

West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder

Portfolio: Councillor Elson – Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People

Related portfolios: Councillor Perry – Leader of the Council

Service: Childrens Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To provide an overview of what the West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder project is, the key opportunities for the project, and the project plan.
- 1.2 To outline how effective delivery of this pathfinder project will support the Council Plan priorities, notably the Children Priority and Communities Priority.

2. Summary

- 2.1 To provide Cabinet with an overview of the West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder, and the key actions and areas of work which will be undertaken to deliver this programme.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the Council acting as the Accountable Body for the West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder project.
- 3.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to subsequently sign contracts or other related documents and to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements should this be required.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 The Youth Justice Annual Statistics for 2021/22 show that children from black and mixed heritage backgrounds continue to be over-represented at most stages of the youth justice system. The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) has an ongoing commitment to tackling over-representation within the youth justice system.
- 4.2 Many of the levers for delivering change sit outside of direct YJB control. The YJB is committed to working with partners to address the elements that further contribute to cumulative disproportionality within the Youth Justice Service (YJS). The YJB has the opportunity to achieve this through targeted investment into pathfinder projects that deliver focussed interventions to change the 'status quo'. The YJB is proposing to do this through investment in two Addressing Ethnic Disparities Pathfinder projects.
- 4.3 Following a bidding process which ended 01/03/24, the West Midlands joint bid was chosen as one of the pathfinder projects, with the Southwest being the other. Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) will be the Lead for the West Midlands project, with other key partners being: Wolverhampton City Council, Dudley Council, Sandwell Children's Trust, Birmingham Children's Trust, Coventry City Council, and Solihull Council. A project steering group comprising of the nominated leads from each LA and key representatives, will meet monthly. As the Lead Authority, Walsall will ensure the presence of their Lead Accountant, legal and procurement officers (where necessary) ensuring comprehensive and well-informed decision making. Walsall will establish clear Terms of Reference for the steering group, outlining areas of responsibility, membership, purpose and communication lines. The group will be chaired by Walsall MBC's Strategic Lead for Youth Justice Services, Philip Rutherford.
- 4.4 The purpose of the pathfinder project is to see a reduction in the number of children who are black or mixed heritage being disproportionately represented in, or on the periphery of, the youth justice system, with a specific focus on early intervention and prevention. This further embeds the national work to encourage a Child First youth justice system. This also aligns to the documentary 'Reformation 2 The System' ([New documentary highlights what it's like for black and mixed ethnicity boys to grow up in Walsall | Walsall Council](#)) which was commissioned by Walsall Youth Justice Service and partnership organisations to explore the fact that black and mixed heritage boys are over-represented in the youth justice system. This pathfinder project will enable Walsall Youth Justice Service to drive forward the system change needed as evidenced through the documentary and, as such, Walsall YJS was keen to lead this piece of work across the region.
- 4.5 There are 4 priorities for the fund:
- Priority 1: Drive system improvements that treat children as children
 - Priority 2: Promote a holistic approach to address challenges facing children in contact with the youth justice system
 - Priority 3: Maximise opportunities for improvements for children

- Priority 4: Promote sector-led practice development and strengthen ways to disseminate what is known about working with children across the youth justice sector and beyond.

4.6 There is a wealth of evidence and data around disproportionality/over representation. It is known that the intersectionality of the cumulative effect of several factors contribute to the over-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children within the youth justice system, such as, poverty, mental health, exclusion from school, care experienced children, victims of crime. These are additional societal disparities that need to also be addressed in order to impact on the flow through and contribution to the likelihood of a child coming into contact with the youth justice system. What is not fully understood is why interventions are achieving better outcomes for white children than for black and mixed heritage children and Youth Justice Services continue to identify disproportionality as area of concern in their Youth Justice Plans. The report from the HMIP thematic inspection (October 2021 [A thematic inspection of the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk) highlighted issues around the 'worrying' level of unmet need among children from black and mixed heritage backgrounds and concerns around the limited understanding about the barriers that may be blocking their access to support before they enter the youth justice system.

4.7 The investment into this pathfinder will include an initial proof of concept prior to the design of the intervention model, to test and learn from the existing interventions to build on what is known to work for black and mixed heritage children and avoid duplicating interventions that do not work. The proof of concept will provide a deeper understanding of how wider social, environmental, and economic factors impact black and mixed heritage children's level of engagement with interventions, supported by a comparison of model development within both rural and urban regions. This deeper understanding will be used to inform the design and development of a psychologically informed model of interventions that will provide a regional response which can be embedded as systematic practice. The funding will also develop a Centre of Excellence from which the model and resources can be disseminated across youth justice services.

