

Equality information and objectives

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Introduction

The Council takes its duty with regard to equality and diversity very seriously and we believe that we should:

- treat people fairly, justly and with respect in both service provision and employment;
- find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded;
- promote inclusion and celebrate diversity.

We are supported in our commitment to equality through the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010. The Act brings together all the legal requirements on equality that the private, public and voluntary sectors need to follow and places the following duties on Local Authorities:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- promote good relations between persons of different backgrounds;
- encourage participation in public life for people of different backgrounds.

This report details our objectives and information on issues the people of Walsall and Walsall Council employees face. The information will be updated annually and the objectives reviewed at least every four years.

The Council's ambitions for the Borough are set out in the Corporate Plan 2018 to 2021 (<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/corporate-plan>). This commits us to focussing on the following:

Purpose:

To create an environment that provides opportunities for all individuals and communities to fulfil their potential. As a local authority Walsall Council has a statutory duty to deliver specific services within the borough boundaries for all people and communities in Walsall.

Vision:

Reduce inequalities and maximise potential.

We must always work to ensure that public money is targeted to where it is most needed and used in the most efficient way possible. We are led by the communities we serve who help shape the services we provide and we help those communities to make a positive difference to their own lives through active civic engagement and co-operation.

Values:

- Professionalism - As stewards of public funds and information, we understand the importance of our jobs, we have respect for ourselves, our colleagues, our citizens and the organisation that we represent. We act accordingly. We deal with issues, positive or negative, in a moderate and straightforward manner, whenever possible;
- Leadership - Together we will create an inspiring vision of the future. We will motivate and inspire people to engage with that vision. We recognise the talents of individuals and allow those talents to be utilised for the betterment of the organisation;
- Accountability - We adhere to a standard of professionalism in the workplace. We hold ourselves responsible for upholding the purpose of our organisation;

- Transparency - We will ensure the availability of information which can be made public;
- Ethical - We will display integrity, honesty and be mindful of the rule of law in order to successfully practice and promote transparency of government.

Priorities:

- People - have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities;
- Economic growth - for all people, communities and businesses;
- Children - have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well;
- Communities - are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion;
- Internal focus - All council services are efficient and effective;

Equality Information

Our Equality information includes details about the protected characteristics of employees and customers. This is evidence that has been used to inform policy development and decision-making. It includes both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (descriptive) information. It means we can;

- understand the impact of policies, practices and decisions on people with different protected characteristics, and to plan them more effectively;
- assess whether we are discriminating unlawfully;
- identify what the key equality issues are.

Having identified the main equality information we hold, we are now be able to identify where there are gaps in information and then how to address them.

Information on the people of Walsall

The Walsall Intelligence website, Walsall Insight, is a resource intended to provide a data-driven overview of the Walsall borough. Throughout this site you will be able to find a range of statistics, info graphics, publications and reports that aim to provide insight into Walsall. <https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/>

Information on Employees of Walsall Council

It is Walsall Council's aspiration to employ a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve. The latest annual employment monitoring report provides a statistical overview of Walsall Council's workforce for the period between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. The latest Employment Monitoring Report is available at https://go.walsall.gov.uk/equality_documents

Recording and Reporting Equality and Diversity Incidents

As part of our Council-wide commitment to respond to all types of harassment in the workplace, Walsall Council has reporting procedures in place for all forms of discrimination. This enables;

- reporting of any incident of discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the basis of a protected characteristic, as defined in the Equality Act 2010;

- those dealing with the recording of any incident involving perceived harassment to act effectively, efficiently, and sensitively.

These procedures support the requirements of the Human Rights Act, as well as the Equality Act 2010, and meet the requirements of the Council's visions and values and community cohesion principles.

Equality Protocol

The Equality Protocol sets out the aims and objectives of the Council's approach to equality and diversity and the overall commitment to valuing equality, diversity and human rights. It sets out the expectations on our Councillors, managers and employees in the Council's objective to promote equal opportunities for all our customers.

Assessment is carried out and recorded as part of employee individual performance management process and review meetings with managers.

Equality and Diversity Related Training

Equally Yours

Equally Yours is a board game that can be used from 2 hours to a whole day. It can be played by all staff from senior management to frontline staff. Questions are customised to Walsall and the council. Learning objectives will vary depending on your audience and business objectives, but could include:

- A deeper understanding and confidence in managing diversity and inclusion;
- Exploring perceptions, thinking and behaviour and the impact on for individuals and the organisation;
- Better knowledge of legislation, policy and guidance and the impact on decision making, systems and conduct;
- Agreeing on actions that are designed for authentic change.

Equally Yours helps to create an honest dialogue, in which we encourage everyone to participate. The honesty often dispels myths. Colleagues will share their experiences in powerful ways. It will also offer people the ability to reflect on themselves and think more carefully about their lens and the impact of how they think and behave.

Training

Most courses are now done via [E-Learning](#). However, the Equality team can also provide bespoke Equality and Diversity training for your service. Please ask for details.

Information on Services

Within service delivery, equality is fundamentally about ensuring that customer needs are equally identified and met and by giving exemplary customer service.

Consultation

Walsall Council endeavours to consult with its residents and business users on major issues or policy changes wherever possible and we use a variety of mechanisms to seek views. At the centre of our approach are four "Localities", designed to enable services to be much more responsive to local needs and developed through a place-based approach to engaging partners to work collectively to identify local priorities and deliver positive change in their community.

The council uses a range of approaches and methods to gather feedback which it uses to inform its decision making. The approaches used are selected on the basis of being appropriate to the audience and the needs of the council and commonly include questionnaires, comment forms, online surveys, focus groups, meetings, workshops, online panels, telephone surveys and face to face discussions.

Some consultation may be conducted with specific groups of people who are specially invited to take part; other consultation may be on the basis of self-selection where anyone can respond. On occasions, random sample surveys are conducted in order to ensure the views gathered are from a representative sample of the population, providing statistically robust results. Most consultation is conducted by the council itself. However, sometimes, consultation is conducted by independent research agencies on the council's behalf. View the Council Consultation information at <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/consultations>

Anyone can have their say on any council service at any time by using the council's comments, compliments or complaints procedure 'Tell Us'. <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/tellus>. Statutory complaints and customer feedback process for social care services and Children's services will be forwarded via the 'Tell Us' procedure.

Consultation and engagement will be targeted, representative and inclusive, ensuring that all relevant sections of the community, including those who are seldom heard e.g. younger people, older people, people with disabilities and Minority Ethnic groups, have enough information and are given the chance and support to contribute.

Walsall for All Programme

Walsall Council has become one of the 5 local authorities invited to take part in the Integration Area Programme of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. A Local Integration Partnership led by the Council was set up in October 2018 and our pledged priorities, Walsall for All, were launched in January 2019.

The [Walsall For All](#) programme will build on existing knowledge but will also give Walsall Council an opportunity to learn from local and national projects. As well as focusing on four priorities, below, it will:

- Recognise its strengths as it develops new activities;
- Use its knowledge and experience of community spaces, networks and groups;
- Ensure equal opportunities for all groups and individuals, regardless of their background;
- Support communities and individuals to be engaged, enabled and empowered, as they are the key to achieving our vision;
- Bring partners and people together to advise us and drive our programme forward;
- Learn from others and adapt the programme to ensure it is creating impact.

Priority 1 - Connecting Across Communities

The 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.

Priority 2 - Young People Learning and Growing Together

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

Priority 3 - Working & Contributing Together

The 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.

Priority 4 - Living Together

The 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.

Equality Impact Analysis

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) is our procedure for carrying out equality analysis: checking the legality of Council decisions in relation to the impact on people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The process allows us to look at evidence and consult as to whether the service or policy is discriminatory (actual or perceived) against people with protected characteristics. The benefit is not just achieving legal compliance, but a means to delivering more effective, appropriate and inclusive policies and practices. Best Practices are examples of outstanding contributions to improving the lives of people in Walsall. They can:

- have a demonstrable and tangible impact on improving people's quality of life;
- be the result of effective partnerships between the public, private and civic sectors of society;
- be socially, culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable.

In all EqIAs, details are required to show how it meets the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements:

- How does the proposal help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act?
- How does the proposal help to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it?
- How does the proposal help to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it?

EqIAs must be considered for:

- all reports with financial or policy decisions that go to Council Cabinet;
- budget setting when there may be an unbalanced effect on certain groups of people, and may be contrary to the statutory equality obligations;
- changes to services, procedures, policies and projects when there may be an unbalanced effect on certain groups of people;
- new services, procedures, policies and projects when there may be an unbalanced effect on certain groups of people.

View the EqIAs list at https://go.walsall.gov.uk/equality_impact_assessments-3

Other sources of equality information

Walsall Proud Programme

The Walsall Proud Programme is Walsall Council's transformation programme. It aims to transform the way it works so that it can achieve a better customer experience, increase employee satisfaction and engagement, and improve service efficiency and performance. The Programme will be undertaken across the whole organisation and is closely linked with our medium-term financial strategy.

The Programme's framework consists of nine key themes and eight enablers that will drive the delivery of improvements that will directly support our priorities and increase our sustainability in the face of future demand.

Information by Ward

Ward census profiles are available from the 2011 census. These include Walsall and England and Wales comparators. These are available at

https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/images/importeddocuments/census_2011_pleck_profile.pdf

Equality Objectives

Our Equality Objectives have been based on available equalities information through research, consultation and engagement and Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's). They help identify internal and external targets that enable the Council to improve the collection of equality information and address the most persistent areas of inequalities faced by both employees and customers.

Objective 1

We will promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work

Objective 2

We will engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues

Objective 3

We will strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels

Objective 4

We will treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative

Objective 5

We will find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded

Each Council Directorate has provided a report that summarises how it has considered equality and diversity and has made a difference to employees and customers.

Walsall Council Equality and Diversity Information

Directorate Report December 2021

Directorate	Adult Social Care
Executive Director	Kerrie Allward
Contact officer	Jeanette Knapper
E-mail	Jeanette.Knapper@walsall.gov.uk

Corporate Equality Objectives

Our equality objectives have been based on available equalities information through research, consultation, engagement, and Equality Impact Assessments. They will help identify internal and external targets that will enable the Council to improve the collection of equality information, and address the most persistent areas of inequalities faced by both employees and customers:

We will:

- Promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work;
- Engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues;
- Strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels;
- Treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative;
- Find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded.

Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics

Protected characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010;

Age	Race
Disability	Religion and belief
Gender reassignment	Sex
Marriage and civil partnership	Sexual orientation
Pregnancy and maternity	

Part 1 Main strategies and plans containing equality and diversity information

Title	Purpose	Availability	
		On request	Internet address
Workforce Strategy	<p>To ensure there is an overarching strategy that identifies the workforce across Adult Social Care (ASC) and its needs in relation to workforce development, and learning.</p> <p>Locally, the work relating to the strategy is being developed alongside other colleagues and key internal stakeholders, to ensure the workforce is robust in its professional development and that the learning is transferred to end users through the services and front facing delivery from the workforce.</p> <p>A Strengths Based Practice model of service delivery continues to develop with all operational teams adopting a new practice framework during 2021 led by the Principal Social Worker. The introduction of the Principal Occupational Therapist in 2020 has further developed strengths based practice in ASC and is embracing single handed care and technology enabled care opportunities. This approach supports all cohorts of people proportionally, encouraging independence and person centred outcomes.</p> <p>Regionally, Walsall are also represented in order to develop a Workforce plan to deliver the needs of the wider workforce when considering the most</p>	Yes	

	vulnerable citizens across the region and to ensure their rights, choices and opportunities are promoted, when working to resettle a person back into community life, post hospital admission, or to reduce the risks of secure hospital admission in the first place by supporting a diverse and robust workforce and marketplace.		
Corporate plan	The Corporate Plan	Yes	
Directorate Plan	To ensure that the Directorate sign up to and deliver the actions agreed as part of their day to day business, that also feeds from and back into the Corporate Plan. Every team across ASC works to the Directorate plan on a page and will localise it specifically to their own service areas and individual appraisals (annual performance conversations).	Yes	
All HR policies and Procedures	To ensure that any procedures that have to be initiated by ASC, are done so, via the approved procedures and policies of the wider Council. The fitness to practice process for social workers is managed by the professional regulator Social Work England and the single point of contact for ASC is the Principal Social Worker.	Yes	
L&D opportunities that also engage staff as well as encourage raised awareness of equality issues	Examples of the raised awareness training opportunities include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human Trafficking and Slavery ▪ Unconscious Bias 	Yes	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Governance <p>This has continued with virtual delivery and e-learning during the Coronavirus pandemic:</p> <p>Successful procurement of a new course concerning Self Neglect: The Impact of Alcohol and Substance Misuse within the context of Mental Capacity & Adult Safeguarding to commence in 2022. The provider was able to evidence that they are a Disability Committed Employer (Level 2) and are very experienced in providing adjustments to delivery to ensure delegates with additional learning needs have the best possible experience. Staff and associates evidenced experience in working with signers, interpreters, and learning assistants which was an important consideration for ASC in awarding the contract. This is an example from 2021 but it is important to note that these considerations are taken into account when ASC award any training contract.</p> <p>Equality issues and legislation underpin the delivery of the current safeguarding for managers and enquiry officers training. In addition, exploitation training has been delivered to raise awareness of adults experiencing exploitation. All this training is mandatory for the relevant operational staff to ensure that their knowledge and skills are up to date.</p> <p>A revised supervision procedure was introduced in March 2021 seeking to further embed learning in</p>		
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	<p>practice. It introduced an explicit category to explore and evidence:-</p> <p>Anti-Discriminatory Practice/Anti-Oppressive Practice issues: <i>(it is appropriate to use any topic for discussion i.e.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Case work</i> • <i>Community Involvement</i> • <i>Group Work, including team</i> • <i>Projects or presentation</i> • <i>Current Themes (KPIs)</i> • <i>Contributions to developing the service</i> <p>When concerns are raised about practice a robust performance management process supports practitioners to improve and address any issues that arise.</p>		
Regulated and unregulated Closure Guidance	<p>This closure guidance was applied to a regulated provider in 2021. Weekly meetings ensured that all outstanding issues and concerns were identified and discussed, covering all areas that could affect a smooth transition for the current residents. They also ensured that quality of care was maintained until the last resident had been relocated.</p>	Yes	
Direct Payments Policy and Guidance	<p>The updated policy and guidance ensures that every customer who could be offered a Direct Payment in lieu of services is actually supported to receive them.</p>	Yes	

	Currently reviewing and updating of practice and processes in relation to Carers Direct Payments to address low take up of these locally.		
All Directorate Procedures and policies	Considerable progress has been made in updating ASC procedures and policies that are uploaded onto a central repository. This will continue to require monitoring and updating as required.	Yes	

Part 2 Equality Impact Assessments November 2020 to October 2021

Service	Title	Contact officer name
Adult Social Care Commissioning	Internal and external day opportunities	Jeanette Knapper
Adult Social Care Commissioning	All Age Disabilities Hub; Alongside Day opportunities consultation	Jeanette Knapper
Adult Social Care Commissioning	Direct Payments Support Service	Tracy Simcox
Adult Social Care Commissioning	Re shaping of the internal provider resource	Jeanette Knapper/Tracy Simcox
Adult Social Care Commissioning	Community Mental Health Services Tender 2021	Tracy Simcox
Service Wide	Adult Social Care Charging Policy	Karen Jackson
Service Wide	Walsall Carers Hub	Kerrie Allward

Part 3 Equality and Diversity Objectives

1. We will promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work; throughout our work

Since the start of 2021, we have continued to work during unprecedented times due to COVID. Adult Social Care (ASC) has continued to deliver its responsibilities in a way that has focussed on ensuring the most vulnerable continue to receive the safest and most proportionate support, during this time we have had to also ensure the workforce and partners remain safe and able to deliver collaboratively, the outcomes that would ensure fairness, transparency and an ongoing commitment to deliver business continuity with flexible arrangements for providers.

We have continued to encourage at all times, the opportunities for local people to access local community resources that have expanded in response to the pandemic and investment corporately through Resilient Communities. ASC has continued to work with partners and the customers directly, to ensure as much safe support and continuity could be maintained as possible during these times. This has involved ongoing individual risk assessments, review of business continuity plans and risk assessments for providers.

Frontline practitioners continue to embrace new ways of working using MS Teams and WhatsApp to support virtual assessments and creative ways of communicating. Some service users and carers have welcomed this more flexible approach. All face to face visits continue to be risk assessed due to the ongoing prevalence of COVID. Considering the necessity of the visit and access to PPE has enabled us to continue to prioritise the most vulnerable and uphold human rights. ASC have supported people to remain at home, avoid admission to hospital and have their needs met in residential and nursing settings when required.

People with a range of disabilities from the age of 14 have continued to access time limited support, as well as a whole range of interventions that can help to promote independence, via the internal provider resource. This is also helping to promote an all age concept into practice and works towards a strength based approach, encouraging and nurturing independence, preparing people for adulthood as well as supporting established adults to move through natural changes in their lives, focussing at all times on independence choice and aspirations.

ASC continue to seek to improve the customer experience as well as celebrate stories of difference that demonstrate Strengths Based Practice.

2. We will engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues

Adult Social Care (ASC) works closely with local communities as part of their work around localities and place-based models of care and support.

ASC is part of Walsall Together, an integrated partnership, which focusses on bringing together Health and Social Care and Public Health in order to support the wider needs of the communities.

ASC has representatives on the Corporate Equality Group and also represents itself as visible partners when working with One Walsall. As a result, it will often be helping communities and local people to understand what is available to them locally and to signpost as part of our prevention duties under the Care Act. In addition, it will also enable them to become far more self-sustaining and in control of their lives, as well as offering Information advice and guidance, thus maximising a person's ability to remain unique and valued as a member of the local community they live. Members of the directorate team will continue to be visible on that group and strengthen the corporate objectives as well as help to deliver the local activities as part of the directorates plan.

Healthwatch Walsall

Healthwatch Walsall continue to be commissioned by ASC. They monitor success based on evaluation of customer experiences and feedback /surveys from customers. They are an independent service that can put people in touch with sources of information on NHS and social care services in Walsall. They can give information about what to do when things go wrong and when people don't understand how to make a complaint. The aim of Healthwatch Walsall is to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Local Healthwatch provides, or signposts, people to information to help them make choices about health and care services.

Employment Support

The promotion of employment opportunities for people, regardless of their complexity of need, means that as a partner ASC is working to encourage people to prepare for employment as part of IMPACT and European Social Funding routes to enable that to happen. In the past year, ASC have improved its overall performance to support people with a learning disability to achieve paid employment. Work experience as part of paid employment to introduce a fair induction process into work was introduced to support people part of SEND to access work whilst working towards alternative employment as part of their journey.

ASC will continue to work to deliver all the activities asked of them as part of its council wide transformation programme (PROUD), but also ensure this is inclusive of equalities for the citizens we serve.

3. We will strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels

The ASC Directorate works to address these issues as follows:

A representative workforce

(Walsall Council and ASC statistics based on Employment Monitoring Report 2020 – 2021 compared to previous annual reporting as at March each year)

The demographics of the population in Walsall are as follows;

	Census 2011 Walsall Working Age Residents (age 16-74)	Walsall Council (March 2021)	ASC (March 2021)
Male/Female split	49.1% Male 50.9% Female	32.45% Male 67.55% Female	20.62% Male 79.38% Female
Minority Ethnic	23%	22.22%	30.70%
Disabilities	10.4% (different definition)	4.45%	6.95%

The number of people working for Walsall Council has reduced year on year since 2011/12, resulting in a total workforce of 3079 at 31st March 2021. The headcount for ASC, on which the March 2021 profile data is based, has increased from March 2020 from 357 to 417. This is due to Public Health moving from Economy, Environment & Communities into ASC. Detailed below are some points for consideration regarding the profile of the workforce:

Gender

The % of female workers in ASC at 79.38% is a slight decrease on last year (82.91%) but remains consistently high. Consequently, male workers are underrepresented at 20.62% although this is an increase on last year's figure of 17.09%.

Gender Pay

The split of female workers to male workers in each grade band in ASC remains relatively stable in comparison to the same period 12 months ago. This has fluctuated as follows;

% of female workers by Grade

- Grade G5 and below – 79.82% a slight decrease from 82.14% at March 2020
- Grade G6-G9 – 81.09%, a decrease from 85.28% at March 2020
- Grade 10-13 – 75.56% a slight decrease from 77.78% at March 2020
- G14 and above – 75% a decrease from 90% at March 2020. In a small cohort of 12 at this level compared to 10 in 2020, this represents an additional 2 males added to this cohort.

Minority Ethnic

In ASC the % of minority ethnic workers has decreased slightly at 30.70% compared to 30.81% at March 2020. This compares favourably with the Walsall community in which 23% declare as Minority Ethnic.

Pay

The % of Minority Ethnic workers in each grade band is as follows;

- Grade G5 and below – 19.30% an increase from 18.75% at March 2020
- Grade G6-G9 – 35.82%, a slight decrease from 37.42% at March 2020
- Grade 10-13 – 34.44% a decrease from 37.5% at March 2020
- G14 and above – 25% which is an increase from 10% at March 2020.

Overall Minority Ethnic employees are well represented in the Directorate and positively reflected in the grading structure, occupying a high % in all grades and above the aggregate for the council.

Disability

The % of workers within ASC who have a disability is 6.95%, the highest % in any Directorate and above the Council aggregate.

The % split of workers with a disability in different pay bands in comparison to last year is as follows:

% of employees declaring a disability by Grade

- Grade G5 and below – 5.26%. No actual change in headcount (6) from March 2020.
- Grade G6-G9 – 8.96%, a decrease from 9.82% at March 2020. However, this represents a headcount increase of 2 up to 18
- Grade 10-13 – 5.56%, a decrease from 8.33% at March 2020. This represents a headcount of 1
- G14 and above – 0.00%, no change from last year.

The base numbers in this group are small so the headcount is more revealing than the % in terms of demonstrating positive movement in this area.

Age

The 2011 census shows that 16-24 year olds make up the largest group in the local population at 11.7%. However, it would not be expected that the Directorate workforce, with a requirement to be largely professionally qualified and experienced should reflect this. In ASC the % of the workforce under 25 years of age is 1.20% and although a slight increase on March 2020 (0.84%), it is lower than other Directorates and the Council aggregate. The largest age group in ASC workforce are the 55-59 age group (18.71%) and overall 44.60% of the Directorate workforce are over 50. This is not unusual in an ageing population and long-serving, professionally qualified workforce, but it is higher than the Council aggregate and second highest of the 4 Directorates.

Religion and Sexual Orientation

There continues to be some reluctance from employees to disclose their religion and sexual orientation. 52% of council employees 'prefer not say' or have not declared their religion or belief ('No religion' is a declaration option).

47% of ASC employees have not disclosed their sexual orientation, 52.52% have declared their sexual orientation as heterosexual and 0.47% as gay or lesbian.

