 65 working days.
- **Stage three - independently chaired review panel.** Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a stage two statutory complaint, they can request a stage three review panel. This panel is made up of a chair and two members. It is the panel's responsibility to review the investigation but not to re-investigate the complaint.

(Note, the corporate complaints procedure follows the statutory procedure at stage 1, but does not have an independent Stage 2 process – a senior manager can carry out a review of the stage 1 complaint investigation at stage 2 on request, before signposting the complainant to the Local Govt Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied with the response.

4.2 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

At the conclusion of the three stages of the statutory process – (or following a senior manager review of a corporate complaint at stage 2) - the complainant has the right to escalate their concerns to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The LGSCO investigate complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by the Local Authority. This may include looking at complaints both in relation to the provision of social services and in relation to the operation of the complaints process. They can also investigate complaints about how the Local Authority has carried out these processes. The Local Authority must have an opportunity to investigate / respond to a complaint before the LGO will become involved. If the LGO is satisfied with the remedial action offered by the Council, the complaint will be regarded as 'locally settled' and the investigation is discontinued.

5. Headlines and Key Points from Annual Data

	23/24	22/23
Total no. social care complaints received	70	81
Total no. statutory complaints responded to	21	22
Total no. corporate complaints responded to	33	38
No. statutory Stage 2 complaints	2	1
No. statutory Stage 3 Complaints	1	0
Overall timeliness of statutory '10 working day complaints'	50%	60%
Overall timeliness of corporate complaints	52%	63%
Main sources of complaints	Parents; Carers;	Young person with advocate; parents
Main issues of complaints	Communication/ sharing of information; conduct/attitude; quality/ delivery of service;	Communication/ sharing of information; staff conduct/attitude; quality of service

Main outcomes	40% of issues raised in complaints were upheld or partially upheld	49% of issues raised in complaints were upheld or partially upheld
No. of compliments	7	22
LGO Complaints upheld	8	5

Key Points:

- Provisional data from 2023/24 statutory returns indicates that at 31/03/24, Walsall had 2483 Children in Need (CiN) and 655 Looked after Children
- The total number of complaints **received** has reduced by 11% compared with 2022/2023.
- The number **responded** to under all complaints procedures was down by 10% from 60 in 2022/23 to 54 in 2023/24.
- Four statutory complaints received at stage 1 in 2023/24 moved to a stage 2 independent investigation and 2 proceeded to stage 3 of the statutory process.
- Three corporate complaints received at stage 1 in 23/24 proceeded to a senior manager review at stage 2.
- Response rates for both statutory and corporate complaints were lower than the previous year.
- Poor communication / information sharing, staff conduct, and quality of service delivered were the main issues raised by complainants
- Fewer compliments were received in 2023/24 than in the previous year

6. Number of complaints received and responded to by stages

6.1 Stage One – local resolution

The Assurance Team received **70** new complaints during the year, however of these **16** were outside the scope of the complaints process. These were either withdrawn by the complainant, where, for example, the issue was resolvable by the service area without handling as a formal complaint or where the complainant did not have the necessary parental responsibility to make a valid complaint. Others were investigated under other procedures, usually via safeguarding or legal procedures.

In addition, **33** of the complaints responded to were **corporate** complaints, dealt with under the council's corporate complaints procedures, which follow the same process at Stage 1 albeit with a longer deadline to respond of 20 working days.

In total, **21** statutory complaints received during the year were investigated and responded to at Stage One of the statutory process.

The total number of complaints responded to under both procedures was lower than in 22/23, continuing a trend in post covid years

Complaints responded to by service area

Note: some complaint responses required a joint response by more than one service because of the issues complained about

Statutory Complaints Responded to in 2023/24 by Service (21)					
Support, Protection & Assessment (inc. MASH)	Children in Care inc. (Fostering & Adoption)	Corporate Parenting (inc. LAC/ TLC/ DCYPT)	Locality & Family Safeguarding Support	Early Help	Review & Child Protection
2	6	10	4	0	0

Corporate Complaints Responded to in 2023/24 by Service (33)					
Support, Protection & Assessment (inc. MASH)	Children in Care inc. (Fostering & Adoption)	Corporate Parenting (inc. LAC/ TLC/ DCYPT)	Locality & Family Safeguarding Support	Early Help	Review & Child Protection
4	11	12	4	2	1

6.2 Escalated Complaints

Four stage 1 statutory complaint received in 23/24 were resolved at stage 1, but then escalated to Stage 2 at the request of the complainant – one was escalated to stage 3. Three corporate complaints were escalated to senior manager review at stage 2.

6.3 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

In 2023/24, 20 initial complaint enquiries were received in relation to Walsall Council Children's Services by the LGSCO. The equivalent figure for 2023/22 was 12

Of those investigated, 8 Children's services complaints were upheld – although none were in the areas of children's social care. The complaints investigated included:

- Handling of complaints
- Provision of alternative education for excluded children
- Special Education Needs and EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans).

The remedies advised by the LGSCO in these cases included:

- Apologies
- Financial compensation
- Review of processes

7. Timeliness of Complaint Responses

Timescales	No. complaints responded to in timescale 23/24 (nos.)	% of complaints responded to within timescale 23/24 (22/23)
10 working day statutory complaints	9 of 18	50% (63%)
20 working day statutory complaints	1 of 2	50% (66%)
Corporate complaints (20 working days)	17 of 33	52% (63%)

The Assurance Team updates and apologises to customers of any delay and advises when to expect the final response. Delays can occur, for example, if a complaint is particularly detailed and where relevant officers are absent which can delay the manager's investigation.

8. Source of Complaints responded to

Source of All Complaints responded to	23/24	22/23
Child/Young Person	2	7
Child/YP with Advocate Support	4	9
Parents	29	37
Grandparents	7	4
Other Relatives	2	2
Foster Carer/Adoptive Parent	10	1
Professional/Staff Member/Other	1	0
Total	54	60

9. Issues

Of the 54 complaints responded to, 83 separate issues were raised. The table below lists the most frequently occurring issues:

Most frequently occurring Issues	2023/24	2022/23
Poor communication/clarity of information/failure to keep informed	17%	20%
Staff conduct/ attitude	26%	18%
Quality of service	21%	22%
Delay in receiving service	7%	10%
Inaccuracies in reports/ assessments	2%	6%
Lack of support	3%	5%
Disagreement with decision/outcome	9%	8%
Contact issues	3%	5%
Non-adherence to procedure	4%	2%
Abuse from other service users	1%	2%
Financial Loss	6%	2%
Discrimination	1%	2%

10. Outcomes of issues responded to

Issue outcome	23/24	22/23
Not upheld	60%	51%
Partially upheld	15%	24%
Upheld	25 %	25 %

11. Compliments

There were 7 compliments received during 2023/24, compared to 22 in the period 22/23. The following service areas received compliments:

Service Area	No. compliments 23/24 (22/23)
Early Help	4 (12)
Support, Protection & Assessment	1 (-)
Corporate Parenting inc. TLC/DCYPT	0 (1)
Locality Safeguarding Family Support	1 (8)
Children in Care inc. Fostering and Adoption	1 (1)
Total	7 (22)

Examples of compliments received in 2023/24 are as follows:

1. *I recently was subject to assessment by a Walsall children services social worker in Protection and Assessment and I would like say how much a pleasure it was engaging with X and how professional she was; not judgemental and did her job, kept me updated and was fair at all times. I've seen understanding, honesty, helpfulness and professionalism from past workers. You have an amazing team, and you should be proud that the right outcome was reached.*
2. *We are foster carers for siblings. The reason for contacting you is to let you know what a fantastic job we think Y from the Corporate Parenting Team is doing with the CICC group and our foster children in particular. He really goes above and beyond for the children and in the years that we have worked with him he has never let them down, he's one of the most reliable people they have had in their lives in recent years. He ensures they have a great time in his sessions, and he has arranged some excellent opportunities for our young people to have their voices heard. We find this support also extends to us as foster carers*
3. *I wanted to let you know that our school have been part of an Early Help support Plan led by A, and what a wonderful outcome this has had, Anne managed to successfully engage a difficult to reach family and has got a pupil into school who had not attended in 18 months. I never believed this would be possible, A worked restoratively, empowering the family to do things for themselves with her support, rather than doing everything and closing the case. This will enable them to maintain things for themselves once Early Help do close. I am quick to say if I feel something is not working well, so wanted to praise when someone does an amazing job.*

12. Learning

- As part of the statutory complaint response process, all responding officers are requested to identify learning for the service. Effective learning can prevent further similar complaints, identify gaps in service, assist with reflection on practise and provide strong evidence for inspection.
- A learning form enables capture of where the learning is raised with staff e.g. one to one's, management meetings, together with any proposed service action/ changes.
- Learning can also be captured from a complaint response where the responding officer sets this out within the response.
- Examples of learning captured in 2023/24 in relation to **upheld or partially upheld** complaint issues are set out in the table below:

Complaint	Learning	Actions
Parent unhappy with quality of service delivered around assessment following	Assessment was not robust; it didn't fully address the issues	Discussion with SW about ensuring we are addressing reason for

father raising concerns about safety and wellbeing of daughter with ex-partner.	which triggered assessment. Parent not fully involved in assessment.	assessment with clear recommendations. SW reminded of importance of both parents being contacted at the start of process. Apology and assurance that all information shared and anything further within the current assessment will be listened too, considered, and explored fully.
Concerns regarding the status of the Special Guardianship Order (SGO) fee payment from a complainant who had changed from foster carer to Special Guardian status	Recognition of a need to explain clearly in relevant policy document payment details and expectations	Updating of Permanence Financial Support Policy - although not set out as a requirement, we will include information in the updated version that explains that any ongoing payments of the fostering fee to the special guardian will be paid against the scheme in place at the time the financial support was agreed.
Care leaver experienced a lack of support from the local authority on leaving care and moving to seek work and live in a neighbouring borough	care leaver was not explicitly made aware of his rights regarding support from the Transition and Leaving Care team between the ages of 21 and 25. He was closed to the service and returned for informal support at times. Young person believes that he would have had more fluid support had ongoing allocation of a Personal Advisor been maintained	Closure documentation to be created to be given to young people when closing to the service at 21+. This will outline the rights that the young person has to return for advice or support up to the age of 25. Review of service response to requests for support for care leavers aged 21+ returning to the service for support.

Contact Details:

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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 23rd 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.

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:

I am Happy, Healthy and Well	Refreshed infant feeding strategy and plan Establishment of a best start for life offer including family hubs Development and implementation of the Family first for children pathfinder Climate Action Fund – our shared future bid
I am Safe in All Spaces	Strategic Summer Planning to reduce risk of youth ASB, Violence and Exploitation Development of a youth offer Development of a belonging Strategy with schools Cohesion and Integration Strategy
I have a Voice and I am Heard	Summer Youth Engagement programme around creating safe spaces and clean and green spaces Participation Summit "Shaping my Tomorrow" Development of a Walsall participation strategy and implement a Youth Council
I am Hopeful and Excited for the Future	Walsall Learning Alliance Belonging Conference Building Aspirations and Developing Local Workforce Working Group

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 14th 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*

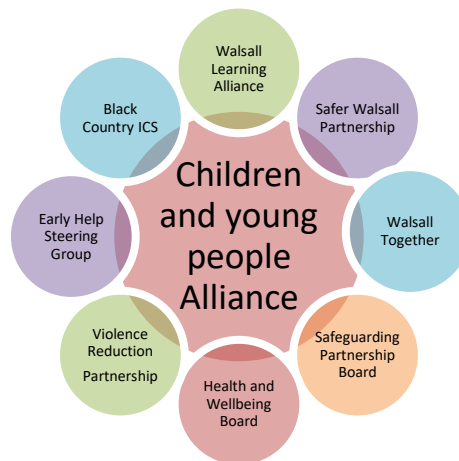
- 4.1 The children and young people Alliance provides opportunities for maximising resources across the partnership as well as securing additional external funding. For example, the alliance is currently applying for Big Lottery funding to secure additional resources to develop participation work and 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 ensures 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.