4.8 The investment will provide one pathfinder that is area-specific where the disproportionality is highest in context with the ethnic breakdown of the population. Youth Justice data has been provided indicating the highest RRI (relative rate index) and second highest RRI amongst black and mixed heritage children across England and Wales. London, as the top RRI, already has significant investment from the YJB; therefore, the YJB Board and Executive agreed to invest in the West Midlands Police Force Area which has the second highest RRI.

Analysis of data in the YJB Ethnic Disparity Summary Tool for the period of March 2017- March 2022 evidenced that in the West Midlands Police Force Area (WMP):

- Black children are 8% overrepresented.
- Mixed children are 11% overrepresented when compared to the general population of children.

- The WMP area has some of the lowest First Time Entrants nationally, however, there are high percentages of West Midlands children in the secure estate who are predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds.

4.9 The Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder project represents an exciting opportunity for Walsall Council and Youth Justice Service to lead a regional team in developing sector-wide reforms, to co-design and test those reforms, and support their implementation nationally. It will compliment some of the work already being undertaken through the Walsall Right 4 Children agenda, as well as the planned development through the Wave 2 Pathfinder Programme. Walsall has significant experience in delivering large externally funded programmes and has the financial stability and appropriate governance to accept, administer and account for the grant.

Council Plan Priorities

4.10 The Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder project will provide a significant opportunity to develop services for vulnerable children of black and mixed heritage in Walsall and across the wider West Midlands region, in or on the periphery of the youth justice system. With regards to Walsall, this will positively impact upon the Walsall Council Plan Children Priority: ‘that children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well’.

4.11 This project will be key in continuing to improve outcomes 7 and 8 for black and mixed heritage children.

Outcomes	Markers of Success
7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential	13. Children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities and schools are more inclusive.
	14. Children and young people with additional needs or in specific circumstances are identified and supported to have their health and education needs met.
8. Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	15. Services and support are responsive to needs of different communities, partners are proactive in responding to these needs and children and families have easier and timelier access to services.
	16. Children and families are better connected with community resources to enable them to build resilience, are involved in developing their plans and can provide regular feedback.

4.12 The Walsall Council Plan Communities Priority to ‘empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community’ is also impacted through this project. The aim of having ‘strong communities across our Borough gives a sense of belonging, enables social connection and support and can help create fulfilling lives. They can create opportunities for people to reach their potential, give back to others and reduce isolation and inequalities.’

Outcomes	Markers of Success
9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other	17. There will be a vibrant and diverse community and voluntary sector providing help and support where people need it with a range of volunteering opportunities
	18. Trust will be built within and between communities across the Borough

4.13 This pathfinder project also aligns to the Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) aspiration that “every Child and Family in Walsall is understood, feels happy and safe, with a strong sense of belonging enabling them to learn, achieve and succeed.”

This includes some of the main WR4C priorities:

- We will enable earliest help to reduce the effects of poverty, deprivation and impact of the pandemic
- We will work together with partners to ensure children receive the support and opportunities they need to thrive in all aspects of their lives, including supporting children in accessing good levels of education and exciting activities to learn and explore
- We will focus on preparing for all transition points by involving children, young people and families in decision making and planning
- Our practice will consistently focus on enabling our children to experience a profound sense of belonging within their family, school and community
- We will consistently nurture strong, supportive and sustainable relationships with all important people in a child's life including family, friends, teachers and community role models
- We will review our internal practices, establishing a commitment across the system to addressing inequality and overrepresentation of children in our statutory services. We will ensure the commissioning and development of localised preventative provisions for these children and their families and ensure they are culturally relevant and effective at meet need at the earliest point.
- We will connect our workforce with the community so they understand need and assets that will enable them to provide the best help
- We will continue to develop evidence-based integrated locality practice models aligned to our restorative practice.
- We will develop and embed a systemwide engagement and participation strategy to provides a wide range of opportunities to hear children’s voice, co-design and co-deliver activities and services
- We will influence partnerships by championing children's voices

Risk Management

4.14 With regards to safeguarding arrangements for the children participating in this project, staff will ensure there is clear consent, and information, engagement

and data sharing protocols will be followed in line with local safeguarding policies. Children will be recruited from established groups. The Project Manager and Specialist Delivery Partner will be trained in local safeguarding processes and unconscious bias including annual refreshers. They will have enhanced DBS checks and will be able to demonstrate they are ‘trauma aware’, anti-racist and have previous experience of working in a culturally appropriate way with ‘vulnerable’ children before appointment.