Summary of Progress since 2016/2017

ADULT SOCIAL CARE – OUTLINE EQUALITY PLAN

In 2016-17, the Directorate reviewed its annual employment monitoring data. This indicated that there were particular areas of the staffing profile that did not reflect favourably in terms of the local population we serve. Since then we have undertaken a number of steps and reviewed the 2020-21 monitoring data to check on our progress and continuing issues.

Our main reference point for comparison is the last census data from 2011 summarised as follows:

	Census 2011 Walsall Working Age Residents (age 16-74)
Gender	49% Male, 51% Female
Minority Ethnic	23%
Age	16-24 years = 11.7% the largest single group

Disability: change in definition doesn't allow comparison

Sexual Orientation: not measured in census

REVIEW, ACTIONS, RESULTS, PLANS

REVIEW: The 2016/17 monitoring data identified some clear features in the Directorate's employee diversity profile that required action:

- **Males** under-represented/not applying, 26% applied, 14% appointed and they made up only 16.92% of the Directorate workforce
- **16 to 24 age group** under-represented/not applying, representing only 1.14% of the Directorate workforce
- **Minority Ethnic employees** under-represented in grades 10 to 13 at 16% of the workforce in this grade band
- 66% non-disclosure of **sexual orientation**

ACTIONS:

The Directorate took a number of steps to address some of these issues:

- Participation in graduate programme to increase intake of 16 to 24;
- Participation in apprenticeship programme to increase intake of 16 to 24;
- Mentoring of male minority ethnic employees;
- Mandatory equality and unconscious bias training;
- Representative recruitment panels where possible and appropriate;
- Targeting positive action in grades 10 to 13 for succession planning;
- Mandatory anti-racist social work practice training for all practitioners; undertaking assessments to raise awareness of the impact of racism;

RESULTS:

The 2020/21 Employment Monitoring data shows:

- Negligible change in male representation from 16.92% to 20.62%
- 16 to 24 age group have slightly increased, now representing 1.20% of the Directorate workforce, although it was always a small cohort

- An increase in 13+ grades being representative of minority ethnic employees to 25% as of March 2021
- The high level of non-disclosure of sexual orientation has shown improvement from 66% non-disclosure to 47% non-disclosure. However, representation of gay, lesbian and bisexual staff in the overall workforce has not increased.

Summary

	2016-17 Issues	2016-17 Indicator	2020-21 Indicator	
Gender	Under-representation of males	16.92% of workforce	20.62% of workforce	→
Age Profile	Under-representation of 16-24 age group	1.14% of workforce	1.20% of workforce	↓
Minority Ethnic workforce	Under-representation in grades 10 - 13	16% of this grade band	34.44% of this grade band	↑
Sexual Orientation	Non-declaration	61% non-declared	47% non-declared	↑

PLANS:

We have shown some improvement, but need to continue to set targets, make and sustain progress linked to our plans and in the long term maintain a workforce profile that reflects our communities. Corporate forums, mechanisms and actions will be an important part of this but the Directorate will seek to achieve meaningful and sustained improvement through the direct engagement and involvement of our staff to ensure that we understand what helps us to develop and sustain a culture of positivity and diversity.

The Directorate will further develop an action plan which is likely to include:

- A 'disclosure initiative' to explore and improve the willingness of employees to disclose protected characteristics and sexual orientation in particular
- Promote participation in the Corporate Equality Group
- Open dialogue with workforce to promote diversity and inclusion and to involve them directly in our plans
- Embedding the learning practitioners undertaking assessments have accessed to ensure ongoing awareness and use of strategies to challenge racism in the workplace and ensure they are anti-racist in their practice, monitored through casefile audits and more robust supervision.
- Work with colleges/schools/universities to promote our employer brand and target our intake to younger age groups.
- Extending the social work degree apprenticeship to external applicants to encourage take up by younger age groups.
- Review of workforce strategy to consider actions required to increase diversity including addressing any recruitment and retention challenges that are highlighted.

4. We will treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative

Through the statutory assessment process, Adult Social Care (ASC) spend a great deal of their time meeting with and speaking to local citizens, albeit there has had to be some variation of how this is delivered due to COVID.

It is also recognised that vulnerable people require a far more bespoke way of being supported, from the first point of contact. Timely and proportionate support is sought from agencies and partners in order to maximise a person's potential to succeed. The development of community hubs has happened at pace during the pandemic to locally meet the needs of thousands of residents. All partners have worked far more collaboratively and thought outside the box due to the situations we have all faced during COVID.

ASC practitioners continue to predominantly work from home when possible and only undertake face to face visits when this is deemed necessary. Robust risk assessments are in place to ensure that all the current public health guidance is adhered and recognises the dynamic nature of this locally. There continues to be examples of good practice using virtual meetings which have been preferable for some. Assessments, reviews and support have been conducted virtually. This has been less intrusive for some and less anxiety provoking for those who may be autistic. Technology continues to enable us to work more inclusively and collaboratively, particularly when family members who want to contribute may live some distance away or numerous professionals are involved. The option of virtual meetings will remain going forward in some circumstances due to the benefits hi-lighted.

Our Health and Social Care integration model of Walsall Together (hosted by Walsall Heath Care Trust) is our partnership to deliver the priorities of Walsall. Shared ownership of key agendas and work across the key stakeholder group for employment, is proving effective when planning the locality based models of working. Training concerning Strengths Based Practice and Co-Production in Public Engagement & Consultation has been delivered in 2021 to support the partnership priorities.

ASC engage and actively work with colleagues across all partners to address and help to improve the SEND agendas, particularly when supporting the needs around young people preparing for Adulthood, or where there may be new ways of commissioning outcomes for young people who are known to both children and adult teams and resources more widely. Engagement in relation to a new Preparing for Adulthood procedure and practice handbook and toolkit has progressed and does need to encourage ongoing engagement from young people to develop this further.

Commissioners continue to actively engage with the external marketplace by way of strengthening local relationships and harnessing and sharing good practice. During the time of COVID Commissioners have worked with providers in order to support them during times they have not been able to physically support vulnerable people.

Walsall Council continue to provide free emergency supplies of PPE to all vulnerable groups via the Internal Provider resource that stepped up during COVID to deliver this task Borough Wide. The stock supplied and allocated is on a need only basis and signposting to the National Portal for PPE is also supported vi the service.

Commissioners continue to liaise closely with all Registered Providers across Walsall by way of supporting the changes post COVID as part of Market recovery and sustainable health and safety measures as well as monitoring for increased infection rates as part of good practice, locally regionally and nationally.

ASC recently delivered formal consultation across Walsall internal and external customers and stakeholders to seek their views with regards to Meaningful Day Opportunities. The communication methods used for gathering as many views as possible included forums: Questionnaires: electronic surveys Easy read formats; BSL and pictorial formats. The external provider of day opportunities were also involved in collating the views of many and supporting the Council to seek the views of people who use services not just the people whose family members use the services and community activities across Walsall

As mentioned in the 2021 report, protests across the UK in 2020 in response to shocking death of George Floyd in Minneapolis showed how important it is that we are talking about racism which was initially encouraged in some Adult Social Care (ASC) teams. However, this conversation needs to continue to be encouraged and again was hi-lighted by the Euro 2020 impact in 2021 on our diverse workforce. Twitter deleted almost 2000 racist tweets during the Euro 2020 final and the 24 hours that followed the 11th July 2021, 11 arrests were made. We need to recognise that we have a diverse workforce, and we serve people and communities many of whom are from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority groups. We need to take action that promotes fairness and equality, and challenges racism – for our staff and the adults with care and support needs we work with. In 2021 the ASC, PH & Hub Black and Asian Employee Network was set up by employees to support employees, listen to lived experiences and inform action required by Walsall Council. The purpose is to review Council culture to ensure a supportive working environment for South Asian, East Asian, African and Caribbean colleagues while also encouraging all staff within the Council to understand the needs of Black and Asian individuals within the workplace. This network has the opportunity to raise issues and concerns which we hope will result in action that evidences a more open, inclusive and collaborative future.

5. We will find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded

Walsall ASC have recently been invited to be part of pilot that looks into the health deterioration of people with Learning Disabilities. It is part of the Deterioration programme overseen by LeDer, suggesting that people with a learning disability die much younger than able bodied people, as a result of receiving good health. Walsall are working with four supported living providers, colleagues from the NHS, CCG, ASC, People with Learning disabilities, specialist nurses and Officers from ADASS, to develop tools that will help Providers look for signs that a person's health is deteriorating.

Public Health are also working to promote a project that offers people with learning disabilities opportunities to attend weight management classes; leisure facilities etc. as part of promoting health and wellbeing across the Learning Disabled population of Walsall. A third sector provider is delivering the outcomes linked to this initiative and the partner has been introduced to the work that links this and the deterioration agendas by way of attracting more attention and interest to this agenda.

Organisations will be expected to use innovative approaches to gather and capture views and experiences of health and social care services and how they are promoting accessible use by seldom heard of communities i.e. individuals with learning disabilities, limited or fluctuating mental capacity, ethnic minority groups. Organisations are requested to provide examples of past experience, outcomes and impact of how successful they have been previously in gathering and engaging with seldom heard of groups.

The same applies to the introduction of any new contract for IT/Digital, as without an ability to flex and adapt, the needs of harder to reach groups of people and individuals will not be met.

Third sector groups can and do support people very well, particularly when there is also a risk of social isolation. Originally working exclusively with older adults an expanded community organisation now works with all age groups connecting people to practical support including food parcels and medication. Networks of support with volunteers have continued with lists of people to phone each week to check on wellbeing.

The ASC and Children's directorates have continued to work on shared agendas to encourage closer working relationships. The ASC Principal Social Worker continues to work closely with the Children's Principal Social Worker to develop best practice tools, joint learning and development opportunities and an all age family group conferencing service. The implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards will be a priority for 2022 to build on best practice application of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

COVID has hi-lighted the disproportionate impact on disadvantaged and excluded groups. A number of reports and guidance documents have emerged as a consequence which have been carefully considered by ASC informing the individual ongoing risk assessments undertaken in relation to all ASC staff. A number of government publications continue to inform this including:-

- Covid 19 – Understanding the impact on BAME communities - 16th June 2020
A summary of stakeholder insights into factors affecting the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.
- Coronavirus – Covid 19 – Reducing Risk in Adult Social Care – 19th June 2020
A framework for how adult social care employers should assess and reduce risk to their workforce during the coronavirus pandemic.

The British Association of Social Workers continues to provide up to date Covid 19 risk assessment guides and flowcharts, most recently considering vaccination status. The wellbeing of staff and the most vulnerable citizens in Walsall has remained our priority throughout the current global pandemic, particularly those who are disadvantaged or excluded.

Walsall Council Equality and Diversity Information

Directorate Report

December 2021

Directorate	Children's Services
Executive Director	Sally Rowe
Contact officer	Philip Rutherford
E-mail	<u>Philip.Rutherford@walsall.gov.uk</u>

Corporate Equality Objectives

Our equality objectives have been based on available equalities information through research, consultation, engagement, and Equality Impact Assessments. They will help identify internal and external targets that will enable the Council to improve the collection of equality information, and address the most persistent areas of inequalities faced by both employees and customers:

We will:

- Promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work;
- Engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues;
- Strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels;
- Treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative;
- Find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded.

Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics

Protected characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010;

Age	Race
Disability	Religion and belief
Gender reassignment	Sex
Marriage and civil partnership	Sexual orientation
Pregnancy and maternity	

Part 1 Main strategies and plans containing equality and diversity information

Title	Purpose	Availability	
		On request	Internet address
The Corporate Strategy 2018 - 21	Key strategic plan for Walsall Borough Council		62515 Corporate Plan 2018-2021 Web Final 0618.pdf (walsall.gov.uk)
The Walsall Plan: Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019 - 21	Key Strategic plan for health priorities		66800 The Walsall Plan- Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2021.pdf
Complaints (corporate and statutory)	Information regarding the complaints process is available electronically and in hard copy and different formats for children and young people. The Team offer support to all complainants, including adapting the format of information to meet requirements and drafting complaints on behalf of the customer	Yes	
Workforce Strategy	Our ambition to ensure that Walsall children are safe and that we are intervening with the child, in the right place, at the right time for the right length of time, means taking every opportunity to invest in and grow colleagues and partners so that we can work better together to make sure children and young people living, learning and growing up in Walsall are safe, happy, healthy and with a bright future. To contribute towards this vision, children's services recognises the importance of having a skilled workforce who work together to deliver better outcomes. Workforce development is the key to ensuring we	Yes	

	continue to understand and meet our employees learning and development needs.		
Walsall Right for Children Inclusion Strategy 2020-2025	The Strategy sets out the vision and priorities to ensure a step change in improved educational outcomes for all children		Microsoft Word - Walsall Inclusion Strategy 2020-25 v1.0.docx
Walsall SEN Strategy 2020-2025	This strategy, implemented in line with the significant Government reforms to education, health and social care for children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers. The principles of these reforms were to facilitate better outcomes for children and young people by combining the support provided across health, education and social care from birth to 25, ensuring early intervention, and to make sure children, young people and parents are at the centre of the decision making.		Inclusion Strategy (walsall.gov.uk)
Inclusion Strategy 2020 -2025	As a Local Authority we will model an early intervention, support and restorative approach based on equality, respect, high challenge and high support to ensure we are the 'champions' of our children, and their families. We will do this in line with our statutory duties whilst ensuring that all learners have equal access to a rich and vibrant curriculum in and out of the classroom.		Microsoft Word - Walsall Inclusion Strategy 2020-25 v1.0.docx
Walsall Accessibility Strategy 2020-2023	This strategy sets out the vision that Walsall Council have to increase access to education for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they can benefit from educational provision to the same extent that children without special educational needs and/or disabilities can.	Yes	

School Causing Concern Protocol	This protocol outlines the procedures for school settings in relation to monitoring, challenge, support and intervention	Yes	
Walsall SEND Written Statement of Action	Our action plan, co-produced with parents, which lays out, our direction of travel to deliver improved outcomes for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)		Microsoft Word - WWSOA_Full Document Submission (walsall.gov.uk)
Children's Social Care Services Supervision Policy	This document describes Children's Services commitment to providing quality supervision and support to children's services social work staff, Team Managers, Early Help Practitioners and other professionals working with children and families in Walsall.	Yes	
Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025	This strategy is being revised and will be agreed by the Corporate Parenting Board in 2022. The strategy outlines our vision for all looked after children and care leavers in Walsall. As Corporate Parents we want all our children and young people to have every opportunity that good parents want for their children. Above all we want our children to fulfil the goals and ambitions they set for themselves and ultimately provide good parenting for their own children.	Yes	
Virtual School Development Plan	This Plan outlines our ambitions for the education outcomes for looked after children	Yes	
Early Help Strategy 2021-2024	This strategy identifies our partnership approach to delivering effective Early Help. The delivery of the right help, at the right time and in the right way as early as possible to work with families prevent issues from escalating is essential to improving the life chances of Walsall's children, young people and their families. The focus of the strategy is around culture and practice, the smart use of	Yes	

	data, sharing key information across the partnership to consider a range of issues and drive the response needed, building resilient communities and obtaining the voice of children, young people their parents and cares to co-produce and collaboratively shape what is ultimately their service. The strategy and associated action plan has a strong emphasis on not only supporting children, young people and their families to avoid poor outcomes but to have ambition and to thrive.		
Walsall Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2021-2022	This plan sets out how the Walsall Youth Justice Service partnership will work effectively to prevent children and young people entering the Youth Justice System, to continue to reduce reoffending and support families, victims and the wider community within its statutory framework particularly the requirements within the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.	Yes	
Children's Services Right 4 Children Newsletter (WR4C)	Regular newsletter to Children's Services workforce highlighting local, regional and national resources to protect and support vulnerable children and their families. Celebrates local developments, good news and successes	Yes	
Education Update Newsletter	Newsletter to all schools highlighting local, regional and national developments and resources to improve progress and attainment including resources to engage and protect vulnerable children. Celebrates local good news and successes.	Yes	
Child Neglect Strategy 2021-2024	Purpose: Neglect is a strategic priority for the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership and this new multi-agency Neglect Strategy is aiming to		Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Neglect Strategy 2021-2024 - Final 1.pdf

	<p>drive development and improvement. We know that experience of neglect in childhood can have significant and long-term consequences, affecting many areas of a child's development and their life into adulthood. It is the most common type of abuse experienced by children in Walsall, as it is nationally</p>		
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Part 2 Equality Impact Assessments November 2020 to October 2021

Service	Title	Contact officer name
Fostering and Adoption	Redesign of Children's Homes Service	Mark Burrows
Residential Services	Reg 44 ITQ	Jason Grainger/Laura Wood
Housing	Acceleration of the UK Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation scheme	Rashida Hussain
Housing	The Provision of Domestic Abuse Emergency Accommodation Support Service	Isabel Vanderheeren/Rashida Hussain
Revenues and Benefits	Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation on preferred option – 2021	Ian Savigar
Housing	Walsall Housing Enforcement Policy	David Lockwood
Housing	Affordable housing commuted sums spend scheme	Neil Holyhead

Part 3 Equality and Diversity Objectives

1. We will promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work

This year the work within the Children's Services directorate has focussed on resetting aspects of service delivery paused due to Covid-19 and reshaping the way in which we work and deliver services using learning from the way in which we have worked during the pandemic, which has had significant impact on many of the lives and life chances of children and families and the communities in which they live in.

Our knowledge and understanding of the individual experiences of children has much improved this year. We have undertaken a system wide in depth needs analysis for each of our 4 localities in Walsall covering education, youth justice, early help and social care. To support this wider understanding of need across localities, we have, with partners, undertaken daily conversations with children and parents over the summer to understand their individual lived experiences during the pandemic. This consultation has been strong and purposeful and the rich information of what it is like to be a child living in Walsall in 2021 will help our future planning and direction of travel.

We have continued to take forwards key areas of work to promote equality and anti-discriminatory practice, and to highlight and challenge inequality. Black Lives Matters gave impetus to discussions in Children's Services about the impact of racism, discrimination and inequality. The establishment of key groups enabled us to understand and explore significant issues, and to agree a planned programme of work. The next stage is to embed this work across the Directorate by way of a cohesive structure that promotes equality and inclusion.

- In Children's Social Care, the Equality and Anti-racism Group has been established. This group meets every 6 weeks, and initially was focused on dialogue and understanding the experiences of our staff, and reflecting on the experiences of children, young people and families. This year, this work has been essential in setting our core areas of work on equality, diversity and inclusion in the workforce and the Wellbeing Strategy. The forum now has a structured programme of themes that are considered.
- The Youth Justice Service has established a disproportionality forum for staff and managers to come together to explore the impacts of injustice for children, young people and families within the criminal justice system. This forum has been supported by work commissioned with sector partners, and has also involved exploring the experiences of practitioners in the service.
- Out of these two groups a further Ethnically Diverse Workers Support Group has been established as a peer network in Children's Services for staff to be able to come together, share experiences and offer collective support and challenge. An LGBT staff support group within Early Help is also in its infancy.
- Work has begun to align these groups and broaden the membership across Children's Services, and this will be a priority in this area in 2022. It has also been agreed by participants within the Equality and Anti-racism Group that the focus will remain on anti-racist practice and supporting staff who are Black, Asian and from ethnic minority groups, and it will also broaden to become the Equality and Anti-discriminatory Practice Group.
- Research will also be undertaken with staff members who are from underrepresented groups about their experiences and with local communities.

- An anti-discrimination Action Plan 2022 will be developed to give clear targets and accountability for this work.
- We also seek to raise awareness and understanding through the inclusion of relevant equality articles in our weekly 'round up' briefs to all staff.

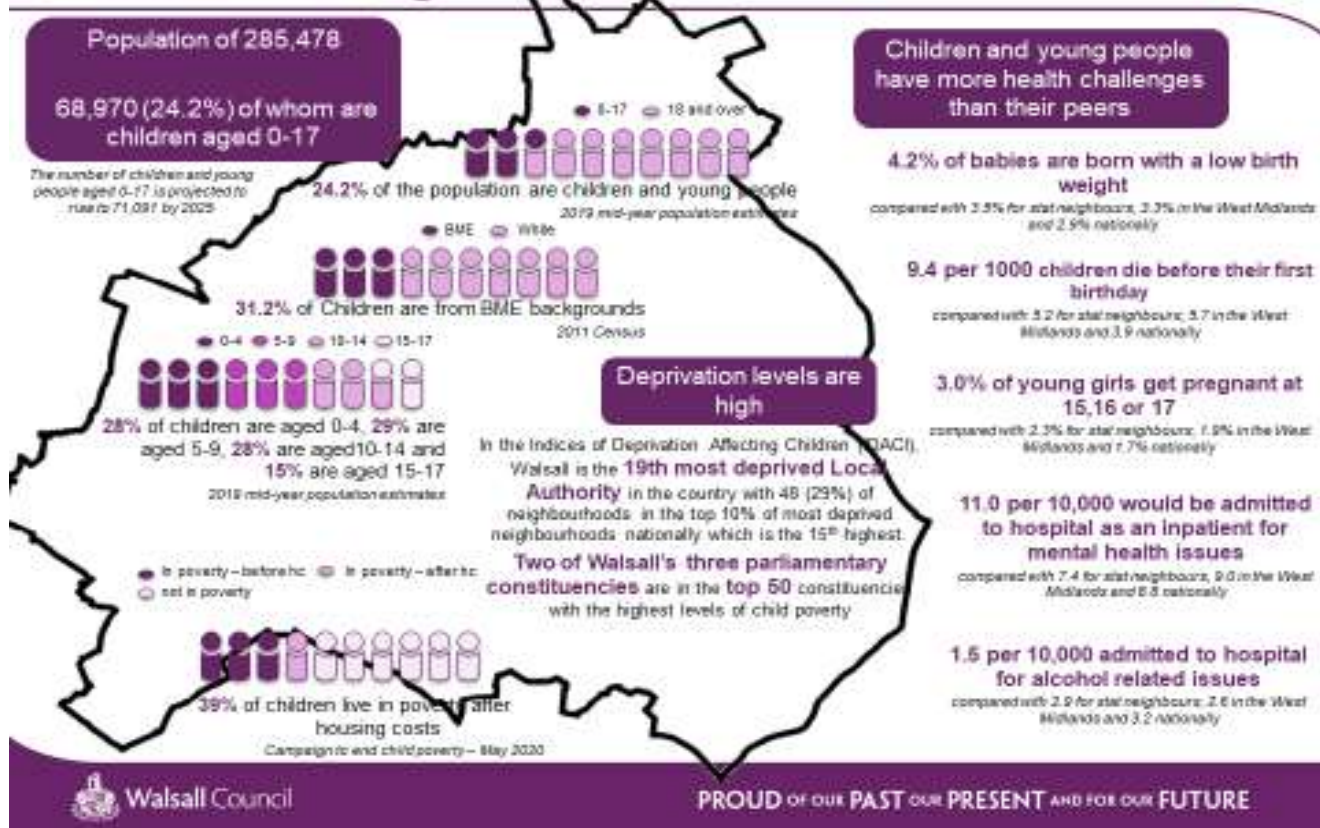
Our education colleagues have worked tirelessly to support schools to move out of Covid-19 restrictions and have ensured that children are in school and are safe, navigating around Department of Education (DfE) and Public Health guidelines. Our most vulnerable children have been prioritised and their access to education through the provision of laptops and equipment has closed the gap for those disadvantaged.

