

WALSALL FOR ALL

Our vision for integrated
and welcoming communities





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Our vision is to create integrated, empowered and inclusive communities where people from all backgrounds come together to celebrate what they have in common. A place where our residents are safe and valued, and everyone has fair opportunities to fulfil their potential and contribute to the growth of Walsall.

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Message from Lord Bourne, Minister for Faith



The government published the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper in March 2018. It set out our ambition to build strong integrated communities where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

We want to see communities that celebrate what we have in common – and the strength we get from different faiths, beliefs and opinions, is underpinned by a shared set of British values that champion respect and tolerance, freedom and equality of opportunity – bridging beliefs and backgrounds.

Britain is a great place to live. We want everyone to take advantage of the opportunities this country offers – especially women and girls who are too often denied these chances – while recognising and valuing their relationship with, and responsibility to, other groups and to our wider society.

We know that the challenges to integration vary throughout the country. The government's Integration Areas Programme focuses local and national resource on a common goal, to deliver integrated communities and to understand the challenges better and to tackle those specific to a place. Each area will take tailored actions to address the challenges specific to their place and capture the impacts of this work. This approach will help us to learn what works and how it could be applied in other places – ultimately helping us to improve integration in other areas.

We were delighted that Walsall agreed to participate in this programme. The Local Authority and its partners in the area have a clear understanding of the challenges they face and the strengths on which they can build, and have shown their desire to be bold and innovative to meet the needs of the communities they serve. We welcome the publication of Walsall's local integration strategy, Walsall for All: our vision for integrated and welcoming communities, which is the result of the constructive consultation and engagement undertaken by the new local integration partnership, the Walsall for All board. We look forward to learning from the delivery of its ambitious long-term vision for the communities of Walsall which sits at the heart of this strategy.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth
Minister for Faith

WALSALL

Message from Portfolio Holder



There are amazing people in Walsall who selflessly serve the good of the borough week in and week out. They do this often without cause or question of the diversity they encounter; they have a simple concept of human kindness and support for all. Sometimes determination to change prejudice into a positive force for good comes from personal experience as many, including myself, have found. I personally supported setting up such projects in the areas that used to be very insular and suspicious of difference, yet today, they open their doors to families and individuals of all ages, breaking down boundaries between generations, cultures and lifestyles. And yet, when I talk about these amazing encounters, people find it hard to believe that this work is happening in Walsall!

I recognise that many of our residents, in their day to day interactions, do not venture far from where they live. Some do not have the means or the confidence to do so, others may view their area as better than others or are anxious of the fast changing environment around them. But it is my belief that if you involve diverse people in common causes and projects, their perceptions change and they learn a lot from each other.

As Walsall people it is our duty to take action to create the type of Walsall we want for ourselves and our children.

Walsall for All is doing just that. Using this new strategy, we will replicate the good work and challenge some of the existing insular approaches to make our neighbourhoods, schools and businesses friendlier and for every corner of Walsall to become truly welcoming.

Walsall for All is about 'doing things differently' by supporting people to meet and mix with others, giving voices to our young people and making sure that everyone can contribute to our local economy and shape their neighbourhood.

Walsall for All will enable us to develop innovative projects and deepen our learning to work towards our vision of inequalities being reduced and all potential being maximised.

And finally, I believe that our Walsall for All approach is key to the future prosperity of the borough. We will use our place within the Integrated Area Programme of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to maximise the opportunities for Walsall people of all ages and backgrounds. When we come together and form strong integrated communities we will contribute to the wealth, health and overall wellbeing of Walsall.

I have every confidence that the Walsall for All board will further encourage that selflessness and kindness and provide the leadership to bring the projects associated with this strategy alive. We will do all we can to make Walsall a borough that serves in the interest of all of the people all of the time.

Councillor Garry Perry
Portfolio Lead for Leisure, Culture and Communities

FOR ALL

Walsall for All overview

Walsall for All is our long-term strategy for creating strong and integrated communities in Walsall. It recognises our numerous strengths as well as our challenges, and sets out the steps we will take to break down barriers to integration.



In 2018, the government published their Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper¹ which recognised that tailored local integration plans are needed to tackle the issues that are specific to each area. Walsall was one of five Integration Areas chosen to work with the government to trial this new localised approach.

Being part of the Integration Areas Programme is an exciting opportunity to be at the forefront of this work, to share best practice and to learn from the

experiences of the other areas. It will encourage the people of Walsall to come together – to build on the existing good work and practice but to be bolder and more ambitious.

The word integration has different meanings for different people. Government defines strong, integrated communities as where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

For Walsall it means creating an environment where people with different life experiences, abilities, ages, backgrounds and lifestyles feel included and valued.

We are clear that integration is not assimilation – it is not about losing your personal identities, heritage or faith – but instead recognising that we have more in common than divides us and ensuring that we celebrate and benefit from the diversity of cultures and religions in Walsall.

A better integrated Walsall will bring a number of benefits – our communities and the whole of Walsall will flourish, overcoming the divisions caused by prejudice, discrimination and segregation, and everyone will be able to fulfil their potential and contribute to the growth of Walsall.

This strategy sets out a number of initial planned actions to be supported by long term thinking about how we can build capability and embed and mainstream integration in our vision for an integrated Walsall.

To achieve our vision, we have identified four priority areas:

- 1. Connecting across communities**
- 2. Young people learning and growing together**
- 3. Working and contributing together**
- 4. Living together**

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>

We all have a part to play

We recognise that all of us have a part to play in building the type of Walsall we want for the future.

For this programme to succeed we must create a movement for positive change and mainstream integration, so it becomes part of our everyday life in Walsall.

This includes our:

- Residents
- Voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations
- Faith communities
- School and colleges
- Businesses
- Council and wider public sector



Our integration journey

Walsall for All is another step on our integration journey. Some areas of Walsall already have a proud history of championing integration and welcoming people – however, we recognise we still have work to do.

This strategy will build on the existing good practice and previous work identified in the Cohesion and Integration Strategy² published by Walsall Council in 2017.