- 4.15 As Walsall MBC is the Lead on this pathfinder project and grant recipient on behalf of the seven Local Authorities, Walsall MBC will be solely responsible for meeting all legal and statutory requirements. In order to mitigate any potential risks and ensure compliance, a Partnership Agreement between all seven partners will be produced clearly outlining the aims and objectives of the project, key milestones and outputs, areas of responsibility for each partner, lines of communication and information sharing protocol. Each partner will be expected to sign the Partnership Agreement, which will be a fundamental cornerstone of the project. The Project Manager will be line managed by the Strategic Lead for Walsall Youth Justice Service.
- 4.16 The Walsall Youth Justice Service Performance and Partnership Board will act as the Lead Board and will oversee and scrutinise the implementation of this work with Executive Director level and multi-agency representation including LA Children’s/ Community Safety / Education Officers, Police, Probation, Public Health / ICB. The Board has oversight of deliverables, spend and quality assurance. The Chair of Walsall YJS Board, Executive Director – Children’s Services, reports to Walsall Council Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team having overall accountability for funding.

Financial Implications

- 4.17 The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) has awarded Walsall MBC, as the Lead for all seven Local Authorities, a grant of £750,000 for the West Midlands Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder grant.

The grant will be awarded as broken down below over four financial years (2 payments made per year):

- 2024/25- £195,000
- 2025/26- £262,500
- 2026/27- £262,500
- 2027/28- £30,000

Plans for how the grant will be spent are detailed in the table below:

Cost heading	Partner	2024-5	2025-6	2026-7	2027-8	Total
Recruitment i.e. Bluetown	Walsall	£500				£500
Staffing Costs Project Manager (G12 grade, Yr. 1 @ 10 months, Yr. 2 & 3 + 5% annual uplift)	Walsall (shared resource)	£55,990	£70,547	£74,075		£200,612

Staffing Costs - Training & Expenses e.g. equipment	Walsall	£3,000	£500	£426		£3,926
Staffing Costs - Project support from LA partners	All partners	£65,510	£75,393	£81,939		£222,842
Flexi Funding - (funding that the provider can spend directly on children's expenses related to their participation in the steering committee and travel costs)	All - estimate £100 per child		£5,600	£5,600		£11,200
Delivery Provider (co-production, delivery, training, facilitation, dissemination)	Walsall (shared resource)	£50,000	£90,000	£80,000		£220,000
Overheads	All		£7,960	£7,960		£15,920
Evaluation (max £75k requirement)	Walsall (shared resource)	£20,000	£12,500	£12,500	£30,000	£75,000
Total		£195,000	£262,500	£262,500	£30,000	£750,000

- 4.18 The project lead will work closely with finance colleagues on a regular basis to ensure spend is in line with the agreed grant conditions and restrictions as outlined in the grant letter and memorandum of understanding once developed and to ensure all grant returns are completed accurately, returned in a timely manner and authorised by the relevant person from the LA. We will also ensure controls are agreed and in place with the other Authorities to monitor and report on spend on a regular basis and to ensure transparency and accountability is upheld across the authorities. Walsall has experience in managing grants in this way as we are also the Lead LA for the Family Drugs and Alcohol programme therefore similar governance and reporting procedures can be used in this instance.
- 4.19 The funding period will start as soon as Walsall MBC signs and returns the grant agreement (in progress) and ends on 31 March 2028, unless terminated earlier in accordance with the attached Grant Funding Agreement terms and conditions.
- 4.20 Restrictions on expenditure are detailed in Section 5 of the attached terms and conditions of the grant- there is not considered to be any risk of the grant being spent on anything ineligible.
- 4.20 Within 6 months of the end of each financial year, an independent assessment of the grant return will need to be certified by an independent and appropriately qualified auditor to confirm that it has been spent in line with the terms and conditions of the grant.
- 4.21 The YJB may, at any time during and up to 2 years after the end of the funding period, conduct additional audits or ascertain additional information where it is considered to be necessary.
- 4.22 If the allocated grant for each financial year is not spent in full, it will need to be repaid to the YJB. Spend will be carefully monitored throughout the year to ensure on track.

- 4.23 Should the services be provided at a lower cost than the amount provided by the YJB, any underspend may be used for any other purposes consistent with the grant agreement.

Legal Implications

- 4.24 Walsall MBC, as the grant recipient, must adhere to all applicable statutory and legal requirements as outlined in the attached terms and conditions (Section 9 onwards). Walsall MBC Legal Services have been informed.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.25 Walsall MBC will ensure that any of its representatives involved in the Funded Activities will adopt such policies and procedures that are required in order to ensure that value for money has been obtained in the procurement of goods or services funded by the grant. Walsall MBC will comply, as necessary, with the procurement regulations when procuring goods and services in connection with the attached grant funding agreement.