Work with children in care continues to develop and the Children in Care Council has been refreshed and membership is growing. We aim to undertake further work to extended membership and wider engagement of children and young people. To support this we have appointed a Care Ambassador in October 2021 and will be seeking to appoint a further Care Ambassador in 2022.

The work that happens every day in Children's Services with children, young people and families to understand their lived experiences should also be reflected here. Equality and anti-discriminatory practice a key feature of the formative training Social Workers and many other professionals receive, and this is then built upon within the training available within the council. Our staff receive a range of training and support, including training in the following key areas:

- Restorative practice – being able to work 'with' children, young people, families and carers in a way that is centred on building positive relationships, understanding their goals and aspirations, and offering support and appropriate professional challenge. To work with people in this way is built on a capacity to genuinely respect and explore their experiences and identities, and where they are coming from.
- Motivational interviewing – this builds on a restorative approach to be really able to communicate effectively with children, young people, families and carers, and to do so in a person-centred way based around their needs, goals and experiences.
- Direct and life story work – developing skills to work with children and young people, and with parents and carers to understand people's experiences
- Assessment and analysis – we focus on supporting our staff to be able to draw together information to provide a rounded, analytic understanding of what is happening and needs to happen to keep children and young people safe and meet their needs. This includes understanding everyone's individual identities and experiences, family histories, social circumstances and external influences at a local and wider social level.
- Equally Yours – This is part of Walsall's training offer to support staff in understanding difference, identity, culture and how people relate to one another, including unconscious bias and the impact of racism and discrimination.
- Anti-discriminatory practice and cultural competence – a specific training offer for all staff has been developed launch in 2022 to support staff in understanding the intersecting nature of inequality and oppression, practising in anti-discriminatory ways, and engaging with people about culture and identity.
- Disabled Children and Young People – a programme of work has begun to support staff in developing knowledge skills to work with disabled children and young people.
- Equality and Diversity was a key feature of our 2022 WR4C Staff Conference

Children Living in Walsall



Work this year has been driven by detailed and comprehensive equality needs analysis for across Children's Services. This has included:

- Ethnicity disproportionality within the Youth Justice System
- Disproportionality within Children's Social Care
- Ethnic disproportionality within Education
- SEND prevalence and need analysis
- Adolescents analysis
- Walsall Borough Locality Analysis

These significant pieces of analysis have been essential in designing strategic plans across the directorate and informing delivery to our children and families.

2. We will engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues

Consultation with children and young people

Overview

Children's Services has embraced and delivered new interventions and plans consistently based on the views of children, their families and the workforce. The 'Big Conversation', the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, the views of children in care and care leavers

and the workforce health check have all provided a wealth of information to inform plans, to target service delivery and change and to resolve equality issues.

Our Big Conversation, a fundamental part of our Walsall Right 4 Children transformation journey, is an extensive programme of activities, aimed at talking with and listening to children, young people and parents about services we deliver and what is important to them, acting on what they say and seeking out opportunities to collaborate on aspects of day to day practice and transformation.

This year's 'Big Conversation' information has been used to:

- redesign social care;
- shape the locality partnership offer;
- develop our approach to reducing exclusions;
- create our new support hub for adolescents;
- help us to understand children's experiences during Lockdown and inform our reset plans.



This year our Big Conversation included a 'daily conversation' over the summer with 323 children aged 5-18 years, many in receipt of free school meals, to understand; the impact of COVID 19, with their views used to target support services in localities.

"Happiness means when something good has happened to me or to someone I know"

"Happiness is important especially because it allows me to make the best memories"

"My family being less stressed. I'm happy when my family is happy"



A survey completed by 102 parents of children taking part in HAF asked:

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

Parents views about living in Walsall and the things that needed to change were very similar that those of children

Children's services has this year, in addition to the Big Conversation:

- Continued to maximise the number of children attending their review and conference, consulting with children using virtual methods throughout the pandemic and continuing to meet some children face to face where it is safe to do so. Following improved participation by children and young people using virtual methods we have continued to develop skills and explore different media to better engage children.
- Consulted more consistently with social workers prior to conferences to encourage better preparation, leading to greater engagement and participation from parents and children.
- Implemented a Participation Working Group to drive participation across the service areas and have developed a robust action plan. Participation is a standard agenda item for Group Manager meetings and is embedded within our audit processes.
- Delivered a number of workshops as part of the annual staff conference focussed on direct work and direct work tool bags – especially around WR4C priority areas including working with teenagers and working with children with SEND
- Commissioned 'in your shoes' as a tool to get the voice of children with SEND influencing their plan and trained a number of professionals
- Reviewed and developed the young carers offer in collaboration with young carers
- Created volunteering opportunities for parents to deliver parenting support – and for parents and young people to get involved in the delivery of programmes like HAF
- Commissioned some independent consultation with parents of young black people in the youth justice system to understand their experiences of unfair treatment, discrimination and disproportionality.
- Taken part in a regional consultation exercise focussed on girls in the justice system this year to understand the reason why girls commit offences, to hear their perspective and experiences and improve services for girls

Children's Services is:

- Developing a co-produced Participation Strategy as part of which we will meet with children and young people to ensure their views on what good participation looks like

forms the basis of the strategy and is embedded in practice as a result. The strategy will set out our learning so far, our ambition for participation and our approach across the directorate.

- Ensuring, through the Participation Working Group, that the right guidance and tools are available for front line workers and that participation is a focus for teams at all levels across the service. Expectations for staff will be clear and supported by procedures such as 15-day consultation ahead of conferences.
- Continuing to develop purposeful engagement and participation through service development opportunities, the implementation of motivational interviewing and restorative practice approaches and sharing examples of good practice
- Upscaling the use of 'in your shoes' as a tool to get children with SEND directly involved in planning

3. We will strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels;

Summary of Progress since 2020/21

Equality, diversity and inclusion have been key themes across the work completed last year, with a range of measures introduced following consultation with staff to understand their lived experiences. We have also sought to ensure all employees who have a protected characteristic feel fully supported and that we are proactively offering development and progression opportunities so that there is diversity at all levels and across the Children's Services workforce.

In Children's Social Care, where there has been the most recruitment activity and a drive to focus on retention given the challenges within this sector, this work has been reflected in a new Workforce and Wellbeing Strategy with measures that will be reviewed as appropriate to demonstrate impact. In relation to recruitment, a diversity statement has been introduced, and measures undertaken to ensure all panels are representative and that staff undertaking recruitment have completed the Council's 'Equally Yours' training on unconscious bias.

To support career progression, new approaches including individual Personal Development Plans which sit alongside the Council's APC framework are being introduced, together with coaching and mentoring. Whilst these are opportunities for all, there is emphasis on ensuring staff members who have a protected characteristic are supported to access them, and that their development is a priority.

Our newly qualified social worker programme continues to be a regional leader and assists in attracting first time graduates to Walsall. This provides a solid foundation for future work through looking to develop and retain these newly qualified workers, and support them as they progress into different roles. Specific data is not available for this cohort, however traditionally ASYE Social Worker roles have attracted candidates who have protected characteristics and from a diverse range of ethnicities and cultures, and through the additional work set out above the aim is to make sure that posts advertised continue to lead to inclusive recruitment practices.

Staff welfare is a priority in Children's Services, and we recognise that for staff to be able to best support children and young people and keep them safe, they need to feel supported and safe, and able to process and work through the challenges that can be encountered in frontline practice. There has been a wide-range of activity to support wellbeing and to support staff especially given the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This has included a focus on building positive, supportive team environments, establishing a series of forums for senior

leaders to hear from and connect with staff, maintaining a culture of ‘checking in’ and bringing people together, and training and development support for managers. This work has had a positive impact with feedback in the Annual Children’s Services Health Check 2021 being that the majority of staff do feel supported in Walsall, and this is one of the main reasons they feel positive about their role and want to stay with the Local Authority.

Alongside this, a coordinated programme of wellbeing activity has been established and continues to be developed. Schwartz Rounds have previously been offered (though currently paused due to the pandemic), staff are trained as Mental Health First Aiders, and the Corporate Wellbeing Offer is proactively used to support staff. In addition, grant funding has been secured for a trial of clinical supervision support for staff and additional training for all managers and senior leaders.

Responding to feedback from staff about the context of practice in Children’s Services, where there can be challenge and ambivalence towards professional involvement, protocols have been developed for when a staff member experiences discrimination or racism, or any form of threatening or hostile behaviour. This has sought to clarify both the post-incident support staff should receive and how such behaviour will be addressed by managers, drawing on corporate incident reporting procedures.

Our social workers are required to be registered with the Social Work England, our regulatory body and to adhere to the Professional Standards Guidance (2020). Our Educational Psychologists are required to register with the Health and Care Professions Council and adhere to the professional standards.

A representative workforce

The demographics of the population and CS workforce in Walsall are as follows;

	Census 2011 Walsall Working Age Residents (age 16-74)	Walsall Council	Children’s Services
Male/Female split	49.1% Male 50.9% Female	32.45% ↑ Male 67.55% ↓ Female	20.30% ↑ Male 79.70% ↓ Female
Minority Ethnic	23%	22.22% ↑	29.64% ↑
Disabilities	10.4% (different definition)	4.45% ↓	5.31% ↑

The number of people working for Walsall Council has reduced year on year since 2011/12, resulting in a total workforce of 3079 31st March 2021. Children’s Services headcount has risen to 867 this year, up from 691 last year due to the Customer Engagement service area moving from Resources & Transformation into the Children’s Services Directorate. Detailed below are some points for consideration regarding the profile of the workforce:

Gender

The % of female workers in Children’s Services at 79.70% is a slight change on last year (85.17%) and is similar to two other Directorates, namely Adult Social Care and Resources &

Transformation. Male workers remain underrepresented (20.30%), although less so than last year's figure of 14.83%. In Children's Services the % split of all males classed as part time workers (1.96%) has risen slightly from 1.66%. For female workers this has dropped from 19.36% to 17.99% and shows a reduction in part-time working year on year.

Gender Pay

The % split of female workers to male workers in each grade band in Children's Services remains relatively stable in all but the top tier in comparison to the same period 12 months ago. This has fluctuated as follows;

% of female workers by Grade:

- Grade G5 and below – 81.60% a decrease from 89.71% last year;
- Grade G6-G9 – 79.89%, a decrease from 84.74% last year;
- Grade 10-13 – 77.62% a decrease from 82.11% last year;
- G14 and above – 75.00% a decrease from 81.82% last year.

Overall, and within each grade band, this is broadly in line with the overall gender split in the Directorate.

Minority Ethnic

In Children services the % of minority ethnic workers has increased slightly at 29.64% compared to 27.99% last year. This compares favourably with the Walsall community in which 23% declare as minority ethnic. At March 2021, 9.46% of workers in Children's Services have not stated or chosen not to state their ethnic group.

Disability

The % of workers within Children Services who have a disability is 5.31% an increase of 0.47% on last year (4.84%). It should be noted that 19.26% of staff have chosen not to state whether they have a disability or not which is an increase from last year's figure of 14.07%.

In Children's Services the data shows the following % split of workers with a disability in different pay bands in comparison to last year:

% of employees declaring a disability by Grade:

- Grade G5 and below – 11.04%, an increase from last year (8.82%) and represents an increase of 6 headcount;
- Grade G6-G9 – 3.91%, comparable with the 3.95% last year, represents an increase of 6 headcount;
- Grade 10-13 – 4.90%, an increase on 4.07% last year, represents an increase of 2 headcount;
- G14 and above – 0.00%, no change from last year.

Apart from G14 and above, all grade bands have shown an increase in workers declaring a disability. The base numbers are small so the actual numbers are more revealing than the % in terms of demonstrating positive movement in this area. It is possible that the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced people's views about declaring a disability.

Age

The 2011 census shows that 16-24 year olds make up the largest group in the local population at 11.7%. However, it would not be expected that the Directorate workforce, with a requirement

to be largely professionally qualified and experienced should reflect this. In Children's Services the % of the workforce under 25 years of age is 2.88%, which is lower than last year's figure of 4.84%. The largest age group in Children's Services workforce are 50 - 54 year olds, whereas other Directorates and the Council overall the majority of the workforce fall into 55-59 year olds.

Religion and Sexual Orientation

There continues to be low numbers of employees disclosing their religion and sexual orientation with just over 50% 'prefer not say' or have not declared their religion or belief.

47.86% of Children's Services employees have not disclosed their sexual orientation, 50.63% have declared their sexual orientation as heterosexual and 1.51% as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Work to understand the apparent reluctance of employees to disclose their religion and sexual orientation, the reasons for this and the actions we need to take will be a priority for Children's Services.

WR4C Conference

Our annual WR4C Workforce conference took place between 4th October and the 8th October and was facilitated this year using a blended approach of virtual webinars and small face to face workshop. Our yearly staff conference provides an opportunity to connect with all our workforce across Children Services with the aim of:

- Looking back and celebrating our collective achievements throughout the last 12 months against our WR4C vision;
- Focussing/reflecting on particular areas of work, practice development priorities, highlighting new areas, programmes and projects through workshops;
- Looking forward and setting the direction of travel across Children's Services for the next 12 months.

With support from the corporate communications team, we sent a number of communications to all our staff throughout the week re-iterating key messages arising throughout the conference, highlighting resources available to staff and inviting staff to further reflect on key issues. Our keynote speaker this year was Jade Hargreaves, sharing her experiences and reflections of being a vulnerable child, the services she received and the difference this had made and how this has informed her approach as a practitioner. We also heard from one of our youth workers on his approach to working with young people around exploitation and the impact it is making. Over the course of a week, we delivered 40 workshops on themes including

- Exploited and Missing Children;
- Importance of participation and collaboration with children, young people and families
- Resilient Communities workshop;
- Outcome of the daily conversation programme – consultation with children and young people of what it is like to grow up in Walsall
- Exploring the issue of disproportionality within the YJS; - 12 months on!
- Sharing Good Practice including: equality; safety planning; youth justice; working with teenagers;
- SEND.
- Digital wellbeing
- Raising awareness of anti-racist practice

- Community involvement and volunteering
- Trauma informed practice in addressing offending, challenging behaviour and in child protection
- Update on the Corporate Equalities Group



Reparation project completed by a group of young people open to the YJS

Staff were asked at the start of the conference and following the closing webinar at the end of the week to post a key reflection they had as a direct result of attending a workshop. Key themes included:

- *Stories shared inspired people*
- *Connecting with each other*
- *Better understanding of what other teams offer*
- *Great variety of workshops through the week ensured it met practitioners needs*
- *Staff appreciated a balance in the workshops between development opportunities and focus on staff wellbeing*
- *Staff appreciated access to resources which they can listen to or reflect on in their own time or when needed.*
- *Great to celebrate the achievement and understand what the priorities are for continuous improvement*

4. We will treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative.

Complaints and compliments are important to Children's Services. We are constantly seeking to improve our services and learning from our young people, parents and community when things go wrong helps us improve practice and outcomes. Similarly, when things go right and we receive compliments it confirms what we understand to be best practice.

The principles of restorative practice continue to run through our delivery with young people and families and shapes how we interact with each other and our partners. Restorative practice seeks to build healthy communities, increase social capital, decrease crime and antisocial behaviour, repair harm and restore relationships.

Complaints received (2021)	Statutory Complaints	Corporate Complaints	Compliments
Q1 (Jan – Mar)	7	16	7
Q2 (Apr – Jun)	7	10	4
Q3 (Jul – Sep)	14	16	3
Q4 (1 st Oct- 23 rd Nov)	0	11	2
Total Jan 2020 – 23rd Nov 2020	28	53	16
Total Jan – Dec 2019 (for comparison)	30	97	10

The overall numbers of complaints are comparable with the previous year, with the exception of quarter 3 where there was a slight increase in statutory complaints activities. The trend for reduction in statutory complaints and a rise in corporate complaints has continued following previous advice from the regional complaints benchmarking group.

The top 5 issues raised by complainants in statutory complaints are:

- Poor quality of service received;
- Conduct/Behaviour of Staff;
- Outcome of a Decision/Assessment;
- Delay in Receiving Service;
- Concerns about services.

Learning from the small number of complaints about our new HAF Programme this year and the needs of children with special needs has helped us to build our specialist offer for children with more complex learning needs or disabilities to and strengthened our delivery of a much more inclusive HAF offer to meet all children's needs. We are consulting with families and collaborating with parents to develop the offer further.

Some of the compliments we have received this year have included:

Feedback from a mother of child open to Early Help : *"LC is amazing, all of the help support and guidance, I couldn't be where I am without it"*

Feedback from a School: *I just wanted to send a message of praise to your team, particularly DBP. D came on board as EH lead for a family that we, as a school, had been working with for around 18 months. Due to limitations and the lockdown, we were not able to get the level of engagement needed to support the family. Since D began working with them, instantly we saw positive change. Parental engagement became excellent and actions were finally being completed. The change throughout the plan as a whole has been immense and so positive for the family and extended family! I really feel this highlights, not only how valuable the service is, but how needed it is for our school families, particularly in these continued difficult times.*

Feedback from parents involved in contact process: *Myself and my partner have been coming to fallings heath for a few months now. At first it was very daunting, not know what to expect or even how the whole thing works. We were allocated R for our contact, R made the whole contact process easy, comfortable and most of all friendly. She is an asset to the team, very bubbly friendly, compassionate and just R. She has made seeing our child more enjoyable, due to how relaxed and laid back she is. You can talk to her about anything and ask her anything. She will always do her very best to answer your questions or find out the information for you.*

Feedback for Social Worker from family: *I would like to thank you for the outstanding commitment and dedication you have demonstrated while working with us as a family. It is clear to see the passion you hold for working with children. Thank you for all your help.*

5. We will find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded

Through our work we seek to find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded.

Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF).

Walsall Council received investment of £1,799,290 from the Department for Education (DfE) to develop and co-ordinate the Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF). This significant programme is aiming to provide healthy food and enriching activities during key holidays to children who receive benefits-related free school meals. It offers valuable support to families on lower incomes, giving them the opportunity to access rewarding and active activities alongside healthy meals over the school holidays and enhance the holiday provision that has already taken place over the last years.

National research tells us that;

- School holidays can be pressure points for some families because of increased costs and reduced incomes.
- Some children are more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health
- Some children from lower-income families are less likely to access fun activities

In Walsall we have 14,197 children who are on roll in Walsall schools, whose parents claim free school meals. Of these 13,592 live in Walsall. We have undertaken a mapping exercise to understand where children entitled to FSM live to ensure we have sufficient provision based on need.

To date Walsall has delivered an activity programme over Easter and Summer and is in the progress to plan a further one for Christmas holidays in 2021. In Walsall we have also include young carers and children on an Early Help or Social care plan as eligible to the programme. To date we have engaged with just over 3000 children which is 21% of the eligible cohort.

HAF impact on reducing inequalities

Every individual, family and community has been affected by the pandemic. In Walsall we have been working across our strategic partnerships to understand the disproportionate impact Covid-19 has had on particular groups of children and families in order to inform how we can best target resources as part of our broader reset agenda.

The HAF programme has provided us with a vital opportunity to respond to a range of issues including those relating to poverty, the education gap, exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic as well as the impact that social distancing has had on children's development and their mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

We have worked with providers delivering on our Walsall HAF programme to ensure we deliver an inclusive offer. As a result 16% of children taking up the offer were children with Special Educational need or Disability (SEND).

Most children reported to have had a positive experience: *"Thank you so much my children my child has autism and physical disabilities he never eats different things but the different ingredients that you gave made him curious he actually ate the vegetable goulash he loved it made me so happy"*

"HAF has been a lifeline for her child this summer holiday. He is in the process of transitioning to secondary school and with their lack of transition opportunities due to COVID 19 His anxiety was high about going to a new school. HAF has helped her child develop independence, social skills and confidence to meet new people and attend new places, skills that are needed to transition into secondary school life. The activities provided structure and stimulation that as a parent who works she was unable to do so. She wanted to thank you and the providers for creating a memorable summer holiday."

Review of domestic abuse (DA) services for adult victims with Children.

Children's Services completed a review of the support for children who are affected by domestic abuse provision. This review informed commissioning intentions in light of demand, transformation plans and other related strategic developments internally to the council.

The review of the current provision identified that:

- Domestic abuse is a key need driving the demand in Children's Service both in terms of Targeted Early Help and Social Care. The context of Covid19 and the DA Bill are likely to increase the demand in the immediate future.
- Some community groups are underrepresented in terms of DA demand and therefore we need to consider the benefits of aligning a support service to a locality approach to identify and address this.
- There is considerable failure demand in the advice and guidance function provided by Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) due to inappropriate referrals or insufficient and wrong information which is resulting in victims not getting the right support.
- The Specialist DA advice and support provided by BCWA as part of the DA triage in The Multi-Agency Screening Hub (MASH) is having a positive impact on oversight, consistent decision making and timely support across police recorded DA incidents and referrals.
- BCWA is providing effective and impactful case working interventions when victims engage, however, the uptake is lower with some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community groups. This could be addressed by bringing resources closer to the community by aligning the casework support to our integrated locality mode.
- The support directly to children as victims is currently a small, but effective part of the commissioning contract. This support should focus on the emotional wellbeing and mental health support as a result of the trauma children have experienced and therefore Health Partners as identified in the Bill will need to play a role in growing this support.

in light of demand, transformation and guidance as set out by the DA bill identified the need to:

- Increase the DA specialist support in MASH to ensure effective identification of need and decision making
- The integration of DA specialist victim support (parent and child) as part of Walsall Right for children locality model to effectively engage and meet the need of the diverse communities

Based on our improved understanding of disproportionality across the Directorate through our comprehensive needs analysis, Services and teams have continued to work to improve outcomes for children, young people and families who are disadvantaged and socially excluded. Below are summaries of how our different teams have made a difference this year.

Early Years: this service works with children of pre-school age to support foundation learning. In order to further promote inclusion in the Independent, Voluntary and Private childcare sector Walsall have been working in partnership with the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN) to deliver a programme of support involving audit and improvement in 20 settings. The programme has been successful in giving managers and SENCO's the understanding and tools they need to be fully inclusive and work effectively with parents and partners to meet the needs of all children in their care.

The Early Years Team have an example of collaborative working with the Job Centre leading to the recruitment of around 15 new practitioners on to the path of training and apprenticeships.

Over the last 2 years, the Early Years Team have prepared schools and settings to deliver the new EYFS curriculum with a focus on giving the most support to those children that need the most, especially disadvantaged and SEND children. Early Years Leaders have been challenged and supported with strategies to address the needs of these groups and to have a clear understanding of what leading best practice for these groups entails.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: while our analysis confirms that there has been significant improvement in identifying pupils with Special Educational Needs in Walsall over the past six years, there is still some way to go before proportions are in line with comparators. The transformation of SEN Services in the borough and the implementation of the SEND Strategy and Inclusion Strategy will support in the continued closure of this gap and will ensure that pupils who need additional support in Walsall receive it.

