

## Walsall for All to deliver exciting projects for young people



Walsall for All working with young people on the NCS programme.

In our second priority “**Young People Learning and Growing Together**”, we aim to give children and young people opportunities to meet and form friendships with people from different backgrounds. We also aim that within our communities, children are encouraged to aspire and take up opportunities to develop self-confidence and skills. We have a number of projects that are focused on young people, about which you can find out more below.

**Black Country Innovate** are working with **Saltmine Theatre Company** to deliver a play called “**In Their Shoes**” to schools across Walsall on diversity, respect and friendship. The play will be followed by a workshop for students to discuss and explore the topics in detail. Schools are encouraged to sign up if they are interested and engage students around these topics.

**The Prince's Trust** are engaging with young people in Walsall through their “**Live, Learn and Earn**” sessions. The series of sessions aim to help young people prepare them for life, boost confidence and self-esteem, provide opportunities for education, employment, training and signposting to services. Young people can be referred to the sessions which will take place throughout the year.

**Urban Hax** are planning a number of creative activities for local communities to come together, including showcases, community forums, a design challenge and creative journalism. As part of their **Walsall Creative**

**Communities Project**, they will be engaging with young people to become “**Junior Journalists**”. Everyone is welcome to take part in the programme and recommend young people to become “Junior Journalists”.

**Youth Connect** are delivering outreach and centre-based youth work in local areas in south Walsall. They will be engaging with a variety of young people, with the aim to reduce the risk of exclusion. Their Together Stronger project is keen to explore links with other youth or sports initiatives.

**Walsall FC Community Programme** are running the “**One Goal**” programme, which will involve cohesion workshops to help groups come together through football and community festivals to encourage social mixing and attending a team fixture afterwards. The project are looking for schools, community associations and groups to sign up to the programme.

*Article continued on next page*

## Walsall for All to deliver exciting projects for young people cont.

School linking event in Darlaston.



**The School Linking Programme** is a successful, national initiative, developed by The Linking Network, based in Bradford. School Linking is about enabling children from different backgrounds to meet together, learn about each other and create a sense of togetherness. Identity and belonging are the main focuses.

For the upcoming academic year, 11 new schools have signed up for this programme, building on the 10 schools that signed up last year.

**The Youth Voices and Youth Ambassadors Programme** is about recognising young people's potential as change makers. The project will train young people to drive and deliver projects in order to create short and long-term impact as well as drive four youth voice events across the borough. The events could be focused on a variety of issues, such as knife crime, the environment and a variety of issues related to integration.

We are delighted to be working with the National Youth Agency (NYA), who will be delivering this project. Through this project, we hope to see more young people meeting and understanding each other and breaking down barriers within their communities.

### Walsall Arts for All

We are working with **Arts Connect** to deliver a high-quality **arts and cultural programme**, with a focus on identity, culture and diversity through a range of arts experiences for young people

and their parents/carers, teachers and schools. A Development Manager has been appointed to drive the project locally.

Currently, 14 schools have signed up for the programme. There will be a significant investment of arts and cultural activities and engagement in innovative projects, designed to bring young people from different backgrounds together.

### UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools

We are working with UNICEF and Walsall schools to become approved 'UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools'. This project will help create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children's rights are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they are able to thrive. This will also support young people to increase their understanding of difference and diversity. This will be linked in with complementary projects, including School Linking and Walsall Arts for All. Seven secondary schools have been welcomed onto the programme and will begin the journey in October to become a Bronze accredited UNICEF Rights Respecting School.

**For further information** about our youth projects, please call **01922 655 797** or email one of our Project Managers:

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Caldmore Green mosaic art project.



## Walsall for All partners with National Citizen Service (NCS)

During the summer, Walsall for All worked with three waves of young people from National Citizen Service (NCS). Over four weeks, we worked with 38 young people between the ages of 15 to 17 years old.