Walsall MBC's procurement system 'Intend' will be utilised to allow for competitive tendering, also targeting individuals/companies with the following expertise:

- ✓ Child First values
- ✓ Extensive experience and engagement in intercultural understanding, equity, cultural safety and anti-racism in contexts such as policy, health, justice, immigration, poverty.
- ✓ Working with minoritised and racialised communities.
- ✓ Experience in evaluating children's services, wellbeing and justice sectors.
- ✓ Knowledge/tools to challenge prejudice, systematic racism and ableism to create opportunities for growth/support inclusion.

Property Implications

- 4.26 There are no new property implications as a result of this proposal.

Health and Wellbeing implications

- 4.27 There are no foreseeable health and wellbeing implications from this project.

Staffing implications

- 4.28 Walsall MBC, namely the Lead, Philip Rutherford, will be responsible for the recruitment of a G12 Project Manager (PM) who will report to him. The PM will then be responsible for the planning, oversight, monitoring and quality assurance of the project. A Specialist Delivery Partner (SDP) will be recruited to set up a Project Steering Group and Children's Steering Group. The SDP will consult with staff across Walsall YJS and the other six YJS's in order to co-design the proof of concept and localised programme.

4.29 During years 2 to 3 of the project, staff in Walsall YJS, and the other six areas (approximately 200 staff) will be trained (face to face and online) in the developed programme.

Reducing Inequalities

4.30 The aim of this project is that by the end of year 3 delivery 80% of black and mixed heritage children (approx. 1500) in the YJS's across the West Midlands region will have been supported by and benefitted from staff and services adopting a culturally sensitive, trauma informed approach in practice (the model). There will be outcomes such as improved confidence and self-esteem, improved pro-social identity, improved family ties, engagement with ETE and other services, and other short term 'soft outcomes' bespoke to the child.

4.31 Long term, the aims are to:

- reduce the number of statutory outcomes for children from a black or mixed heritage background in the West Midlands Police Force Area.
- reduce the over-representation of black and mixed heritage children from the West Midlands Police Force Area entering the youth justice system (FTE).
- reduce the number of reoffences by children from a black or mixed heritage background in the West Midlands Police Force Area.

Climate Impact

4.32 There are no direct climate change implications for this project. Local and West Midlands regional providers will be sourced and procured to facilitate any required interventions which will reduce the need for travel; thus reducing CO₂ emissions.

Consultation

4.32 The aim of this pathfinder is to create a culturally sensitive, trauma informed programme for use across the YJS's in line with the YJB 'Child First' vision to ensure trauma, specifically racism, prejudice and discrimination are proactively considered. This will be done through co-production with children and families from all 7x YJS's. Staff from all areas will also need to be consulted and involved in the co-production of the final model of the programme. This will be through staff focus groups and surveys. The Project Steering Group and Children's Steering Groups will oversee consultation.

5. Decide

5.1 Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the attached grant terms and conditions detail the proposed and approved plans for the delivery methodology, governance and project management, co-production, structure and systems, accountabilities and responsibilities, and quality assurance. Whilst Walsall MBC is the named Lead of this pathfinder project, all seven Local Authorities across the West Midlands have been consulted and contributed to the joint bid, and all will be accountable to report to their own Local Implementation Group.

6. Respond

- 6.1 The project delivery plan is as outlined above in the relevant sections of the terms and conditions (attached). The ask is that Cabinet endorses the West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder, and notes the recommendations, initial overview and activity set out in this report.

7. Review

- 7.1 A quarterly update report will be submitted to the Youth Justice Board by Walsall Youth Justice Service (written and agreed by all 7 YJS's).
- 7.2 Each YJS will report to its local Youth Justice Partnership Board to provide regular updates on the project and ensure it remains locally rooted.
- 7.3 An external evaluator will be recruited (through competitive tender) to create the project's Theory of Change (ToC) to evidence the proof of concept. The evaluator will produce a mid-project evaluation report to inform learning and any adjustments needed for Year 3. The external evaluator will then produce a final evaluation report in Year 4. The evaluation plan will be approved and quality assured by Walsall MBC and the YJB.

Appendices

Attached

Background papers

None

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Signed

Colleen Male
Executive Director Childrens Services
28.06.2024



Signed

Cllr Stacie Elson
Portfolio holder Childrens Services
03.07.2024