

Right for Children Transformation Programme

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe

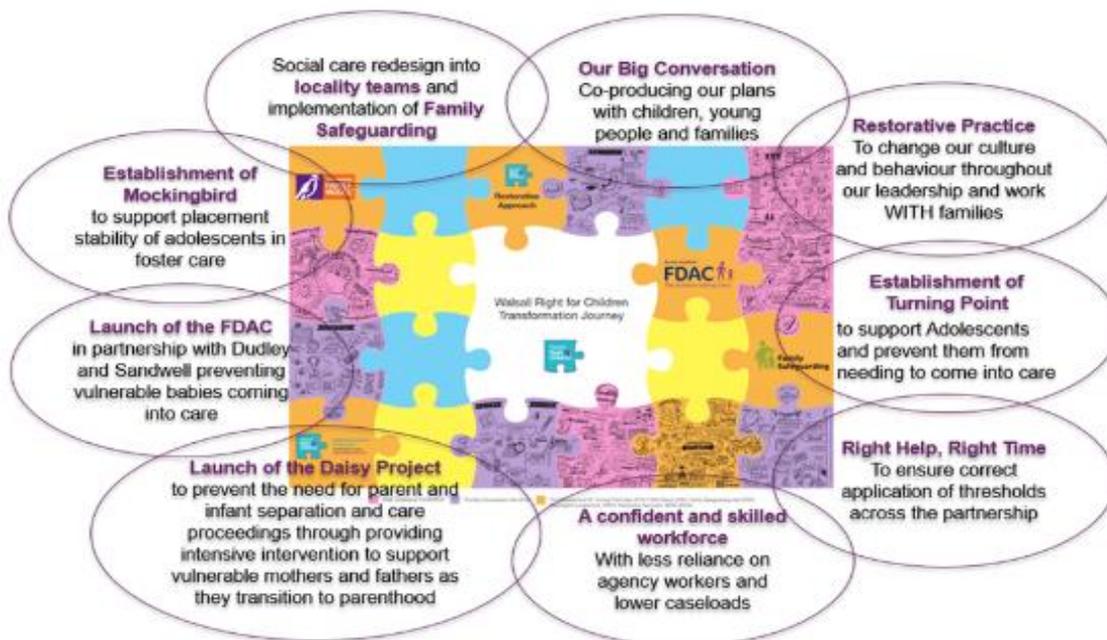
Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on progress against our Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) Transformation vision and Programme.

Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C), launched in September 2018, is a whole system forward thinking transformation programme driven by the following principles:

- Get the basics right for children
- Strong leadership informed by 'what works' setting our direction
- Mirror the lives and challenges of real families
- Implement changes that work for Walsall children and families, underpinned by evidence
- Prioritise the stability of children in all aspects of their lives – design out 'handover' and 'pass on'
- Develop a culture of being proud of what we achieve through a relentless focus on quality, impact and outcomes

The first phase of the WR4C focussed on transformation across Council delivered Children's Services in ensuring we were supporting the right children, at the right time, in the right place for as long as it is needed.



As our internal services have embedded we started to focus on Co-ordinating and influencing the establishment of a mature WR4C partnership platform to drive the delivery of the WR4C vision.

Reducing our demand and preventing children, young people and families from needing costly statutory interventions requires a strong and mature partnership approach.

Connecting up transformation across Walsall in the interest children and families will be key including integrating services around our children and families where this makes sense for them , strategies , processes , adopting the same thresholds, removing duplication between partners and co-producing with families and the community

Reason for scrutiny:

To provide members with a progress update of our 'Walsall Right For Children' Transformation Programme.

Recommendations:

For progress to be noted

Background papers:

Scrutiny reports presented on October 2019, February 2020, March 2021

Resource and legal considerations:

Transformation programme is aligned to the Councils Medium Term Financial Outlook, and sets to achieve benefits to the value of £10M over the three year term by March 2023.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

The 'Walsall Right for Children' Transformation Programme contributes to a number of our Council Corporate Plan priorities:

1. People: throughout the programme we have and will continue to work with children, young people and their families to ensure they have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.
2. Internal Focus: The programme is focussed on a whole system change to ensure that within Children's Services we are as efficient and effective as we can be.
3. Children: The primarily objective of the programme is to ensure that the right support is in place so that children can have the best start and are safe from harm, happy, health and learning well
4. Communities: Our transformation programme will connect and strengthen relationships with Walsall communities and ensure that they are resilient with all housing needs for children and young people being met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

Citizen impact:

Our WR4C transformation contributes towards the Council's target to increase Customer satisfaction through:

- Children, young people and families' voices help shape our service design and development through our WR4C Big conversation programme.
- Our restorative approach means we work with families and therefore families understand better why we are involved and will feel that they play an active part in the plan of support
- Our work through the CAM work stream should ensure information easier to access and therefore customers will be able to self-service where relevant.
- We will be providing timely, relevant and seamless support from WBC

Environmental impact:

Not applicable for this report.