They attended a facilitated session on integration and cohesion, including an exercise splitting young people based on their eye colour which was a powerful way for young people to understand the harmful impacts of segregation. One young person said, ***“When I was physically moved, with no reason or explanation I felt angry. I wanted to rebel. When we were then moved out of the classroom I began to have an attitude of I do not care. We had our own sweets; we did not need what the others had!”***

This helped the groups understand how segregation works and from that starting point, we could look at how integration can have an impact on communities.

The second part of the work was to support young people to create a social action project. With time to discuss beforehand they came up with a plan, prepared a bid of up to £50 to help support the social action activity and then pitched their idea to a panel of people who would decide whether they should receive the money.”

Young people on NCS taking part in a flash mob in Walsall Town Centre.



NCS social action project at Walsall Arboretum.

The third aspect of the programme was promoting Walsall for All. The teams were creative in how they did this, from Flash Mobs in Walsall Town Centre, to litter picks and handing out leaflets. This helped the team understand a little of what Walsall for All is about and as a member of the team said, ***“Stepping out of my comfort zone and approaching people I did not know was my biggest challenge but I realised how friendly most people were”.***

Finally, the teams were able to deliver a social action project. This ranged from delivering games with young people at youth champions' events, litter picking, setting up equipment at one of the Innovation Grant projects and delivering a sports and family fun day in one of the local parks.

After one of the social action events, a young person commented, ***“I realised that the journey I had been on as part of the NCS wave had created integration as we all had different backgrounds, genders, sexualities, and ethnicities. Although there were times when we disagreed, we put our differences aside, tried to understand someone else's view so that we could deliver a project for other people”.***

Young people have expressed an interest in volunteering with Walsall for All or in their local communities, enabling them to access opportunities to develop confidence and experiences.

For more information, please contact Mike Collyer - [Michael.Collyer@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Collyer@walsall.gov.uk)

# Walsall for All – Young People’s Art Competition

On the 26th of June, the Walsall for All team organised a fantastic arts competition at Forest Arts Centre for young artists from nine different schools in Walsall. The theme was **integration**.

The aim was to celebrate diversity, bring young people together and increase social interaction, as our long-term ambition is that young people in Walsall have diverse friendships, understanding, and acceptance of all.



Saltmine Theatre Company performed an extract of "In Their Shoes".

**Saltmine Theatre Company** opened the show with a 30-minute teaser of their play and workshop called "In Their Shoes" to the schools.

As they believe in the power of story, they presented their work with a commitment to making a difference. Their message was to make us think how we would feel if we were in someone else’s shoes, making us more open and aware of others.

Children had the opportunity to reflect their vision about the meaning of diversity, equality and integration in their artwork.

**Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy** were the winners of the competition. Their film "**My Town**" highlights many of the positive things of Walsall through spoken word.



Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy won the art competition.

**"Proud of Walsall"**, produced by **Bloxwich Academy**, used a range of materials and embroidery incorporating landmarks, people, culture, diversity and much more.

**Caldmore Primary Academy** created a large collage from different small pieces of artwork which reflects their theme, **"Diversity in Walsall - We are Stronger Together"**.

**North Walsall Primary Academy's** entry was called **"Hand in Hand"**. Pupils created posters, and shared their meanings of diversity and how they are unique in their own different ways.

**Palfrey Junior School's** work **"Diversity Makes Us Brighter"** focused on the way of sharing cultural information that allows us to interact and to co-operate effectively. Languages and dialects are examples of shared cultural information, showing that diversity improves the way people think.

**"CommUnity Mix"** was joint produced by **Palfrey Junior School, Busil Jones Primary School and Lodge Farm Primary School**, in partnership with One Walsall and Walsall Creative Factory, funded by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The schools created a collection of mannequins, all individually designed, representing the wide diversity of people and communities within Walsall. From these mannequins, a short animated film was produced.

**Barr Beacon School** produced a large canvas to honour a local soldier who fought in the First World War. The students integrated an original image of the soldier into the piece, surrounded with poppies.