Over the last couple of years, we have listened to our communities and engaged our partners to understand the challenges. We have also taken some actions to make progress towards achieving a connected Walsall. The timeline below shows some of these key steps taken and the progress made.

March 2017

Community Conversations with over 500 residents were used to inform/develop the first Walsall's Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy.

2016

2017

October 2016

Local research with Walsall residents about their perceptions of Walsall's places and communities was launched.

June 2017

Walsall became a Borough of Sanctuary offering a warm welcome to new communities of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

November 2016

New to Walsall research, gathering experiences of people who are new to the borough started.

²Walsall Council 2017, Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2017 – 2020
<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/Uploads/EQD/docs/Cohesion%20Integration%20Strategy%202017-20.pdf>

March 2018

Integrated Communities – A Vision for Walsall conference and World Café style discussions identified potential solutions for a more integrated Walsall.

December 2018

Lets Talk About It project, funded by the Government's Controlling Migration Fund was launched with the aim of encouraging community and voluntary organisations to increase English language skills in an innovative way.

March 2018

Walsall was announced as one of the five Integration Areas working with government.

October 2018

First formal meeting of the Walsall for All Board to agree the strategy and how we can drive the work forwards to ensure maximum impact and sustainability.

2018

June 2018

Walsall People Project, funded by government's Controlling Migration Fund, was launched to create better conditions for integration of the settled and the new communities in priority neighbourhoods.

November 2017

Walsall Council's Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2017-2020 was published.

September 2018

18 face to face consultations were undertaken with partner organisations and community and voluntary organisations in different localities of Walsall to inform the priorities for the Walsall for All strategy.

Wider context

To achieve the Walsall for All vision it is crucial that this work does not occur in isolation, but becomes a vital part of all other plans for Walsall.

Walsall Locality Model

One such important element of the existing infrastructure is the Walsall Locality Model spanning across the four geographical areas – East, North, West and South. This gives us an opportunity to connect a the vast array of partners, including smaller local organisations, community leaders and businesses across Walsall.

The Walsall Plan

The Walsall Plan: Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017- 2020³ aims to ensure all Walsall residents are happy and healthy by addressing the key determinants of health and wellbeing, including: economy, skills, transport and housing.

The Walsall Plan identified 3 priorities:

- Increasing economic prosperity through increased growth
- Maximising people's wealth, wellbeing and safety
- Creating healthy and sustainable places and communities

The plan recognises the critical importance of reducing inequality by applying maximum effort and resource into those areas in Walsall where the need is greatest.

Overall, the health of Walsall residents is considerably poorer than other areas across England and Wales. It is acknowledged by Walsall's Clinical Commissioning Group on tackling health inequalities in Walsall that those living on the East side of the borough have much better health outcomes than those on the West.



West Midlands Combined Authority

Walsall for All welcomes the opportunities to work together with the West Midlands Combined Authority.

For example, their Leaders Like You report⁴ recognised the need for leading and influential positions in our region to be more representative of the people it serves.

We will work with employers and businesses within Walsall to break down barriers and ensure fair access to opportunities for progression.

³<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/Uploads/PublicHealth/60112%20Walsall%20Our%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Strategy%202017-2020.pdf>

⁴https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/2218/leadership-diversity-in-the-west-midlands_-002.pdf

About Walsall – our integration challenges and opportunities

History and changing demographics

Situated at the heart of the Black Country, Walsall was transformed by the Industrial Revolution – its prosperous industries included leatherwork, mining, nuts and bolts manufacture and lock making. During this time, Walsall's population increased from just 10,399 residents at the beginning of the 19th century to 86,400 residents by the end.

However, during this time Walsall, like other parts of Black Country, experienced relatively low levels of economic migration from outside of Britain.

Overseas migration rose in the mid-20th century. In the 1950s communities started to settle in Walsall from the Indian subcontinent, followed by Caribbean communities in 1960s, primarily to meet labour shortages.

Today, Walsall has a population of 281,293 with the overall make up of our borough continuing to evolve as more people move to Walsall from different parts of the world to make it their home.

At the last Census (in 2011) 'White British' remained the largest single group at 76.9%.

However, the number of residents from minority ethnic groups has risen to almost one in four (23.1%), an increase on the 14.8% in 2001.

Growth of the European Union has now made it possible for people from Central and Eastern Europe to settle in Britain and since the last Census, we have seen some of these communities moving to parts of the borough.

Walsall also homes approximately 400 asylum-seekers and refugees in any one year, as part of the asylum dispersal system and we have welcomed people from all corners of the world, particularly the Middle East and Central and West Africa. We have an existing settled and itinerant Gypsy and Traveller population, and some recently settled Roma communities originating from Central and Eastern Europe.



Inclusion

In the existing Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2017-2020 we highlighted the need to work with both indigenous and minority communities, and those with any protected characteristics that may experience barriers or disadvantage.

All of our communities must feel valued, have raised aspirations and be empowered to improve the quality of life in their locality.

Our Community Conversations showed that those with disabilities sometimes feel that they have very limited influence and are often ignored. These groups feel negatively affected by recent changes to welfare entitlements and growing inequality. One in five Walsall residents has a health condition that limits their day to day activities and 10.4% would be classed as having a disability compared to 8.3% in England and Wales.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community showed an increased confidence in organising events such as the annual Walsall Pride and they reported feeling better supported, with increasing numbers attending.



Experiences of prejudice however do continue and as our community continues to change, our approach to tackling these issues will need to evolve too.



Perceptions of others

Walsall localities and wards have a tendency to be insular, whether due to an historically recognised identity or to a preference to 'stay local'.

There is a strong socio-economic divide between the affluent East and the deprived and less healthy West, with ethnic diversity higher towards the South, although this is gradually changing.

This insularity can lead to an increased negative perception of anyone from 'another area' or seen as 'different' with a reluctance for interaction the unfortunate result. It can also lead to harmful myths being made about individuals and groups – learnt and spread through the official media and social media rather than from people's direct encounters⁵.

⁵<http://tedcandle.co.uk/parallel-lives-the-new-evidence/>

Yam! Caribbean pop-up restaurant in Walsall

Sharing food is one of the most accessible ways to learn about other cultures and connect with people from different backgrounds!