Performance management:

We developed a WR4C outcome framework - This framework sets out the five key priorities and the individual outcomes within each of them alongside the indicators that will be used to measure progress against each of the outcomes and ultimately whether they have been achieved and the quality assurance questions that need to be asked alongside the data to fully understand progress.

The framework aims to utilise existing service KPI's but view them through a cross directorate lens to measure our system wide success in achieving our transformation priorities.

We also recognise that our WR4C transformation can only be achieved through collaboration with partners internally and externally and this document sets out how the WR4C transformation programme links in with the wider aims of the Walsall Together partnership and Walsall Council's Corporate priorities and PROUD Transformation Programme. It also outlines how the monitoring of the outcomes will be governed in line with the existing performance and quality governance arrangements.

Reducing inequalities:

The aim of our 'Right for Children' programme is to ensure that all children have the right support, in the right place, at the right time, for as long as it is needed to enable them to be safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best.

Our Outcome framework has a cross focus on equality and includes the following:

- a) To incorporate equality monitoring into existing processes considering all applicable 'protected characteristics'
- b) To monitor interventions/activities to progress towards improved equality of access and opportunity
- c) To monitor interventions/activities to progress towards improved equality of outcomes
- d) To use equality monitoring to develop and improve interventions/activities and to act where inequalities exist

Consultation:

Throughout the transformation programme there has been consultation with our workforce, children, young people and their families and partners most notably , our Big Conversation

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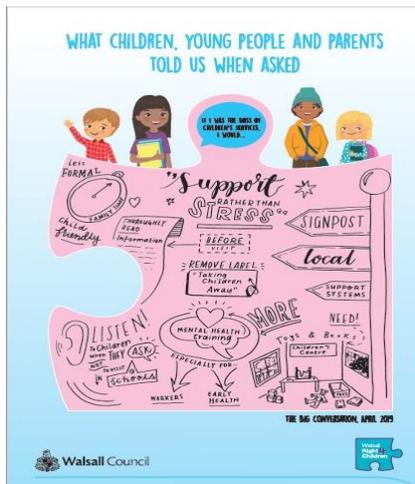
Report

1. Our Big Conversation – voices of children, young people and their families at the heart of decision making and influencing our partnership development

Our Big Conversation is a fundamental part of our Walsall Right 4 Children transformation Journey. It is an ongoing programme of activities, aimed at talking with and listening to children, young people and parents about the services we deliver and what is important to them and acting on what they say.

We seek out opportunities to collaborate with them on aspects of day to day practice and transformation.

Since 2018 we have created a number of Big Conversation practice tools to collaborate and gather feedback. We have used the information to:



- redesign social care;
- shape the locality partnership offer;
- develop our approach to reducing exclusions;
- create our new support hub for adolescents;
- help us to understand children and young people's experiences during 'lockdown' and inform our reset plans including the development of an emotional and wellbeing partnership framework to support children to make a successful transition back into school.

Summer – daily Conversation

During the summer the Local Authority and its partners took time to talk with children and parents to better understand;

- Their lived experience of growing up in Walsall?
- The impact of COVID on their lives, their peers and their community
- What might help improve their lived experience now
- What their ambitions are for the future
- What might be barriers to achieving their future ambition
- What help or support could help remove these barriers to achieve their ambition

During the w/c 16th and 23rd of August we asked anyone working with children to reflect on one question a day and let us know their views, thoughts and ideas.

During this time we heard from 323 children aged 5 -18 year. A high proportion of children taking part in the daily conversation are entitled to Free School Meals.

In addition, we sent a survey to parents of children taking part in our Holiday Activity and Food programme and asked them:

- What do you like most about living in the borough of Walsall?
- What don't you like about living in the borough of Walsall?
- What would make living in the borough of Walsall better for you and your family?

102 parents returned the survey

See appendix 1 – Daily Conversation overview.

What have we done with the information so far?

The detailed analysis has informed the refreshed Early Help Strategy and the Child Neglect Strategy.

Following our daily conversation, we are working with a group of 13 children and young people (and expanding) who have had support from different part of children's services to explore the outcome of the daily conversations and how they want to take this forward, with a focus on how we can ensure that children have easy access to early help and support. We have secured £10K from the PCC to develop this work.

This piece of work will form a key part of the development of the Walsall Children and Young people Alliance and has been integrated to the development of a Common Moral Purpose document.

Relevant information and themes has been presented to other key partnership boards to influence their strategic thinking, direction and delivery, including and we are tracking the actions taken as a result of the

- Walsall Together – Community Resilience work stream
- Safer Community Partnership
- Safeguarding Partnership

2. Development of a Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance

In January 2021 we undertook a review of strategic partnership working around the agenda of children, young people and families. This review was undertaken in collaboration with the CCG, Walsall Health Trust, the Safeguarding Partnership and the Safer Walsall Partnership and raised some critical issues around the effectiveness of the partnership as well as some drivers for change, opportunities and solutions.

As a result all partner collectively agreed to a series of externally facilitated strategic partnership workshops to explore more effective strategic collaboration and decision making across the partnership in relation to children, young people and family business.

