

**Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Agenda  
Item No.**

**13<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

**7.**

**Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance**

**Ward(s):** All

**Portfolios:** Cllr Stacey Elson  
Portfolio Holder

**1. Aim**

- 1.1 This report is to update members on the development of The Children and Young People Alliance.
- 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.

**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 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 and Local Area SEND inspection in 2022.
- 3.2 As we were embedding our internal services it was also important to focus on co-ordinating and influencing the establishment of a mature WR4C partnership platform to drive the delivery of the WR4C vision.
- 3.3 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.

- 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. It recognised that this work 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 had 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 on the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 have been key pieces of engagement work undertaken with children and young people growing up in Walsall providing the Alliance with valuable and rich qualitative information to understand children’s lived experience and the things Walsall Alliance need to consider in ensuring all children in Walsall can be happy, healthy, safe and learning well.

The key pieces of work were:

- 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
- We are Walsall 2040 – 2022
- Regular inviting children and young people stories to the Board

### **The Children and Young People Strategic Alliance Focus Areas**

- 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 the Alliance 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.



#### **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 As part of its strategic thinking the Alliance has invited Youth Justice to share the work they have done around disproportionality of young men in the youth justice system and has listened to young people's story to enable to identify the system changes that need to put in place.  
As part of the Alliance 1001 days needs assessment it has also undertaken a Walsall Maternity Ethnicity needs assessment to understand the areas (place and issues) we needed to focus on to reduce inequalities.

#### **6. Decide**

6.1 The Alliance is currently developing its Walsall Children and Young people Strategy 2023 – 2040 based on following principles:

- Children First - driven by our understanding of current lived experience and our ambition for children in the future
- Long term system change – aligned to our We are Walsall 2040 vision
- Use of our organisational and partnership levers
- Widening our influence to include private sector and communities

#### **7. Respond**

7.1 The Alliance continues to mature and has already led to significant change including.

- Walsall together are implementing a Children First priority.
- Some of our Alliance members are considering how they can become a foster friendly employer.
- -The commitment in the development of the Family Hubs at a fast pace has been down to the strength of the Alliance.

7.2 The Alliance will be organising a Children and Young people Alliance submit on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023 to work with wider stakeholders to develop the 2023-2040 strategy and secure wider stakeholder commitment

## 8. Review

- 8.1 Following the summit the Alliance will be launching its Strategy in September 2023. The impact of this will be reviewed annually through consultation and engagement with children and young people by asking questions around their lived experience of growing up in Walsall and whether it is improving.

### Background papers

Appendix A - Alliance way of working



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