Two cousins whose grandparents arrived from Jamaica to England in 1962 wanted to have the opportunity to share their Jamaican culture and food. Growing up in a family where food brought everyone together every Sunday made them feel Walsall needed a place for everyone to come together, enjoy food and connect.

“We come from a family with food at its heart; gathering, sharing and eating together. For us, Caribbean food has always had that family feel”



They decided to open a restaurant where people from different backgrounds can come to taste Caribbean food in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Taste For Life and Ryecroft Community Hub supported them

by offering facilities and advice. The result has been fantastic!

Ryecroft Community Hub now has a Jamaican pop-up restaurant that operates on Sundays bringing communities together.

www.yamhouse.co.uk/story

Strong communities

Walsall has a thriving voluntary sector with many social enterprises and faith organisations promoting kindness and generosity.

They deliver numerous activities – from parenting classes and youth provision to English language classes and job clubs as well as community cafés and pop-up restaurants. Faith groups organise social gatherings open to all – including multifaith Iftar celebrations, Christmas tree festivals and the Diwali celebration at Walsall Art Gallery. Our Hindu and Sikh community pave the way in recruitment of volunteers.

In our annual Remembrance Day we recognise contributions from different cultures and ethnicities from Walsall. Our Anne Frank Holocaust event, exploring prejudice through historical and modern-day examples was attended by 1,500 young people from across Walsall – the largest attendance of any associated event in the country.

Faith representatives from across the borough currently provide vital support for ‘people in need’ with free, hot meals provided six days per week. This successful service will soon be extended to seven days per week 365 days per year. It is delivered at Walsall Night Shelter, which provides winter support for ‘rough sleepers’ in partnership with YMCA Black Country Group.

Ethnicity in wards in the North of the borough such as Blakenall and Bloxwich, are largely white British, but they have recently seen the settlement of people from other European communities. Some of our Community Associations have introduced drop-in outreach services for those families to help them settle in the local area – reducing tensions and supporting community cohesion.

These activities and events help to bring people from different backgrounds together, to support newly arrived communities and contribute to Walsall being a welcoming place. We must continue to build on this good work to bring people together, to celebrate diversity, what we have in common and create a shared sense of belonging.

Caldmore Primary Academy

Caldmore Primary Academy serves a richly diverse community, their motto, 'Aspire, Believe, Achieve', is central to the inclusivity of the academy. There are strong, nurturing relationships between staff and pupils and an unwavering commitment to help all children fulfil their potential.

The image of a rainbow in the badge reflects the ethos of the academy. It depicts the way in which we are all unique, but are also an important part of the whole and create something beautiful when we come together.

Over 30 different languages are spoken by children who join the academy from all around the world. All pupils, regardless of their starting points or backgrounds are supported and challenged to be the very best that they can be.



Language development permeates every aspect of the academy in order to enable pupils to communicate with others, minimise barriers to learning and raise aspirations.

In addition, there is a focus on involving parents in the learning journey and supporting them to learn English – for example through regular workshops, inviting them in to the school to share lessons with their children and providing English classes through networks established with our local college and community organisations.

www.caldmore.attrust.org.uk

Young people

There are an increasing number of young people living in Walsall – with an 8.8% increase in births in Walsall between 2004 and 2014, and the number of reception pupils in Walsall schools increasing to 11.3% between 2012 and 2017.

It is therefore vital that 'Walsall for All' programme considers the needs of children and young people as they offer a real opportunity for intergenerational change.

The Social Mobility Index placed Walsall in the worst 10% of Local Authorities for school mobility. Community consultation showed that we need to support young people to raise their aspirations, regardless of background, and help them gain higher skill levels so they can contribute to future economic growth in Walsall.

School segregation is a key integration issue – with 68% of secondary schools in Walsall classed as segregated⁶. This is a result of high levels of residential segregation impacting catchment areas and feeder schools, but also parental choice in school selection, with parents often choosing schools based on the ethnicity or religion.

Community consultations highlighted concerns about divisions in the playground and that there should be more opportunities for young people to mix and learn about people with different backgrounds and experiences. As a result, Walsall Council's Community Cohesion officers provide regular one-to-one school support that identifies issues in the playground or classrooms and have worked with the Faith and Belief Forum to deliver 26 school assemblies exploring faith and culture with shared values.

Our 'Youth of Walsall' are particularly good at understanding issues impacting upon young people and taking positive social action. The new project, 'Walsall Youth in Unity' aims to engage and empower young people across Walsall by providing open access youth activities for all.

We must work harder to harness the positive energy of young people and give them a voice in shaping this agenda.

⁶The Challenge, Understanding School Segregation in England: 2011 to 2016 <https://the-challenge.org/uploads/documents/TCN-Understanding-School-Segregation-in-England-2011-to-2016.pdf>

School Linking

The School Linking Programme started in 2017 and brings together students from different cultural or faith backgrounds to explore issues of identity, community and belief.



Approximately 600 children have been directly involved so far, and our aim is to double this number over the next two years.

During 2018 Walsall piloted school linking between four primary schools and two secondary schools.

The pupils undertook a year-long programme where they took part in three engaging link days with their partner school to deepen knowledge and understanding of different beliefs by engaging directly with students from different backgrounds.

During the programme they explored three key questions: Who Am I? Who Are We? How do we live together?

This helped the students develop skills of communication, empathy and reflection. The value of the programme was demonstrated by reflections from students themselves:

'At first I was uncomfortable but now I feel more relaxed and at ease when talking to someone new, especially those who come from a completely different background.'

'It made me feel less closed off. I've learnt more about other schools and religions.'

Youth of Walsall

Youth of Walsall was established in 2011 to make a positive difference to the lives of young people in Walsall.

They are currently running a knife awareness campaign called:

Real Knives, Real Lives

This project was created after knife crime was found to be the top issue for most young people in the area.

The campaign aims to educate young people at risk of committing knife crime about the potential impact of their actions, not only on the victims and perpetrators, but also on their families, friends and relevant organisations that are all involved in the aftermath of a knife incident.