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WALSALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ALLIANCE – BIG CONVERSATION 2024

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

Big Conversation Consultation – Results - We are Walsall 2040

Isabel Vanderheeren, Nike Morris



CONTENT

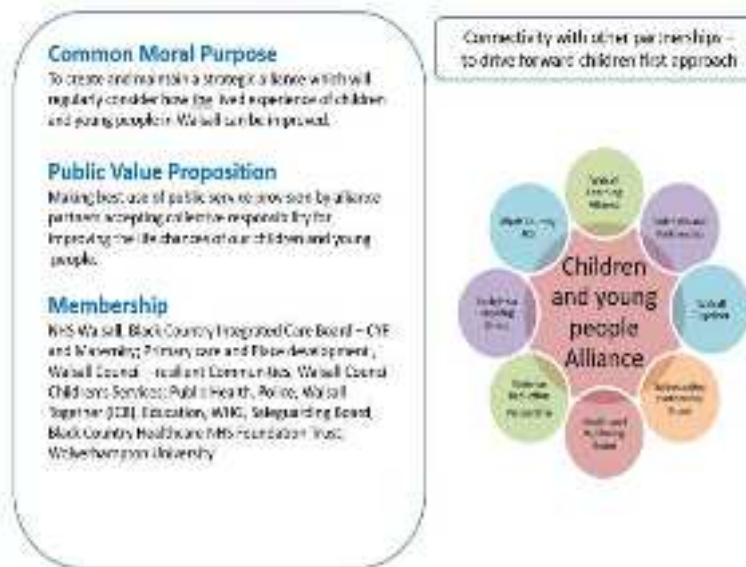
1. Introduction
2. What is our BIG CONVERSATION?
3. ACTIVITY 1: BIG conversation pack
4. ACTIVITY 2 - Walsall 2040 – Future planning workshops in schools
5. ACTIVITY 3 : Virtual engagement using Minecraft Education Edition led by TENSTAR
6. Reflections on what young people have told us through this consultation
7. Recommendations

1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

2. WHAT IS OUR BIG CONVERSATION?

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

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

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

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

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

3. ACTIVITY 1: BIG conversation pack

Methodology:

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

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

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

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

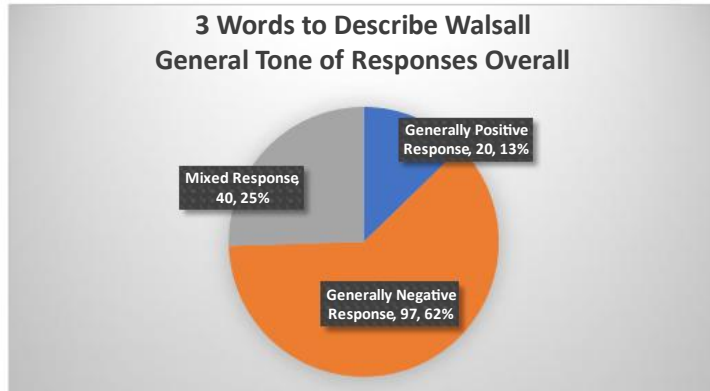
Respondent profile

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

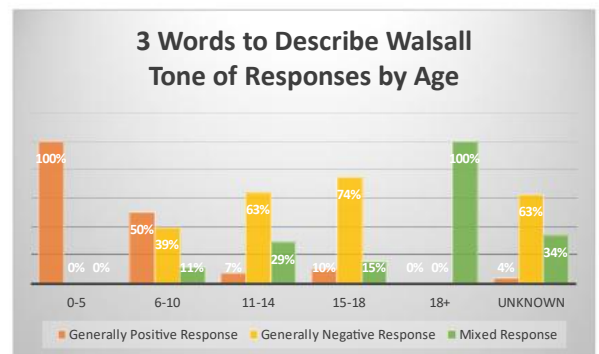
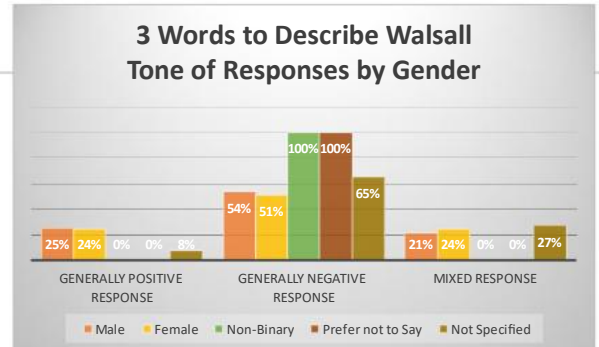
Age	0-5	1.1%
	6-10	13.6%
	11-14	24.3%
	15-18	22.0%
	18+	0.6%
	Unknown	38.4%
Gender	Male	40.1%
	Female	26.0%
	Non-Binary	0.6%
	Prefer not to Say	0.6%
	Not Specified	32.7%
Ethnicity	Arab-Egyptian	0.6%
	Asian/Asian British	5.6%
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	9.6%
	British	1.1%
	Mixed/Multi-Ethnic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

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

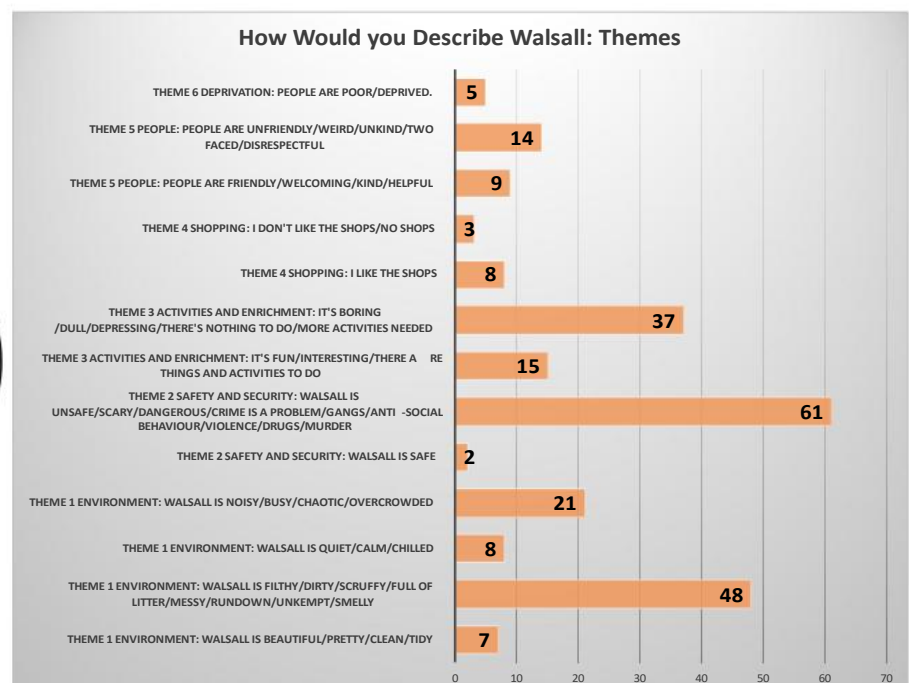
How Would you Describe Walsall in 3 Words?



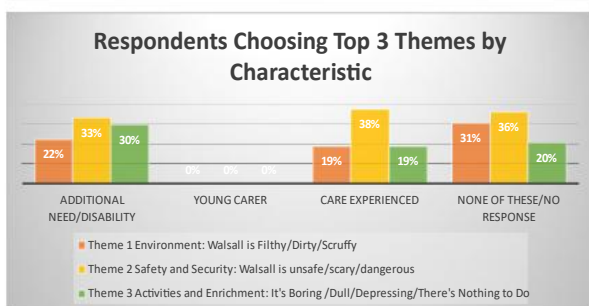
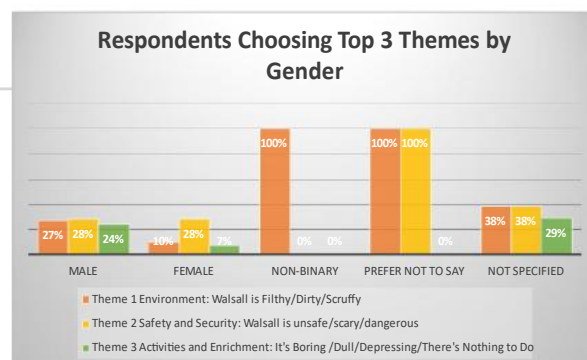
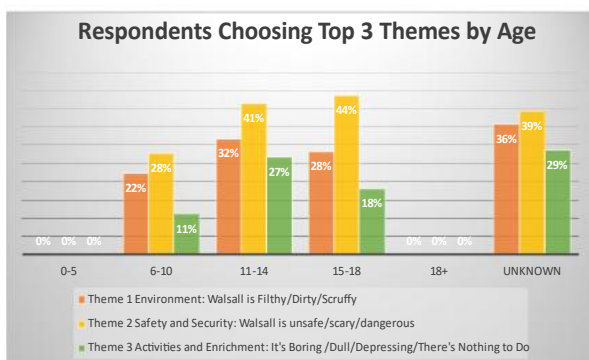
- Most responses were negative in tone.
- There was little difference in positivity vs negativity between male and female respondents.
- However, children and young people in older age groups gave more negative responses than those in younger age groups.



How would you describe Walsall in 3 Words:
Emerging Themes



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



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

How would you describe Walsall in 3 Words: Quotes

“Popular, brilliant schools, fabulous”

“good, boring and funny”

“Rough, filthy, scary”

“Terrible, Unsafe, Deprived”

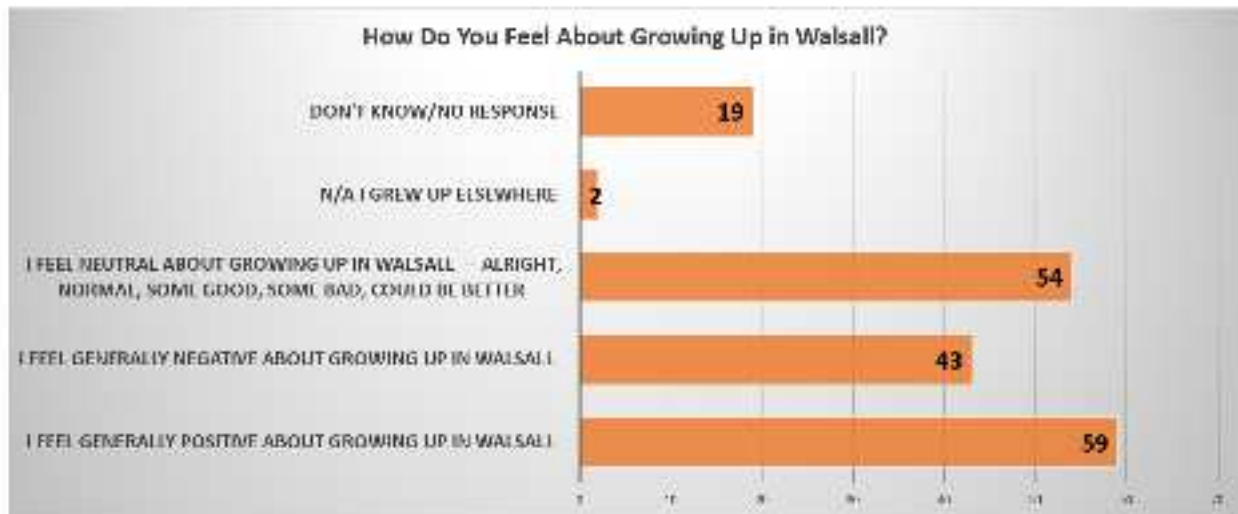
“1, Dangerous, 2, Big, 3, Fun things to do (if you have money to pay)”

“Fun, Expensive, Split”

“Scary, Boring, Crap.”