However, there is some specific work to be undertaken to understand further the underlying reasons for the disproportionality in SEND Need, particularly for girls, children from Asian ethnic backgrounds and pupils who speak English as an Additional Language.

This is something that will be picked up at a number of levels:

- Operationally the SEND team will examine this data further and review it in line with process transformation to ensure that disproportionality is not built into the system.
- Children's Services will be reviewing their strategic approach to disproportionality as part of the wider Walsall Right 4 Children Transformation Plan – with Equalities being a key part of the WR4C Outcomes Framework and focus of discussion over the coming months.
- We will work with partners to ensure disproportionality is understood across the system and that services for children with SEND meet the needs of all children equally.

Inclusion: the past 12 months have continued to be driven by the response to the pandemic, working in partnership with schools, Public Health and wider partners to support the return of pupils to full time education and support families where attendance was being flagged.

Guidance has been regularly updated on school COVID risk assessments including guidance and individual risk assessments for staff and pupils at additional risk, including black, Asian and minority ethnic staff.

The Walsall Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice Support (SENDIAS) service has been launched providing free and impartial support to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and their parents and carers. The service provides easy access to support and guidance to families and carers ensuring they are able to make informed decisions about their child's education and support needs and, where appropriate, advocate on their behalf, with public bodies.

In addition we have relaunched the SEND Local Offer which is designed as an easily accessible website where families, carers, young people and professionals can access information as to the range of services and support available across the Borough to meet the needs of children and young people. The website has been redesigned with feedback from service users to improve the accessibility to the advice on offer. This was in train in last year's report but has now been delivered.

Walsall is now an Autism Education Trust Hub delivering accredited courses across education settings enabling staff to identify, support and refer children and young people facing barriers to learning due to a diagnosed or undiagnosed autism spectrum impact. Autism Education Trust accredited training is now available to all schools and further education settings across Walsall.

The Strategic Education Inclusion Board has also funded the roll out of Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) support to priority schools across Walsall. The programme provides training and support to enable schools to set clear unambiguous targets and implement real time monitoring to support closing the progress and attainment gap for some of the most vulnerable pupils in our schools.

Education Welfare Service: the Education Welfare Service supports schools, children, young people and families by encouraging regular school attendance which is central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential. As part of our early intervention work with schools, we analyse data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups such as:

- children who have a social worker including looked-after children;
- young carers;
- children who are eligible for free school meals;
- children who speak English as a second language;
- children who have special educational needs and disabilities.

The service liaises with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable. We engage partners from early help and social care teams to ensure that they understand attendance expectations and ensure that the vulnerable cohort they serve is supported to sustain good levels of attendance. Below is an example of the Education Welfare Service can make a difference:

A primary school pupil had a high level of absence since the start of the academic year. The child's mother was not always calling the school to say that her child would not be in, or, she

would turn up with her after the registers had closed. School and the Attendance Officer became concerned as this was now starting to be a regular occurrence for this family.

School had attempted to call Mum but the phone was always switched off therefore a home visit was carried out to discuss the child's absence.

Following on from the visit there was no improvement in attendance so the Officer liaised with the Family Support Worker. The Attendance Officer created a report outlining the concerns and the case was eventually escalated. A Social Worker was assigned to the family and Mum has been helped with her problems which were having an impact on her ability to parent the children.

Due to effective information sharing and a multi-agency approach, attendance is moving in the right direction. Mum now contacts the school if her child is unwell and provides medical evidence. Mum has also built a trusting relationship with School. A home visit has since been completed and Mum and her child seem happier and more positive.

The Virtual School: the Virtual School Team provide support and challenge to schools and education providers to ensure all looked after and previously looked after children are receiving the right support to enable them to reach their educational potential. We ensure that pupil premium funding is being used effectively to enhance children's education and provide them with creative educational opportunities.

To enable children who have moved to the UK to continue to learn and practice their first language we have funded polish lessons for a family of 3 children who are placed with trans-racial carers.

The Virtual School are delivering an 'Access to Music Project' for all children in Year 4 in Walsall and have worked closely with special schools to ensure children with special educational needs and disabilities can access the project. We further supported young people new to Walsall by delivering weekly group ESOL courses during the summer holiday

In addition, the Virtual School have run a 10 week Summit2 Success programme for young people identified by their family as having low self-esteem and who they felt would possibly struggle to return to school after lockdown. This programme enabled them to meet new friends, take risks, be part of a team/group, learn new skills and challenge themselves physically and mentally.

Early Help: this service works with children, young people (CYP) and their families as soon as problems emerge, to prevent where possible increasing vulnerabilities and escalation into statutory or specialist services, to improve outcomes to the most vulnerable CYP.



A picture and a poem a YP sent during COVID

Over the past year, services have adapted to the COVID pandemic and delivered in a different way which has strengthened relationships with CYP and their families. One to one support has been creative, parenting programmes and self-help tools redesigned in collaboration with CYP. The COVID 'road to recovery plans' have also been a focus, specifically around the emotional health and wellbeing of our CYP. During the pandemic a range of ways to engage CYP including a view from my window art workshop to understand how they were managing during lockdown.

Our parenting programmes have further developed with a lot of self-help and 'tip sheets' being produced along with videos to support all parents across the borough, including those whose children have additional needs.

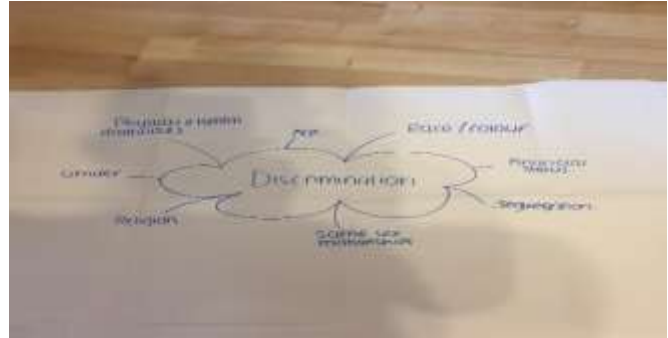
Quote from a parent

"[The course] made me feel better in myself, I know what to do for my baby. More alert, responsive to me, know who I am, interacts with me. The group helped me trust people better and feel more confident with parenting. I learnt to understand my child, what they want and how to manage their needs. I feel more confident, I know more than I realise. I would be interested in other courses. I am to attend mellow parenting in September and I am attending a fathers group. I will be accessing holiday programme and parenting stay and play sessions. I would recommend this to other 'parents to be'.

Early Help are working with a group of young people who display concerning behaviour at school, who may have been living within a domestic abuse situation, exasperated by the Covid19 pandemic. Bespoke group work around 'respect' is being delivered and as part of the PSHE course to consider; *"our society is made up of people from many different races and*

cultures. Race and culture doesn't just mean people from different countries, it refers to the background, family and social groups that people belong to"

Young people completed the task of creating an illustration that shows the variety of identities in the group, discuss one story of discrimination and one story of celebration for each of the identities.



Young Carers: Early Help work closely to ensure young carers are identified and supported to prevent them being excluded or disadvantaged in any way. March 2021 the refreshed Young Carers service was launched following consultation and co-production of young carers. Skills of young carers were considered and celebrated as well as enhancing the support available to ensure children and young people are identified by schools and health services for their caring roles and responsibilities.



A Young Carers I.D. card

Youth Justice Service (YJS): the YJS was again successful in obtaining Police and Crime Commissioner funding, through the Safer Walsall Partnership, to improve services to address disproportionality in the justice system in Walsall. The service continued its partnership with a local organisation to conclude its consultation with our young people and families.

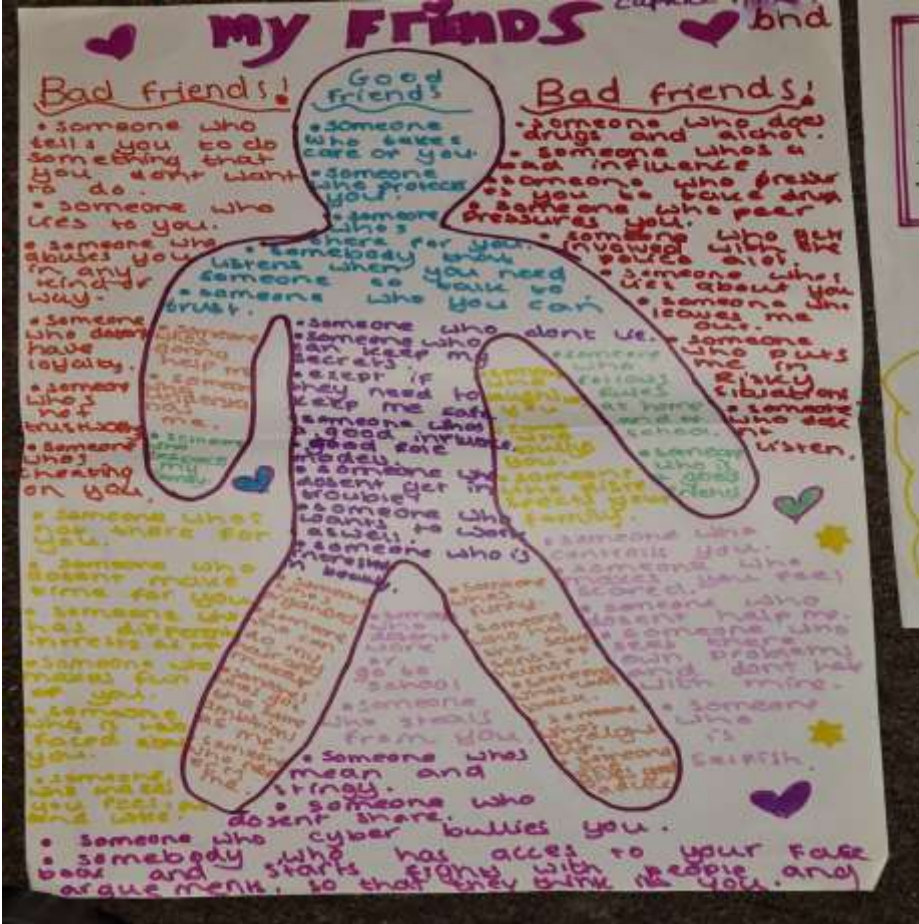
With this funding, the Service has also commissioned equality and unconscious bias training to support staff in writing assessments and pre-sentence reports, to better use language and terminology to avoid issues such as 'adultification' of black and mixed heritage boys and pejorative phrases.

YJS Disproportionality Forum: building upon our much improved ability to monitor trends and data of black, Asian and minority ethnic young people within the youth justice system and following our consultation with our families and staff, we have established the formal Youth Justice Service Disproportionality Forum. The Forum is held on a bi-monthly basis and provides a safe space for practitioners and managers to identify and discuss issues relating to equality

and overrepresentation of young people within the justice system, for us examine data and trends and to learn from reviews of practice and events that occur within this country and around the world. But, perhaps, most importantly, the Disproportionality Forum is used as a platform to establish a better infrastructure to change practice and improve the lives of the young people we work with.

The Service, led by its practitioners, have created a Disproportionality Action Plan to ensure we push forward this agenda and are accountable for making a difference to the lives of young people. To support this important area of work the YJS now has two Equality Champions who will drive forward improvements in practice and continue to promote and raise awareness of equality issues within the justice system but also within our workforce. Going into 2022, the YJS are reviewing its strategy to reduce disproportionality of black and mixed heritage boys in the justice system

Girls in the Youth Justice System: the YJS are working with colleagues across the region to understand issues affecting girls in the youth justice system, in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commission and the regional criminal justice board, in response to a need to address issues related to female offenders. The West Midlands Youth Justice Service's mission is to deliver services that recognise that the needs of girls within the criminal justice system are often different to the needs of boys and responds accordingly. In line with a child first approach to youth justice, we pledge to treat girls fairly, acknowledge and respond to their different needs, and help them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society. A more detailed pledge was discussed and agreed at the YJS Disproportionality Forum.



Crime Prevention Intervention work with a young girl

Children's Social Care: Children's Social Care works with children and young people who are identified as having unmet needs to the level that they require a higher level of professional support, who are at risk of significant harm or who are in care or leaving care. These are children who experience multiple forms of disadvantage and exclusion. It's the responsibility of Social Workers and Practitioners to advocate for children, and to make sure they have access to opportunities to be heard, for their needs to be met, and to grow up safely achieve positive outcomes. Specific areas of work that have been undertaken have included:

- The Family Safeguarding Model has been launched to provide higher levels of support to children and their families through adult specialist workers being recruited and working directly alongside Social Workers, as well as a programme of work being followed with families where there are challenges due to parental substance misuse, mental health problems and/or domestic abuse.
- Exploitation – work has been completed to map areas where exploitation occurs, to understand the needs of those communities and how professionals can best engage with people to tackle exploitation. Work to continue to developed exploitation responses, policies and procedures is ongoing. Daily exploitation triage occurs and there is information sharing and mapping between the Exploitation Hub and locality services, with further work to develop integrated multi-agency responses underway.
- The needs of disabled children and young people are assessed and support is provided to make sure that their needs are met and families receive help that is appropriate to each child's individual needs and circumstances.
- A Child in Care will always have a Care Plan where their needs should be considered and the work needed to help and support a child in care is identified. Work has been undertaken to enhance the way that children's Care Plans are developed with them and monitored to make sure actions are progressed and children and young people are supported to achieve their goals. There has also been specific work on how professionals can support older children to prepare them for adulthood
- Young people leaving care – The Care Leaver Local Offer has been refreshed and staff work hard to engage with young people leaving care to be able to provide them with wrap around support and to make sure they can access their entitlements.
- A group of professionals have accessed training on working with young people who are transgender. This learning has been shared with teams, and a wider piece of development work is planned to improve professional knowledge and skills in this area.

Specific examples:

- *Child A is disabled and struggles to manage his emotions and behaviour. This resulted in a period with significant challenges at home and he had a period in care. His family received intensive support and professionals worked closely with the child's mother, alongside therapeutic support. This meant he returned home and is now more settled.*
- *Young Person A is Black-African and in care living with foster cares of a different ethnicity. Relationships with parents are very difficult. Life story work has been undertaken to research and develop an understanding of his African heritage. This creative work has connected with his interests. This has helped the young person to know his own story, and help important people in his life to understand his identity.*
- *Young Person B was an unaccompanied asylum seeking child who arrived in Walsall aged 17. He had no connections, many vulnerabilities and would go missing. He was intensively supported by his Social Worker and Foster Carers and supported to live in semi-supported accommodation in a different area closer to his friends. Here he was able to settle and enjoy greater security and stability.*

Walsall Council Equality and Diversity Information

Directorate Report

December 2021

Directorate	Economy, Environment and Communities
Executive Director	Simon Neilson
Contact officer	Philippa Venables
E-mail	Philippa.Venables@walsall.gov.uk

Corporate Equality Objectives

Our equality objectives have been based on available equalities information through research, consultation, engagement, and Equality Impact Assessments. They will help identify internal and external targets that will enable the Council to improve the collection of equality information, and address the most persistent areas of inequalities faced by both employees and customers:

We will:

- Promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work;
- Engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues;
- Strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels;
- Treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative;
- Find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded.

Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics

Protected characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act;

Age	Race
Disability	Religion and belief
Gender reassignment	Sex
Marriage and civil partnership	Sexual orientation
Pregnancy and maternity	

Part 1 Main strategies and plans containing equality and diversity information

Title	Purpose	Availability	
		On request	Internet address
M6 Junction 10 Highway Improvements Project	M6 Junction 10 Highway Improvements Project complements the Council's regeneration strategy for the area comprising Darlaston, Pleck and Bentley. The area is the focus of some of Walsall's most significant urban regeneration proposals that will transform unused and unproductive land into a major centre for economic growth and employment, with thousands of jobs being created as part of the Black Country Enterprise Zone. Working in collaboration with Highways England, the road bridges over the M6 motorway will be replaced by two new four-lane bridges. This will increase the capacity of the junction and improve traffic flow through the area. In addition, improvements will be made to the A454 Black Country Route as well as the junction of the A454 Wolverhampton Road / Bloxwich Lane which are situated directly adjacent to M6 Junction 10		www.walsall.gov.uk/m6j10
Transport Strategy 2017-2022	The transport strategy follows the framework of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (Movement for Growth) and Black Country	Yes	https://go.walsall.gov.uk/transport_strategies

	<p>Core Strategy and identifies proposals and programmes which will improve and develop the transport network across Walsall by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging economic growth; • Stimulating regeneration; • Improving the borough's environment; • Making the borough a healthier and safer place to live; <p>Providing benefits to all sectors of the borough's diverse communities</p>		
Guidance for local authorities in England on administering and enforcing the Blue Badge disabled parking scheme.	<p>The Blue Badge (Disabled Persons' Parking) Scheme was introduced in 1971 under Section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 ('the 1970 Act').</p> <p>The aim of the scheme is to help disabled people with severe mobility problems to access goods and services, by allowing them to park close to their destination. The scheme is open to eligible disabled people irrespective of whether they are travelling as a driver or as a passenger. The scheme provides a national range of on-street parking concessions to Blue Badge holders. It allows them to park without charge or time limit in otherwise restricted on-street parking environments, and allows them to park on yellow lines for up to three hours, unless a loading ban is in place.</p>		https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/519091/blue-badge-scheme-local-authority-guidance-paper.pdf
Walsall Road Safety Strategy	The Walsall Road Safety Strategy sets out Walsall's local vision and supports the	Yes	

	<p>regional aspiration to reduce killed and seriously injured casualties (KSI). The strategy also recognises the need to develop a more holistic approach to project appraisal and evaluation to ensure that targeted improvements and initiatives, consistent with the United Nation's Safer Systems approach, are delivered. This approach supports a vision of improved quality of life and equality for all our residents.</p>		
All Age Exploitation Strategy	<p>The creation of a multi-agency strategy that aims to reduces exploitation, in all its forms, across Walsall Borough.</p> <p>Such a strategy will have the full support of partner organisations and a commitment to a 'whole system', multi-agency approach delivering effective activity and achieving measurable outcomes.</p> <p>Violence and exploitation are key issues across Walsall Borough influencing both the health and wellbeing of our population and can lead to significant health inequalities.</p>		
Domestic Abuse Strategy	<p>To create a strategic framework for the Council and its partners that aims to prevent,</p>		

	<p>address and tackle domestic abuse in all its forms in Walsall.</p> <p>To respond to and ultimately reduce the harm caused by the perpetrators and therefore improve health and wellbeing across the Borough. In doing so it is recognised that there are areas of challenge, improvement and development that need to be addressed to develop a comprehensive response to domestic abuse.</p>		
Walsall for All Strategy	<p>Creating opportunities for social integration and social cohesion, supporting social mixing, school linking and community and voluntary sector to achieve 4 priorities of the strategy. Increasing work opportunities for those furthest from the job market and tackling hate crime.</p>	Yes	https://www.walsallforall.co.uk/our-priorities
<p>Black Country Regulators Operating Framework</p> <p>(Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy)</p>	<p>Before deciding that prosecution is appropriate, the relevant Authority will consider all relevant circumstances carefully and will have regard to the public interest and, where appropriate, the views of any victim, injured party or other relevant person or impact on the community. Equal opportunities will be borne in mind in terms of implementing the enforcement policy.</p>		https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/Uploads/Licensing/Combined%20Joint%20Black%20Country%20Regulators%20Operating%20Framework.pdf

Black Country Regulators' Operating Framework	To provide guidance to officers and people who may be subject to enforcement actions on how various sanctions will be applied		Decision Sheet (walsall.gov.uk)
Public Spaces Protection Orders	Imposed prohibitions and requirements on certain behaviours to make the area a safer and more enjoyable space for everyone to enjoy		Public Spaces Protection Orders (walsall.gov.uk)
Black Country Regulators Operating Framework (Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy)	Before deciding that prosecution is appropriate, the relevant Authority will consider all relevant circumstances carefully and will have regard to the public interest and, where appropriate, the views of any victim, injured party or other relevant person or impact on the community. Equal opportunities will be borne in mind in terms of implementing the enforcement policy.		https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/Uploads/Licensing/Combined%20Joint%20Black%20Country%20Regulators%20Operating%20Framework.pdf
Equality Protocol	The Equality and Diversity protocol outlines the aims, expectations and practices required from our Councillors, managers, employees, workers and partners in relation to equality and diversity. It is the equality view of Walsall Council.	Yes	
Walsall Strategic Economic Plan	The Walsall SEP was approved in 2015 and sets out the strategic economic vision for the borough under the key themes of People, Place and Business, with the aim of promoting inclusive economic growth for the borough and its residents.		https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2019/10/Walsall-SEP-2015.pdf

	<p>Underpinned by the Local Economic Assessment process, the SEP draws together the priorities set out in a range of strategic documents at national, regional, sub-regional, local and corporate level. It presents these in a single Strategic Economic Framework, demonstrating how these priorities are interlinked and how we are working with partners to address a range of complex and long term challenges.</p> <p>A review of the Walsall SEP and Economic Framework will be carried out in 2020 to ensure it remains valid and to align it with the priorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority.</p>		
<p>Walsall Local Plan:</p> <p>Walsall Site Allocation Document – Adopted January 2019</p> <p>Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan – Adopted January 2019</p>	<p>Strategy for housing and employment growth and regeneration.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate supply of land for industry, housing and open space. Designates for protection the greenbelt and other assets.</p>		<p>https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/Uploads/Planning/SAD/SAD%20Adoption%20January%202019%20Final%20for%20Printing.pdf</p>

Walsall Site Allocation Document and Town Centre Area Action Plan Sustainability Appraisal	Promotes opportunities for investment and improvements within the town centre.		
Draft Black Country Plan (Regulation 18) (August 2021)	Strategy for housing and employment growth and regeneration. Equality aims to reduce poverty, crime and social deprivation and secure economic inclusion.		https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/accessibility-statement/ https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/t2/p5/
Saved policies in the Unitary Development Plan (Adopted 2011)	Strategy for housing and employment growth and regeneration.		
Walsall Town Centre Master Plan	<p>A visionary and deliverable masterplan that will provide a framework for physical change in Walsall Town Centre over the next 15-20 years.</p> <p>Building upon the allocations promoted in the adopted Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan, the masterplan will:</p> <p>Provide a development framework for the re-imagination of Walsall to reverse the decline and ensure Walsall town centre, once again, becomes the town of choice for the borough whilst also attracting visitors from the wider region to maximise the benefits of such a large catchment.</p>		<u>Walsall Town Centre Masterplan</u>

Local Planning Enforcement Plan	Policy for prioritising action on the enforcement complaints that are received by the Council and explain the different types of actions available to the local planning authority to deal with breaches of planning legislation. It also identifies how the Council will communicate with complainants.		https://go.walsall.gov.uk/planning/planning_enforcement/local_enforcement_plan
<p>Black Country City Deal:</p> <p>Creation of BC Investment Fund; Apprenticeships for high value manufacturing (HVM); Housing, Jobs & Prosperity Demonstrator project; Business Support package</p>	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 ha of Brownfield land brought into manufacturing use within 4 years, with a further 30 sites for future development over 10 years • 5,800 new manufacturing jobs within 4 years • 1,500 apprenticeships • £120m private sector investment in HVM sites • 700 jobs created / safeguarded through support • 2,800 long term unemployed social housing tenants supported with 900 into employment. 		https://go.walsall.gov.uk/black_country_city_deal

Part 2 Equality Impact Assessments November 2020 to October 2021

Service	Title	Contact officer name
Integrated Commissioning	Single Handed Care Training	Jean Watson
Resilient Communities	Equality Monitoring Form	Brian Fitzgerald
Bereavement Services	Mortuary and Pathology contract	Christine Walker-Kelley
Resilient Communities	Making Connections Walsall one year extension	Sarah Oakley
Clean and Green	Development of a new Waste Transfer Station and Household Waste Recycling Centres	Stephen Johnson/Joanne Cockbill
Resilient Communities	Approval of an All Age Exploitation Strategy for Walsall	Paul Gordon
Regulatory Services	Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2021/22	Paul Rooney
Regulatory Services	Domestic Abuse Strategy	Paul Rooney
Highways & Transport	Traveller Transit Site Construction	Kathryn Moreton

Part 3 Equality and Diversity Objectives

1. We will promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work

Community, Equality and Cohesion Team

The Community, Equality and Cohesion Team focuses on individual experiences in publications of stories about Walsall residents and organisations on the Walsall for All website. Each individual or group's story is unique and is adding to the understanding of Walsall's diverse population.