There are three main components to the campaign: workshops with young people; creating and sharing awareness raising videos and an art competition. Recently, knife crime has been brought into the spotlight due to several incidents taking place in Walsall.

Youth of Walsall hope that educating the local young people about the detrimental effects will result in a reduction in knife crime in Walsall; and help to build a safer, more cohesive, unified community with reduced youth violence.

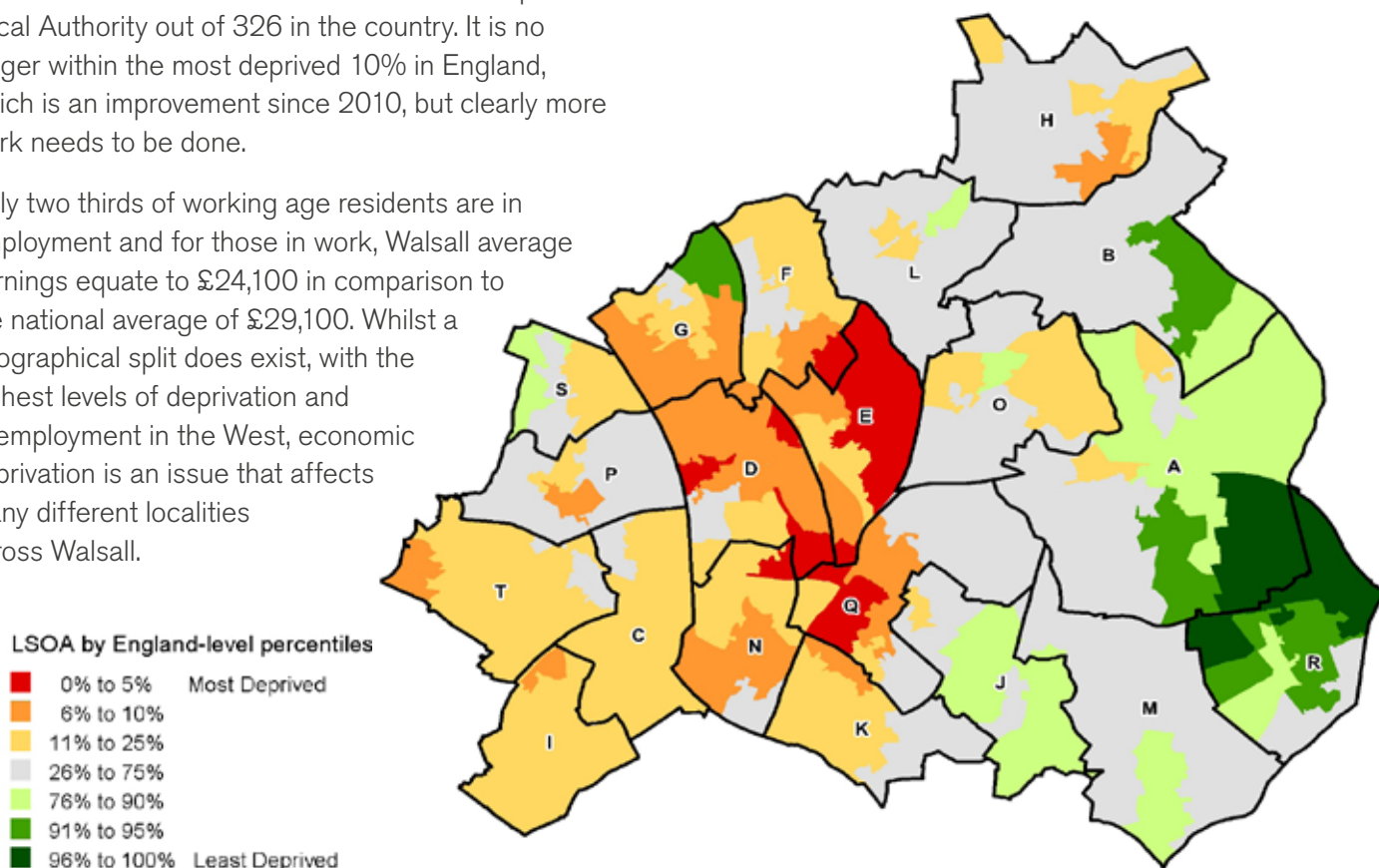
Pockets of deprivation and employment challenges

Social integration challenges are linked to wider indicators of deprivation and labour market disadvantage.

Latest data shows Walsall is the 33rd most deprived Local Authority out of 326 in the country. It is no longer within the most deprived 10% in England, which is an improvement since 2010, but clearly more work needs to be done.

Only two thirds of working age residents are in employment and for those in work, Walsall average earnings equate to £24,100 in comparison to the national average of £29,100. Whilst a geographical split does exist, with the highest levels of deprivation and unemployment in the West, economic deprivation is an issue that affects many different localities across Walsall.

Statistics also show that women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in Walsall, are underrepresented in the workforce. It is therefore essential that we work to improve employment opportunities for women and that cultural attitudes do not restrict them from fully participating in employment or wider society.



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Local job clubs

In August Joanna attended the Moxley People Centre Job Club, part of the Black Country City Deal programme. She needed support in finding a job, but lack of English language skills was identified as key area for improvement. Joanna, who was originally from Poland, had been in the UK for eight years but knew very little English.

Joanna was a stay at home parent and was claiming Income Support as she had never worked either here or in Poland. She was signposted to Emconet, who help migrants, particularly from Central and Eastern Europe, with a number of issues including employability.

Joanna also said she felt very disconnected and isolated from her community. She was put in touch with her local Polish group who provide a supportive social network.

She is now enrolled on to an ESOL course at the Walsall College to help her improve her English. Inability to speak English is a huge barrier to integration and finding work.

Learning English has enabled Joanna to break through the barrier of social isolation, form new friendships, access services independently and find work.

Supporting young people into employment

The Black Country Impact Project is designed to address high levels of youth unemployment in the Black Country through supporting young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) into the labour market – including those at risk of social exclusion or from marginalised communities.

Aqil is one of the young people supported within the project. At the age of 21 he became jobless and was struggling to get back into work.

He was keen to work in retail or customer services and was interested in setting up his own business in the future.