“It’s very beautiful”

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



How do you Feel about Growing Up in Walsall: Quotes

“Scared because of crime”

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

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

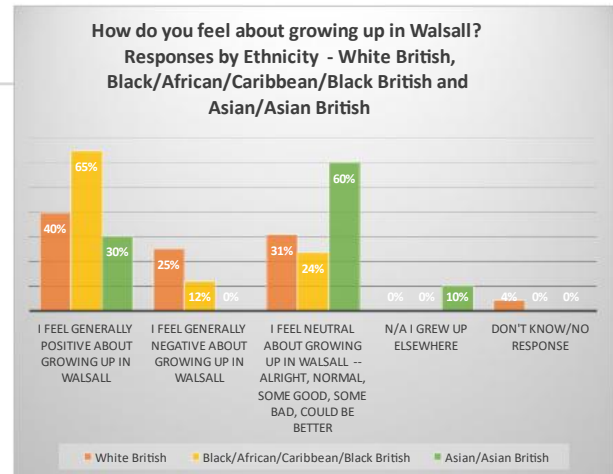
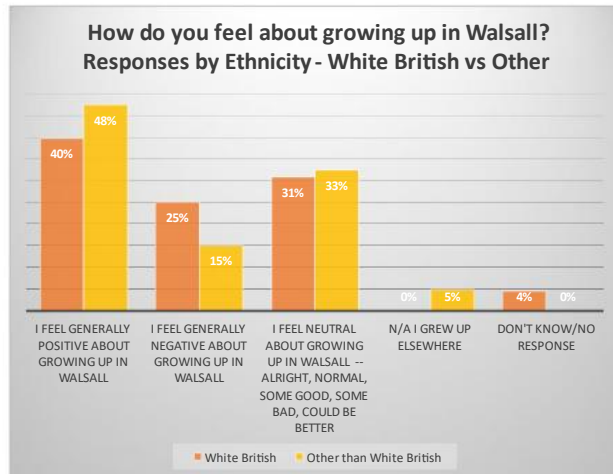
“Good - I love being with my family (foster carers)”

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

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

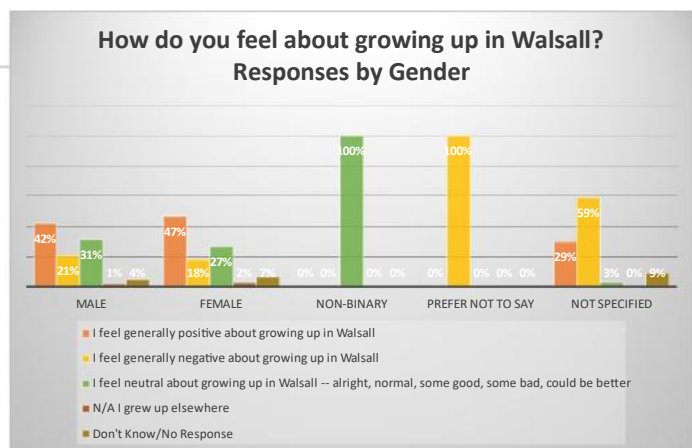
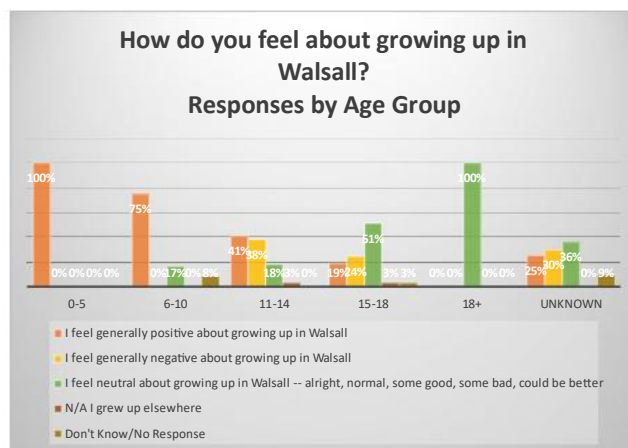
“It is what it is. I will be moving out of Walsall when I’m older.”

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



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

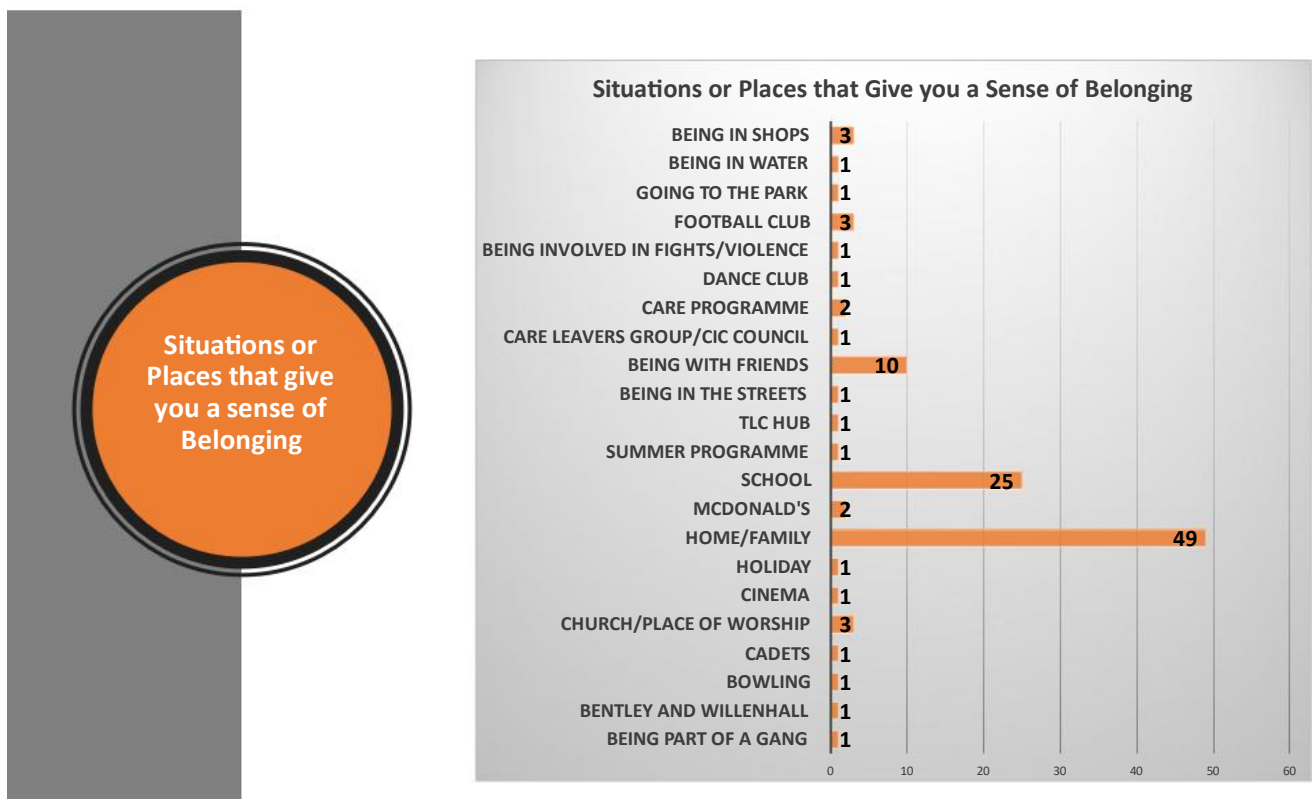
How do you feel about growing up in Walsall? Responses by Age/Gender



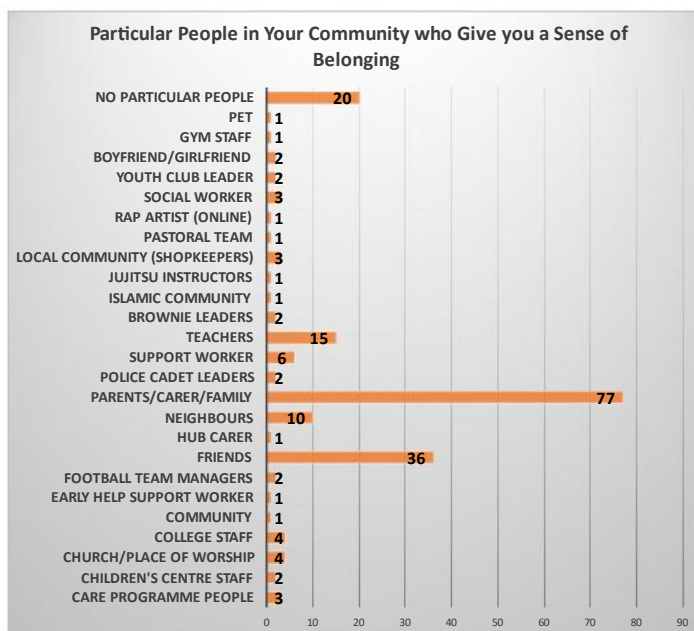
- A greater proportion of 11-14 year olds felt negative about growing up in Walsall than other age groups.
- No children in the 0-5 or 6-10 age groups felt negative about growing up in Walsall.
- Positivity reduces as age increases.
- A slightly higher proportion of female respondents felt positive about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

Topic 2 - Belonging in Walsall

What does belonging mean to you?



People who give you a Sense of Belonging



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

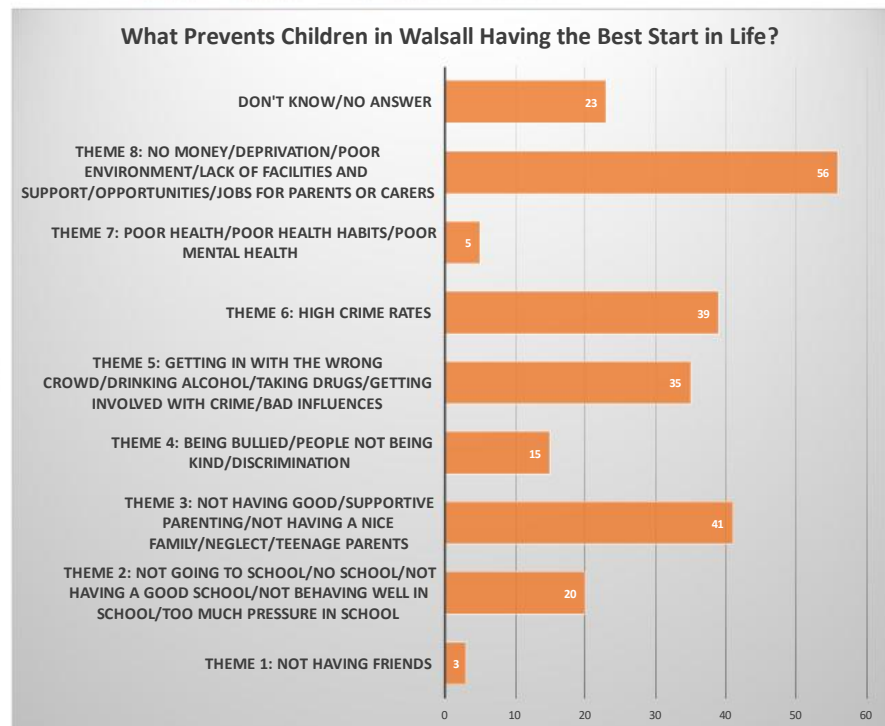
"More activities and places to meet for children with disabilities. Greater accessibility in the area."

