

12th January 2023

Update on Children’s Strategic Alliance and Walsall Learning Alliance

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Mark Statham
Portfolio Holder Education and Skills

1. Aim

- 1.1 This report is to update members on the development of The Children and Young People Alliance and Walsall Learning Alliance (WLA).
- 1.2 The Children and Young People Alliance provides an opportunity to develop a good understanding of the needs of children and young people in Walsall and system wide change which needs to take place to enable improved outcomes. As well as using this information to enable partners own organisation change it enables them to influence change for children and young people in other strategic spaces.
- 1.3 Walsall learning Alliance is a strategic board consisting of leaders from the education system in Walsall. It has a drive to achieve excellence through equity in models of school-led improvement reflecting individual and collective actions required to work towards achieving a model of “connected localism” for Walsall education settings. The purpose of the alliance is ‘Improving the education and wellbeing of children, young people, and families across Walsall through collective accountability.’

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That members support the work we are doing with partners through the development of a Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance, and Walsall Learning Alliance, to secure better outcomes for children growing up in Walsall

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C), launched in September 2018, is a whole system forward thinking transformation programme of which the first phase 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. The outcome of this transformation leading to outstanding practice and

improved outcomes for children and young people in Walsall was recognised by Ofsted in November 2021.

3.2 As we were embedding our internal services 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 in January 2021.

3.3 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.

3.4 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.

The workshop raised following key reflections that guided the thinking in the development of the children and Young People Strategic Alliance:

- Meeting the needs of children, young people and family's needs a mature strategic partnership approach. This is complex, especially with ongoing regional and local organisational change agenda's driven by budget reductions, national change agenda's e.g. academisation, Social Care review, Supporting People, integrated care agenda, etc
- The pandemic has enabled partners to come together with a common purpose, find solutions to get us through the challenges and support communities impacted by COVID19, establishing new ways of working that connects us better and make decisions in a timely way to support the most vulnerable.

As we reset our activities in the context of the new normal it has given us lots of challenges as a partnership to reflect, check our moral compasses and rethink:

- What is important?
- What are we leaving behind?
- What are we retaining and why, i.e. to what purpose?
- Partners agreed that we needed to work towards collective accountability through developing a systems leadership using an Alliance framework achieved through:
 - influence and 'nudge', not formal power
 - alignment around common vision or purpose: improved outcomes for service users
 - a focus on the outcomes and results, no the process
 - strong but robust and honest relationships
 - a mind-set, rather than specific actions and behaviours

3.5 The Children and Young People Alliance was launched in March 2022.

What is Walsall's Children and Young People Strategic Alliance? Vision and Purpose

3.6 The Children and Young People Strategic 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.

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 The Alliance provides an opportunity to develop a good understanding of the needs of children and young people in Walsall and system wide change which needs to take place to enable improved outcomes. As well as using this information to enable partners own organisation change it enables them to influence change for children and young people in other strategic spaces.

Membership

- 3.9 Current members of the Alliance include: NHS Walsall, Black Country Integrated Care Board – CYP and Maternity; Primary care and Place development , Walsall Council – resilient Communities, Walsall Council Children’s Services; Public Health, Police, Walsall Together (ICB), Education, WHG, Safeguarding Board, Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust; Wolverhampton University.

The Alliance is supported by The Staff College as a critical friend bringing in in best practice, research evidence and healthy challenge.

Children and young people’s voice at the Centre of Strategic thinking and doing

- 3.10 There has been three key pieces of engagement work undertaken with children and young people growing up in Walsall provided us with valuable and rich information that help us to understand their lived experience and the things Walsall partnerships need to consider in ensuring all children in Walsall can be happy, healthy, safe and learning well.

The key pieces of work are:

- An ethnographic Study on ‘growing up in Walsall’ – commissioned by Public Health - November 2020
- Big Conversation – Summer Daily Conversations programme – undertaking by Children’s Services during Summer 2021.
- The Big Ask/ The Big Answer undertaken by the children commissioner for England – September 2021

The Children and Young People Strategic Alliance Focus

- 3.11 Listening to the voices of children and young people the Alliance considered what the issues were that ONLY this group could resolve in the best interest of children and young people living in Walsall? As a result they selected two key areas of focus:

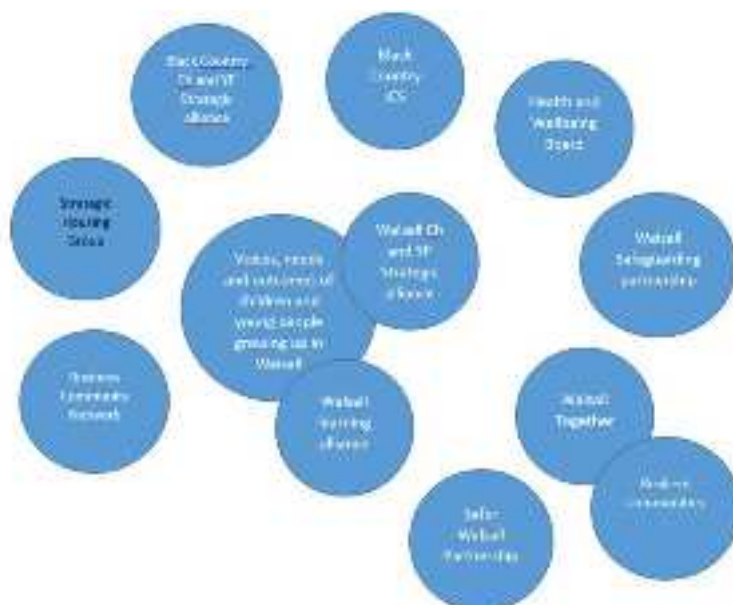
- First 1001 days – recognising that investing in system wide change which supports children to have the best start in life will lay the foundations to
 - Improve the mental and physical health of the next generation
 - Reduce risky and anti-social behaviour and the cost they bring
 - Build skilled workforce to support a thriving community and Create a compassionate society
- Exclusions – in selecting this priority the Alliance recognised that:

- It's not OK to fail Children
- Exclusions is a system failing a child – collective responsibility
- Therefore we need to find system solutions

The Alliance defined exclusions as the act of leaving someone out or the act of being left out and have an ambition of influencing a system change that focus' on increased sense of 'belonging'.

Governance

- 3.12 As a partnership we agreed to focus on making the right connections and maximising opportunities rather than focus on formal governance arrangements. In order to do this we will be joining the dots to ensure we maximise opportunities to advocate and influence the right issues/topics in the right place:



- 3.13 The Alliance recognises that our schools and education settings are an important part of this collective model. The Alliance have therefore secured connectivity with the Walsall Learning Alliance ensuring that wider system issues affecting children's learning is consistently considered and improved.

Walsall Learning Alliance

- 3.14 With support from The Staff College all partners in the education system completed the thinking around what the future partnership approach should look like which led to the inception of the Walsall Learning Alliance.

The agreed purpose of the Alliance is to:

"improve the education and wellbeing of children, young people, and families across Walsall through collective accountability".

- 3.15 Collectively the Alliance promises are:

We will:

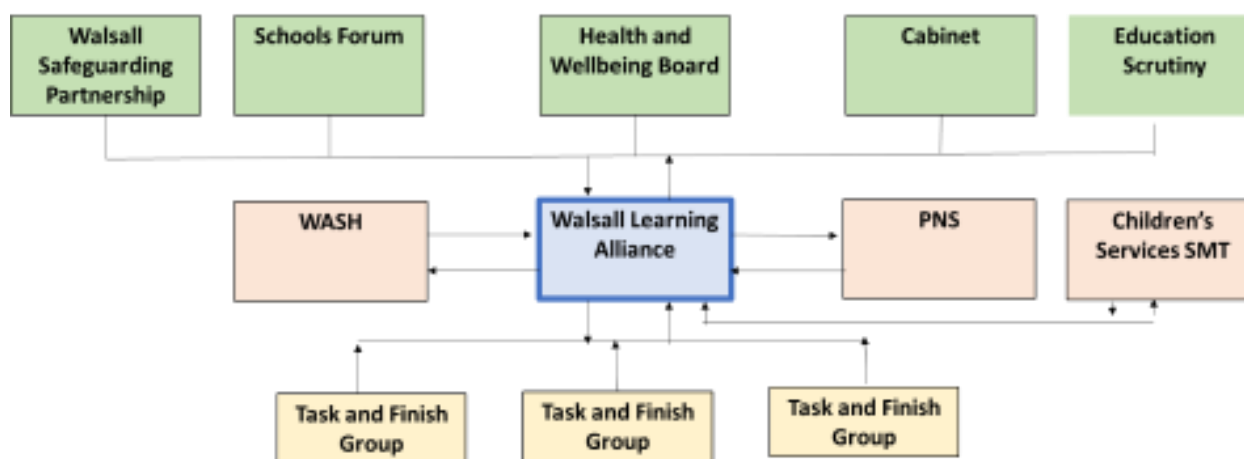
- Put the needs of children, young people, and families first
- Be a community which nurtures all our young people, enabling them to become effective citizens, serving the common good, in a rapidly changing world

- All work together for the best possible life chances for every child and family
- Build positive relationships through respect, openness, and trust
- Be accountable for innovation and continuous improvement across the Alliance

This means:

- Us all creating the sense of belonging in our schools, where children and families have pride in themselves and are ambitious for their future
- Families, educators, and employers working together
- Us all celebrating strengths and achievements whilst recognising the needs of all individuals and schools
- Us all working together with a shared commitment to develop inclusive practice that meets the needs of all our learners
- Us all being a learning community, which prepares our young people for life through fostering hope, ambition, and the prospect of a positive future
- Achieving excellence through equity of opportunity for all

The Alliance’s Role within the Education eco-system



3.16 We recognise existing forums risk being territorial in terms of their areas of responsibility/ accountability. Established in the right way the Alliance is the mean of focussing the debate on partnership activities to deliver for the children and young people of the Borough. It will also be a key partner and conduit for the Childrens Strategic Alliance.