The Impact adviser helped him to update his CV, develop his interview skills, apply for a variety of vacancies and eventually start his new job.

He was so excited to be offered a role at the brand new Iceland store, opening in Walsall.

Aqil was also supported with travel costs to attend training at an existing store before the new store in Walsall opened. Aqil is now feeling positive about his new future thanks to Impact!

Despite higher levels of education, the progression into leadership positions by Black and Minority ethnic people is lagging behind in several public sector organisations. In December 2017, Walsall Council partnered with 'brap' to undertake research into experiences of Black and Minority ethnic staff in workplace and the subsequent data has informed the Council's Workforce Transformation Programme.

Since 2018, the 'Equally Yours' game has been used by Walsall Council, Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group and Walsall Housing Group as a debating tool that promotes dialogue at leadership levels to identify barriers and potential prejudice.

In order to help services adapt to changing diversity in the borough, Walsall Council has piloted innovative, inter-cultural training to help staff understand how culture may impact on service user behaviours and needs.

Our European Social Fund 'Black Country Impact' programme supports young disadvantaged people, enabling them to enter the local economy. To date, 2,882 diverse community members have been supported, reaching over 900 positive outcomes in employment or training. 'Walsall Works' is our employability initiative and seeks to support local people to find jobs, apprenticeships and to access training whilst supporting local businesses that are looking to expand and invest in their future workforce.

This Council initiative has supported over 8,000 residents with 2,247 moving into employment and 1,083 into training opportunities.

Employment offers a route out of deprivation, reduces social isolation and connects people from different backgrounds. We must continue to ensure equality of opportunity and inclusive economic growth so that all people in Walsall can benefit.



English language

The lack of ability to speak English is a significant barrier to integration – inhibiting people from open communication, socialising and forming friendships with others. It also makes accessing services more challenging and reduces opportunities for employment.

According to 2011 Census data, 7% of Walsall's population did not speak English as their main language. The 2017 annual School Census shows 24% of pupils from state-funded primary schools did not speak English as their first language – with the highest proportion in the South locality, one of the most ethnically diverse areas.

Our 'Let's Talk about It' project, funded by the Government's Controlling Migration Fund, was launched in December 2018 with the aim of encouraging community and voluntary organisations to improve English language skills of residents in an innovative way.

Several projects have come forward from a wide range of providers including Community Associations, Temples, women's organisations, Saturday schools and creative arts projects. Ensuring everyone in Walsall is able to speak English to communicate is crucial to tackling isolation, increasing employment levels and supporting integration.

Learning English in Church!

All Saints Church in Darlaston has become a church-based centre of learning that delivers English for Speakers of other Language (ESOL).

Supported by the Lichfield Diocese Community Fund, the Church successfully delivered its first term of support to people who are from asylum seeker or refugee backgrounds. ESOL courses cover speaking and listening, reading and writing and vocabulary. Improving someone's English can help them with medical appointments, support their children with homework, access work and pass the Life in the UK test to become a British citizen.

To make the classes accessible to all, the church recognised common barriers to attending ESOL classes and so provides free childcare facilities, free refreshments and subsidised costs for students who are not eligible for grant support.

The Revd Gilbert David, who heads up the project said: "The church is a popular centre of worship for local Christians. However, we believe our church should be a place which serves the need of the entire community and for people of every faith and background. We are delighted that every student on our first term course passed their Level 1 accreditation with flying colours."





Housing

In the 2011 Census, Walsall had the 12th highest residential segregation in the country, with communities from a similar ethnic background often living in the same areas of Walsall.

For example, the proportion of ethnic minorities in Palfrey ward is 68% compared to 4% in Pelsall. Tackling residential segregation is a complex issue. People value the right to choose where they live, however, it is easier for those who are affluent and have existing local family or cultural connections.

Walsall Council does not have its own housing stock and both social and private housing are delivered

through external organisations. Main providers of social housing formed the strategic Housing Partnership Group and they actively seek to better support new residents to feel at home and become part of their wider community.

Working with smaller private landlords can be more challenging and the risk of exploitation of people who are new to the area and unaware of their rights is greater. More is required to tackle poor living conditions and overcrowding.

Walsall welcomes the recent funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to tackle rogue landlords by improving cross-agency enforcement work, including the innovative use of drones and thermal mapping to identify problem properties.

Waters Keep Estate

Historical factors combined with changing demographics and tenure around the Waters Keep estate has created a diverse yet challenging backdrop.

These challenges and opportunities include:

- Merging the new estate with remaining properties on the existing estate
- A more ethnically diverse community, where previously it was predominately White British
- Modern housing alongside more traditional Local Authority properties
- Mixed tenure including homes for sale, where previously the majority had been social housing

To support residents to get to know each other and form a strong and integrated community, a Neighbourhood Club was established in 2016, which was supported by a Community Organiser.

It aimed to bring new and existing residents together to organise and run inclusive community events and activities. The community have organised events including an estate barbeque, a Big Lunch event, a Christmas decoration competition, a flower planting event and table top sale. These events have enabled neighbours to get to know each other and build a strong community, as well as to tackle isolation.

Neighbourhood tensions

There can be tensions in neighbourhoods caused by the pressure on local services, issues of anti-social behaviour, street drinking, littering and fly tipping.

To tackle these issues, our 'Walsall People Project' funded by government's Controlling Migration Fund, provides valuable outreach services for new communities. It enables us to support access to services, deal with tensions early, tackle rogue landlords and inform people of their rights and responsibilities.

Other projects aimed at new residents include the new 'Refugee and Migrant Centre' surgeries held at St Paul's Crossing which provides induction and wellbeing support for people who have settled in Walsall as part of the asylum dispersal scheme or other refugee and immigration pathways. There can be negative views and prejudice towards our Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. The Council engages with people from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds who stay in Walsall temporarily on authorised settlements. We have recently completed a piece of research that will contribute to the Council's strategic planning of temporary sites.

There are several streets in Caldmore, Palfrey and Pleck that are densely populated by Roma families. In 2018, Walsall People Project employed a member of the Roma community who was able to make 350 contacts and recruit 30 volunteers for afterschool activities for children and young people. The project was recently hailed as best practice by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in their recent Controlling Migration Fund workshop.