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

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



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



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

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

"That everyone has a good education"

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

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

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

"Give out nappies and milk formula for free"

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

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

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

Topic 4: All Children are Thriving

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

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

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

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

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

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

Children and Young People's Aspirations

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

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

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

What will you be
doing in 2040?
Quotes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Better role models and less fear on the streets"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Topic 5: Walsall in 2040



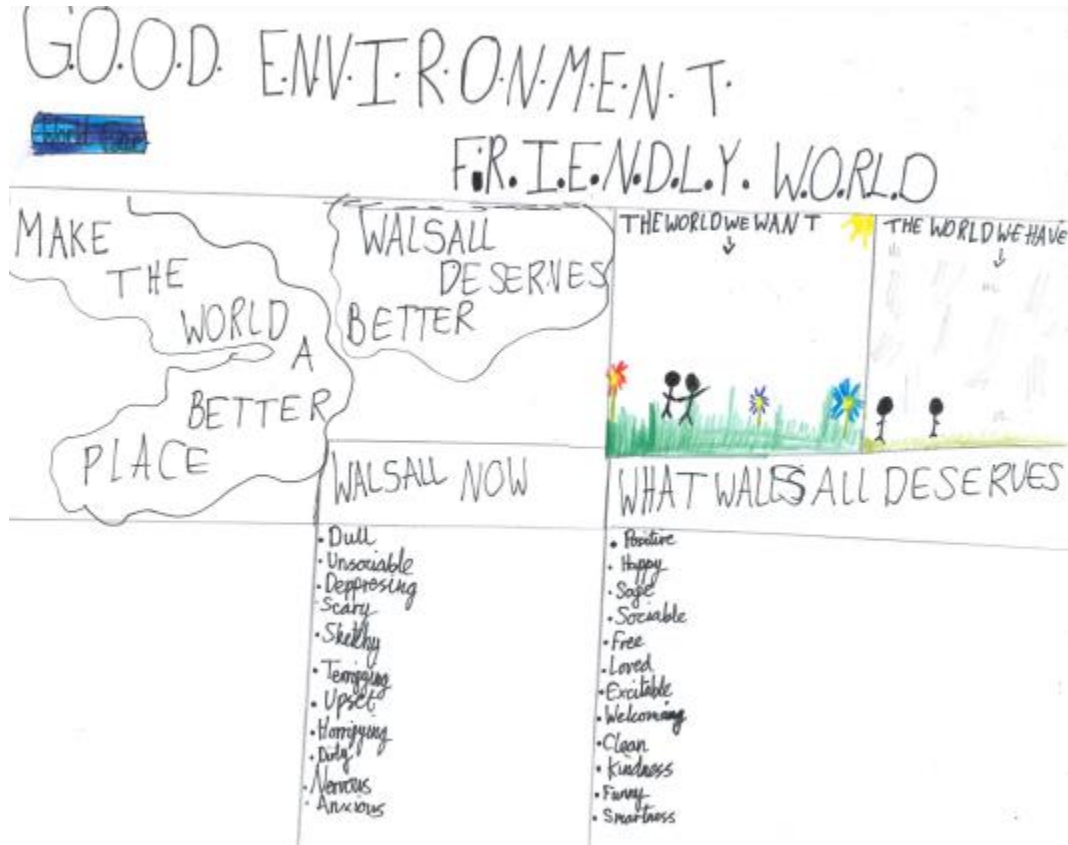
Topic 6: Call to Action

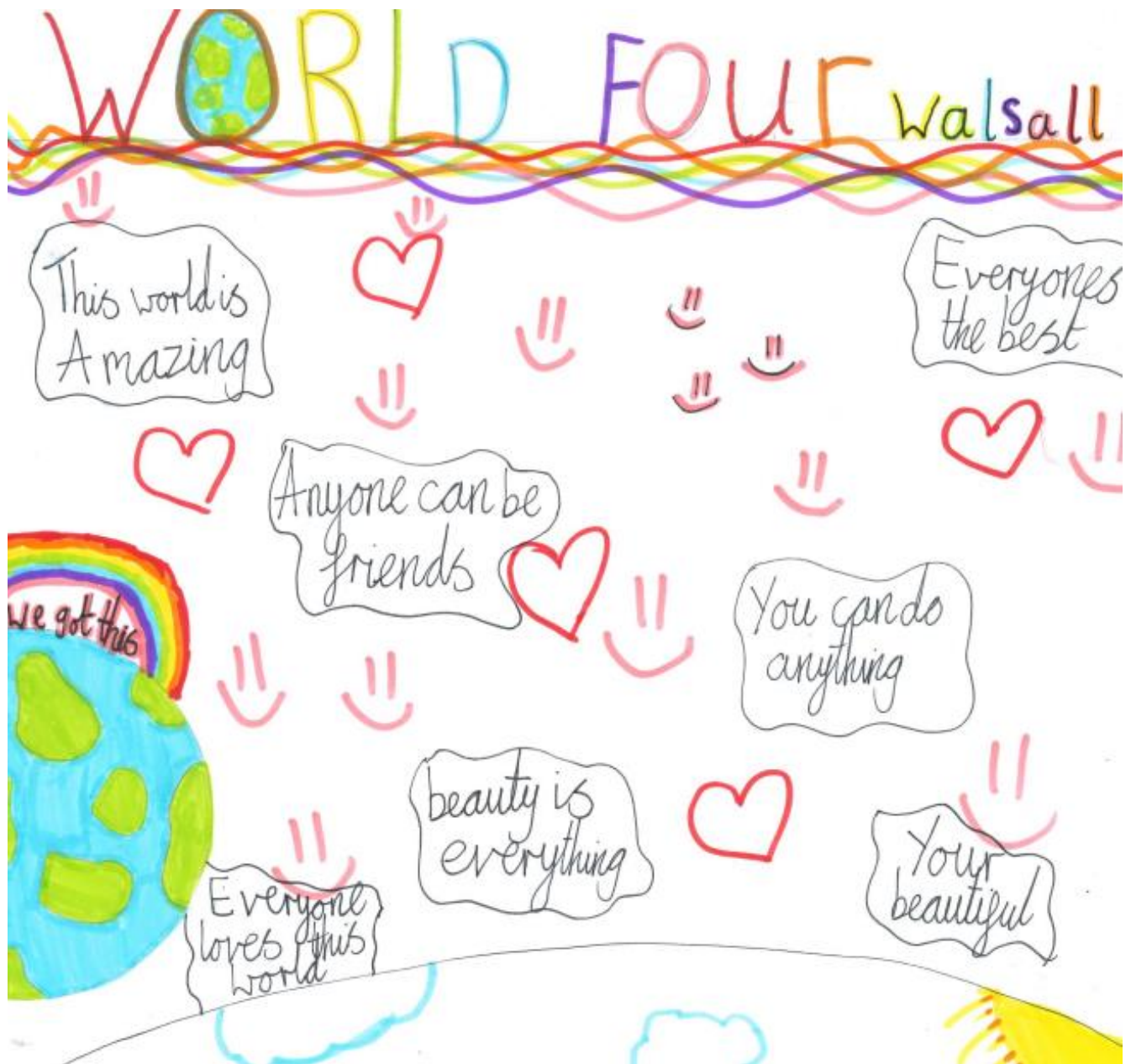


We asked children what actions leaders in Walsall should take to ensure Walsall becomes a better place for children to grow up. The themes for actions children identified:

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

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





Research background

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

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

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



¹ <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/WAW2040>

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

Our Approach

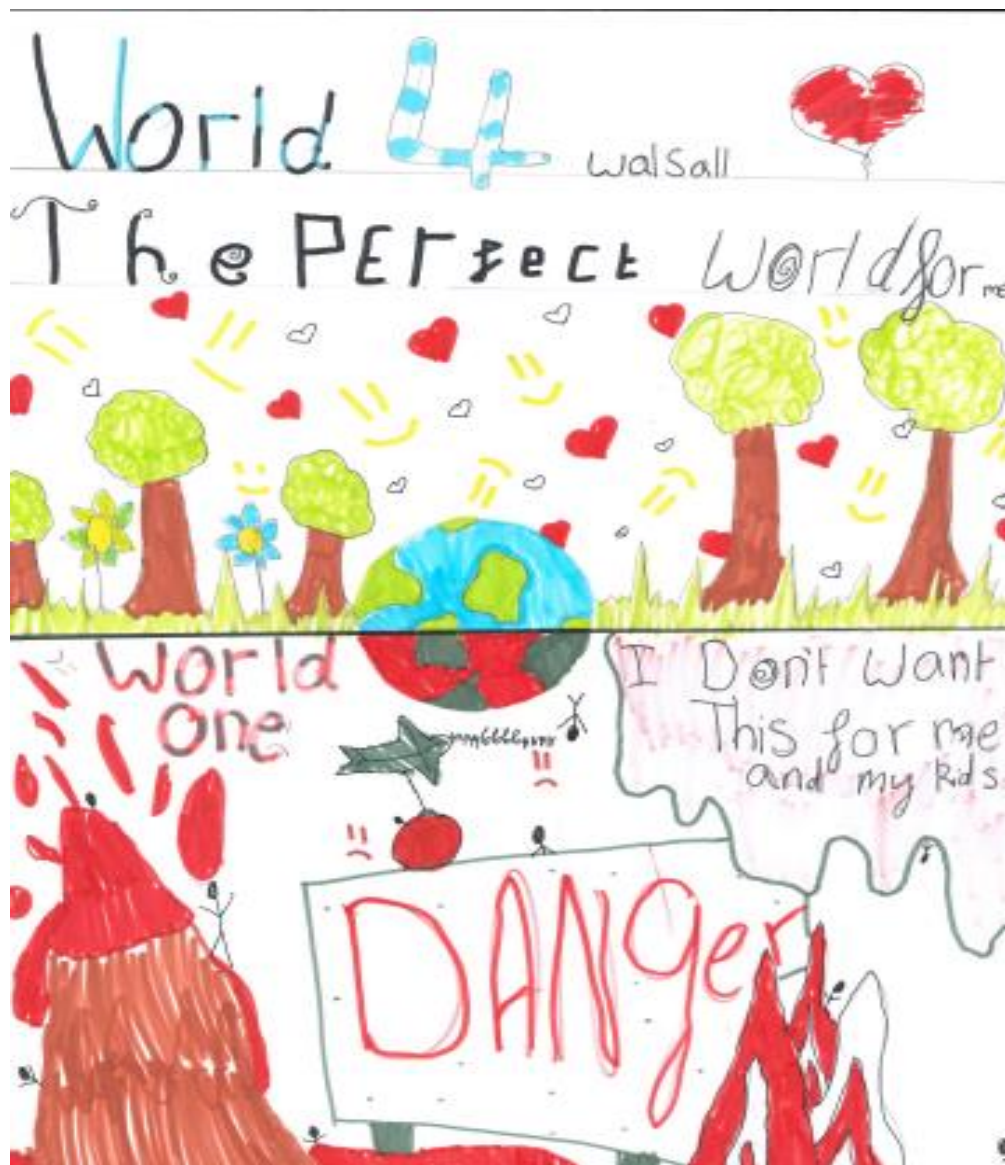
The MindKind Projects used a quantitatively and qualitatively-driven multiple-method approach to collecting insights from participants. Opinions and insights were gained by working through a workbook that included open questions, future vision drawings, group discussions and whole class opinion polls.

