



WALSALL FOR ALL

Evaluation Report

May 2022

*Wings of Ambition created by students as part of the
Walsall Arts for All programme.*

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About the programme

Walsall for All is a programme of activities intended to create long-term positive changes in and among communities across the borough. Walsall was one of five local authorities supported by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), previously known as MHCLG as part of its [*Integrated Communities Strategy*](#)¹.

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

To achieve this vision, [*the strategy*](#)² sets out a range of projects and activities designed to support each of the following four priority areas:

- 1. Connecting across communities:** a vibrant and diverse place where people with common interests come together and form meaningful friendships.
- 2. Young people learning and growing together:** young people in Walsall have diverse friendships and understanding, and acceptance of all. They have the confidence and aspiration to fulfil their potential and are empowered to take social action and make a positive difference in Walsall.
- 3. Working and contributing together:** everyone has a fair opportunity to contribute to Walsall through meaningful work or volunteering. Everyone should be able to speak English to access these opportunities.
- 4. Living together:** well-integrated communities where everyone has good-quality housing and plays a positive part in making Walsall a place where people want to live. Everyone understands their rights and responsibilities – hate crime is reduced, and people of different backgrounds live together in harmony.

Integrated Communities Strategy¹ - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf

The strategy² - https://22f055b9-76fc-4cec-9c0a-b3a632d37169.filesusr.com/ugd/ffd8a6_0f6ab95a53e4458cb1d320de074841b1.pdf

Guiding principles for robust evaluation

Measuring social integration – Indicators and what we know so far in Walsall

In recent years there has been significant research to agree, broadly speaking, the range of indicators that contribute to a socially integrated society, such as social mixing. The level and depth of these indicators are covered in the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (now Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – DLUHC), Outcomes and Measurement Framework, and the Home Office Indicators of Integration.

Our current understanding about Walsall's communities tells us that:

- **There is demographic disparity between localities:** Walsall is becoming increasingly diverse but remains divided. There is little mixing across religious, ethnic or generational lines, and people tend to remain within the boundaries of their locality. Some wards have more than 60 per cent Black and minority ethnic mixed populations, others less than 4 per cent.
- **Residential and school segregation is persistent:** Walsall is 12th in the country for schools' segregation, which means opportunities for children to mix with others from different backgrounds are crucial. One third of children aged 0-14 are Black and minority ethnic, and more than 11,000 school pupils have English as a second language. Some 68 per cent of secondary schools in Walsall were classed as segregated.
- **There are some tensions between different communities and / or newcomers from different backgrounds:** Some newly settled residents / communities do not feel welcome in certain areas, with some evidence of community tensions on newly built estates. In 2018/19, the West Midlands ranked fifth for rate of hate crime among police forces across England. Between 2020 and 2021, hate crime rose 65 per cent in Walsall and 41 per cent across the region.
- **Some parts of the community have low levels of English language ability:** According to the 2011 Census, approximately 7 per cent of Walsall residents do not speak English as their main language and one third of those speak very little English: 2.3 per cent cannot speak English well (6,200 people), and of these approximately 1,200 cannot speak it at all. This affects both social mixing and aspirations for meaningful work.
- **Poverty and inequality have worsened:** At the start of the programme, Walsall was the 25th most deprived local authority in England, out of 317 as of 2019. This represents a significant jump from 45th in 2007, 30th in 2010 and 33rd in 2015. A quarter of all neighbourhoods in Walsall (44 of 167) are in the top 10 per cent most deprived in England, an increase from 34 in 2015. Walsall sits at 276 out of 324 local authorities for social mobility.

- **Employment trails other areas of England:** Walsall sits in the 20 per cent lowest performing local authorities in UK. Employment rates are significantly lower than the UK average and only 48 per cent of women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are in employment. 19 per cent of the population has no qualifications — a quarter of this cohort are White adults. Many migrant workers have under-used skills and qualifications.