At the last workshop in November 2022 partners signed up to the establishment of a "Making Walsall Right for Children Strategic Alliance", critical to developing new ways of thinking and new ways of working, driven by the voices of children and young people and **working to one moral purpose - to regularly consider how the lived experience of children and young people in Walsall can be improved.**

The Alliance will have governance links with the Walsall Learning Alliance and the Black Country Children and Young people Partnership Board

The Alliance is currently developing their plan on a page – see appendix 2

3. Strengthening the partnership with the voluntary and community sector helping us to build our locality offer.

Using the Council's resilient community work stream we have secured opportunities to strengthen the capacity and capability of the voluntary sector as part of our locality model. This partnership has enabled us to better meet the needs of Walsall's diverse community, redirect demand appropriately and ensure community 'scaffolding' is available to sustain change for vulnerable families following statutory intervention.

This work started in during the initial pandemic wave in 2020 with the development of a proactive, well co-ordinated, and targeted summer provision with significant contributions

from the voluntary and community sector that helped vulnerable families to continue to receive support, enabling a successful transition back to education and the prevention of increased referrals to Children's Services in September.

This work provided a strong learning platform for the development and delivery of our Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) funded from £1.7M investment by the DfE in 2021. We developed, in a very tight timescale and challenging COVID context, an innovative face-to-face and online programme of activities and healthy food hampers, delivered by 47 local providers throughout Easter, summer and Christmas 2021, to 3000 children (21% of our FSM cohort).

We used this opportunity strategically to build capacity and optimise capability across the Voluntary Sector, strengthen reach and engagement with communities and to proactively identify and respond to issues relating to poverty, neglect, exploitation and mental health.

Through a stronger relationship with the voluntary sector we have been able to develop access to a network of community buildings for children services team to use for a range of activities providing opportunity through their work to connect families they work with, with community resources.

4. Improving access to information for children, young people and families.

We used one of the Proud capabilities to optimise Customer Access Management in exploring how we can reduce / divert unnecessary demand through our children services front door by providing better access to information and services to help parents be more resilient.

The initial stage of this work has been completed with the redesign and relaunch of the Early Help webpages in October 2021 to support parents, carers, children and young people and professionals to access help and support on a self-serve basis. Webpage have been developed in consultation with parents and children and continues to be improved based on feedback.

[Early Help \(walsall.gov.uk\)](https://www.walsall.gov.uk/early-help)

5. Partnership with schools in providing the Right Help at the Right Time for children

As part of locality multi-agency partnership work we have put in support to strengthen the locality offer in ensuring children get the right help at the right time, this includes:

Time 2 Talk

During COVID 19 Our Early Help localities introduced a partnership 'Time 2 Talk', a platform to enable partners across sectors to keep connected and support each other through these unprecedented circumstances. This approach valued by partners with increasing attendance started to bring significant benefits to children, young people and their families by creating the space for local services to understand local families and their needs, identify local services and also local gaps in provision. Partners agreed to further develop this platform and embedded into the core locality Early Help support offer.

'Time 2 Talk' has proved invaluable for us while we are navigating the changes coming thick and fast during the COVID 19 pandemic. We have felt connected to colleagues in our area and supported. The sessions are relaxed and focussed, with useful information and an opportunity to share amongst ourselves our experiences and local issues. They

have been timely and much welcomed. Restorative Practice in action!" Feedback from Health partner

Based on this the partnership have strengthen with new members committing to the locality work. The groups now meet bi-monthly to look at needs, share experience, to support each other, consider joint training opportunities and connectivity based on needs of local families and are working at bringing together each partners data to really understand needs and develop and share the early Help local offer, with specific focus on 'helping at the earliest opportunity'. Each have developed their own action plans to show progression and impact.

'Session 1 started well as we felt included on sharing the issues/barriers we currently face in school. If I'm being completely honest, I didn't think that our points raised were going to go anywhere as that is what has happened in previous meetings - not necessarily in children's services - but generally across all areas of education. It was a great meeting yesterday, really purposeful and good to share, put names to faces, etc. and get some contact details. When our partner shared the findings from the last meeting and that each area would be addressed in subsequent meetings - I thought it was fab!! Feedback form School

Supervision for Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL's) in school

Walsall was successful in securing a place on the research project with The What Works Centre for Social care to develop supervision for DSL's.

The aim of the programme is to ensure children in schools and their families get help as soon as a problem emerges, to prevent things getting worse and/or an escalation in intervention – ensuring the right support is provided at the right time, in the right way. It is hoped that this will divert families away from statutory social work intervention and offer an alternative which is more proportionate. Where statutory intervention is necessary, it is hoped that delays will be avoided, and referrals will accurately identify safeguarding concerns.

Schools in Walsall were randomly selected by the research programme to take part in the pilot. There are 43 Primaries and 11 Secondaries that were chosen of which 38 Primaries are taking up the offer and 2 of the 11 Secondaries.

The Primaries have reflective supervision and the secondaries have group supervision. These are offered every 6 weeks for primaries and every 4 weeks for the secondaries.