Examples include:



Experiences of participating in the [COVID-19 Community Champions](#) programme, including volunteer and group experiences.

One of the champions Shahida (who is of Pakistani heritage) shared her story of volunteering with Refugee and Migrant Centre and said that she *“learnt so much being involved with this campaign: cooperation, empathy, facilitation, time management and how to change people’s perceptions from negative to positive.”*

One champions group, The Motivation Hub (a service supporting adults with additional needs), produced a [video](#) about encouraging everyone to get vaccinated against COVID-19. This brought to light experiences of COVID-19 among the disability community and was shared with other disability groups, health services and GP surgeries.

Individual stories published for EDI awareness events, including [Black History Month](#), [Black Inclusion Week](#), [Inter Faith Week](#), [International Women's Day](#), [Pride Month](#) and many more.

- As an example, Black Inclusion Week was the first of its kind, an opportunity for everyone to celebrate Black people in the UK and to remember the importance of building a fair and just society through the inclusion of EVERYONE. One of the case studies was [Duane](#), who works in Children's Services. His commitment to 'being the change' was to *"treat the career and myself I am passionate about with uttermost respect and love. To challenge discrimination in all its forms. To be proud that personal growth develops sustainable change for my family, friends and community."*
- EDI awareness events have also encouraged individuals to share about their faith, beliefs and/or culture in different ways. For example, during Black History Month we had [poetry performances](#) recorded and published on YouTube. Each piece was personal to the individual and their experiences. These were well received across the community and online.

Community Researchers – as part of Walsall for All, a [report](#) was published in October 2021, in partnership with University of Birmingham and community members (as researchers). The overall aim of the study was to explore residents' experiences of living in Walsall; to understand the type of relationship people have with others in their communities; to examine attitudes to community safety and divisions; and to explore ways to improve neighbourhoods and community relations in Walsall. The report will be used to influence the public sector training in cohesion and integration practice. It will also contribute to the legacy of Walsall for All.



Equalities Function

We oversee the corporate Consultation and [Equalities function](#). The role of this advisory service is to ensure the Council's compliance with Equality Act and related legislation. We coordinate Corporate Equality Group (CEG) meetings and agendas with the Chief Executive's office, engaging with Trade Unions and Equality Champions.

CEG is a place where important conversations take place, a safe space to share lived experiences and develop positive solutions to support our workforce and Walsall residents.

CEG is committed to making real Walsall Council's vision that- '*inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised*'. We are ambitious for our employees and the people of Walsall keeping EDI one of our top priorities. Diverse voices from across the organization are represented and we share with our workforce achievements and challenges.

The CEG pledge is to be a transformative mechanism for Walsall Council providing leadership in:

- Development of culture that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in everything we do;
- Providing space for sharing experiences and giving feedback on EDI matters;
- Aligning the Council's equality, diversity and inclusion work with Walsall Proud, particularly the Enabling Communication and Culture workstream - identifying the communication and engagement requirements across the workforce with different protected characteristics;
- Influencing EDI reputation for our organization, making it attractive for recruiting diverse candidates;
- Inspiring attractive brand of celebrating and valuing EDI engaging the whole workforce.

CEG Members are responsible for:

- Promoting open and honest discussion of barriers presented by diverse workforce and commitment to finding solutions and appropriate resources;
- Ensuring that the whole of the organisation and all teams have the right skills to deal with sensitive and difficult subjects related to EDI;
- Actively seeking feedback from workforce regarding their wellbeing in difficult times (e.g. pandemic), taking into account their different protected characteristics;
- Communicating appreciation of positive contributions made by diverse communities and staff living and working in Walsall.

As part of the equalities function, we publicise the Council's achievements under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and oversee implementation of the Equalities Protocol. These continue to be reviewed and approved through CMT.

We promote inclusion in the corporate training. The coronavirus pandemic became a challenge to deliver the different methods of equality learning. The online e-learning modules, which focus on legal knowledge and management application of equality and diversity continue to be delivered without any impact.

The bespoke and interactive Equally Yours, a game that is used in a group environment to raise awareness and tackle potential bias or prejudice, has been reworked to allow delivery to take place virtually. It continues to be a very popular approach to learning, using personal experience as a starting point. Used by many Council services, the programme is also now delivered monthly to the Practice Development Hub in Children's Services.

Equality is integral to the Corporate Induction programme. However, because of the pandemic and moves towards blended working, equality updates continue to be provided via audio, for both managers and new starters, to enable them to get a solid grounding in and a better understanding of the equalities function.

The EDI Team also supports two thriving networks within the Council. These are the Adult Social Care Black Workers Support Group and Children's Services Ethnically Diverse

Workers Support Group. Whilst still in their infancy, these networks are attracting good numbers of colleagues, providing a forum and safe space where colleagues can talk about their lived experiences in a confidential setting. The networks are also represented at CEG.

Trading Standards

Trading Standards – Scams, Rogue Traders and Door step Crime.

If someone is persuaded to part with money because of postal, telephone or electronic communication received into the home they may well have been scammed.

This can often take place on an industrial scale through:

- Fictitious prize draws;
- False investment opportunities;
- Pension fraud or bogus equity release schemes;
- Clairvoyant or dating scams;
- Fake lotteries

These scams often use techniques such as sales scripts, data collection and targeted mail. They may play on the aspirations as well as the vulnerability of the victim. Victims' details are often passed around criminal groups, leading to repeat victimisation.

Several forms of this crime take place on the doorstep. Victims are cold called at their homes and persuaded to part with money. The most common form is charging an extortionate price for unnecessary work not completed. The average victim loses about £1,000 to scams but some have lost their homes, their life savings and many thousands of pounds. Financial loss is not the only cost. Feelings of vulnerability can have an overwhelming impact on many victims. Elderly victims are 2.4 times more likely to die or go into a care home than those who are not scammed.

National Trading Standards to the Citizens Advice Consumer Service have outsourced first line civil advice for many years now. However, Walsall Trading Standards have continued to assist vulnerable consumers in civil disputes as well as investigating all complaints of scams, doorstep crime and rogue trading with the aim of providing support to vulnerable victims and effective enforcement action against perpetrators.

Library Service

It is the role of public libraries to enable increased understanding of individual and group experience through as wide a range as possible of reading material, available through a network of libraries across our communities.

Library services aim to meet and reflect the diverse nature of our communities, meeting needs of all people from birth and throughout life, from all cultures, backgrounds and situations.

The library service provides resources on an ongoing basis to support and promote diversity, and it engages with and promotes resources in particular in line with national promotions, such as LGBT month in February and Black History Month in October, as well as others throughout the year. This promotion takes place through both libraries in communities and via our online BorrowBox platform.

Leather Museum

Walsall Leather Museum exists to promote the history of the leather industry in Walsall, particularly through the individual experience of those who worked in the leather trades. We do this by utilising a wide range of photographic images and oral history testimonies, together with volunteer demonstrators on hand to talk about life in the factories.

As far as possible we will always endeavour to demonstrate the widest demographic possible, so as to be inclusive for the widest range of visitors, as well as to be sure that we are reflecting the fullest story of the history we seek to communicate at the museum. The museum focuses particularly on the working experience in the leather trades, and ensures where possible that images used in the galleries reflect diversity as far as possible in the workforce.

The museum holds in excess of a hundred audiotapes of oral history, and in the past year these have been digitised to enable creation of audio sequences that can now be heard across the galleries. These oral testimonies relate the individual, diverse experience of former leatherworkers, providing a counterbalance to the official histories, by telling the personal, lived experiences of people in their own voices.

Staff are now able to use the new digitised formats to create specific audio sequences, such as for the Women's Tour, when the museum focused on women's experience in the leather trade.

Community Protection

When taking decisions on actions with respect to breaches of legislation enforced by the Community Protection Team, protected characteristics, are taken into account.

Examples of how this is applied include:

- In a case about anti-social behaviour the age of the victim and mental health of the perpetrator were both significant factors in deciding how to manage the case.
- In areas where there are significant problems caused by waste, advisory visits and information is provide in relevant languages, where this is appropriate for the people affected.
- Inspections are carried out to ensure that taxi and private hire drivers are carrying children with disabilities correctly on home to school contracts.

Food Safety

The Council is required to meet and is implementing the requirements of the Food Standards Agency Recovery Plan, which requires local authorities to re-start their food hygiene intervention programme following the restrictions imposed on the Food Safety team because of Covid-19.

The Recovery Plan forms the basis of the current Food Law Service Plan. Many food business operators are from a BAME background and therefore information is provided in various languages and in documents that are visual in nature. The Food Safety team also

has access to translation services and use this regularly where enforcement action to ensure Food Business Operators are fully aware of what is happening.

The Council has been working to implement Government Covid-19 legislation and guidelines. Council officers have been taking a light touch approach in order to encourage the public to follow government rules and guidelines and have been working closely with other agencies. In carrying out enforcement work of this nature; officers having been paying close attention to protected groups and tailoring their enforcement approach appropriately.

Covid-19 Enforcement

The Council has been working to implement Government Covid-19 legislation and guidelines. Council officers have been taking a light touch approach in order to encourage the public to follow government rules and guidelines and have been working closely with other agencies. In carrying out enforcement work of this nature; officers having been paying close attention to protected groups and tailoring their enforcement approach appropriately.

Walsall Archives

During COVID 19, we:

- answered enquiries by email and telephone to ensure that people had some access to our resources.
- We reopened with reduced opening hours so customers can access the service in person. We will resume our normal opening hours in January 2022.
- We responded to customer comments by replacing a high bench in our public research room with a lower one, which is more accessible to our users.

We are working on a bid to get funding to digitise photographs from our collections to make them available online so that more people can access them.

2. We will engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues

Highways and Transport

On 10 February 2021, Walsall Council Cabinet approved a proposal to provide a temporary transit site to support the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. Construction of the site is scheduled for completion in early spring 2022. Operation of the site will enable the council to improve their offer to the GRT community and provide a suitable facility for groups of travellers passing through the borough.

Community, Equality and Cohesion Team

COVID Community Champions Programme

In January 2021, Walsall Council was successful in receiving funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly known as MHCLG) to deliver a [COVID Community Champions Project](#).



The aims of the project were:

- to help increase vaccination uptake, particularly in BAME communities and people with disabilities.
- to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- to tackle the spread of misinformation around COVID-19 and the vaccine
- to reduce the impact of the virus on families, neighbourhoods and wider communities

We worked collaboratively with various Community Organisations to achieve these aims and reach hundreds of residents through the programme. Activities have included information sessions (online and in-person) with health professionals, completing questionnaires to understand concerns and needs, podcasts, videos and much more.

We also worked collaboratively with Public Health, Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS, Community Transport colleagues and various Community Organisations and businesses to coordinate the delivery of over 4000 vaccinations across the borough to offer residents a more accessible means of having their vaccinations.

Equality Function

As part of our role in assuring the Council's compliance with EqlAs, we often advise on how to directly consult with people possessing protected characteristics, ranging from those with sensory needs to LGBTQ communities, black and ethnic minorities or refugees, migrants and new communities.

Whilst the equality function is generally regarded as an internal service, we will work with people, communities and businesses to empower them to enact change. The advice and guidance we provide, particularly with EqlAs, allows our services to take new and innovative approaches to tackling the causes of inequality in our communities, as well as using targeted action to deal with its consequences and impact. Equality is key to all our work.

Library Service

In the past year the library service has:

- Engaged with volunteers to support delivery of library books to people's homes during the second lockdown, to support well-being, particularly of vulnerable people living alone, for whom reading is an essential outlet.

- Actively provided support in organising a community book exchange at Moxley People's Centre, to be managed by the community association there. The library service equipped the new book exchange with new children's library furniture, purchased large collections of picture books to support early learning and large-print books for those with visual impairment, organised the range of stock to make it usable, and provided advice and a new PC to support the community association in operating the service.
- Provided collections of new large-print books to community-run book exchanges across the borough, providing a mechanism to enable rotation both amongst the book exchanges and with the library service itself. This enables particularly older people in areas without a library still to have access to reading material that they can access despite their visual impairment.
- Provided a "Ring & Read" collection and home delivery service, to enable those most in need to borrow library books and audiobooks even while libraries were closed during the pandemic.

Leather Museum

As a result of Covid, the museum currently has only three active volunteers, the newest of whom is of Asian heritage.

Walsall Archives

Walsall Archives provide opportunities for education as people can access our resources as part of their school or college courses or part of lifelong learning.

We hold a wide variety of Walsall Council records and records of other organisations. We assist people to access information about themselves held in Walsall Council records and the records of other organisations, including (SARS) and proof of residence enquiries. They can also access information about their families including about family history, death and burial.

Our records also empower people to find information about their communities and their own property through Walsall Council records and the records of other organisations.

3. We will strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels

Community, Equality and Cohesion Team

Community, Equality and Cohesion (CEC) team is proud to provide apprenticeships for young people since 2017. Black and minority ethnic staff are currently under-represented in Economy, Environment and Community (EEC) directorates (15.55%). Females are also under-represented in across all the grades in EEC directorates and especially in the Grade 14 (35.29%) and above.

In our offer of apprenticeships since 2017, CEC have focused on providing work experience for under-represented communities, including 3 females from ethnic minority background (one with ESOL needs). In 2020/21, one of our apprentices moved from the initial Business

Administration qualification to Project Management qualification completed with distinction. She has now gained a job role as an ESOL Covid Project Officer in the Walsall for All team.

For her positive contribution to achieving outcomes for Walsall residents, she was Highly Commended in the Rising Star Category at the MJ Awards and the Winner in the Charity, Voluntary and Public Services Category at the BAME Apprenticeship Awards 2021. She is now the Black Country Area Lead for the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (AAN) and also on the Association of Apprentice's Council.



The CEC team has an excellent track record of attracting funding for social cohesion and integration projects. In the period 2019-2021, Walsall became one of the 5 local government partners on the government Integrated Areas Programme.

With the funding for Integrated Areas, CEC team were able to create 10 new job opportunities. They included 7 fixed-term roles, 2 secondments and 1 agency role. The fixed-term job roles attracted 2 females and 3 males from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and 2 promotions to a higher grade (secondments) for a White female and black and minority ethnic male employee.

The CEC team has thus become one of the most diverse teams in the EEC Directorate, dedicated to social cohesion and integration agenda – leading an exemplary Walsall for All programme that was in September 2021 highly commended in the Association for Public Services Excellence (APSE) Awards for Best Collaborative Working initiative (with other public sector and third party partners).



In 2021, CEC team developed a new **Diversity Calendar** as an internal Walsall Council planner for two purposes: to inform staff about equality, diversity and inclusion events throughout the year and to encourage service areas to make a commitment in relation to EDI.

A Diversity Calendar group has also been created on Microsoft Teams and council employees are encouraged to contribute to the key events (set out as priorities) as well as promotional weekly and monthly activity in partnership with the corporate Communications Team.

Equalities Function

Promoting and supporting diversity in the workplace is an important aspect of good people management. It is about valuing everyone in the organisation as an individual. However, to reap the benefits of a diverse workforce it is vital to have an inclusive environment where everyone feels able to participate and achieve their potential.

The Equally Yours training programme targets the appreciation of having a diverse and representative workforce. It explains the positive reasons for supporting this aspiration. Its aim is to encourage colleagues to understand that, by attracting, recruiting, supporting and promoting talented individuals at Walsall Council, this will help to represent the diverse communities we serve across the borough.

To value difference we must be inclusive. We recognise that people with a variety of skills, attitudes and experiences, from diverse backgrounds and cultures, bring fresh ideas and perspectives. Encouraging and harnessing these differences can only enhance Walsall Council and reinforce the commitment to achieving a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve.

The CEC team has an excellent track record of attracting funding for social cohesion and integration projects.

Leather Museum

With one vacancy as a result of secondment, the museum only has two assistant curators and 2 x FTE museum assistants, apart from the Service Manager for Libraries and the Leather Museum.

Walsall Archives

Walsall Archives complies with Walsall Council's recruitment policies and procedures when recruiting new staff. We will advertise widely to attract a wide range of people to apply for roles within our department.

We are working towards creating volunteering opportunities within the archives service. This will create opportunities for work experience and developing skills that will enable individuals to gain employment.

4. We will treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative

Community, Equality and Cohesion Team

Equalities Function

As part of our corporate Equality and Diversity function, we oversee Walsall Council's compliance with the PSED.

We seek to ensure that our staff and managers implement agreed equality objectives and carry out equality impact assessments on all Council services or changes to them. As part of this process, services (included those that are procured through external providers) are asked to analyse their service user data and consultations, identifying gaps in provision. Action plans are required where adverse impact or potentially adverse impact was identified.

The Community, Equality and Cohesion Team continues to promote accessible communication by provision of the new community languages, British Sign Language and easy read service, in the framework contract interpretation, translation and transcription and Easy Read (ITTE). Analysis of the Council's interpretation services determines a targeted approach to Walsall's communities.

The Team provides guidance and checks the quality of EqlAs that are focused on ensuring that residents and customers with protected characteristics have easy access to our services and are treated fairly.

EqlAs are public documents. Therefore, anyone may ask to view any EqlA or request a copy. To make this process as transparent as possible, we provide a list of all EqlAs undertaken in the year on both the Council's intranet and internet sites. These assessments are also identified within the PSED.

Library Service

As in (statement 3) above, libraries have been working through community agencies and the range of volunteers provided through the Friends of Streetly Library, to enhance access to services both via the borough's network of libraries and through community-run facilities.

Leather Museum

The Leather Museum provides a number of activities for schools, and despite the focus of the museum on the Walsall leather industry, these include a range of activities to promote the diversity agenda:

- Making a drawstring purse, based on one from the Niger region of Africa (we have a party of 60 children coming from Birmingham to make the purse because of its link to their cultural heritage).
- A "discovery box" activity in which children get to handle examples of leatherwork from other cultures, including from Asia, Africa and Afghanistan.
- Making a replica of an Asian ceremonial slipper.
- A shadow-puppet activity based on an Asian rawhide shadow puppet held by the museum.
- A Chinese dragon puppet activity.

Walsall Archives

We have experienced staff with excellent customer care skills, who can assist individuals with accessing our collections and our services.

We work with other council departments and external organisations to help them with their information needs and their own projects to benefit people in the local area.

Working with employers to bring forward positive outcomes for our people

Walsall Works recognises the contribution made by local employers to help residents improve their skills and to provide access to employment. In 2018, Walsall Works introduced a quality mark to companies and since then have been giving recognition to those who demonstrate social value and their exceptional commitment to support the people and communities of Walsall. The employers are ranked either Bronze, Silver and Gold and during 2021, the team continued to work closely with Gold Partners; Barhale Construction, Midcounties Co-operative and whg to bring forward positive change for our residents.

Each of these companies had demonstrated extensive work in the following areas:

1. Creating and sustaining employment for local people
2. Helping local people to increase their skills and improve their employability
3. Creating more opportunities for local companies through supply chains
4. Supporting Walsall's most vulnerable residents to improve their health and wellbeing
5. Helping local schools to raise aspiration and improve educational attainment
6. Supporting community-managed facilities and developing community-based initiatives
7. Increasing diversity and inclusivity in the workplace

In addition, Walsall Works engaged with 120 local employers who brought forward 252 job vacancies to match to local unemployed residents registered with the programme. The engagement demonstrated their commitment to working with the Council Walsall Works programme to improve their corporate social responsibilities to support local people and communities.

Kickstart

Walsall Council is a Kickstart Gateway Organisation, who has secured well over 150 work placement pledges from local private sector employers and by December 2021, we have placed 118 young people into paid work placements. The focus of our involvement is to ensure that each young person is given the best possible work experience and chance to progression onto employment with the host employer or supported to access employment elsewhere.

Kickstart Placements (Walsall Council Gateway)		Volume
Current Live Vacancies		62
No. of employers with live vacancies		26
No. of young people currently active in placements		39
No. of employers with active placements		22
Year to date: Total vacancies filled		112
Black Country Impact Clients	13.4%	15
DWP Referred Clients	76.8%	86
Walsall Works Clients	9.8%	11
<i>Data correct at 17/01/22</i>		

Social Value

Walsall Council's Social Value Policy supports delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. The Council are committed to working collaboratively with its major contractors and developer partners to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of its people and communities. The Walsall Works team continue to assess tenders for responses on social value and then support approved contractors with delivery of these contractual commitments. During 2021, the focus has been with a small number of contractors (Starting Point Recruitment, Civil Enforcement, Highways Maintenance) and to use the social value principles to support external developers managing large regeneration schemes ie Goscote housing scheme (whg), M6 J10 (John Sisk) and Phoenix 10 remediation (Henry Boot Developments).

Walsall Works

The award winning initiative funded by Walsall Council continues to support local people to find jobs, apprenticeships and access training, while also supporting local businesses that are looking to expand and invest in their future workforce. Despite all the challenges during 2021 Walsall Works support 508 people into a positive outcome, of which 241 into employment, 108 paid work placements, 125 into training or further education and 17 into apprenticeships. The emphasis of the support has been key in past year due to the pandemic, which further highlights the importance of being in work and having the right opportunity being important not just financially but also to improving the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Black Country Impact

Work with young people aged 16 – 29 who are not in education employment or training on a 1-2-1 basis to remove significant barriers to work and help them get back into training or work. Help them access housing support, training support, application help and other services. Includes specialist provision provided a by key contracted partners to deliver services for ex-offenders, those with health issues including disability and mental health. Specifically targeted are looked after children, children from travelling communities.