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

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

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

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



Participants

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

Rushall Primary School -

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

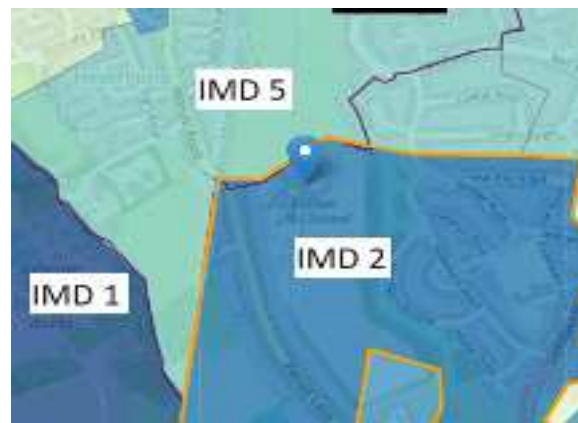


Figure 1 - Map showing location of Rushall Primary School and Indices of Deprivation

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

Croft Academy

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

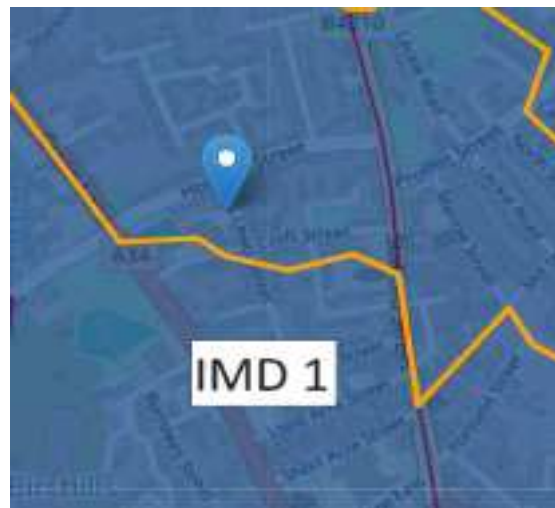


Figure 2 - Map showing location of Croft Academy and Indices of Deprivation

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

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

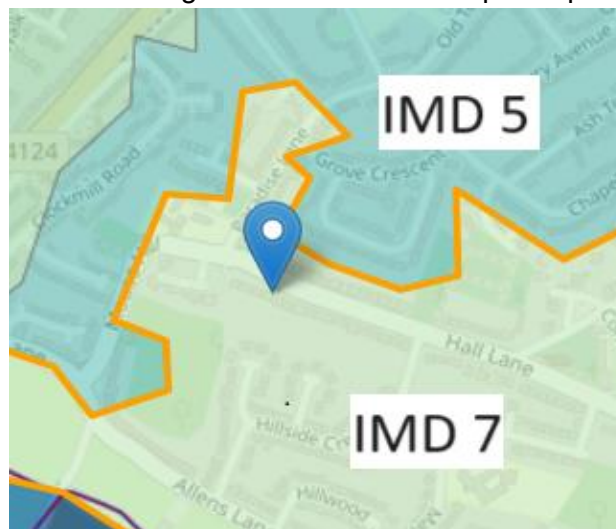


Figure 3 - Map showing location of St Michaels and Indices of Deprivation

Whitehall Junior School

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

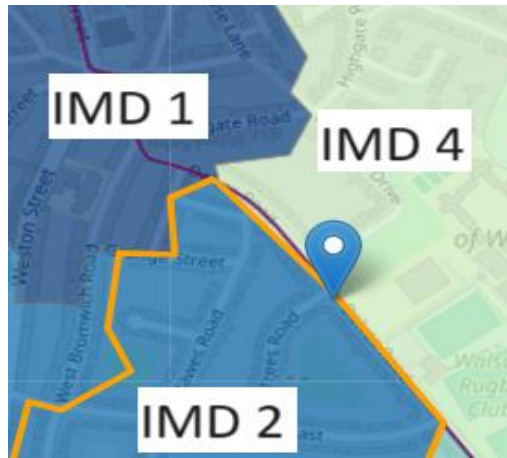


Figure 4 - Map showing location of Croft Academy and Indices of Deprivation

Blakenall Heath Junior School

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



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



Findings

Current Views of Walsall

Demographics and Intersectionality

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

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

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

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

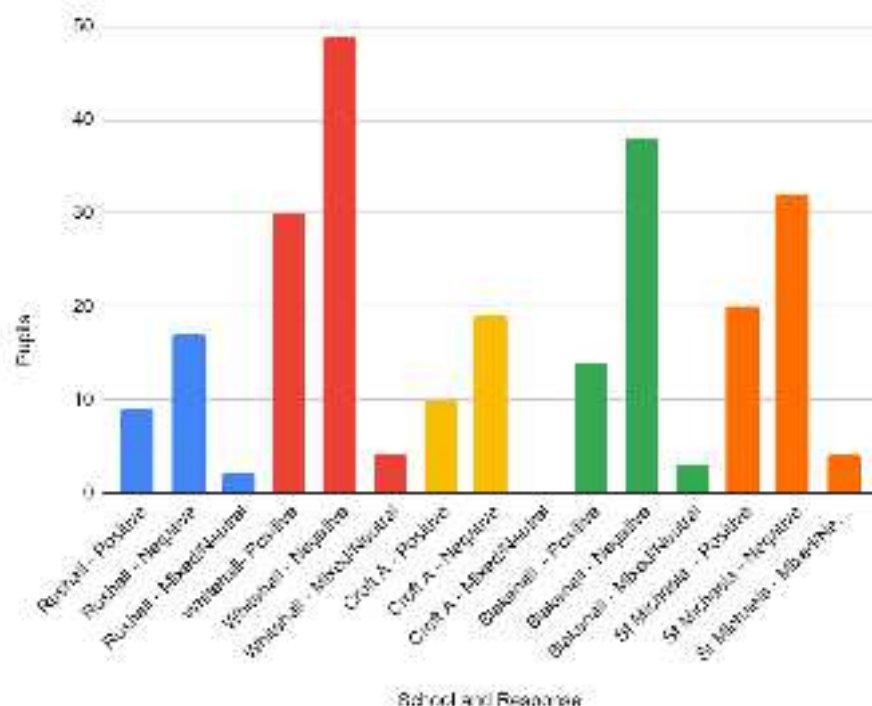


Figure 7- Chart Showing Nature Of Responses To The Question - 'What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?'

What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?

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

Good Things	Bad Things
Shops Schools	Litter Vandalism
Best Thing	Worst Thing
Home Family	Slappings Death Shootings

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

What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?

Smells	Bad	unsafe	I hate it
dirty	unsafe	to many people dangerous	unpleasant
crime		killings	

Key Themes

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

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

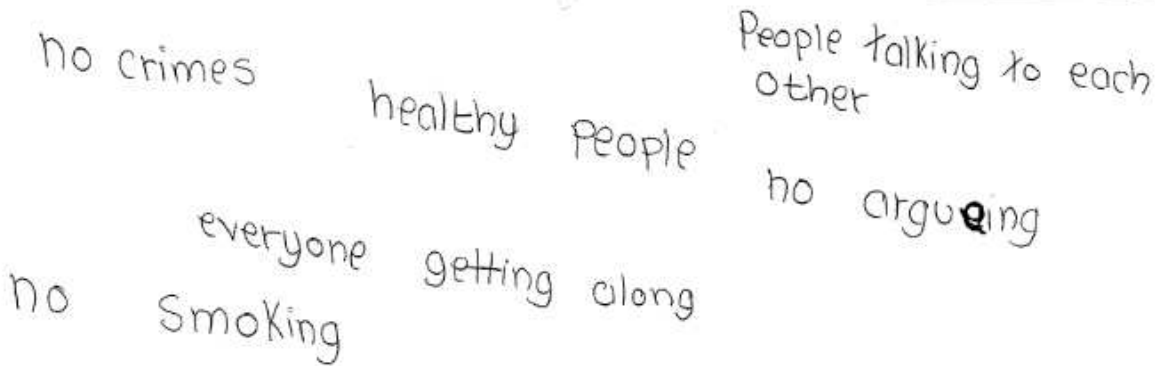
Across localities there was a tangible sense of feeling unsafe as a key driver for negative responses towards Walsall. Crime in various forms featured heavily in responses including murder, stabbings and gang activity. Whilst this sense of danger was present across all localities it was clear that participants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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Future Safety and Crime

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

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

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

Finance and Jobs

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

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

Homes and Homelessness

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

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

Dystopian Visions Of Walsall 2040

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

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

Environment and Nature

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

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

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

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

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

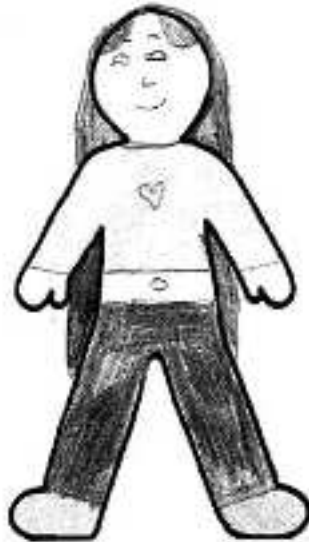
Leaving Walsall

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

Future Ambitions

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

26



...What Will You Look Like?

Nurse to help people

Footballer



debt card
cash: +000999999999
due - 50000

£7 mil
[sketch of a building]

...What Will You Look Like?

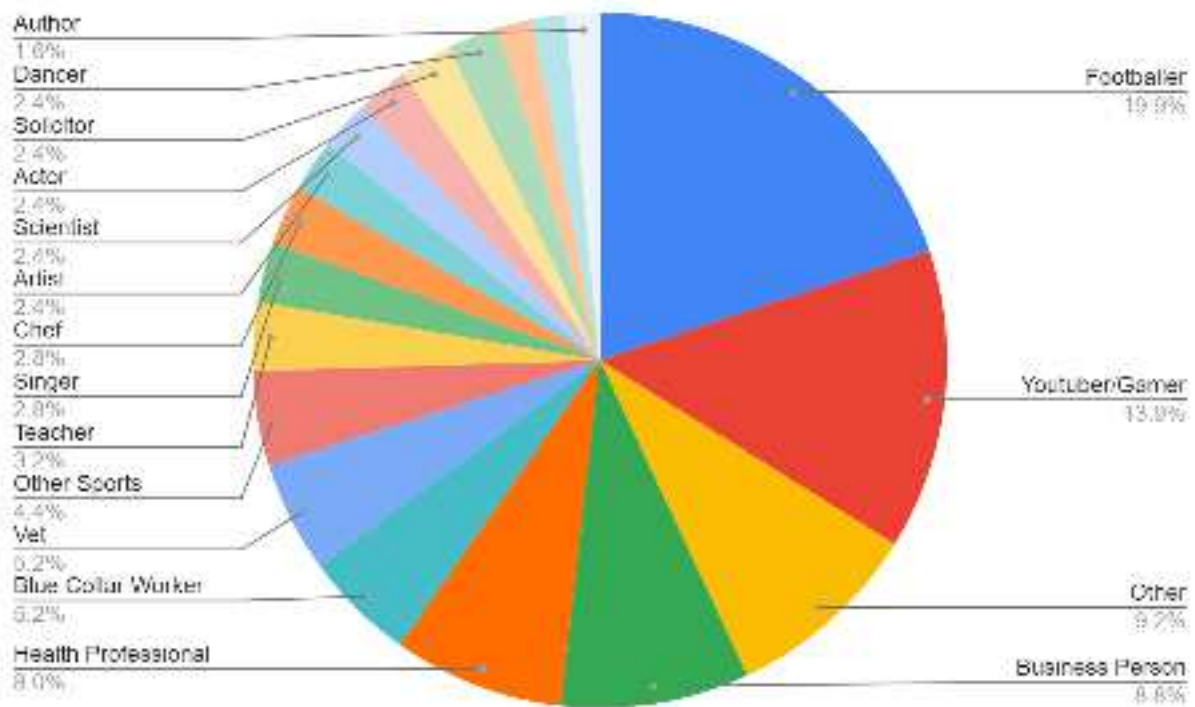
How Old Will You Be in 2040.....