**Salisbury Primary School's** artwork **"Skin"** delivers a strong message that we are not just a skin colour; we are much more than that as we contain all of humanity in our heart and in our mind, and we should be proud of that.

Congratulations to all the schools who took part in the competition!



Winner

## The Entries



Barr Beacon School - World War One Soldier



Bloxwich Academy - "Proud of Walsall"



Caldmore Primary Academy - "Diversity in Walsall - We are Stronger Together"



North Walsall Primary Academy - "Hand in Hand"



Palfrey Junior School - "Diversity Makes Us Brighter"

"CommUnity Mix" by Palfrey Junior School, Busil Jones Primary School and Lodge Farm Primary School



Salisbury Primary School - "Skin"

## Waseelah's Story

Discrimination is a powerful thing. It's not just found in the structures of our politics but within us as individuals, polluting our efforts to be a united society. Racism, for example, elegantly twists itself into ideologies that profess a love of kindness and God, so much so we can't see that religion is not the same as the ethnonationalism that is so often preached. Even the wisest of us are a product of our society – there is nothing wrong with that – but there is something wrong with claiming that one history, culture, society and interpretation of existence has a monopoly over others. People like me, who do not look or sound the same as the community around them, try to fit in and thrive on a religio-ethno-nationalistic conflation that rejects every atom of their being. It's a kind of poison that my teenage self would fill pages with poetry and lyrics, writing out a pain that no one, regardless of age, should ever feel. Almost a decade on, it still hurts to read.

University was where I experienced a misogynistic form of racism, where existing in my community was hopeless. There isn't a woman alive who hasn't experienced the 'know your place' attitude but what I didn't expect was for the Qur'an, one of the most emancipatory texts ever written, to be used against me to curtail the freedoms that the text itself gives to me. There's a historical misogyny, founded in a fear of powerful women and endorsed by political regimes, undermines the idea that we argue so strongly for - that Islam doesn't oppress women. It's true, Islam doesn't oppress women. Misogynists that use a legal code and twist the words of Qur'an into a means of power and control do. The greatest and most celebrated women in Islamic history argued and refuted these laws that inhibit women. They openly and outrageously fought for their rights and freedoms, and they still do. How have we managed to say that Islam gives women 'freedom' and 'rights' whilst simultaneously preaching a strain of law in a religio-political narrative that relies upon the oppression of women? This 'freedom' doesn't allow a woman like me, who is culturally and racially different, educated and opinionated to have any form of empowerment.

Eventually these things break your soul. No matter how much I wanted to be part of a community that loves God as I do, for my own survival, I had to leave. Since then, I've surrounded myself with only those who love me as I am and I have been so truly loved that, when racism and misogyny appear, I am no longer

desensitised to it. I educated myself on the roots of these issues so I can go out into a hostile world with strength enough to fight back with a generosity, knowing I have nothing to lose. I also found that I am not alone in my struggle, that there are those who are discriminated against even though they are of the same race, sect and colour. Hatred is elegant enough that it always manages to find a way to take hold in so many ugly forms that even I, as someone who experiences it so often, am not immune to discriminating against others.

In a time where everyone waves the banner of diversity and inclusivity, racism and misogyny are ever more subtle; wrapped up in the appropriate language as a means of subverting activism and conversation by only allowing diversity and inclusion on specific terms. There is still so much contradiction. Legislation doesn't allow discrimination, yet it remains because it still lives within us all. It's in those occasions, for example, when I see a community fighting against racism whilst using racist language in their meetings. It's entirely counterproductive. If we are to fight the systems that disempower us, then we must break through the elements of this disempowerment within our own homes and spaces. We need to educate ourselves on the depth of mistreatment, calling out racial slurs at our dinner table conversations and telling your best friends not to harass those girls on the street, for how can we fight oppression by acting as the oppressor?



## Ben's Story



I'm currently studying Economics at the Open Study College and have studied Government and Politics at Joseph Leckie Academy, and have just finished a programme on building confidence with the Prince's Trust. I love playing chess and tennis, and often like to go walking.