The Black Country Impact programme addresses the barriers faced by unemployed individuals aged 15-29 years, supporting them to secure positive outcomes including employment, apprenticeships, training and further education. Our individualised approach and alternative delivery structures provides flexible personalised learning and support that addresses the range of different personal and skills needs of young adults. Access to trusted advice and support, working alongside partners including housing, health, transport and employers to ensure individuals have the best possible opportunity to overcome the range of barriers they face, and to ensure they effectively participate, achieve a positive outcome and remain engaged. Public Health have developed specific pathways for ensuring tailored health and wellbeing support is provided. Targeted groups include looked after children and children from travelling communities.

The Black Country Impact is made up of five partners, Dudley Council, Sandwell Council, Walsall Council, Wolverhampton Council and Black Country Talent Match (Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council project funded by the Big Lottery Fund). The specific breakdown of funding for the Black Country Impact project is made up of £17 million Youth Employment Initiative funding, £17 million European Social Fund and £17 million of match funding from the five Black Country Partners (which also includes £8 million of match funds from the Big Lottery Fund). This brings the total value of Black Country Impact project to £51 million, of which £1.68m was claimed for Walsall in 2021 (grant and matched funding).

During 2021, the Walsall Impact programme supported 2729 unemployed participants and 1706 inactive participants (those who were not claiming benefits or those who are unable or unfit to work). In total, 4435 young people have been positively impacted by the programme in the past year

The Black Country ESF Community Grants programme aims to engage with local community groups and organisations to deliver a range of skills and employment support activities to enable people from the hardest to reach communities, experiencing multiple disadvantages, to make progress towards the labour market. The priority groups to benefit from support include people aged 50 and over, those from ethnic minorities, those with disabilities or health conditions, females and offenders/ex-offenders. The funding supports any activity, which can help the individual, progress towards employment and improve employability skills such as; taster sessions, informal or non-accredited learning, volunteering and work experience placements, job search assistance and softer skills, confidence building and personal development.

Community Grants

Since April 2019, the project has issued 21 grants to local community and voluntary groups to deliver bespoke employability services to those hardest to reach communities.

Walsall Leather museum has been working with the supported learning students at Walsall College for over 20 years now, providing them with a gallery venue for their annual Art and Design exhibition and supporting them with display and publicity.

Stitchers and Skivers is a monthly craft club at Walsall Leather Museum designed to support social interaction – for example, one person has lived with a chronic illness for 20 years that had led to some mental health issues, and is noticeably growing in confidence with each session with likeminded people. Another was booked into the Stitchers to attend by her daughter specifically to decrease her risk of social isolation following a bereavement.

Services across Economy, Environment and Communities continue to increase the employment opportunities for people who, through illness, disability, etc. have difficulty in securing employment and require work experience to improve their employability. **Case studies** illustrate this work and the benefits it has provided for individuals involved. (All of individuals in the case studies have given their permission to be identified and/or have their stories told).

2996 were White and 1127 (27.33%) were from BAME backgrounds. Including care leavers (2.1%), ex-offenders (3%), health barriers (31.3%), homeless (1.9%) and lone parents (10.3%) and with special needs or learning difficulties, there are a higher proportion of participants who reside in our most deprived wards including Birchills Leamore, Blakenall and Bloxwich.

Case Studies

Kickstart Case Study - Leyla Kaya (One Walsall)

Leyla graduated university in July 2020, with a BA in Music. She struggled to find work, which was made more difficult by the pandemic and lockdowns resulting in employers holding back on recruitment. Due to this, Leyla began making a claim for Universal Credit. In April 2021, Leyla applied to the governments Kickstart Scheme which provides funding to create new 6-month jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment.

Leyla saw a Kickstart placement being advertised through Kickstart Gateway Provider Walsall Works with the organisation 'One Walsall'. They were offering a 6 month paid placement for a Volunteer Centre Support Officer, so Leyla followed the process and informed her JCP Advisor that she was interested in the position and requested that her CV be put forward. Luckily, her CV was shortlisted and she was asked to attend an interview. The interview went well and shortly afterwards Leyla was offered the position and started working with the organisation in May. This role was perfect for Leyla as it had similarities to her long term goal to work within events management, organisation and administration. On a daily basis, due to the Covid restrictions and home working, Leyla had to undertake her training for the role through Zoom calls. Her role entailed communicating with volunteers applying for the various opportunities, creating volunteering adverts, inputting data and other administrative tasks. "One Walsall is the voice of the voluntary sector in Walsall, who support local not-for-profit organisations such as community groups, charities and social enterprises".

In July, she became aware of an internal vacancy being advertised for a Volunteer Coordinator and as she was really enjoying her role she put forward her application and gained another interview to be considered for a permanent position. Shortly afterwards she was informed that she had been successful and on 2nd August became a permanent member of One Walsall's team, what is more amazing, her actual Kickstart placement wasn't due to end until October!

This is a great outcome for both Leyla and the Kickstart Scheme, proving its initiative to provide on the job training, improve knowledge and future job prospects is working.

Walsall Works Case Study – Client J (Steps to Work)

J contacted Walsall Works, following a referral from the Wolves @ Work programme. J was on a zero hour contract which was proving to be exactly that. As a recovering alcoholic with a relationship breakdown, no income and mounting financial difficulties, J wanted to get back into work as soon as possible to prevent her spiralling into the old bad drinking habits. Through her Walsall Works employment advisor, J received telephone contact, face to face appointments, a new CV, zoom interview practice, referral to free training provision to help build her confidence and motivation.

In December 2021, J was invited for an interview at Steps to Works and after a number of practice zoom interviews, she was ready and focussed on doing her best and was delighted when she was offered the role as an Employment Advisor on the JETs programme.

Walsall Works Case Study – Client CW (Grosvenor Casino)

Grosvenor Casino contacted Walsall Works, to support with marketing a number of vacancies in customer service and hospitality. Conversations led to a need to design a tailored sector based work academy to encourage locally unemployed people to obtain key skills which would put them in a better position to apply and secure interviews. Alongside this, live vacancies were communicated across all our channels ie social media, website, bulletin and via emails to partner organisations who support locally unemployed people. This resulted in an employer engagement officer with training provider, Go Train, referring client CW to the Electronic Gaming position. Go Train informed Walsall Works that he had spoken to his client CW who was extremely interested and had worked in a casino for 7 years and therefore knew the role inside out. CW's was asked to submit a CV for the role and was interviewed the next day for the position.

Michelle, Gaming Manager at Grosvenor Casino reported 'Craig started last night! He's fantastic for the role'.

5. We will find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded

Community, Equality and Cohesion Team

Walsall for All Programme

As part of the Walsall for All Programme we have worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Walsall Works and the Black Country Chamber of Commerce to support individuals who are disadvantaged or excluded.

Department for Work and Pensions

- DWP's Community Connectors have supported over 300 women across Walsall to secure employment, education and training opportunities via their Empowering Women and Motivate Your Mind workshops and Coffee Mornings. Walsall for All has published [several stories](#) of women who have benefited from the support of DWP Community Connectors.
- We delivered the [Walsall Diversity Project](#) in partnership with DWP and the Black Country Chamber of Commerce which included conducting research around local workforce demographics, planning and delivering a conference for businesses and employers to encourage diversity and inclusion in their workforces and supporting businesses to commit to pledges around ensuring their workforce is diverse and inclusive. The Chamber engaged with around 150 businesses and individuals over the duration of the project.



Walsall Works

They have supported local people who face barriers to employment, such as ex-offenders and women who have been affected by domestic violence, with ID documents, as well as employment advice and support.

Places of Welcome

[Places of Welcome](#) is a national initiative that enables people to connect, belong and contribute to their local community. In Walsall and the wider Black Country, the project is managed by Transforming Communities Together.

Walsall for All has supported Places of Welcome since 2019. Any venue (from churches and mosques to community centres and libraries) can become a Place of Welcome and open their doors to the local community for a warm welcome and free refreshments. Places of Welcome are open to everyone and are safe spaces.

Places of Welcome was significantly impacted by COVID-19, meaning that venues could not open while restrictions were in place. However, as restrictions were eased in July 2021, venues across Walsall began to re-open.

For many of the people who attend a Place of Welcome, they rely on this support to help with mental health and wellbeing and to feel included where they live and belong. For others, it is a lifeline - during COVID, those involved in Places of Welcome have missed meeting in person and there is now a sense of coming together as a community again to share experiences and support one another, which reflects on the principles of connecting, belonging and contributing.

To date, there are 14 Places of Welcome across Walsall. The majority of these are churches, but others include community centres and one mosque.

In August 2021, a new Place of Welcome re-opened at Bilal Academy in Palfrey. The centre says it is embracing the ethos of 'Place, People, Provision, Presence and Participation', that it is accessible and hospitable, open to all, is a place where people listen, offers free refreshments and recognises that everyone attending will bring talents, skills and experiences that they might be willing to share.

Maulana Ebrahim Esakjee, Place of Welcome Host and Trustee of Bilal Academy said: *"I am happy to host a Place of Welcome after the difficult times we have had, to bring the community together and put a smile on people's faces and they will leave feeling better."*



ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

As online classes started to end and community-based learning was reintroduced, health and safety measures around Covid were put in place. Initial concerns that attendance would be low proved to be the complete opposite; attendance was at 98% across the board.

Sessions included mental health and wellbeing checks, and discussions on Covid and ways to stay safe at the beginning of each session to ensure service users were kept up to date with recent government communications. Service users who went onto completing their courses were signposted to Walsall College for an accredited course, some entered

employment during and after the course and some remained with the existing tutors but were upskilled to the level above.

Confidence and boost in morale resulted in great language proficiency and further growth of the ESOL provisions. The reputation of Walsall Council's ESOL Intelligence Unit led to identifying newly arrived communities to the borough, such as the Ghanaian community, who were isolated due to their inability to speak the language and access public services.

To date, our ESOL provisions saw many social barriers and attitudes to learning being broken down, where service users were engaging with people of different cultures and backgrounds through a shared common language.

The attention to detail in respect of the cultural and religious norms that was placed in the setting up of each provision was highly regarded by the faith institutes and led to greater referrals and a high attendance rate.

Examples included service users who may not have engaged in conversation with another community due to political, cultural and religious differences, such as service users belonging to the Sikh and Hindu faith attending a local mosque to learn English, and a class of white Eastern Europeans attending classes at a Gurdwara. Confidence was instilled within the Roma community of Walsall, which felt neglected and faced continued discrimination.

Education was not deemed as of importance due to past experiences and many of the service users accessing the provision were illiterate in their native language. This attitude soon changed, and this community was given a sense of belonging and empowerment, whereby trust and rapport was established and potential unlocked through quality learning.

Several ESOL case studies have been published on the [Walsall for All](#) website.



Welcome Pack

In partnership with Nash Dom CIC, a [Welcome Pack](#) has been produced to help newly arrived in Walsall to settle and lead a fulfilling and active life. It contains information and contacts for local services covering most aspects of living: health, employment, education, housing, transport, rights and responsibilities, social activities. It is available in English and seven other languages. The pack has been well used by community organisations to pass onto residents and clients they work with.



Equalities Function

The Community, Equality and Cohesion service area supports those who are disadvantaged and excluded in a number of ways including the provision of good quality Interpretation, Translation, Transcription and Easy read (ITTE) service. This is a commissioned service available to our customers at the point of contact. The quality is measured and analysed and data used for sharing future service provision.

Word360 offers a fully managed service and, as the Council's sole provider, delivers 100% of the service. It recognises the value of effective communication with their service users, no matter what form of ITTE is required. Its network of professionals have the range of skills and abilities to meet the various requirements of our diverse range of clients. ITTE professionals will be assigned based on different criteria, such as whether they might be working within a healthcare environment, legal situation or with informal community groups.

The benefit of having one provider, apart from a single point of contact and ease of access, is that Council employees have just one singular process to access all services. The data collected across these services resides in one single consistent data set. Information such as this has been particularly valuable in identifying high use areas, top languages and the adoption of new technologies without dilution due to multiple agencies.

With social distancing and lockdown restrictions in place, face to face interpreting became difficult, and Walsall Council made the transition to using virtual platforms for communications. Undoubtedly, frontline workers and those who have been essential in keeping our daily lives moving are the heroes of this time, but the pandemic truly highlighted the importance of global translation and interpreting services.

Here are just a few ways in which the role of translators and interpreters has changed with COVID-19;

- Less face to face interpreting, more remote interpreting - Due to the rise in virtual events, we have seen more interest in remote interpreting. Most physical meetings are now hosted virtually, with a remote interpreter. This has become an essential part of day-to-day operations for many services, providing accessibility and inclusivity for all. Word360 successfully transitioned from its bespoke remote interpreting service to Microsoft Teams with no detrimental effect to the Council;
- New and uncommon phrases – The virus resulted in an explosion of new words and phrases. To English speakers, words such as “covidiot” or “doomscrolling” are now common in our everyday language. There has also been a rise in uncommon phrases, such as “self-isolating” and “social distancing”. So, it is more important than ever for ITTE service to bridge the gap between meanings and translated words. For example, “lockdown” is used in the UK, whereas some Asian countries prefer to use “circuit breaker”, which has a different meaning in the UK within the same context. Ensuring that

these words and phrases are translated in a way that makes sense, so to avoid miscommunication, especially in a formal setting, is essential.

- The need for localisation online - Bridging the gap between words and meanings across languages has become more apparent with COVID-19. With the amount of people spending time online rising, this need has become critical. The Council needed to be 'business as usual' during the pandemic and, as service users continued to request ITTE services, services needed to be efficient, accurate and fit for purpose.

In spite of the pandemic, there have still been some positive messages to report this year. The transition to a single ITTE provider has provided a simplified, convenient and cost-effective solution to our interpreting needs, even with the teething issues at the commencement of the contract with Teams access.

It is clear that, with an increase in use of the Council's ITTE contract, we are meeting our legal obligation to provide accessible communication and make reasonable adjustments for people to access our services under the Equality Act 2010. This usage mirrors the need for these services across all communities.

The Polish language again remains the most requested language this year. We saw an increase in requests for Romanian, almost replicating its peak in 2018/19. Whilst Asian languages remained amongst the highest requested, there was a general decrease in demand against the 2019/20 total. Demand for Central and Eastern European languages increased. Frequency of languages used and requested also vary significantly from locality to locality as some wards, particularly in the South of Walsall, are more densely populated by people from newly settled communities.

Top requested languages to 2020/21

	Punjabi	Mirpuri	Polish	Urdu	Bengali	Slovak	Romanian	Czech
2019/20	576	211	626	220	380	155	181	
2020/21	277	158	632	279	232	170	398	230

Polish being the most requested language is no surprise. As of June 2020, there are around 815,000 Polish nationals living in the UK. Between 2008 and 2019, the UK Polish population doubled, reaching a peak of over 1 million in 2017, then decreasing by June 2020. This decrease may be the result of the UK's decision to leave the European Union. Whilst some migration back to birth states may be indicative in the current figures, it is too early to tell the effect of this decision on the number of European citizens in the UK requiring language support.

Historically, there has been confusion in what services people are entitled to. Service users have not always been offered ITTE services, resulting in individuals relying on family members or friends. The use of ITTE services is now more widely known and accessible.

Lately, secured funding from the Integrated Communities Fund has resulted in the Community, Equality and Cohesion team working with regional and national partners in the delivery of services, including immediate and essential language provision, to seldom heard and emerging communities, so supporting the procured contract and having a positive effect on the provision of ITTE in Walsall.

41 languages were requested in 2020/21, including the new language requests of Acholi, Edo, Lingala and Yemani Arabic. There were notable increases in demand for the Czech and Twi languages. Indeed, the Czech language was the sixth most requested language in this period. Whilst having three dialects, the Kurdish language totalled 178 requests, making Kurdish one of the most requested languages.

Library Service

The library service seeks to support those who are disadvantaged or potentially excluded via a variety of means:

- The libraries themselves provide safe and neutral places in the community for people to access resources, experience a welcome place of sanctuary for all, and a community meeting place to enable self-organised groups to set up and flourish or for individual to experience a place of shelter and learning.
- To meet the diverse nature of our communities and their needs, our libraries select and provide resources that are as inclusive as possible to reflect those needs. These include:
 - Books and talking books from specialist suppliers in a range of community languages;
 - Dual-language picture books for smaller children;
 - Books covering a range of cultural themes to reflect the diverse nature of our communities and increase cross-cultural understanding.
 - Large-print books and audiobooks to meet the needs of those with visual impairment.
- The mobile library service goes out into communities across the borough, which do not have access to a local library and provides access particularly for those with mobility issues. It provides the full range of resources that people can get from a static library, these resources being continually changed and updated to overcome the size limitations of the vehicle, and so that communities are getting a service as equal as possible to those with access to a static library. Reservations are also free of charge via the mobile library to reflect this need. Walsall's mobile library continues to be one of the biggest-loaning libraries in the borough, bucking the trend for mobile libraries and reflecting how it carefully addresses the local needs of communities.
- The Home Library Service provides direct services into people's homes for those with mobility issues who are likely to be housebound or not even able to get to the door – so that library staff have special access. Home library Service customers may have diverse backgrounds and reading/language/disability issues and needs, which are specially catered for by the service. During the pandemic the Home Library Service has been active also in delivering books to people's homes through the "Ring & Read" home delivery service.
- In addition to books, audiobooks, newspapers and magazines available through our libraries, the service provides a range of services provided through its 24//7 Online Library. This provides an equivalent range of resources to a static library, but enables

people to access them who may not have access to a local library, whose shift-work or childcare etc may exclude them from normal library opening hours. 24/7 Online Library resources may be accessed and downloaded at any time of day or night from any device with internet access. Resources include:

- Walsall's BorrowBox platform for eBooks and eAudiobooks for adults and children – which also turns every eBook into a possible large-print book.
 - PressReader provides access to over 7,000 full colour newspapers and magazines, from Britain and more than 100 countries all around the world in over 60 languages - providing access to papers not even available in printed form in the UK.
 - People can choose to have particular titles delivered directly to their device each day – so it is a great way to make newspapers and magazines equally available to the widest range of people. All the newspapers are identical to the printed editions and issued at the same time as the print versions are published. It is a great service for cultural diversity.
 - The OverDrive platform provides a particularly good means of accessing magazines in digital formats, as well as an additional range of eAudiobooks.
- The public PCs in libraries provide an essential way for many people to undertake things like jobsearch or keeping in touch with family, who may well be overseas, particularly for people who are asylum-seekers. They have a key purpose in addition in supporting the acquisition of functional digital skills which are increasingly necessary for full and equal access to services and society. For children where there are multiple demands on the home PC, the library PCs provide equality of opportunity for homework and study.
- Weekend and early-morning opening is really important to provide access to library services for working people and families, and to provide quiet places for homework and study that not all children and students may have access to at home. It also enables equality of access regardless of particular faith or Sabbath days. Walsall's libraries provide a full day of opening on Saturdays from 9am to 4pm, and are open from 8:30am on weekdays.
- As part of the RPI Programme, a social outcomes digital feedback form was devised for libraries and the Leather Museum, to enable staff to gauge the wellbeing outcomes and practical benefits (e.g. improved IT skills, ability to do jobsearch etc) arising from activities and events. This uses generic social outcomes as a measurement and will support continuous improvement in how libraries and the Leather Museum meet priority outcomes on an ongoing basis.

The activity programmes that are offered by the Leather Museum have a track record of working with a range of schools, including with children with special educational needs or behavioural issues.

The Leather Museum continues to be free from any admission charge, in order to be as inclusive as possible, and charges for activities remains very low so as to avoid barriers to participation.

A significant proportion of the take-up of Leather Museum activities comes from postcode areas of Walsall with significant disadvantage.

Although the collections of the Leather Museum primarily reflect the local leather and lorinery trades, the museum has invested also in purchasing the leatherwork of other cultures, to demonstrate that leathercraft transcends borders.

For example:

- Personal items from Africa, such as a purse, sandals, a leather-dressed pot, a teabag and an inscribed box. These items augment larger artefacts, such as an African camel saddle.
- Examples of Asian, Spanish and Afghan leathercraft.
- Examples of lorinery from other cultures, such as South America.

Community Protection

- People with disabilities and the elderly are often reliant on the taxi and private hire trades to enable them to carry out normal activities. However, if they have problems with a journey, they can be reluctant to complain for fear of victimisation. Advice is provided to the trades on their responsibilities under equalities legislation and this is followed up by proactive enforcement operations.
- Following an incident involving the user of a wheelchair and the tail lift of a licensed vehicle, a review of the process of the inspection of vehicles has been undertaken in conjunction with the vehicle testing station. Changes to the process have been put in place to ensure the safe carriage of wheelchair users.
- Taxi and private hire drivers are required to produce regular medical reports to ensure they remain fit to drive. During the covid pandemic, it was not possible for many drivers to get the necessary appointments with their GP. A modified process was put in place requiring the licensees to complete a self-declaration. This ensured that the elderly and people with disabilities could continue to access essential services at a time when public transport was restricted.

Walsall Archives

Walsall Archive Service relocated to Walsall town centre in 2019 to the newly refurbished Lichfield Street Hub building. We are now in a more central location, which is near to public transport, bus and train services.

There are parking bays for the disabled near to the library building.

Staff assist customers in using our computers and other equipment. We also help customers to access our collections through our catalogues and by showing them how to use the different types of records.

The Archives Service is on the ground floor for easy access to all customers.

There are always experienced staff on hand to assist people to find the information that they want.

Walsall Council Equality and Diversity Information

Directorate Report December 2021

Directorate	Resources and Transformation
Executive Director	Deborah Hindson
Contact officer	Julie Birch
E-mail	Julie.Birch@walsall.gov.uk

Corporate Equality Objectives

Our equality objectives have been based on available equalities information through research, consultation, engagement, and Equality Impact Assessments. They will help identify internal and external targets that will enable the Council to improve the collection of equality information, and address the most persistent areas of inequalities faced by both employees and customers:

We will:

- Promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work;
- Engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues;
- Strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels;
- Treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative;
- Find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded.

Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics

Protected characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010;

Age	Race
Disability	Religion and belief
Gender reassignment	Sex
Marriage and civil partnership	Sexual orientation
Pregnancy and maternity	

Part 1 Main strategies and plans containing equality and diversity information

Title	Purpose	Availability	
		On request	Internet address
Corporate Plan	The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's purpose along with the priorities that we believe will help to reduce inequalities and maximise potential. This year's corporate plan is a refreshed edition covering one year – 2021/22 – and is offering a summarised review of impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the borough. The Corporate Plan, in conjunction with other plans and partnership work, plays an important role in ensuring that the council's strategic objectives are achieved for the people and borough of Walsall. The 2021/22 plan presents the council's five priorities with 10 identified outcomes, which will be measured against 20 markers of success. This process ensures transparency and accountability as the council will measure achievements and identify gaps with the focus on reducing inequalities and maximising all potential across the borough.		Corporate plan, vision and values (walsall.gov.uk)
Corporate Workforce Strategy 2018-2021 “Proud in Growing Together”	The Strategy recognises that the workforce are the Council's greatest asset and identifies the importance of attracting and retaining a highly talented and diverse workforce. The strategy outlines the Council's vision, priorities, values and behaviours and set's out a number of key actions, including a number related to		Corporate Workforce Strategy 2018-2021 (walsall.gov.uk)

	equality and diversity, in order to support the development of the workforce to ensure that it is fit for the challenges and transformational change that lies ahead.		
Employment Monitoring Report (EMR) is published annually and includes the Council's Gender Pay Gap Report	The EMR provides a statistical overview of the Council's workforce and provides in-depth analysis based on a number of protected characteristics. The report provides data which monitors pay grades, recruitment, employee relations matters, broken down by equality monitoring measures, identifying trends and demographic comparisons to inform future decision making and support the Council to promote and maintain a diverse workforce.		Employment Monitoring (walsall.gov.uk)
Pay Policy Statement (published annually)	The Pay Policy Statement is an annual statement that sets out the Councils policy in relation to pay levels and conditions of service for all employees, in doing so it formalises our equal and consistent approach to a number of pay related decisions ensuring fairness and equality for all recipients.		https://go.walsall.gov.uk/pay_policy
Human Resources manage a portfolio of corporate employment policies, procedures and guidance, of which equalities and diversity are a key aim and focus, in particular some specific policies have at their core the equalities agenda e.g. Job Evaluation and Grading Policy, Dignity at Work Policy.	All employment policies are developed in line with equality and diversity principles and aim to ensure that discrimination of any form against employees with protected characteristics is not tolerated. Policies also include reminders to managers on reasonable adjustments and can be provided in alternative formats where required.		HR A-Z Directory of HR policies and procedures (walsall.gov.uk)
Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2021-23	The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan provides a proactive approach for deliverables against eight key themes that		Available upon request

	<p>champion equalities, diversity and inclusion. The action plan provides a framework for the setting and monitoring of tangible and measurable ED&I initiatives as a shared responsibility across of a number of corporate functions and involves input from the Council's Corporate Equalities Group and Culture and Communications workstreams.</p>		
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Part 2 Equality Impact Assessments November 2020 to October 2021

Service	Title	Contact officer name
Transformation and Digital	Digital Strategy 2022-2025	Carol Williams
Customer Engagement	Customer Experience Centre (CXC) Wave 2	Michael Taylor/Elise Hopkins
Transformation and Digital	Teams Telephony Project	Carol Williams
Public Health	Mental Wellbeing: Priorities and additional investment over three years	Public Health/ Angela Aitken
External Funding and Business Development	ESF Black Country Technical Assistance	Amanda Spratt
External Funding and Business Development	Walsall Heritage Strategy	Benjamin Parker
External Funding and Business Development	Accountable Body / Governance - Quality Officer Role	Mark Lavender
Human Resources	Reimbursement of Personal Expenses Policy	Rebecca Harrison
Human Resources	Injury Allowance Policy	Hannah Hewston-Jones
Human Resources	Corporate Employee Survey 2021	Michele Leith
Human Resources	Menopause Policy	Hannah Hewston-Jones
Human Resources	Unattached Teachers Pay Policy	Rebecca Lloyd
Human Resources	Schools Model Pay Policy	Primula Paul
Human Resources	Pay Policy	Rebecca Lloyd
Human Resources	Code of Conduct for Employees/ Workers	Rebecca Lloyd/Nicola Rickhuss
Finance	Walsall Council Strategic Asset Plan	Nick Ford
Public Health	Establishment of a Walsall Wellbeing Service (WWS)	

Part 3 Equality and Diversity Objectives

1. We will promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work

Human Resources (HR)

The Corporate Workforce Strategy (2018-2021) recognises that the workforce are the Council's greatest asset and identifies the importance of attracting and retaining a highly talented and diverse workforce. The strategy outlines the council's vision, priorities, values and behaviours and sets out a range of key actions, including a number related to equality and diversity and a specific pledge, "We will strive to build a workforce which is reflective of the community we serve". In addition to this, specific deliverables for this year include;

- Commissioning and delivering an employee survey designed to understand how individuals experience the Council as an employer with a 44% return rate. Results will be known before end of calendar year and will inform development of an action plan/refreshed strategic Workforce Plan.
- A recruitment survey has been developed to understand how job applicants experience our recruitment practices. This will be stood up before end of calendar year. The results will be used to shape policies, procedures and training for hiring managers.
- A recruitment survey for agency workers and managers of agency workers to understand and consider improvements to the process and experiences of those involved – currently being rolled out.
- A review and reset of the Corporate Equalities Group (CEG), centred on understanding the individual experience.
- Ongoing Mentoring and Coaching opportunities affording person centred development opportunities.
- Ongoing provision/support of Mental Health First Aiders who are trained to listen and signpost individuals to appropriate support.
- Workforce policy development including a review of the Sickness Absence Policy and introduction of a new Menopause Policy, along with the commencement of a review of various policies from an ED&I perspective including the Recruitment and Selection Policy, Dignity at Work Policy, Grievance Policy, Code of Conduct and the Confidential Reporting Policy – all of which have a strong equality and diversity element.

Inclusion and equality is promoted through all of our employment policies and these are normally reviewed on a three yearly cycle, see objective 4 for a further breakdown of these.

Governance

Governance services engages with the public in their day-to-day activities and seeks to do so in a way most appropriate to individual needs. This is reflected in the way in which we deal with members of the public directly in both the cases we conduct on behalf of the council and the way we engage residents in the democratic processes. For example in childcare cases we ensure that cases are presented coherently before the court by ensuring that parties to the proceedings are supported by the interpretation services. The service also deals directly with suppliers, businesses, members of the public, service users carers and other organisations

Information Governance – Transformation & Change and ICT

Information Governance:

- Our policies, procedures and guidance ensure that every aspect of information handling has regard for the obligations and duties in law to ensure that the rights and freedoms of all individuals are considered whenever we want to create, store, destroy or retain data as defined within the regulations. This ensures that we maintain a balanced approach to upholding those rights in transparent and compliant processes that ensure our records processing activities meet the equality requirements in law.
- Whenever investigating incidents, we must evidence that our incident management process considers the equality, diversity and rights of individuals affected.

ICT & Transformation and Change:

- Equality Impact Assessments form part of the transformational activity which the service delivers and EqlA's enable change to include diversity and equality in design and development
- APCs are used to ensure where possible employees are provided desired/appropriate opportunities in a consistent and suitable format to enable all to access and be engaged
- We seek lessons learned from project/programme delivery – opportunities where improvements can be made
- We seek feedback from customers who interact with ICT with a request or enquiry
- We ensure that the devices and software we use are digitally inclusive and adaptable for individual needs.

Corporate Landlord

The Corporate Landlord Service (CL) provides services which enable the Council's front line operational Teams to deliver on their services and statutory duty to the people of Walsall. By working efficiently to deliver our services, CL ensures that public money is targeted towards where it is most needed within the community.

The CL Team provides a wide variety of services including major construction projects. Client's needs are investigated to understand the nature of the development and needs of service users, staff and members of the public, to design in accessibility and remove exclusion. CP are experts in disability access and compliance through to specialist requirements such as educational establishments; ranging from main stream schools, special educational needs and facilities for pupils who are excluded from mainstream education for a range of reasons, all complying with Department of Education building bulletins. CL also works with staff on an individual basis and as well as directorates and services to provide a safe and fit for purpose working environment which meets the needs of a variety of different users, teams, service users and supports reasonable adjustments for staff and users with individual needs or Access to Work requirements one way systems, signage, site access control and supporting staff to obtain equipment to work safely from home.

CL also works with Community Associations and provides support on applications for Lottery funding, helping to maximise access to services they provide to their communities. This year CL have continued to support the wider council throughout the continuing pandemic by providing cleaning services to schools, council buildings, and some community buildings, caretaker services, couriers, catering and schools crossing patrols ensuring that schools and civic premises remained open within the government measures throughout the pandemic,

frontline employees have worked continually since March 2019 to ensure safe service delivery.

Black Country Impact Team (BCIT)

BCIT works with young people aged 16 – 29 who are not in education, employment or training on a 1-2-1 basis to remove significant barriers to work and help them get back into training or work. The Team help them access housing support, training support, application help and other services. Scope of support also includes specialist provision provided a by key contracted partners to deliver services for ex-offenders, those with health issues including disability and mental health. Specifically targeted are looked after children and children from travelling communities, our young people come through various council services and also engage through external partners, including the care team, youth offending, probation service, health services and employability services. Interventions are provided by specialist advisors and/or commissioned bespoke services.

The Black Country Impact programmes application to extend the current programme through to July 2023 was successful, increasing the number of places available by 1300 to 5800. This also allows us to extend support to young people affiliated with gangs or at risk of becoming a gang member.

BCIT are also working within local schools and community organisations on employment and skills priorities such as providing labour market information to young people, providing employability courses and sessions as well encouraging the business community to engage with schools and young people.

Corey's Case Study: Care Leaver into Education

- *Corey was presented to the Council for support with housing as a care leaver, looking for support with independent living and looking for employment.*
- *Corey was referred from the Walsall Council Housing team and the Transition Leaving Care team onto Impact, where he was receiving Jobseekers Allowance, Housing Benefit and Personal Independence Payment.*
- **Impact supported** *Corey with creating a competitive CV to improve his chances in the job market, while also supporting Corey with travel costs to attend an ICT course with Walsall College. Corey would also be able to add to his CV following completion of his course, which Impact continued to support with throughout the COVID-19 lockdown and the changes to the course from face-to-face to online working.*

Foyaz's Case Study: University Graduate lacking Confidence

- *Foyaz was a university graduate in Biomedical Sciences, looking to find a role in the medical industry.*
- *Foyaz was first introduced to Impact at the Walsall Works Expo 2020, where he was subsequently signed up to Impact. Foyaz had been out of work for a while, caring for family. As Impact appointments turned to mainly telephone appointments due to the COVID-19 lockdown, Foyaz was losing confidence in looking for work and was feeling depressed, feeling that becoming a carer had prevented him from pursuing his career.*
- **Impact supported** *Foyaz in helping with confidence and counselling measures, along with employability support getting into the medical industry. His advisor helped with creating his profile on the NHS candidate page and supporting statement, as well as*

securing paid employment with Royal Wolverhampton Trust as a Lab Technician. Foyaz's Advisor Kiran says "Foyaz was very excited about starting his new role and very thankful to Black Country Impact for supporting him."

Assurance Team (Statutory, Corporate and Local Government Ombudsman Complaints, Information Rights (including Subject Access Requests), Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests).

The work of the Assurance Team focusses on enabling everyone to have a voice and / or to access the information they require as allowed by legislation. The role is to make the function as accessible as possible and to assist, as much as possible, all customers to make requests and receive their response in the format that is most suitable to them. For this reason, the service will receive and accept requests in a number of ways including via face to face, telephone, email, or web access. The role involves an element of advocating for the complainant / requester to ensure the Council fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

This informs the selection of the most appropriate form of communication and making reasonable adjustments to the way the service is delivered to provide equality of access. This involves providing responses in alternative formats as requested and, if required, ensuring customers receive additional support as responses are issued which involves working closely with colleagues in social care.

Finance

Financial administration engages with members of the public, suppliers and businesses, service users, carers, legal representatives and other organisations during its day-to-day activities and seeks to do so in a way that is the most appropriate to individual needs. In addition, the service offers to communicate and liaise with users via a variety of means, the main purpose of which is to seek to address demand in a way that best suits the individual's requirements.

2. We will engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues

Human Resources

The Learning and Development Team provide and promote a portfolio of learning and development opportunities which are specifically related to promoting and resolving equality issues. These are available both to the internal workforce and to externally commissioned providers. They include;

- Caring for me and you (recognising the key role unpaid carers play);
- Mental Health First Aid and Suicide prevention;
- Sexual exploitation;
- Autism awareness (co-delivered by an 'expert by experience');
- Dementia awareness;
- Domestic abuse;
- Carers support and information;
- Conflict resolution;
- Deaf awareness;

- Modern slavery and human trafficking;
- Prevent
- Safeguarding awareness – children and vulnerable adults.

The Council's Recruitment Team actively engages in outreach activity, attending local careers/jobs fairs to promote employment opportunities, this includes the very successful Recruitability programme, which offers paid work placement opportunities for individuals who have a disability in order to provide them with valuable experience leading to a permanent job with the Council or another employer.

Governance

Members of the public are able to highlight issues of local concern in several ways. This includes use of the Council's petition scheme, inviting the public to ask a question at a Council or committee meeting or request that an item be considered at a Scrutiny Committee. These processes are used to good effect with issues that affect residents with protected characteristics in Walsall regularly raised by the public and debated by Councillors.

It is of the utmost importance that the council's governance arrangements are open, transparent and inclusive to provide a voice for communities to raise matters for debate. In addition, the public can attend all Council meetings unless there are issues of confidentiality. This accessibility is now increased as all public committee meetings are broadcast live on YouTube. Since digital meetings began they have been viewed by thousands of people and attended by many members of the public who have been supported by interpreters where required.

Holding meetings digitally promotes inclusivity as those, that may not have been able to attend a meeting at the Council House, can now do so digitally. Further to this it is possible to watch back meetings of YouTube with subtitles. It is hoped that the Government will allow hybrid meetings, following the pandemic, which will enable this to continue, which would be a positive and important step for inclusivity. Democratic Services have been monitoring the viewing figures for hybrid meetings and, in one week in February 2021, meetings were viewed by over 1000 people which means that meetings are easier to attend and more inclusive as a result of being screened live.

In addition to the public's access, the Democratic Services Team also assist elected members in tabling motions to Council that deal with issues of inclusion. Examples include:-

- The condemnation of hate crimes;
- Ensuring that taxi vehicles designated wheelchair accessible must be equipped with appropriate belts for securing a wheelchair and seat belts for a wheelchair passenger.
- Motions being passed by Council in relation to Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism in September and November 2021, and then considering how these definitions should be considered throughout the organisation.

We also promote inclusion in managing Council decision making in an open and transparent manner. This includes ensuring all relevant information is contained in reports to enable informed decisions to be made regarding fair delivery services and allocation of resources. In dealing with court cases we ensure that all parties can fully participate in proceedings by liaising with courts and parties to proceedings to ensure that where required interpreters are used in proceedings. Guidance and training is provided in relation to the production of council

reports to ensure that they deal with the council's public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, coupled with the requirement for Equality Impact Assessments to be undertaken as necessary. The guidance also reminds officers of the need to consult appropriately with service users where changes to services are proposed in reports.

Information Governance – Transformation & Change and ICT

Information Governance:

- Our policies, procedures and guidance are transparently published to ensure the wider community and general public are always engaged and fully aware of their individual information is collected, processed, retained and or shared or deleted.
- This ensures that all residents, clients, and members of staff are fully aware of their rights and freedoms and how the council will comply with those obligations as a data controller.

Corporate Landlord

CL works with community associations and voluntary organisations to find solutions to enable them to continue to use premises and facilities for the benefit of the wider community, this could be by continued maintenance or installation of specific improvements such as ramps, lighting, improved toilet facilities, design and support as and when alterations are required

Social value is integral to all of our contracts and we aim to support local and small and medium sized enterprises to flourish.

The Walsall Impact Programme

Part of Black Country Impact, the Walsall Impact programme supports young people aged 16 -29, and helps to address the barriers faced by young people who are not currently in employment, education, or training (NEET). Specifically targeted include looked after children, and children from travelling communities.

By engaging with our partners and stakeholders we are able to deliver specific support to support all young people who have barriers, some of which are often complex. The specialist support is managed by the individual adviser who has access to a commissioner for the Impact programme should their intervention not be readily available. Often local communities can add real value to an individual's journey and we engage with them through various communication channels.

Impact resources, at just over £10million over its lifetime (2016 – 2023), comes from a mix of European Social Fund and Youth Employment Initiative funding. This creates the opportunity for up to 5800 young people to receive the advice, mentoring and training to overcome barriers preventing them from moving into positive outcomes including; accredited training, further education, apprenticeships and employment. The scope of support also includes a range of contracted specialist services for ex-offenders, those with health issues including disabilities and mental health.

The Impact project proactively supports individuals who face social and financial exclusion, by working with young people to address a range of issues that prevent an active and positive engagement in society. Individuals are supported to overcome key barriers including health, housing, confidence and skills deficits through personalised and targeted support. The project also works with employers to address workplace barriers that could prevent an individual

joining the workforce, including disability awareness advice and guidance and ongoing in work support following placement.

So far 4522 young people have joined the Impact programme, with so far; 2673 completing their planned interventions (employability support, motivation and confidence building etc.). Resulting in so far 1493 achieving outcomes including; Apprenticeships (90), movement into Training or Further Education (729), a Traineeship (121) and Gaining Employment (553). Impact has now secured additional funding, extending its services through to July 2023, and will be looking to secure an extension through the Governments UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF), which is being launched in 2022.

External Funding Team

The External Funding Teams assists the Council to attract resources in order to enhance the quality of its services it provides for and with the local community. This approach plays a key role in enabling the Council to work even closer with partners to deliver key actions around; children and young people, health, social care and well-being, lifelong learning, economic wellbeing, regeneration and community safety.

The **External Funding Team**, acts as a central point of contact for directorates looking for external funding that may be available. Working together with colleagues across the council this has resulted in many successful applications, leveraging in significant amounts of external funding, with £12million secured during 2020/21. So far during this 2021/22 financial year bids totalling over £8million have been submitted, with just over £3.1m approved so far.

The team also leads on strategic partnerships with a number of funders including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, National Lottery Community Fund and Arts Council England. This has led to the development and drafting of the Walsall Heritage Strategy, now approved by Cabinet, providing a firm foundation for the submission of bids, which we hope will bring many of Walsall's derelict heritage buildings back into economic use.

Funding secured to Update Local Data and Plans, e.g. the Local List, now underway through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities-funded Black Country Local Heritage List Project due for completion by Summer 2022.

This leads on to a number of Catalyst Projects, including:

- Reimagining of Walsall's Canals with the External Funding Team working with the Canal & River Trust secured £1.7 million from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.
- National Archives support grant, the 'Walsall in Picture's' Archives Digitisation Programme, with a £250k next stage bid now being submitted to Heritage Lottery.
- Working alongside Walsall Housing Group and One Walsall to develop a local 'Heritage Champion Programme'
- Working with Manor Hospital to support a bid focussed on the development of a Sister Dora heritage trail and exhibition within the planned new build site.

The team is also developing alternative ways of supporting community groups to access and distribute funding; the now established Crowdfund Walsall, saw its first round successfully fundraise for 6 local projects, varying from festivals to youth buses, beekeeping to allotment

refurbs. Collectively, these projects fundraised a total of £28,760 from 177 backers including local businesses.

Crowdfund Walsall Round 2 is under development with 8 projects seeking a further £58,669 of contributions to deliver community based projects, including; the creation of Community Gardens and Improvements to Allotments, Mental Health & Wellbeing initiatives, Active Clubs for primary school children, equipment for Youth Busses and many more.

You can find out more through [Discover Projects in the Crowdfund Walsall \(spacehive.com\)](https://spacehive.com)

Programme Development & Accountable Body Services.

Walsall Council has developed specialist skills and a successful track record in the administration and development of major projects and programmes. We currently act as the LEP's Single Accountable Body, and so far have successfully contracted almost £300million across the Black Country. For Walsall, this includes investments benefitting housing, employment and transport totalling over £100million for projects including; Goscote Lane, Phoenix 10 and Junction 10 of the M6, through the Growth Deal and Land and Property Investment Funds.

With government now contracting directly with Local Authorities as part of their Levelling Up programme, our Accountable Body services are well placed to receive and administer these funds. One recent example is the £42.6million the council successfully secured as part of the governments new Towns Fund programme, with £21.3 million approved for both Bloxwich & Walsall.

Projects to take up this funding and support the sustainability of both towns and their communities were approved by government as part of the Town Deal Investment Planning stage. These projects are now being designed and developed with the key stakeholders and community groups involved, as their individual Businesses Cases are now being formed and drafted.

Walsall Town Deal Projects include;

- Construction Skills Academy
- Advanced Electric Vehicle Technology Centre
- Town Centre Performing Arts Venue
- The Active Travel and Connectivity Programme
- Town Centre Digital Skills Hub
- Town Centre Creative Industries Enterprise Centre
- Town Centre Active Public Spaces Programme
- Community Capital Grants Programme

Bloxwich Town Deal Projects Include;

- The Active Travel and Connectivity Programme
- The Promotion of Construction Skills Through Regeneration
- Community Capital Grants Programme
- Bloxwich Incubation Space and Digital Access Centre
- The Green Bloxwich Improvement Programme

Assurance Team (Statutory, Corporate and Local Government Ombudsman Complaints, Information Rights (including Subject Access Requests), Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests).

Through the analysis of data, the service can identify potential trends and issues and provide services with this information to assist them in their engagement and empowerment of local communities. The service will seek to utilise mediation where necessary to resolve issues for customers and will signpost customers to appropriate support organisations.

Learning from statutory social care complaints and Local Government Ombudsman Complaints is routinely captured and shared with services. This will then inform service improvements, for example the accessibility of information including web accessibility and easy read documents.

Finance

Finance engages with the public when undertaking consultation work on proposed budget savings. This enables the public to give their views on proposed/potential changes that may affect specific category groups, e.g., aged and disabled persons, to contribute their views generally on the budget and specifically on any proposals which acutely affect them. The results are analysed and published on the Council's website.

Financial administration also engages with the public in their day-to-day activities and seeks to do so in a way most appropriate to individual needs

3. We will strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels

Human Resources

The annual Employment Monitoring Report (EMR) provides a statistical overview of the Council's workforce and provides in-depth analysis based on a number of protected characteristics. The report provides data which monitors pay grades, recruitment, employee relations matters, broken down by equality monitoring measures, identifying trends and demographic comparisons to inform future decision making and support the Council to promote and maintain a diverse workforce.

In addition to the annual EMR, HR also produce a quarterly Management Dashboard that provides further in-depth analysis of workforce and equalities data and subsequently works with directorates to interpret, analyse and devise action plans as necessary in support of both corporate and individual directorates' equality objectives.

Alongside the priorities contained in the workforce strategy (see objective 1) which also relate to this objective, HR promotes, supports and contributes to this objective through a number of other employment policies, practices, principles and learning and development opportunities including;

- A requirement that all recruitment and selection (R&S) activity is conducted by at least one person who has received the Council's R&S training which includes a dedicated equalities module;

- A R&S policy which advises that the diversity representation of any R&S panel should be given due consideration;
- A requirement that all R&S activity should be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Equality and Diversity Protocol;
- A R&S policy which allows for positive action decisions to be taken to support diversity in the workforce;
- Job evaluation checks must be performed to confirm fair, equal and consistent grading of all posts prior to recruitment;
- A requirement that all job adverts must contain an equality and diversity statement and/or appropriate logo;
- Being a Disability Confident employer and so guaranteeing all applicants who self-declare a disability an interview if they can demonstrate they meet the minimum shortlisting criteria;
- Positive action in the form of the successful Recruitability Programme for individuals who have a disability;
- Safer recruitment practices are promoted through the R&S process helping to safeguarding the young and vulnerable in our communities;
- Promotion of work placements/pre-employment opportunities for inexperienced workers/students/citizens;
- Ongoing promotion of the award winning Apprenticeship Programme, Endless Possibilities and national/local graduate schemes;
- Deployment of an emergent Talent Management System which will help us identify our rising stars and those needing further support;
- Ensuring equality is a key feature in the suite of HR policies recently developed and the implementation of all of them remind managers of the requirements to offer reasonable adjustments as appropriate.