26



...What Will You Be
Scientist

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



Social Connectedness and Kindness

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

POSTCARD

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



To the king of Midlands

Walsall Castle

Walsall, UK

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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



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

POST

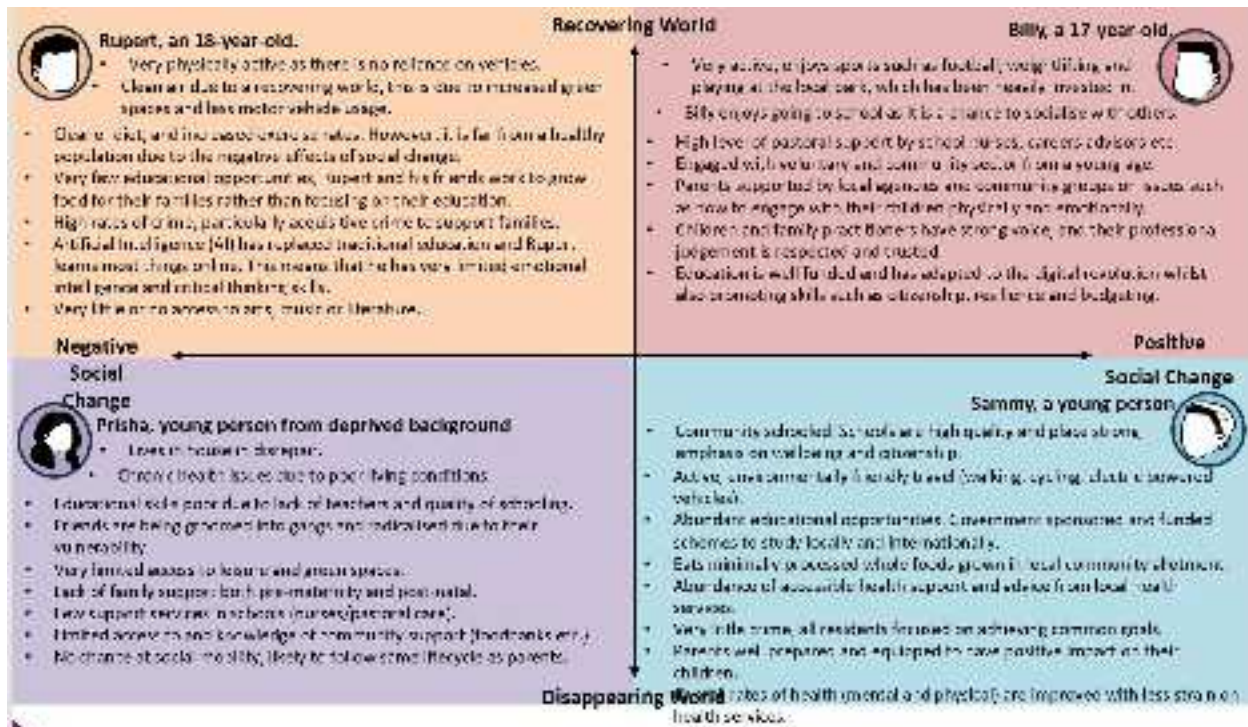
MAKE Walsall a better place



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

Methodology

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



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

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

participants

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

CARE group - 9

Lifegate - 18

North locality Early Help - 6

South locality Early Help - 5

Young carers youth group - 33

Findings

How would you describe Walsall Now:

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



What do you think Walsall in 2040 will be like–

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



Children feedback on each of the worlds:

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

39 young people completed this world.

Questions explored with young people in this world:

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

37 Negative reactions to Prisha's house 2 Positive

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

39 Positive Reactions to Kofi's house 0 Negative

Name 3 things you changed to Prisha's house?

Most used changes -

Greenery (32)

A bed (29)

Food (19)

Would you like to see more green spaces in Walsall?

36 Yes 3 No



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

28 young people completed this world.

Questions explored with young people in this world:

How does the village make you feel?

Positive (26) Negative (2)

Name the village

23 kept the name Walsall with some small additions.

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

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

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

29 young people completed this world.

Did you choose to destroy the AI?

Yes (27) No (2)

Do you use social media over 3 hours a day?

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

Do you think AI poses a risk in 2040?

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

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

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

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

69 young people completed this world.

List of builds-



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

An underground house for the homeless

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

Summary of key issues identified through the activities:

The key issues highlighted from the 2040 Minecraft Project are:

Litter/Dirt

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

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

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

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

Safe Places

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

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

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

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



"My family safe"

Overall

The overview seems to be mostly negative.

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

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



"A safe space to Chill"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Recommendations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Social Connections

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

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

4. Children as active citizen

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

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

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

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

**WE ARE
WALSALL
2040**

WE ARE WALSALL



2040

Child friendly Borough

Our Future

Our Borough

Version 1

September 2024 - April 2026

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FOREWORD

2



Dear Children and Young People of Walsall,

We, the Walsall Strategic Alliance, are proud to present to you the Walsall Children and Young Persons Strategy.

This strategy is the result of lots of learning from listening to children, young people, and professionals to understand your current lived experiences and the drivers for change that will influence what Walsall looks like and feels like for children and young people in 2040. Our goal is to make Walsall a child-friendly borough where all children grow up healthy, happy, and achieve their potential.

This strategy sets out a direction we want to travel in, but it's more than just getting to the end goal; it's about the journey and what we learn from what you said along the way. We'll keep checking our compass with to make sure we're on the right track, reflecting on what we've done, and learning from it. We'll make changes when needed so we can reach our goals and truly make a difference to your lives.

We are committed to working together to turn the curve on current projections and ensure that Walsall is a vibrant place where you are proud to live and people in all neighbourhoods have the same life chances.

We hope that this strategy will serve as a guide for our collective efforts to make Walsall a better place for all of our children and young people.

Sincerely, The Walsall Children and Young People Alliance

WHY DO WE NEED A CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES STRATEGY?

3

If we do not take action, we predict that:

The overall population of Walsall will grow by

5.5%

between now and 2040.

Those aged under 16 will increase by

8%.



There will be an increase to around 1/17 children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN), an increase of

66%

by 2040.



We predict that

63%



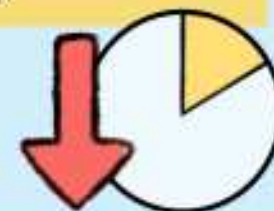
of young people aged 16 and under will live in relatively low-income families.



There will be a

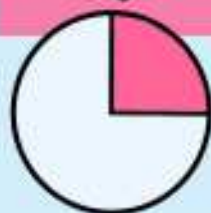
20%

fewer children and young people aged 5-18 doing 60 minutes of activity per day.



25%

of children will show signs of dental decay.



Walsall will be behind England's average for those achieving

5+

GCSE's.

WHAT HAVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US?

4

During 2040, we asked over 500 children and young people about what it's like to live in Walsall and what their thoughts and hopes for the future were

60% of children felt that Walsall would not be a positive place to live in 2040

41% of children said feeling safe is important for making them feel that they belong in Walsall

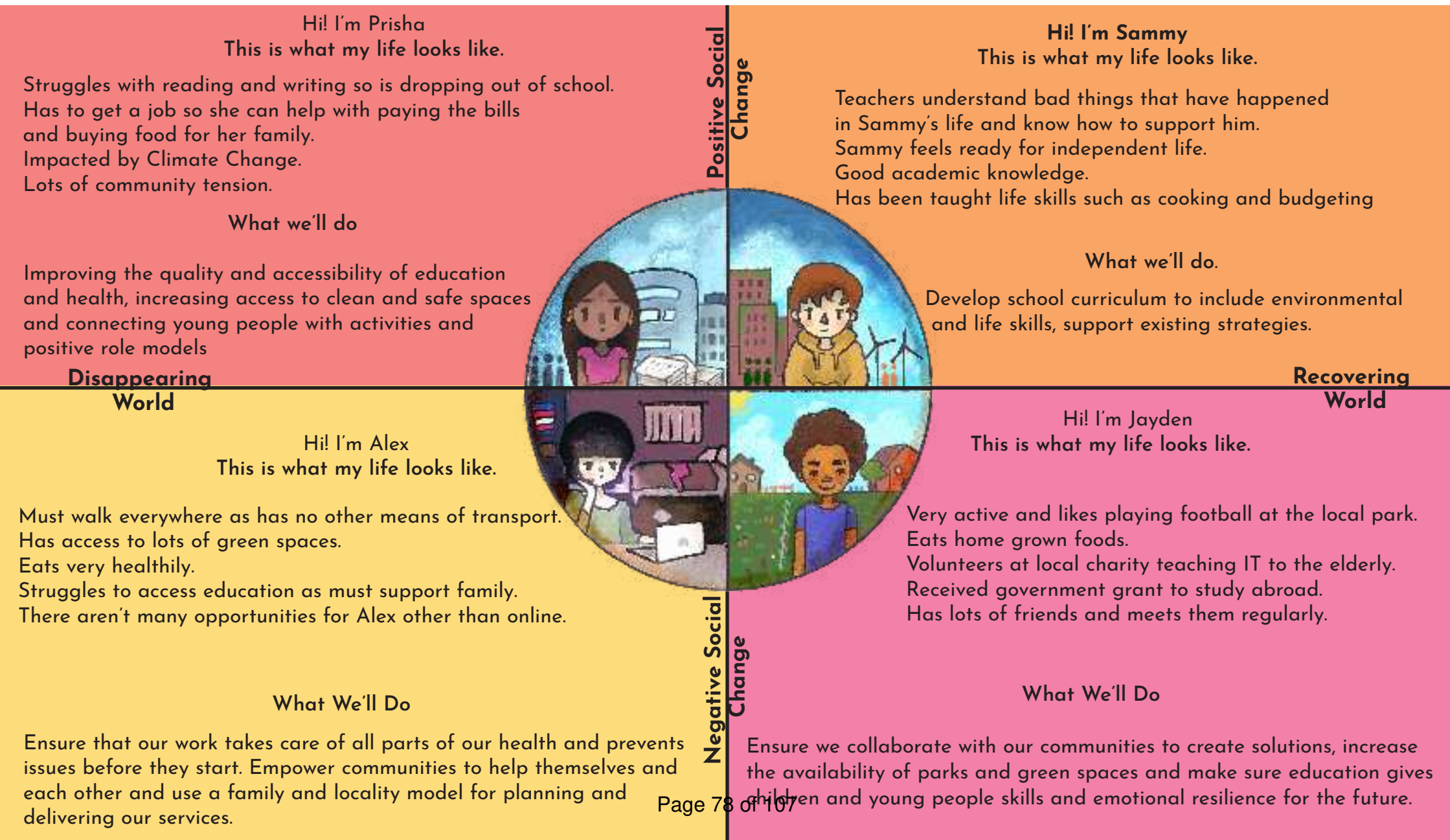
75% of children who said they would leave Walsall before 2040 are from deprived areas



MEET OUR CHILDREN GROWING UP IN DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF 2040

5

We'd like you to meet four children. Each of these children has a similar life to some children in Walsall today. Their worlds have been created based on the effects of climate change and social change; two key issues which greatly impact our futures. Professionals have used these four worlds to understand how we can stop the negative things from happening and to understand how to promote the positive aspects through our strategy.