Hate crime

In 2018 there was a 20% increase of reported hate crime in Walsall, of which over 80% was race related.

Many instances of hate crime also fail to be reported due to uncertainty of how to do so, fear of repercussions or a belief that nothing will be done following reporting.

Some people fear visiting or living in different areas due to concerns about hate crime and the increasing number of hate incidents which are reported through informal channels. Homophobic comments and

Walsall People Project

Nash Dom's outreach worker met Silvia when she and her family were facing major difficulties.

Originally from Romania, Silvia moved to Walsall in November 2017 with her husband and twin daughters aged six. Her husband was unemployed at that time and she was the only one to work and support the family. Their daughters were out of education. The family was sharing a single room in a large house with several other people.

The outreach worker supported the family to register with school admissions.

One of the girls has disabilities and required additional support, so the family was referred to Walsall Children Services where she received suitable support and identified an appropriate school for her needs.

The family was supported to register with the local doctor and access the household and child benefits they were entitled to.

Due to this support, the family receives additional household income and they no longer have to share a house with others – as they have now secured a privately rented house for their family. Both of their children now attend school.

bullying in schools are a concern by some, although others felt there is less prejudice relating to sexual orientation amongst younger generations.

We want Walsall to be a safe place for all people. West Midlands Police and Walsall Council Communities services co-located in 2017 – resulting in a new working group focused on tackling hate crime.

A new Walsall Hate Crime Strategy is currently being developed in partnership with 'One Walsall' and emphasises the need to understand and simplify reporting, offer better support to victims, to create a zero-tolerance culture; and to work with those who perpetrate these crimes.

Our vision and priorities

Our vision is to create integrated, empowered and inclusive communities where people from all backgrounds come together to celebrate what they have in common. A place where our residents feel safe and valued, and everyone has fair opportunities to fulfil their potential and contribute to the growth of Walsall.

The Walsall for All programme will build on our existing knowledge but will also give us an opportunity to learn from a wider range of projects, both locally and nationally.

In focusing on our four priorities, we want to uphold a set of guiding principles that we see as important for Walsall. These include:

Asset based approach: we will recognise and focus on our strengths and existing assets as we develop

new activities. This includes using our knowledge and experience, making use of existing spaces and buildings and community networks and groups.

Equal and fair opportunities: through all activities in the programme we aim to ensure equal opportunities for all groups and individuals, regardless of their background.

Empowering and engaging communities: our communities and individuals are key to achieving our vision. We will support them to have the confidence and tools needed to be active citizens to transform their lives and create integrated and thriving neighbourhoods.

Partnership approach: we will bring partners and people together to share responsibility for achieving our vision. It is only through a genuine partnership approach, working across Walsall that this programme will be transformative and sustainable.

Learning: learning will be ongoing throughout the programme and we will review and adapt the programme to ensure it is always making the desired impact.

Our understanding of the challenges and opportunities has resulted in four priority areas:

1. Connecting across communities
2. Young people learning and growing together
3. Working and contributing together
4. Living together

1. Connecting across communities

Our long-term ambition is for Walsall to be a vibrant and diverse place where people come together around what they have in common and form meaningful friendships.

We want Walsall to become a place where acceptance, understanding and respect replace any prejudice and intolerance, and everyone feels a shared sense of belonging.

We must increase the opportunities for people from different communities and parts of the borough to meet and mix – through events, shared hobbies, sports, art, sharing food or interfaith work. This will allow people to connect with others and recognise we have more in common than divides us. It will help break down existing barriers, challenge myths and allow friendships to form.

We recognise that people are often not given the time or space to discuss and explore views around difficult and emotive topics such as racism, religion, migration – and we will increase the opportunity to do so.



What will we do?

We will launch a new Walsall for All fund that will support innovative approaches to supporting integration in Walsall. Local community and voluntary sector organisations will be able to bid for up to £10,000 for projects that fulfil the following criteria:

- Creating opportunities for meaningful social mixing. Emphasis will be on inclusivity and bringing together people from a range of different socio-economic, age, cultural, religious and lifestyle characteristics.
- Exploring social attitudes and promoting positive change in changing perceptions.
- Developing digital solutions to support integration.

We will develop a Walsall for All pledge encouraging groups and providers to sign up to promoting values and principles about inclusivity and integration. We will also support expansion of the successful 'Places of Welcome'⁷ scheme in the areas already identified as a growing risk of social isolation or prejudice.

We will ensure there is greater engagement with and between faith communities. We will improve co-ordination between our existing interfaith activities and organise a new 'Integration Through Faith Conference' with the aim of adopting a 'Faith Covenant for Walsall.'

During 2019 and 2020 we will hold Community Dialogue sessions across Walsall – creating safe spaces for people to have honest discussions about integration and changing neighbourhoods. We want people to be able to ask difficult questions, share views, raise concerns and debate issues to better understand each other's views and beliefs – and tackle divisions and misconceptions.

We will support more opportunities for collaboration across the borough through better coordination and linking of existing groups, activities and events across Walsall.

⁷www.placesofwelcome.org.uk



What will this mean for Walsall people?

Short term results:

- New innovative activities promoting integration and funded through the 'Walsall for All' fund.
- More opportunities for Walsall people to meet and mix across geographic, ethnic, faith and economic boundaries – improving awareness and take up by local people.
- Creation of a Walsall for All pledge to which community, voluntary and faith groups can sign up, increasing understanding of the importance of inclusivity and integration, and the role they can play in achieving this.
- Following the 'Integration Through Faith' conference, there is increased interfaith work with greater participation levels – and people are signing up to the 'Faith Covenant.'
- Walsall people are participating in 'Community Dialogue' events, starting to raise concerns and shift negative perceptions of others.

Longer term results:

- People are freely meeting and mixing with others and building more diverse networks across the borough.
- There are truly diverse and inclusive groups across Walsall, where all people are welcomed and have a voice – and where integration aims are embedded in core work.
- There is increased tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding between different communities in Walsall, and reduced fear and prejudice of others using interfaith activity.
- Walsall is a welcoming and open place where people are comfortable to visit or live, work or learn in any part of the borough.