The Pay Policy Statement is an annual statement that sets out the Council's policy in relation to pay levels and conditions of service for all employees. In doing so it formalises our equal and consistent approach to a number of pay related decisions ensuring fairness and equality for all recipients, ensuring that matters of pay and conditions are not affected by discrimination of any form. The Council's Pay Policy also reaffirms the Council's commitment to being a real living wage employer each year.

The Council also produces an annual Gender Pay Gap Report which shows the difference between the average earnings of men and women at the council expressed as a percentage. The currently published gender pay gap (based on data as at 31st March 2021) shows a vastly reduced gender pay gap of 0.0% compared with 5.7% the previous year and 9.8% the year before that.

As an organisation we have made a commitment to having a workforce representative of the community we serve. A key piece of work to underpin this commitment is development of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan.

<https://walsall.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/EqualitiesWorkProgrammeOfficeGroup/EVZGUyCQmO5Jli6RLZnwcNsBXDDPQfMAEIBLavv2U7nC3w?e=N5MA9z>

The Council currently operates a self-service portal 'One Source' which provides employees with the opportunity to update their personal and sensitive data in order to support the Council's ability to capture, monitor and report on employment and equalities data.

The Learning and Development Team support manager and employee development around issues of Equality and Diversity by offering a wide range of classroom and self-paced learning opportunities and access to other resources.

Career Development Workshops have been developed and offered primarily to those from under-represented groups. So far 4 individuals have secured promotions and have attributed these to the knowledge and support received via the workshops.

Sponsorship is being offered on the regional Breaking Through Programme for those from under-represented groups wanting to elevate their careers.

We are sponsoring a number of senior leaders on the regional Allyship Programme – the aim being for these individuals to mentor/support those on the Breaking Through Programme.

We nominated one of our apprentices in the Municipal Journal awards (Rising Star category). The individual was shortlisted and received a highly commended award. This will have not only have built her confidence but raised her profile nationally. The same individual won the BAME Apprentice of the Year Award.

Governance

Legal and Democratic Services adheres to all corporate activity and policies as applicable to equality and diversity. All employees have training in accordance with identified need as part of the Annual Performance Conversation process. In addition, all qualified legal staff are required to undertake annual CPD accredited training. All employees are treated fairly and equally in considering learning and development opportunity. Employees with equal priority or equal need for learning and development will be given the same or equivalent learning opportunities.

The following Equality & Diversity e-learning is available via One Source:

- Equality and Diversity Legislation
- Introduction to Equality and Diversity

Equality and diversity is embedded within our staff training programmes. Our recruitment policy ensures that candidates will be treated fairly and equally, and will be scored against specifications of the job role. Lead interviewers must be trained in Recruitment and Selection, ensuring an approach in accordance with legislation. Equality and Diversity is a standing agenda item on monthly team meetings.

Information Governance – Transformation & Change and ICT

Information Governance:

- Our recruitment processes follow the HR and employment law requirements by ensuring that our team strives to employ a diverse workforce.
- We are therefore a diverse, flexible, and culturally diverse team that works well together to understand our data processing requirements for such a diverse community.

ICT and Proud:

- Throughout ICT recruitment activities we ensure an inclusive process is followed to allow all suitably skilled candidates to apply for our posts. The process of recruitment

has been further enhanced by the Agile Working policy, which offers a more inclusive and flexible option for some potential members of staff.

- We actively encourage diversity and opportunities to develop through offering secondments, apprenticeships etc. designed to offer opportunities to a wider range of people
- We actively encourage all team members to develop new skills in different areas of ICT.

Corporate Landlord

Our frontline service is of a diverse nature including ethnic minority groups and employees requiring reasonable adjustment for a variety of reasons, however the operational team needs to be more diverse in ethnicity and has been noted and identified as an ongoing requirement.

The operational team is female dominated / aging workforce due to the nature of much of the work, however the management team are striving to recruit male / younger workers into the team. The aim for 2022 is to develop a training succession plan and also recruit apprentices to deliver a more diverse and multigenerational workforce.

Assurance Team (Statutory, Corporate and Local Government Ombudsman Complaints, Information Rights (including Subject Access Requests), Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests).

Assurance Officers have regular contact with members of the public, processing complaints and requests for information governed by Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Environmental Impact Regulation legislation. The team are accustomed to handling sensitive information during the course of their work and ensuring legislation guiding the rights of individuals are adhered to. The Council publishes information regarding Individual Rights.

The Assurance team adheres to Council policies in its recruitment of staff. The service has participated in Council work experience and placement initiatives such as the Council's Recruitability scheme through which we have nurtured and supported staff with a disability to gain skills, which have led to permanent positions within the team.

An awareness of and an ability to ensure that we follow the principles of the Equality Act 2010 when performing our duties are written into our job specifications and are embedded within the recruitment and selection process.

Finance

Finance adheres to all corporate activity and policies. Training towards a professional qualification is available to staff, subject to pre-determined criteria for CCAB, AAT and other suitable finance related qualifications, for example CII (Insurance). This training ensures that all employees will be treated fairly and equally in considering learning and development provision.

Employees with equal priority or equal need for learning and development will be given the same or equivalent learning opportunities. Resources will not be allocated on a "first come, first served" basis, but will be prioritised against the relative requirements of a range of staff and their work area.

Everyone within Finance who possesses a professional qualification must maintain continuous membership of their financial body and must actively participate in continuous professional development.

Finance staff have the opportunity to develop their core skills by attending internal finance “bite size” sessions on key financial topics and new developments. Finance has a ‘buddy system’ for trainees. Each student will be allocated a “buddy” by the Training Manager when their studies commence. Each student will be entitled to a buddy irrespective of age, race, religion, ethnicity, disability; gender etc and the policy will be applied to ensure all areas of equality are met. This person will either be a student themselves or a newly qualified member of staff.

Finance also has a mentoring scheme, provided for each student with the mentor being a qualified accountant within the organisation. Training is provided by HR for the mentors. However, it is envisaged that the role of the mentor will be that of critical friend or supportive colleague rather than the mentor having to have any specific skills or knowledge in the area of counselling or coaching skills.

Equality and diversity is embedded within our staff training programmes. Our recruitment policy ensures that candidates will be treated fairly and equally and will be scored against specifications of the job role. Lead interviewers must be trained in Recruitment and Selection, ensuring an approach in accordance with legislation. Equality and Diversity is a standing agenda item on team meetings.

4. We will treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative

Human Resources

HR procured the Council’s managed service provision, successfully appointing Starting Point Recruitment (SPR) as the Council’s temporary agency worker provider (ongoing from April 2019). As part of this contract we have committed to work collaboratively with SPR to promote a number of social values that specifically support equalities and diversity, many of which are in support of those in local communities who are disadvantaged or excluded, (see objective 5 for specific collaborative projects).

HR ensures that all procurement and commissioning exercises are conducted in line with best practice and relevant legislation, ensuring opportunities to work with us and offered in a fair and transparent manner. A further 2020/21 example being our Apprenticeship Training Provider Framework.

HR hold regular contract monitoring meetings with all providers to ensure that services are the best they can be and in order to continually improve the quality of service delivery.

HR aims for all employment interactions to meet this objective by developing best practice employment policies and providing thorough, fair and consistent advice including comprehensive training to its managers. This year to date the following employment policies have been reviewed or have commenced a review process:

- Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 (annual);
- Recruitment and selection policy;
- Grievance and collective grievance policy;
- Dignity at work policy;
- Code of Conduct for employees;
- Confidential reporting (whistleblowing) policy;
- Menopause policy
- Injury allowance policy;
- Reimbursement of expenses policy;
- Domestic abuse workplace guidance;
- Unattached Teachers Pay Policy 2021/22 (annual).

There are also a number of further policies and/or guidance that have an Equality and Diversity impact. These include:

- Substance misuse guidance;
- Gender reassignment guidance;
- Flexi-time scheme;
- Right to request flexible working policy;
- Job Evaluation and grading policy;
- Appeals policy for NJC/Hay Job Evaluation;
- Disciplinary policy;
- Appeals policy;
- Retention payments policy;
- Market supplements policy;
- Fixed term and temporary contracts policy;
- Social media policy;
- Alcohol and drugs testing policy;
- Performance and ill health capability;
- Sickness absence policy;
- Annual leave purchase scheme;
- Agile working policy;
- Organisational change management policy;
- Performance and ill health capability policy;
- Redeployment Policy;
- Redundancy Policy;
- Leave and Time Off Policy;
- Family Friendly Policy.

As an organisation we continue to give the mental health of our workforce the same priority as physical health, making it safe for individuals experiencing a mental health episode to talk to their line manager or an independent Mental Health First Aider about what they are experiencing and how they might be helped/signposted to relevant agencies. This includes delivery of training to the workforce, elected members, schools, community organisations and wider workforce in the Borough and regionally.

Governance

Equality and diversity is embedded within our staff training programmes, and management team meetings which includes a standing item on equality and diversity. Whilst a support service, we have direct contact with external clients and partner organisations including the police and we engage with those clients in the manner that best supports specific needs. All of the services make reasonable adjustments for clients with protected characteristics from arranging interpreters to assist people in court proceedings to assisting people in attending Council meetings. As a service, we deal directly with suppliers, businesses, members of the public, service users, carers and other organisations. As a result, we communicate and liaise with them via a variety of means, to seek to address demand in a way that best suits the individuals' requirements.

Information Governance – Transformation & Change and ICT

Information Governance:

- Our processes ensure that we implement appropriate assessments and engage with third parties, individuals, and agencies in both a fair and transparent manner so that any data protection or confidentiality requirements, obligations or incidents can be dealt with in a timely and ethical manner for all concerned.
- We have embedded data protection transparency in a fair and lawful manner into all aspects of any data change, such as through procurement, technical design authority, business design authority and PROUD, by ensuring appropriate levels of guidance, awareness, agreements, contracts, and training are available to everyone at the time they require it.
- Our publication of council and service wide privacy notices, guidance on access to data and the rights of individuals ensures that our processes are fully transparent, ethically sound and completed in a fair, justified and lawful manner.

Corporate Landlord

As a department, we are proud of our ability to be open, inclusive and work collaboratively; none more so than the past 18 months of COVID 19 measures and our adopted working practices to date. The CL teams have proven to be flexible, adaptable, inclusive and fair.

By purchasing works and services from contractors who can demonstrate a commitment to making sure that their employees and their suppliers are not discriminated against because of any protected characteristic, we can be confident that our own values are adopted.

Consolidated further by engaging in transparent, open and fair procurement. All the contractors appointed are required to meet a minimum standard of Social values in line with Walsall Council procurement requirements and our suppliers are also encouraged to use local supply chains for materials when delivering works within the Walsall borough.

Black Country Impact project partners and overall funding allocation.

The Black Country Impact is made up of five partners, Dudley Council, Sandwell Council, Walsall Council, Wolverhampton Council and Black Country Talent Match (Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council project funded by the Big Lottery Fund). All partners work collaboratively to meet the programmes financial and performance profiles and meet regularly at both operational and strategic level.

The specific breakdown of funding for the Black Country Impact project is made up of £17 million Youth Employment Initiative funding, £17 million European Social Fund and £17 million of match funding from the five Black Country Partners (which also includes £8 million of match funds from the Big Lottery Fund). A recent application to extend the Impact programme was approved in 2021, which extends its life through to July 2023, increasing the programmes resources from £51million to over £65million.

The Programme Management Team at Walsall have recently put together a Social Return on Investment report for the Impact programme. The report showcases the added value to both young people in the borough and some of our front line services.

Assurance Team (Statutory, Corporate and Local Government Ombudsman Complaints, Information Rights (including Subject Access Requests), Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests).

Assurance Officers have regular contact with members of the public, processing complaints and requests for information governed by Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Environmental Impact Regulation legislation. The team are accustomed to handling sensitive information during the course of their work and ensuring legislation guiding the rights of individuals are adhered to. The Council publishes information regarding Individual Rights.

When receiving requests and complaints the service ensures that we take into consideration any potential barriers to ensure equality of opportunity in our service delivery. We will adapt how we share the information / response to meet the needs of individual requesters as required.

Complaints may highlight particular concerns of residents and service users relating to aspects of the equality's framework – this might include concerns from residents concerning the service they have received, or the customer experience that they have had in dealing with our services. The service will act as advocate on behalf of complainants as required to ensure customers receive fair treatment

Finance

Equality and diversity is embedded within our staff training programmes. Equality and Diversity is a standing agenda item on team meetings. The accountancy and associated teams are a support service, and therefore customers are generally internal. We attend various portfolio holder meetings / meet with external partners and address queries raised by internal and external parties.

We are available by a number of means (i.e., phone, e-mail, in person) and would respond in the required method of communication to address their needs. Financial administration and its services areas deal directly with suppliers, businesses, members of the public, service users, carers, legal representatives and other organisations, and communicating and liaising with these via a variety of means, to seek to address demand in a way that best suits individual requirements.

5. We will find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded

Human Resources

HR has procured the Council's managed service provision, successfully appointing Starting Point Recruitment (SPR) as the Council's temporary agency worker provider (ongoing from April 2019). As part of this contract we have committed to work with SPR and vice versa on promoting social value across the borough and ensuring that these ongoing commitments are relevant, fit for purpose and deliver maximum value to our local residents and communities. Social values activity which has taken place over recent months includes:

- Another record-breaking year of charitable giving. During the financial year of 2020-21, SPR gifted a total of £606,806 to local employability support projects - an increase of 4.4% on the previous year;
- SPR's Business Development Team have continued to engage with One Walsall and Walsall Works activities, sharing insights and opportunities and offering continued support to the local community. This has included the delivery of two Computer Club sessions to local VCOS on digital marketing and website management;
- SPR and STW played an integral part in the Walsall Workplace Diversity Survey and Conference in collaboration with Walsall For All, DWP and Wolverhampton University;
- Attending and recording the numbers of engagements with local residents via the Walsall Works Expo, local Walsall Works job clubs, and other recruitment events;
- Implemented an Employer-Led Volunteering Policy, working with One Walsall to identify opportunities to support volunteering projects in the local area;
- Delivery of over 5,000 hours of crucial contract support to local children and families;
- Delivery of a number of one-to-one employability support sessions for care leavers, which has resulted in four young people entering employment and/or training;
- Continuing to deliver quarterly 'Motivate Your Mind' workshops to female Walsall residents with two moving into employment post-training, including one attendee who has joined SPR's internal team;
- Hosting a customised Health and Wellbeing training workshop every three months for Walsall residents with customised training programmes offered;
- Donation of office furniture to local charities and organisations, including 18 desks to the British Heart Foundation;
- Supported Walsall Council's activities for the Women's Tour International Bike Race, hosting a 'Walsall Wishing Wall' for local residents during the race where locals could share their hopes and dreams for Walsall's future;
- Co-ordinated a collection for an expectant young mother in need to set up her new home;
- The recruitment of at least one apprentice each year, either via the SPR Contract Team, Head Office or supply chain;
- Developing a Community Directory, to identify where there are social programmes for children, young people and families to attend in the Walsall area;
- Developing a comprehensive directory (to be updated annually) to support residents staying in their home and manage their cost of living with the aim of helping to reduce homelessness;
- Supporting the Council's Employment and Skills Team by collecting and collating data on reasons for unemployment and develop partnership working to enhance relationships, following successful registration.

In addition our in-house Recruitment Team have launched a twitter campaign to share tips and techniques with individuals wishing to apply for a job with the council and are finalising a longer infomercial.

We welcomed applications for our Proud Manager programme from under represented ethnic groups.

Our Endless Possibilities Apprenticeship Programme continues to support our Looked After Young People/care leavers to access employment opportunities in the form of work tasters, pre-apprenticeships, support with making applications etc In addition we continue to engage in events aimed at school leavers and promote STEM occupations to girls with support from our apprentices in non-stereotypical roles.

Secured CMT commitment to membership of the Movement to Work initiative, the aim being to get young people who are NEET into work.

Governance

Agendas, reports and minutes are accessible through the Committee Management Information System (CMIS), which is available to both internal and external customers through the intranet/Internet. This system is AAA rated.

The service also manages an electronic petitions system, which is available to everyone and is again accessible through the Council's internet site. This allows all our residents to scrutinise our decision-making process ensuring openness and transparency.

Provision is made to support everyone taking part in local democracy. For example, hearing loops are available to ensure accessibility of Council meetings, whilst a new audio-visual Council systems has been procured in 2021, accessibility has been fully considered as part of the procurement process.

The Council has reviewed the reporting guidelines for producing cabinet reports and as part of the review has made sure that greater emphasis is placed on how any decision taken by the cabinet will reduce inequalities across the Borough. Two changes relate to the reporting of Health and Wellbeing implications and Reducing Inequalities in reports.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

To provide clearer advice, based on guidance from the Department of Health, on how to test against the Marmot Objectives, which underpin the Council's approach to reducing health inequalities.

Reducing Inequalities

To further emphasise the legal requirements in the Equality Act 2010 to carry out an EqlA which must be appended to the Cabinet report. EqlAs must be undertaken when the need for a new policy, practice or service development change is identified, or when an existing one is reviewed. In addition, for any proposal where there is an organisational change or there are budgetary implications that may impact on people.

Governance and legal officers will provide support to all service areas to ensure that these changes are embedded in reports. In addition, the guidelines will be available in a number of formats for officers.

In addition the Governance Service Plan 2021-2024 is explicit in its support of the council's corporate vision and purpose. Stating at the outset that the service will provide: "High quality customer focussed services, ensuring high standards of corporate governance in delivering the Council's vision and purpose.", or the "best possible service at the best value possible". Council Vision - "Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised." Council Purpose – "To create an environment that provides opportunities for all individuals and communities to fulfil their potential."

There is an individual section on Equalities which States - we need to ensure that there is no discrimination or harassment in the delivery of our services and in the application Council policies and procedures, and in the workplace. We will ensure that the council promotes equality in all of its actions particularly when making changes to existing services and commissioning new services. We will provide pro-active advice in relation to the statutory requirement under the Equalities Act 2010 in relation to consultation bearing in mind the public sector equality duty under s149 of the said Act.

Information Governance – Transformation & Change and ICT

Information Governance:

- Our processes ensure that we implement appropriate assessments and engage with third parties, individuals, and agencies in a fair, lawful and transparent manner so that any data protection or confidentiality requirements, obligations or incidents can be dealt with in a timely and ethical manner for all concerned.

ICT and Proud:

- Through the Agile Working Policy ICT has been able to support team members with e.g. Carer or Child care commitments to have a greater degree of flexibility over the hours they work to meet their work and home life commitments. We support services areas within the Council to provide the best service they can to those who are disadvantaged or excluded, for example supporting Childrens Services to roll out 1200+ devices provided by the DfE for vulnerable children during Covid-19.
- Proud One Source Programme – an EqIA was completed for the programme that looked at ways in which some of our Hard to Reach employee groups could be supported to use digital options to access payslips etc. The rollout for payments included extensive support for our Hard to Reach staff including numerous workshops ran by the Adoption and Change team to assist e.g. our IFM and Clean & Green teams to be supported to learn how to access their payslips etc. Additionally, the Change & Adoption team supported employees with e.g. sight impairments to access supporting software such as Jaws which provides text to speech output or a Braille display.

We adhere to external standards when offering digital services, ie Government Digital Services (GDS).

Corporate Landlord

CL procurement of maintenance or major contracts requires an element of social value to contribute to good causes, which can take the form of employing apprentices, local employment or involvement in education at schools and can be financial or labour commitment to local projects community involvement and personnel work placement.

Although these benefits may not always link to a specific individual this benefits the wider community or residents within the Walsall borough.

Accessibility is maintained within all corporate buildings for everyone, both staff and public regardless of disability so that there is no disadvantage and inclusivity is maintained. We also have an employee who has recently undergone full gender realignment and has been fully supported by the team, who have been fundamental in assisting the employee back to work.

CL supports work experience which provides people of all ages with an insight in to an exciting and complex works of design and construction, and facilities management. CL supports recommendations from Occupational Health and Access to Work and facilitates and supports reasonable adjustments in the workplace for staff and managers. Several of our own staff need reasonable adjustments both physically and mentally and also in a mentor / support capacity. We do not exclude, we redeploy across the wider sectors of our team to suit the individual as necessary as far as is practicably possible. We support many of our employees facing difficult times with advice, support and food parcels and also provide crisis parcels to disadvantaged families via schools.

Black Country Impact Team

Walsall's delivery teams have supported 4522 participants to date with some of the following disadvantaged groups:

- Teenage parents;
- Ex-offenders;
- Homelessness;
- Ethnicity;
- Educational attainment i.e. those lower than a level 2

Of which:

- Inactive: 1718
- Short-term unemployed: 1716
- Long term unemployed: 1088
- Participant that have enrolled with no basic skills (DWP define basic skills as: both entry level literacy and numeracy: 871
- Number of single parents engaged with: 402
- Ethnic minorities supported: 1335
- Disable participants supported: 1374
- Number of Ex-Off: 186
- Looked after Children: 156

Assurance Team (Statutory, Corporate and Local Government Ombudsman Complaints, Information Rights (including Subject Access Requests), Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests).

The Assurance team carries out for the Council a multi-skilled assurance function. Ensuring that we have the capacity to meet statutory response timelines, the service is streamlined to up-skill staff to ensure that those customers, internally and externally, who need use of our services can access our expertise when needed and at first point of contact across the wide range of our functions.

We take account of any potential barriers to receiving our service and are flexible when needed to ensure that customers with special needs are catered for. For example, the use specialist advocacy services and interpreters when needed. The service will often act as advocate on behalf of complainants as required to ensure customers receive fair treatment.

Finance

Finance and its associated teams are a support service, and therefore customers are generally internal, however some teams within Finance (for example Insurance) deal with a mix of internal customers (schools, services areas) and external customers (claimants, residents, legal representatives, etc).

We attend various portfolio holder meetings / meet with external partners and address queries raised by internal and external parties. We are available by a number of means (i.e., phone, e-mail, in person) and would respond in the required method of communication to address their needs. Financial administration deals directly with suppliers, businesses, members of the public, service users, carers, legal representatives and other organisations and communicates and liaises with these via a variety of means, to seek to address demand in a way that best suits individual requirements.

As stated above, Finance engages with the public when undertaking consultation work on proposed budget savings. This enables the public to give their views on proposed/potential changes that may affect specific category groups, e.g., aged and disabled persons, to contribute their views generally on the budget and specifically on any proposals which acutely affect them. The results are analysed and published on the Council's website and mitigating actions taken as appropriate.

Financial administration also engages with the public in their day-to-day activities and seeks to do so in a way most appropriate to individual needs.