Children and Young Persons Strategic Alliance



The world is seen through my eyes

I AM HAPPY, HEALTHY AND WELL

We will get upstream on issues by ensuring that current use of resources focuses on a holistic prevention approach.

We will commit that children are at the heart of all of the decisions of public services.

We will commit to ensuring that children and young people have got affordable, accessible and sufficient opportunity for activities which are fun.

We will reduce the barriers that children, young people and families who live in poverty face.

I HAVE A VOICE AND I AM HEARD

We will ensure that all children are listened to and that this impacts upon the design of our services.

We will engage and coproduce integrated services with children, young people and parents so they impact upon them.

We will develop a Youth Council to enable the influence of children and young people at a local, regional, and national level.

We will strengthen the voice of children who are disproportionality under or over-represented.

I AM HOPEFUL AND EXCITED FOR THE FUTURE

We will focus on employing residents to create pathways for people with lived experience to pass on their knowledge to young people.

We will work with the education system to ensure that the curriculum includes more skills for life and more cultural education.

We will nurture children's aspiration and ambition from the very start.

We will support children to have the opportunity to access good quality work experience and jobs locally.

I AM SAFE IN ALL SPACES

We will protect, enhance and build more clean and green spaces which are safe and accessible for all, which improves mental wellbeing.

Schooling - We will ensure that children and young people are safe in school and feel that they belong there.

Housing - We will provide high quality, affordable, efficient houses that support a strong sense of community.

We will connect children with activities and adults to enable them to have sustainable practical and emotional support.

Co-Production
Contributing Citizenship

Social Justice

WHAT OUR STRATEGY WILL MEAN FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE GROWING UP IN WALSALL

7



I'M HAPPY, HEALTHY, AND WELL BECAUSE:

- I walk to school, through green spaces and I feel safe doing so.
- My healthy life was prioritised from the start with my parents, once I was old enough, I understood the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices.
- I feel able and supported to cope with life's challenges, I'm able to work through them, recover from them and learn from them to improve my future.
- I'm actively engaged in my community.

I HAVE A VOICE AND I AM HEARD BECAUSE:

- I feel proud of growing up in Walsall because I can be apart of building Walsall's future.
- I understand and feel connected to Walsall's history and excited about its future as a place and feel I can contribute to this.
- I get regular communication to what changes are being made because of what I have said.
- I'm being asked if things are getting better for me on a regular basis.
- I have lots of opportunities to get involved in shaping services and making decisions on issues that are important to me.
- No matter my background, ethnicity or whether I feel confident or not in speaking out, I feel my voice is equally represented



CHILD
FRIENDLY
BOROUGH

I AM HOPEFUL AND EXCITED ABOUT MY FUTURE BECAUSE:

- I'm ready for school.
- I have an environment that supports me in learning.
- I have a great understanding of the world around me.
- I'm positive engaged with in education that meet my needs.
- I want to continue to live and work in Walsall.
- I have the skills that will help me in getting a good job and be resilience.
- I feel that Walsall is providing me with lots of opportunities to skill up young people for being part of developing a greener future

I AM SAFE IN ALL SPACES BECAUSE:

- There has been lots of improvements in my area it looks and feels better.
- I use green space near where i live to meet up with my friends or meet new friends.
- I can afford to live and stay in Walsall
- I have a house which is of good quality, spacious for my family and has access to green space
- There are lots of safe and affordable activities for me to engage with and meet friends
- No matter my background or ethnicity I feel I belong in my community



HOW WILL WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS?

8

I'M HAPPY, HEALTHY, AND WELL

Smart places measurement of use of parks during school time.

Health data - healthy weight, inequality data, reducing gaps, infant mortality rates.

Reduction of number of children that need (repeat) specialist statutory interventions.

Reduction in waiting list and children who do not attend appointments

Reduction in under 18 conception rate.

I HAVE A VOICE AND I AM HEARD

Improved uptake of universal services.

Positive feedback.

Number of children involved in decision making and make up (diversity).

Evidence of feedback loop in decision making.

I AM HOPEFUL AND EXCITED ABOUT MY FUTURE

Numbers of pupils achieving a good level of school readiness and development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Number of pupils reaching expected standard at key stages.

Increased number of children engaged in further education

Exclusion rates.

Increased number of young people in apprenticeships

Positive destinations of young people with special educational needs and/or a disability when they leave school.

Number of young people positively engaged in education and achieving good level of attendance

I AM SAFE IN ALL SPACES

Regular survey with kids.

Reduction in anti-social behaviour and knife crime.

Less representation of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system.

More young people engaged in positive activities within communities.

Reduction in racisms and hate crime



You are Here



WHO HAS COMMITTED TO DRIVING FORWARD THIS STRATEGY

9



Walsall Council



Walsall Healthcare
NHS Trust



Black Country Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



Black Country
Integrated Care Board



UNIVERSITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON



Walsall College



Staff
College



**WALSALL
COMMUNITY
NETWORK**



**WALSALL LEARNING
ALLIANCE**



THIS STRATEGY IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

Our walsall strategy has been illustrated and designed by Armani Preet and Pav Moore our two young people who have helped bring the strategy to life through illustration and graphics.

Where to find us?

If you're interested in contacting us to help design your strategy or think we can best help you visualise your upcoming ideas then get in touch!

Business enquiries:

Armani Preet (illustrator)

Email: armanipreet2102@gmail.com

Socials: @inkm3ii

Pav (graphic designer)

Email: pavmoore@yahoo.com

Socials: @ypav



Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Area of Focus – 2024/25

25 June 2024	24 September 2024	05 November 2024	03 December 2024	28 January 2025	10 March 2025	08 April 2025
<p>Walsall as a Families first pathfinder presentation.</p> <p>Walsall Right for Children (WR4C) Refresh.</p> <p>Areas of focus – 2024/25</p>	<p>Complaints report.</p> <p>Update on Children's Alliance and Children and Young People 2040 Strategy.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report.</p> <p>Budget consultation.</p> <p>Private Fostering Annual Report.</p>	<p>HAF and Youth Summer Programme.</p> <p>Youth Justice. Annual YJ plan. Invite Partners. YJ, Police, Probation and Health.</p>	<p>Young Carers. Pathfinder Update.</p> <p>Family Hubs-sustainability.</p>	<p>Child sexual abuse within the family environment.</p>	<p>Children at risk of exploitation.</p>

*Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 Financial reports will be circulated via e-mail to Members of the Committee and will not form part of the Committee's Agenda unless specially requested by the Committee.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Area of Focus – 2024/25

Items to be scheduled	Notes

*Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 Financial reports will be circulated via e-mail to Members of the Committee and will not form part of the Committee's Agenda unless specially requested by the Committee.



FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

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

2 September 2024

FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan sets out decisions that are termed as “key decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet). Also included on the plan are other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet (“non-key decisions”). Preparation of the forward plan helps the Council to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk 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
OCTOBER 2024 TO JANUARY 2025
(02.09.2024)**

7	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	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
	42/24 (2.7.24)	Article 4 direction for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs): To approve the making of a borough-wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the change of use from dwellinghouses to smaller HMOs. To issue public notice of the Article 4 direction for a period of at least 6 weeks to allow for representations.	Cabinet Key Decision	David Holloway David.Holloway@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	11 September 2024
	44/24 (5.8.24)	Walsall Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Strategy: To approve the Walsall Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Strategy.	Cabinet Key Decision	Nicola Byrne Nicola.Byrne@walsall.gov.uk Matt Crowton Matt.Crowton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	11 September 2024

23/24 (18.3.24)	Commercial Strategy: To agree the strategic approach to generating income, reducing costs, fostering an entrepreneurial culture, forming partnerships, and investing in businesses to support local economies and social objectives	Cabinet Key Decision	Michele McPherson Michele.McPherson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	11 September 2024
33/24 (4.6.24)	West Midlands Children's Residential Homes Framework: To agree call off contracts with Residential Children's Homes providers under the West Midlands Regional Framework.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sally Gamston Sally.Gamston@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Regional stakeholders (during tender development)	Cllr Elson	11 September 2024
45/24 (5.8.24)	Walsall Youth Justice Strategic Plan 22/25 Annual Update Report: To receive and recommend to Council for approval, the annual youth justice plan and update report.	Cabinet Council Non-key Decision	Phil Rutherford Philip.Rutherford@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Elson	11 September 2024
50/24 (5.8.24)	Black Country Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC) Partnership contract: To approve a variation to the Black Country Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC) Partnership contract, to further extend the original term by 12 months.	Cabinet Key Decision	Paula Wilman Paula.Wilman@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Elson	11 September 2024
34/24 (4.6.24)	Temporary Accommodation Regulator Registration: To approve registration with the Regulator of Social Housing for the purpose of providing additional	Cabinet Key Decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Garcha	11 September 2024

	Temporary Accommodation for homeless people.					
43/24 (2.7.24)	Secondary School Sufficiency: To consider the expansions of secondary schools in Walsall to support the requirement for additional school places to meet the Local Authorities statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places available across the borough for all Walsall residents.	Cabinet Key Decision	Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Kaur	11 September 2024
51/24 (12.8.24)	Community Reablement Service Procurement: To delegate authority to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care to award a contract for the provision of support to the community reablement service.	Cabinet Key Decision	Andrew Osborn Andrew.Osborn@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Community Providers	Cllr Pedley	11 September
32/24 (4.6.24)	Appointment of Contractor for Civic Centre and Council House Decarbonisation Works: To appoint a contractor for decarbonisation works at the Civic Centre and Council House. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Nick Ford Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 October 2024

46/24 (5.8.24)	Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): To approve a draft SPD for consultation.	Cabinet Key Decision	David Holloway David.Holloway@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 October 2024
52/24 (2.9.24)	Disposal of Links to Work Building, Stephenson Avenue, Beechdale, Walsall, WS2 7HF To approve the disposal of the Links to Work Building. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Ian Jeavons Ian.Jeavons@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 October 2024
40/24 (1.7.24)	Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29: To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, including savings proposals.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	16 October 2024
41/24 (1.7.24)	Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25: To report the financial position based on 6 months to September 2024.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	16 October 2024
53/24 (2.9.24)	Children and Young People Strategy:	Cabinet Key Decision	Isobel Vanderheeren Isobel.Vanderheeren@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Children and young people	Cllr Elson	16 October 2024