2. Young people learning and growing together

Our long-term ambition is that young people in Walsall have diverse friendships and understanding and acceptance of all. They have the confidence and aspiration to fulfil their potential and are empowered to take social action and make a positive difference in Walsall.

To achieve this ambition, we must ensure all children are given opportunities to meet and form friendships with people from different ethnic, religious or socio-economic groups. Children's views are shaped in their formative years and so we must teach them about different cultures and to respect each other's views and opinions, so they have understanding and tolerance.

We must ensure that within and outside of the school community, children are encouraged to have high aspirations and are given opportunities to develop their self-confidence and skills.

What will we do?

We will expand the School Linking Programme in Walsall. Building on the success of the pilot, the School Linking Programme will be expanded to include 20 additional schools and to better engage parents. It will conclude with a celebration event with parents and teachers to reflect on their journey.

We will work with arts providers to deliver an annual borough-wide school arts competition called "what does integration mean to me?" Work produced will be exhibited throughout the borough and will provide an opportunity for parents and communities to view and discuss the artwork.





We will support Walsall schools to become 'UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools'⁸. Rights Respecting Schools will be supported to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children's rights are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they are able to thrive. It will support young people to increase their understanding of difference and diversity and become active citizens within their communities. We will examine ways to increase integration through the education sector.

We will invite relevant stakeholders from local schools, Walsall Council and the Department for Education to consider opportunities to support integration, including examining school admissions policies, marketing and outreach work that provides opportunities for children of different backgrounds to be educated or socialise together.

We will encourage and support young people from different backgrounds to build confidence, raise aspirations and access opportunities for meaningful social integration. This will be achieved through working with uniformed youth groups, The Prince's Trust and The Challenge as well as increasing take up of opportunities such as the National Citizen Service.

Building on the existing infrastructure provided by 'Walsall Youth in Unity' and 'One Voice' Forum, we will establish opportunities to give our young people from different backgrounds, abilities and lifestyles a meaningful voice where their views can be heard and their ideas implemented. With our support we can enable them to create the vision that takes 'Walsall for All' into the next generation.

⁸<https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/>

What will this mean for Walsall people?

Short term results:

- Through school involvement, young people will have the opportunity to integrate with those from different backgrounds and to reflect upon their own identity and beliefs, as well as those of others.
- Parents will have an increased understanding of the benefits of our partnership with schools and participate in end-of-year events with other parents from different backgrounds.
- More Walsall schools will be awarded 'Rights Respecting Schools' status from UNICEF – empowering young people to be aware of their rights, to become active citizens and develop pupils' acceptance of difference and diversity.
- Young people have access to exciting opportunities resulting in increased self-confidence, higher aspirations and wider opportunities for meaningful social integration with others.
- Young people will develop increased cultural awareness, feel empowered and have a voice to make positive change in the community on the community cohesion agenda.

Long term results:

- We gain a better understanding of views of young people and barriers to integration.
- Students and parents have more mixed social groups and build networks with others from different backgrounds.
- Children, teachers and parents embrace diversity and overcome prejudices which often result in bullying and discrimination.
- Schools have the necessary tools and resources, including through the 'Rights Respecting Schools' award, to support integration and celebrate diversity and long term system changes are considered.
- Young people have raised aspirations, better understanding of integration issues, and are empowered to make a positive difference in Walsall.

3. Working and contributing together

Our long-term ambition is that everyone has the fair opportunity to contribute to Walsall through meaningful work or volunteering. Everyone should be able to speak English to access these opportunities.

Workforces should be representative of the communities living in Walsall and businesses should play a key role in supporting local communities and promoting integration.



To achieve this ambition, we must support people to develop skills and access appropriate training, employment or volunteering opportunities. Increased participation in employment or volunteering will help broaden people's social networks and increase their confidence. We must ensure businesses have fair recruitment policies and equal opportunities for progression. We must understand the barriers to accessing English language classes and ensure we offer appropriate provision.

What will we do?

We will create a new English Language Intelligence Unit, which acts as a single point of contact for anyone in Walsall who speaks English as a second language (ESOL) to improve their English Language skills. This new unit will act as a brokerage service between potential learners and all of Walsall's ESOL providers. The service will also collect and analyse data on unmet needs and work with providers to ensure appropriate courses are provided.

We will work with the Department for Work and Pensions to support those furthest from the labour market. Walsall jobcentres will create an outreach team to provide tailored support for disadvantaged people, particularly women in the local community to better understand their specific needs, opportunities to tackle isolation and overcome barriers to participation in mainstream provision – improving both their prospects and potential to engage in opportunities that may lead to meaningful employability.

We will enhance capacity of 'Walsall Works', the Walsall Economic board and other key partners to encourage equality of opportunity in the workplace. This will require closer working with the borough's large employers, Chamber of Commerce and small and medium enterprises to develop social integration leadership capabilities among their staff.

Through offering apprenticeships and volunteer placements for people with different abilities, ages and background, we can better meet needs of our local communities and create a better environment for integration.

What will this mean for Walsall people?

Short term results:

- Adults with poor English Language skills will have a single point of contact within the Council to register for ESOL classes.
- ESOL learners are referred to the most suitable provision for them, and education training opportunities fully utilised.
- More disadvantaged residents, especially women, are supported to integrate into the community and sustainable employment.
- Workplaces reform their recruitment practices to attract new apprentices and employees from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Long term results:

- Increased uptake of ESOL provision and improved data.
- Improved partnership working between ESOL providers across the sectors with an improved learner offer and progression routes from informal to formal learning .
- Cohorts of those furthest from the labour market will have been supported, skills enhanced and issues of social isolation fully addressed.
- Walsall people, regardless of background, can work together in harmony with equal opportunities for accessing employment and progression.
- Public and private sector employers value and increase employment diversity at all levels.



4. Living together

Our long-term ambition is for well-integrated communities where everyone has good quality housing and plays a positive part in making Walsall a good place to live. Everyone understands their rights and responsibilities – hate crime is reduced, and people of different backgrounds live together in harmony.