In terms of attitudes and behaviours amongst Walsall residents, a survey by [IFF Research](#)³ commissioned by MHCLG, found that:

- **87 per cent** very or fairly strongly feel they **belong to Walsall**.
- **41 per cent** say they definitely or tend to agree that **Walsall provides opportunities to learn new skills**, with only 32 per cent saying this for getting the right support for finding and entering work.
- **77 per cent** have at least some **friends from different ethnic backgrounds**.
- **64 per cent** definitely or tend to agree that people from **different ethnic backgrounds get on well**. A similar proportion (61 per cent) feel this way about people from different religious backgrounds. In both cases, 11 per cent definitely disagree or tend to disagree that this is the case, which is a notable minority.
- **68 per cent** say that it is important or very **important to have opportunities to mix with people from different backgrounds**.
- **49 per cent** think that **immigration makes the UK a better place to live**, with one fifth (21 per cent) reporting that this makes the country worse. However, it is noteworthy that a quarter said neither better nor worse.
- Of those with children, **93 per cent** report that their **child/children definitely has/have or tends to have the opportunity to mix with those from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds**, and 90 per cent definitely or tend to agree that it is important for them to have this opportunity.

Map of Walsall borough's four localities:

north, south, east and west



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³ Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, Chapter 8: Measuring Success, March 2018. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf

Limitations of current data relating to social integration

Social integration often relies on self-reported measures and participants' perceptions of themselves and the world around them. These can be influenced by existing biases, or biases introduced in the data collection method. Children and young people are just as prone to social desirability bias as adults.

Surveys and individual interviews should consider the wording of questions carefully to account for this and, if possible, include counter- or complementary questions that can draw out truthful answers, as well as semi-open or open questions that provide space for people to write / speak in their own words.

It is also possible to over-measure when using quantitative methods, such as surveys. For this reason, it is ideal to draw upon a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Observation reports from facilitators, delivery partners and programme officers can be highly informative but require openness, awareness of the risk of bias and a critical eye. Sometimes, a set of key questions can help to guide the reporting.

It is vital that each project or activity is evaluated against a set of expected outcomes, with key outcome measures listed in the Walsall for All delivery plan, MHCLG guidance⁴, Home Office guidance⁵ and sector best practice, elaborating on particular measures.

⁴ Measuring Outcomes for Integrated Communities, Technical Note, MHCLG, July 2019.

⁵ Indicators of Integration Framework, Home Office, June 2019.



Priority 1:
Connecting across communities



Priority 1:

Connecting across communities

Measures		
Sense of belonging to Walsall / the local area / the immediate neighbourhood	Feeling safe and connected where one lives Residents in a local area respect differences between other people in the area	Meaningful positive social mixing Local area is a place where people from different [ethnic / faith] backgrounds get on well together People in neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood
Rights and responsibilities/ safety (Home Office indicators) Awareness of key institutions, rights, supports and pathways to participation (those new to Walsall)	Social bonds – local good practice (Home Office indicators) Existence of community organisations Opportunities for regular community events, cultural festivals, regular celebration of communities and so on	Culture (Home Office indicators) % reporting being knowledgeable and comfortable with diversity of local social norms and expectations
Loneliness (ONS) How often do you feel lonely? Often/always, some of the time, occasionally, hardly ever, never	Digital skills (Home Office indicators) % reporting confidence in using technology % accessing digital training courses % with personal access to the internet (including mobile data)	Social bridges – local good practice (Home Office indicators) Community celebrations that bring together different ethnic backgrounds Provision of activities aimed at encouraging diverse participation
Raising issues with local leaders/agency % reporting it is important to feel able to influence decisions in local area personally		

Methods of intervention	Output data	Outcomes
Innovation micro grants	14 projects funded	5,200+ benefitted (see the separate project summary)
Walsall for All Pledge Training sessions for Pledge, Places of Welcome and Community Dialogue.	86 groups signed up to the pledge 114 individuals signed up to the pledge 240 attended pledge training sessions	People pledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A community-wide common understanding of social integration and network of diverse individuals, with the potential to collaborate because of people signing up to the Pledge. Organisation pledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A better understanding of local assets and a network of diverse organisations working towards a common purpose, through signing up to the pledge. Organisations committing to deliver services, recruit and manage staff, and collaborate with other organisations through principles of fairness and inclusion.
Places of Welcome Exchange of practice between 'cold spots' and 'catalysts of change'.	Seven new Places of Welcome opened since 2019 in Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Willenhall and Caldmore (total of 21) and 14 reopened in July 2021 (inc. Bilal Academy, St. Joseph's and St. Mary's Roman Catholic churches).	Places of Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A collection of new activities led by participating organisations to promote connectedness across Walsall's communities. Increased understanding of, and number of, opportunities for people to mix across boundaries (ethnic, faith, geographical). Increased participation in events and diversity of existing community groups/associations and greater inter-faith work.