	To approve the Children and Young People 2040 Strategy.					
35/24 (4.6.24)	Walsall Housing Allocations Policy: To approve Walsall's Housing Allocations Policy which details how the Council will prioritise applicants for nomination to housing association properties.	Cabinet Key Decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Public Consultation Internal Services Housing Associations	Cllr Garcha	16 October 2024
54/24 (2.9.24)	Local Area Network (LAN) contract award: To award a contract for provision and support of the Council's Local Area Network (LAN).	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	16 October 2024
55/24 (2.9.24)	Service Channel Management Platform contract award: To award a contract for the continued provision the Councils Service Channel Management Platform.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	16 October 2024
56/24 (2.9.24)	Middlemore Lane Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) & Waste Treatment Service Operational Arrangements: To approve a short-term service contract for the operational management of the new waste facility at Middlemore Lane and the existing HWRC at Fryers Road and approve a new finance lease agreement for the operational equipment, HWRC	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Murphy.	16 October 2024.

	containers, and other physical resources at Middlemore Lane.					
47/24 (5.8.24)	Council Plan 2025-2029: To consider the final version of the Council Plan following consultation and recommend this to Council for approval.		Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services, external stakeholders, other interested parties (via Public Consultation exercise)	Cllr Perry	11 December 2024
48/24 (5.8.24)	Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 – Update: To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, including update to savings proposals, impact of Autumn Statement, and progress on budget consultation to date including feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the draft revenue and capital budget.		Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services	Cllr Perry	11 December 2024
49/24 (5.8.24)	Treasury Management Mid Year Position Statement 2024/25: To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (and in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017), the mid year report for treasury management activities 2024/25	Cabinet Council Non-key Decision	Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	11 December 2024

	including prudential and local indicators.					
39/24 (1.7.24)	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029: To approve the final version of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy following consultation.	Cabinet Key Decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services, external stakeholders, other interested parties (via Public Consultation exercise)	Cllr Lee	11 December 2024
57/24 (2.9.24)	IT Goods, Software and Associated Services contract awards: To award a contract for the provision of IT Goods, Software and Associated Services.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	11 December 2024

Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Published up to January 2025

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	Black Country Enterprise Zone			
05/08/2024	<p>Gasholders</p> <p>Approval of the Gasholders project (Walsall Council) for grant funding from the Black Country Enterprise Zone (BCEZ) business rate surpluses.</p> <p>Approval for the City of Wolverhampton Council and Walsall Council to proceed to enter into a separate Grant Agreement which will set out the terms and conditions of the funding.</p>	<p>Simon Tranter simon.tranter@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Walsall Council	30/09/2024
	Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF)			
02/09/2024	<p>Approval for the remaining £1,203,740 of the Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF) programme funds to be awarded to the 2 selected projects - Alfred Gunn House (Sandwell Council) and Oxley Health & Wellbeing Facility (Wolverhampton City Council).</p>	<p>Tammy Stokes tammy_stokes@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Simon Tranter simon.tranter@walsall.gov.uk</p> <p>Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk</p>	<p>Sandwell Council</p> <p>Walsall Council</p> <p>Wolverhampton City Council</p>	30/09/2024

	<p>Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) for the LPIF programme to proceed to enter into grant agreement with the Alfred Gunn House project (Sandwell Council).</p> <p>Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) for the LPIF programme to proceed to enter into grant agreement with the Oxley Health & Wellbeing Facility project (Wolverhampton City Council).</p>			
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West Midlands Combined Authority

Forward Plan

Forthcoming key decisions

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
Single Settlement Update To consider the work undertaken to-date between the WMCA and constituent authorities to develop functional and place-based strategies that will underpin the delivery of the Single Settlement.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
Culture, Creative and Heritage Infrastructure Programme To seek permission to undertake the Culture, Creative & Heritage Infrastructure programme of activity.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
Update on Bus Network Proposals from January 2025 To consider proposals for the region's bus network in 2025.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
Bus Depot Strategy To approve the funding strategy for Transport for West Midlands to acquire sites for bus depots.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
Provision of Ring & Ride and Demand Responsive Transport for the Region To consider the proposed outcome of the introduction of the revised target operating model of the West Midlands Ring & Ride and Demand Responsive Transport service.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
Regional Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2030 Endorsement of the Regional Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2030 following completion of public consultation and validation from the Regional Road Safety Strategic Group.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
WMCA Brownfield Land Remediation - Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee To consider the findings of Overview & Scrutiny Committee's review into how the WMCA exercises its powers and funding in respect of brownfield land redevelopment and how the region's communities have benefited from this.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Interim Executive Director of Housing & Regeneration (John Godfrey)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
Regional Energy Strategy To consider the WMCA's Regional Energy Strategy.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
Innovation Update To provide an update on recent highlights from the Innovation Board, including the current position regarding the Innovation Accelerator.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
Best Value Fare Capping for Bus (cEMV Broker) To consider the Full Business Case for the national cEMV Broker pilot and West Midlands roll-out which will enable best value fare capping for bus users to be delivered for travellers using their contactless debit card or other device. The Board will also be asked to approve the legal partnership arrangements with the collaborating delivery entities.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
Bus Franchising: Audit Outcome and Decision To Consult To consider the outcome of the audit, and to agree to undertake public consultation on the next steps.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
Key Route Network Review 2023/24 To gain approval to update the Key Route Network.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
Local Transport Plan Adoption To consider recommendations to approve the final version of the LTP suite of documents (including Area Based Strategies) which have been adapted to align fully with the WMCA Functional and Place Based Strategies.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
Wednesbury Brierley Hill Metro Extension Phase2 Report to seek approval to release funding to complete construction of the Phase 2 WBHE Metro.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
A Review of the Effectiveness of Member Engagement and Development within the WMCA To consider the findings of a scrutiny review undertaken to examine the effectiveness of member engagement and development within the WMCA.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Director of Law & Governance (Helen Edwards)
Draft WMCA Budget 2025/26 To consider the draft budget for the 2025/26 fiscal year.	WMCA Board 10 January 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position	WMCA Board 10 January 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Budget 2025/26 To approve the 2025/26 budget.	WMCA Board 7 February 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position	WMCA Board 14 March 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position and provisional outturn for the 2024/25 financial year.	WMCA Board 13 June 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)

The Forward Plan

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

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

What is a key decision?

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

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

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

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

Councillors or members of the public wishing to:

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

should contact the Governance Services team: governance.services@wmca.org.uk

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Recommendation Tracker 2024/25

Committee Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Officer responsible	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
25 th June 2024.	Walsall Right for Children (WR4C) Refresh	That an update on the Holiday Activity Fund and summer programme be provided at the Committee in November/December.	Ongoing	Scheduled for 3.12.24	

Please ask for: Nicole Freeman
Telephone Number: 0121 626 6060
wmpcc@westmidlands.police.uk



Our reference: 2024-00620

Councillor Adam Hicken

Sent by email only:

cllr.adam.hicken@walsall.gov.uk

03 July 2024

Dear Councillor Hicken,

Thank you for your letter, regarding resourcing of exploitation hubs in the region. I am grateful to you and your local partnerships, for the excellent work being delivered in Walsall, to protect our children from violence and exploitation. I want to reassure you, that this is a key priority for both myself, my office and West Midlands Police.

West Midlands Police created SOCEX hubs and rolled them out within the West Midlands Police force area, between September and December 2020. They were created by the Chief Constable at the time, Sir Dave Thompson and were established, using posts from the police uplift programme.

They were focused on exploitation and were created as a One Stop Shop for intelligence development, partnership safeguarding, National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals and investigations. They were made up of a mixed economy of detectives and non-detectives.

They were created in the three cities, Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton which, through the use of data and intelligence, clearly presented the Force with the greatest threat and risk. The hubs did not operate in isolation and were part of the old operating model, operating alongside a range of other force-wide and local resources, operations and roles.

Apart from the hubs, all of the other Force assets operated force-wide, including in Walsall. As an example, Operation Skyclash and Operation Liberate, were force-wide operations and all Local Policing Areas (LPAs) have Early Help and Schools Intervention and Prevention Officers, who work to identify children and young people at risk of exploitation, amongst other matters.

In addition, LPAs received additional officer posts, as part of the uplift for gangs' teams. Additional resourcing under Operation Guardian (Serious Youth Violence) and County Lines, have also brought additional support and resources to Walsall.

In December 2022, I appointed a new Chief Constable. In April 2023, the Force changed its operating model, to align with the new Chief Constable's vision and values. This model essentially took the Force from a centralised to a local policing model. The Chief Constable was clear, that he wanted to maximise the number of police officers and police staff working locally. The SOCEX hubs remain in the three cities and the broader force assets and local resources described above, have remained the same.

Twelve months into the new operating model, a review has commenced, to look into the Force response to SOCEX and in particular exploitation. This includes looking at the hubs. It is too early to comment further at this stage, although we can ensure that the LPA provides an update when this is available.

I also want to take this opportunity to set out the work the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) has been supporting and leading on in Walsall.

The VRP has been working closely with the Safer Walsall Partnership since 2019 and intensively since 2022, on the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. We have supported the development of the violence strategic needs assessment and the delivery plan for the Borough.

Over the last year, we have also been working with local charities and CICs, to strengthen the provision of youth focused interventions and activities in Walsall, recently developing bids alongside the James Brindley Foundation, that have resulted in over £150,000 of additional funding for the Foundation, to continue their critical work in the schools within Walsall. Our VRP Navigator in Walsall, is also working closely with the partnership on a consortium bid that, if successful, would bring an additional £1 million funding to Walsall, for youth focused activity and intervention.

Over the last couple of months, we have been supporting the partnership, led by Early Help, on a plan to mitigate the risk of summer violence spikes in Walsall, during the school holidays. This is traditionally a period when nationally, we experience peaks in violence impacting young people and therefore mitigation planning is really important. The plan is multi-agency and brings together a range of activity, to meet the needs of young people in Walsall, including targeted interventions as well as youth work in key areas.

Local delivery funding provided by the VRP, supports the Walsall Violence and Harm Prevention Group, chaired by Supt Pervez Mohammed, to meet needs identified in the violence strategic needs assessment and respond to emerging issues.

In addition to the local delivery funding, the VRP also provide funding to support local areas to respond to incidents of serious violence, aiming to both address the trauma experienced by communities when violence occurs and also reduce the likelihood of further incidents.

In May 2024, two allocations were made through the response budget, to incidents that had occurred in Walsall, in both cases supporting schools that had been impacted by violence.

This year, the local delivery budget will be allocated as follows:

Project/Intervention	Lead	Allocation	Detail
CARE Project	Walsall Council Early Help	£35,000	To provide support for young people aged 11–16, who have additional needs, either diagnosed or undiagnosed and who due to their vulnerabilities are at risk of and/or showing early warning signs of low-level exploitation, and who fall beneath the threshold for an EHCP or for statutory and specialist service intervention and support. This protects young people from exploitation/violence and has been running for two years, one of which was a successful pilot. Provision is also part funded by Children's Services and delivery model has been amended to

			target areas of greatest need (North and South Walsall).
Modern Slavery Response	Walsall Council	£5,000	To support Walsall's response to findings of recent modern slavery pathway review. This will improve the collective response and the support offered to vulnerable victims.
ASB/Violence Response funding	Walsall Council	£7,981.29	Funding will be used to respond to known/emerging anti-social behaviour/violence issues through detached/youth outreach and other interventions. This will support work delivered through and be aligned to interventions delivered through the holiday activity fund programme and Operation Eternity.

I trust the above information set out in this letter is useful, in providing the context and current position. If you require any clarification or further information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Sara Roach, Director, West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership: sara.roach1@westmidlands.police.uk

Yours sincerely,



Simon Foster
Police and Crime Commissioner