Membership of WLA

3.17 The membership as it currently stands is as follows:

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|--|---|
| Independent Chair | 1 |
| Portfolio holder for Education | 1 |
| Head teachers representing Primary Schools in Walsall, as nominated by Walsall Primary, Nursery and Special School Head teachers | 2 |
| Head teachers representing Secondary Schools in Walsall, as nominated by the Walsall Association of Secondary Head teachers (WASH) | 2 |
| Special School Head teacher | 1 |
| Nursery School Head teacher | 1 |
| Teaching School Hub Head teacher | 1 |
| Executive Director for Children’s Services | 1 |

Director – Access and Inclusion	1
Chairs of Governors (as nominated through Walsall Governance Association)	2
Birmingham City University	1
Wolverhampton University	1
Walsall College	1

All representatives were nominated from their relevant sectors and this does provide a breadth of buy in from the education system.

Our current priorities:

- 3.18 The Alliance risks being overwhelmed if we try to solve every pressing issue facing children and young people at the same time. To that end we feel that the key areas where we may have immediate and cross partnership impact are:
- a) **SEND** – working across partners and in collaboration with children, young people, parents and carers to identify early learning needs and the right provision to meet those needs through mainstream and specialist settings.
 - b) **Raising standards** – working together to share best practice and challenge each other to continually raise educational outcomes for children and young people with all pupils educated in a school that is good or outstanding.
 - c) **Vulnerable groups** – the early identification and targeted support to those most vulnerable in our communities and their families enabling them to achieve their potential.
 - d) **Transition** – enabling children and young people to develop the skills confidence and resilience to transition successfully to the next stage of the educational and life journey.
 - e) **Recruitment and retention** – Walsall to be an exemplar in recruitment, retention and succession planning with effective professional development and wellbeing support to teachers and support staff in our schools. Staff want to come to Walsall and they want to stay.

Accountability

3.18 The Alliance is accountable to the partners that sit around the table and contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people across the Borough.

Measuring Impact:

- 3.19 Key to the longevity of the Alliance is the impact it can evidence in working in partnership to deliver improved outcomes for children young people, families and staff across all education settings.

The Alliance will determine the impact measures of its work dependent upon the priority under consideration. That having been said there is an overall expectation that the work of the Alliance board will be measurable over time in regard to:

Long term impact	Sustained improvement in outcomes for children and young people across Walsall including improved attainment and progress, reduced offending rates, reduced pupil expulsions and exclusions, the appropriate safeguarding and interventions through Early Help and social care.
Medium term impact	The measurable impacts that the Alliance has had through the projects it has commissioned including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of teachers having joined the Walsall NQT pool still teaching in Walsall after 3, 5 and 10 years. • Level of confidence of schools in meeting autism spectrum support and identification • Increases in the percentage of EAL pupils achieving a Good Level of Development
Short term impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative feedback on the quality of training and development offered through the projects commissioned through the Alliance • The recommendations being adopted by partners from evidence brought forward by the Alliance

3.20 The Alliance led a conference for school leaders on 7th October where they relaunched the Alliance and also provided key updates to leaders through the attendance of DfE colleagues and HMI who provided sessions on the national direction and developments, and helped the alliance shape their thinking for the future and to agree/identify priorities.

4. Financial information

4.1 There are no financial information related to this development.

5. Reducing Inequalities

5.1 The aim of our Strategic work with partners 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.

5.2 The Children and Young People Alliance is currently apply to be part of a partnership with Barnardo's to co-design a Children and young people's Health Equity framework. The Framework will be developed into a dynamic measurement tool which ICSs can use to gather the right information to focus ICS resource on the development of emotionally, mentally and physically healthy children. The tool will provide a practical solution to addressing wider determinants of health, which

lay the foundations of good health. Barnardo's and the Institute of Health Equity will lend their expertise in developing supporting interventions to take evidence-based action on equity indicators.

6. Decide

6.1 To note the recommendations as set out in this report.

7. Respond

7.1 The Director of Early help and Partnerships, with the Director of Access and Inclusion will work with both Alliances to ensure future development of the partnerships meet needs of our children and young people

8. Review

8.1 Both Alliances will keep the impact of their work under review. The WLA will produce an annual report at the beginning of each academic year

Background papers

None

Authors

Sharon Kelly

Director Access and Inclusion

☎ 658372

✉ sharon.kelly@walsall.gov.uk

Isabel Vanderheeren

Director Early Help and Partnership

☎ 650434

✉ Isabel.vanderheeren@walsall.gov.uk