Priority 1:

Connecting across communities

Methods of intervention	Output data	Outcomes
Community Dialogue Surveys with participating organisations (Pledge, Places of Welcome).	40 Community Dialogue facilitators recruited. 20 groups of 40 people recruited to engage in Community Dialogue sessions. 3 dialogue sessions per group delivered (60 sessions in total). Training and reflection Community Dialogue sessions delivered with 40 facilitators. Final Community Dialogues event conference organised.	Community Dialogue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding between different communities in Walsall and reduced fear and prejudice. Positive shift in perceptions of others among participants. Walsall residents are more comfortable to discuss views around integration and are given opportunities to challenge perceptions.
Community Practitioner Research	14 participants attended training. Due to COVID-19 impact, only four participants have completed a full set of interviews and a research write up. Report analysis produced by University of Birmingham.	Community Practitioner Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse community members are trained by University of Birmingham (Research into superdiversity — IRiS) in social research methods and they will receive a qualification. Local experiences of living in Walsall is used to identify how to improve integration. Potentially develop changes in the approach of local service delivery through co-production. Insights shared with relevant agencies. Final report by University of Birmingham.

Methods of intervention	Output data	Outcomes
Community Transport	Re-profiled to support emergency support during the pandemic.	Community Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transporting Walsall residents to activities within the borough that actively and intentionally promote social mixing. Subsidising and meeting costs to reduce socio-economic barriers to participation.
Deaf Community Support Use of alternative formats (BSL), special sessions or culturally appropriate sessions for certain communities). Monitoring forms (participation levels). Interviews with members of the Deaf Community.	10 events held, including 3 sign language cafes, 6 song rehearsals, 1 music performance and inter-generational event, with 322 attendees mainly from WS1 and WS2 postcodes. 55 attendees were service users, 31 of whom were Deaf and 12 Deaf with additional needs. Gender: 22 male, 33 female Age: most between the ages of 35 years and 74 years (48) Ethnicity: White 41, Black 7, Asian 7 Numbers reached through Walsall for All Facebook: 1,290 Engagement: 53	Deaf Community Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaf residents are supported to participate in new activities, thereby reducing social isolation and building confidence. Develop resilience in Walsall's Deaf Community by providing training in areas of vulnerability, such as COVID-19, cyber security and computer literacy. Provide a voice and platform by enabling participants to organise and lead a diary/video arts projects, which was published on social media?

Priority 1:

Connecting across communities



Participants and staff members at the Accord Housing monthly lunch club in Walsall.

Innovation projects

In total, 14 organisations were each awarded a grant of up to £10,000 as part of the Integrated Areas Innovation programme. Projects were selected according to how well the organisation met the following criteria:

- Creating opportunities for meaningful social mixing between different communities in Walsall
- Creating opportunities for changing prejudicial attitudes
- Designing and applying digital solutions that support social mixing between different groups and communities.

This criteria was targeted at different communities and with residents of all ages, abilities, cultures and lifestyles.

Projects covered a wide range of themes: from food, theatre and cinema to sport and creative arts. These took place mainly in the south and west localities of the borough, mainly because these areas hold the greatest mix of communities. However, projects were not aimed specifically at those areas and some projects, for example, Saltmine theatre project and The Crossing's cinema project, had a borough-wide reach.

Additional funding was allocated to various uniformed groups throughout the borough, for projects promoting cohesion:

Accord Housing (Age Matters): A monthly lunch club that brought together older people from different faith and cultural backgrounds.

Black Country Innovate (In Their Shoes): Using theatre to engage with schools and adults on community cohesion and British values.

Caldmore Village Festival (Cultures of Walsall festival): A one-day festival providing an opportunity for communities to come together to celebrate diversity and Walsall's rich cultural heritage. The festival has been twice postponed due to COVID but is now scheduled to take place on 4 June 2022.

Faith & Belief Forum (awards evening): Awards to recognise and celebrate voluntary and faith groups' contribution to Walsall.

Manor Farm Community Association (CA): Using sport to increase cohesion and integration.

Mindful Gifts CIC (Around the World in 80 Days): People of diverse ethnicities and from different backgrounds share food and learn about each other's cultures.

Nash Dom CIC (Let's Kick About): Using football to bring people together and provide them with educational and development opportunities, and help to improve their physical and mental wellbeing and their confidence.

The Crossing at St Paul's (Walsall Cinema for All): A series of community film nights showing carefully selected films that promoted integration and diversity.