This is closely linked to priority 1 – Connecting across communities. Living together is about creating and maintaining residential areas that support the needs of existing and new residents in a balanced way. It is also about creating conditions for people to socialise without concern for their safety, social or economic status, their disability or cultural background.

To achieve this ambition, we must ensure that early interventions, utilising assets in the community wherever possible, address the key issues and concerns identified at neighbourhood level.

What will we do?

We will provide new residents with practical information about their local area by means of a Welcome Pack and give them an opportunity to have a buddy. Our existing Walsall People Project gives us a unique opportunity to encourage new residents to sign up to local services and to get involved in the community. We will pilot the buddying approach with the Places of Welcome and those organisations that commit to the Walsall for All pledge.

We will work with the police to better support victims of hate crime. Our draft Multi-agency Hate Crime Strategy seeks to improve awareness of reporting options and ensure people feel safe in all areas of Walsall. Hate crime will be a topic for discussion at the new community dialogue events, allowing communities to raise concerns and have input. We will look at how we can bolster support for victims of hate crime in Walsall taking into account the numerous barriers people may face when going through these difficult experiences.



Walsall Council will use their forthcoming Housing Strategy to consider ways to reduce residential segregation, and better tackle rogue landlords which are impacting negatively on vulnerable new communities and increasing neighbourhood tensions.

Walsall Council will identify trusted individuals from the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities to ensure their needs are understood, and work to tackle negative perceptions and stereotypes held about these communities.

Housing Associations will share best practice on the co-design of future housing developments to meet residents' needs and support them to come together as a community.



What will this mean for Walsall people?

Short term results:

- New residents are informed about their rights, responsibilities and community activity – supporting them to be active citizens, build friendships, practice English and integrate into Walsall.
- Measures that support integration and combat rogue landlords, are embedded within the forthcoming Housing Strategy.
- An improved mechanism for reporting hate crimes leading to increased positive action against the perpetrators.
- Hate crime victims are provided with improved support.
- Increased understanding in Walsall of residents, council, elected leaders, police and other partnerships of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community lifestyles and reduced tensions and negativity towards them.

Long term results:

- An increased confidence to report hate crimes and improved systems to do so.
- New housing development design informed by the community throughout the planning process, leading to more integrated housing estates.
- Greater acceptance towards Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities and enhanced service provision and policies that meet their needs.
- A decrease in level of anti-social behaviour enabling improved integration and a stronger community.
- A network of community buddies that can support people new to Walsall through signposting and support networks.

Our Walsall for All board

We know that working in partnership is essential for the success of this programme. We have created a local integration partnership board. Our Walsall for All board is responsible for setting strategic direction and driving forward implementation of the programme.

The board members bring their experience and expertise, as well as a good understanding of our diverse communities' needs. They will guide the programme as well as champion integration within their own organisations, networks and sectors – ensuring long term sustainability and greater impact of the programme.

Membership of the board may evolve over time, but currently includes representatives from:

Voluntary and community organisations

- One Walsall
- Walsall Community Network
- Youth of Walsall
- Walsall Black Sisters
- Aaina Community Hub
- Refugee and Migrant Centre

Faith sector

- Diocese of Lichfield
- Walsall Hindu Forum

Public sector

- Walsall Council
- Walsall College
- Primary & Secondary education forums
- Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group
- West Midlands Police
- West Midlands Fire Service
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- Department for Work and Pensions

Private sector

- Chair of Walsall Economic Board
- Chair of Walsall Housing providers
- Walsall Housing Group

Academic institution

- Institute for Research into Superdiversity (University of Birmingham)
- The Challenge

Their insights have all been used to understand our challenges and to inform the strategy and priority areas, create opportunities within the existing infrastructure and consider long term sustainability.



Learning and evaluation of Walsall for All

Learning and Evaluation

As highlighted in government's Integrated Communities Strategy, there are still important gaps in our understanding of best practice and what works well to build integrated communities.

An evidence-based approach and focus on ongoing learning will be key parts of the Walsall for All programme. We will be bold and innovative in our approach and not afraid to try new things.

We will work with government to develop clear and measurable outcomes so that the impact of our projects can be understood. Monitoring and evaluation will be embedded in initial design, during implementation and through to final evaluation. This will allow us to build an evidence-base to understand what works (and what doesn't) in creating strong integrated communities.

As part of this approach, an independent organisation will evaluate some of the common themes across

the five places that are part of the Integration Area programme. This will provide a comprehensive evaluation of the strategy and its impact in Walsall, and also inform and add to the national evidence base on what works to achieve integration.

A post-programme survey will also be undertaken once the first wave of the programme concludes in 2021, and the results compared with the local area baseline survey recently conducted to measure current attitudes and behaviours. The results will hopefully provide objective data to measure the progress made on our integration journey.

Next Steps

We will continually evaluate and learn throughout the programme and use the knowledge gained to refine activities and inform future development. This will ensure we can focus on activities that have the most impact and help us achieve our long term vision for Walsall.

Communication and getting involved

We will be establishing several ways to keep people updated and informed about our approach and the progress we achieve. Social media platforms and a regular newsletter for the programme will publicise and promote progress and developments. We will schedule meetings within our communities across Walsall and gain their involvement in shaping the programme going forwards.

We encourage all community members and organisations to become involved and be part of the integration journey. There are a few options for you if you want to find out more:

- Sign up to our newsletter to receive updates about our work, forthcoming events and the many opportunities to get involved.
- Become a buddy to support someone who is new to your area.

- Apply for innovation funding or sign up to a pledge.
- Tell us about examples of good community integration around Walsall that we can promote and publicise to encourage others.
- Become a local champion and help communicate about the work of Walsall for All.
- Share your story/experience and feature in one of our stories to help others learn about the existing good work locally.

If you would like more information or to get involved, please email: walsallforall@walsall.gov.uk

You can also sign up to our monthly newsletter by sending a message to the email above.

We plan to develop a Walsall for All website in the near future and we will promote details on our social media and newsletter so you know when it launches!

For further information contact:

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