Having Asperger's Syndrome makes it difficult for me to socialise but also create and maintain friendships and this at times makes me feel lonely. I also have problems with anxiety.

Before I joined The Prince's Trust and Youth of Walsall, I struggled to find my place in anything. Not feeling like I could connect with the world, I floated on. Whilst on the Prince's Trust programme, I met a group of people who made me feel happy, gave me confidence and allowed me to learn about how to deal with different social situations. They let me be who I was. I joined the Youth of Walsall through Prince's Trust, and after discovering projects they were engaged with, I had a personal connection with the core message of getting out to the community and giving young people a voice on major issues. They help me to feel like I matter, which means the world to me.

Next, I plan to gather as much political experience as I can through both representation and direct campaigning, but also in public speaking. I also intend to finish my Economics A-Level at the Open Study College. My advice to those wishing to develop confidence and skills, is to have faith in yourself and to be patient, but also motivated in your passions, beliefs, and your principles.

## Kamran's Story



I am proud to represent Walsall as a Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) and to act as the Chair of the Youth of Walsall (YOW). In addition, I volunteer at the Walsall Cancer Research (CRUK) store. I am also a member of the 'Change Your Mind' team, where Y12 pupils from Queen Mary's Grammar School deliver Mental Health workshops to Walsall primary schools.

I was born in Walsall and I have lived here since then, therefore I feel a sense of responsibility to work towards a better Walsall. I want to spend my time productively and act upon the issues facing Walsall every day. I came to my first YOW Meeting to find out what it was and since then I have become the Chair of the group and was elected as a MYP in early 2019. Both of these roles have given me a way to represent young people in the community and engage within Walsall.

Lack of mental health funding, and knife crime, are two things that affect a lot of young people. Social Media has created a global community, therefore young people are passionate about issues beyond Walsall's borders such as the recent events in Kashmir.

Through weekly YOW meetings, I have met many young people who are prepared to stand up for their town and I have learnt to put myself forward for things. 'Change Your Mind' has developed my presenting skills. I will continue working as part of YOW and pushing our Knife Crime Campaign 'Real Knives, Real Lives'. I aim for the group to thrive in the coming weeks and to keep up my volunteering at the CRUK store.

I would encourage every young person in Walsall to apply to join YOW and come to their first meeting. Walsall's charity shops need young people to step through the doors and volunteer their time. Take ownership of your community.

# One Love Event - The New Art Gallery Walsall

On Saturday 10th August, Walsall Town Centre came alive with smiles and joy for the Walsall 2019 "One Love" event in Gallery Square. The aim was to celebrate the work, contributions and culture of the African-Caribbean community. The event saw some great talent through the young people who attended and participated in dance, spoken word and song.

Learning and growing together was demonstrated through the co-ordinated and joint performances. Brum Dynasty Knights (BDK) got everyone energised with their incredible dance routines. Walsall has some fantastic local talent.

Aston Performing Arts Academy (APAA) performed an amazing selection of songs at the end of the event and encouraged everyone to sing and dance along.

Other performances and speakers included DJ Phil, Richard Clarke (One Love Community Music and Arts CIC), Evan & IWAY Reggae Band, Malachi Edwards, Mighty Jamma Steel Band, Black Country Community Choir, Jeremy Grant and Moses Whyte.

Maureen Lewis, Chief Officer at Walsall Black Sisters Collective said, *"It is important that we support young people to learn and grow together, because it is for their own personal development as well as for social engagement and interaction. Young people are our future and they themselves have hidden skills and talents that can be used to build communities and relationships."*



Brum Dynasty Knights (BDK)



Aston Performing Arts Academy (APAA)

The day overall showed that Walsall, with its diverse communities and young people, can make the town come alive and bring smiles on people's faces, even in difficult times.

The event was organised in partnership with Walsall Black Sisters Collective, Walsall Housing Group, One Walsall, Walsall Council's Community, Equality and Cohesion team and Walsall for All.

Don't forget to follow us on social media and visit our website to find out more about Walsall for All.

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