The Prince's Trust (Brew and Chew): Creating a space for young people (16–30) to meet in each other's community, focusing on education, job search, and building resilience and confidence.

Uniformed groups: A number of short projects for uniformed groups to promote cohesion. These included the creation of online services, a cohesion through music project, and support to young people by providing activity packs during lockdown.

Urban Hax (Walsall Creative Communities Project): Creating projects that capture local communities' imaginations and link with culture and identity of Walsall.

Walsall BME Welfare & Advice Centre: A group-learning setting to enable socially isolated and disadvantaged women from Asian backgrounds, their carers and immediate family members, to learn and adapt the mechanism of healthy and active living to tackle long-term health conditions.

Walsall Creative Factory: Using community arts to improve cohesion and integration.

Walsall FC Community Programme (One Goal): Using football and other sport to help young people mix with those from different backgrounds.

Youth Connect: Street-based sessions and activities, as well as centre-based sessions, that aim to develop young people's creativity when looking at cohesion and integration.

More than 5,200 individuals took part in the projects, with ages ranging from primary-age children to much older residents. These projects included a wide range of ethnicities and religions, with an estimated 34 languages spoken by those who participated.

Priority 1:

Connecting across communities

Testimonies from participants in Walsall Creative Factory's arts activities:



"It's a great place to try art when you haven't done anything since school. It's a cool place to meet others in the community and it's become a community hub. Gets you out of the house and doing something positive." (Henry, a vulnerable young adult with autism)

"Loved sharing food and getting to know new people."

"How nice to spend the day with neighbours we didn't know before."

"Great watching the kids dig a big hole in the sand together. They acted as though they had always known each other."

Eight projects were affected by COVID, with both the theatre projects and cinema projects ending early and others, such as the Faith & Belief Forum awards evening and Youth Connect, providing fewer sessions than planned. Others had to re-profile their activities or move them online. Three innovation projects were re-profiled to provide COVID support:

- Mindful Gifts provided emergency food supplies and other much-needed items to residents in a deprived area of the borough
- Walsall Creative Factory provided a remote service to the elderly and vulnerable
- Youth Connect provided, with Walsall Housing Group, activity packs for children and young people.

Underspend from the Mindful Gifts project also helped to provide family activity packs to under-privileged families in the borough. This additional activity was carried out by Caldmore Community Garden.

The Cultures of Walsall festival was scheduled to take place on 31 May 2020 but was postponed due to the first lockdown. A rescheduled date for September 2020 also had to be postponed due to continued uncertainty over COVID and the reluctance of festival participants to commit their services. The festival is now planned for June 2022.

LEGACY (innovation projects): There are wide-ranging legacy benefits of innovation projects for both providers and participants. These range from an increase in volunteering (Accord Housing, Age Matters) and the learning of new skills (Walsall Creative Factory, Caldmore Community Garden) to young people gaining employment or apprenticeships (Prince's Trust) and providers reaching new audiences for their services (Manor Farm). Other benefits include buying assets, such as laptops and projection equipment that community organisations can continue to use (The Crossing at St Paul's). Regular networking meetings resulted in good

contacts being made across innovation project providers and some of these have continued (Nash Dom, Urban Hax and Youth Connect with Walsall FC).

COVID support through innovation projects

Mindful Gifts: This project originally focused on social mixing through social/food events. However, the project provider withdrew before the project completed, leaving an under-spend of about £4,000. The provider was given permission to use £3,200 for a community food outlet, which gave food and other essential items to local people in Darlaston, an area of high deprivation.



Case studies from Mindful Gifts COVID support project:



One man, who is over 70 and uses an oxygen mask, was unable to leave home to get shopping. He was unable to get to his kitchen because of his oxygen equipment. He depends on using a kettle to make hot drinks and food that can be made with hot water. Mindful Gifts CIC provided cup-a-soup, noodles and other items that proved to be a life-saver.

One woman had recently lost her husband, had had a stroke and was self-isolating. She had been unable to get any shopping for three months. Mindful Gifts CIC provided a wide range of items for her after she selected what she needed from a list of available items. This lady received enough essentials to last her a couple of months or more. She was also able to see a friendly smile when the goods were delivered to her, the first she had seen for a long time.

The rest of the under-spend went to Caldmore Community Garden to provide activity packs for under-privileged families in Caldmore, an area in the south of the borough. This was at a time when families were struggling to keep children busy during a very difficult time in lockdown. Four packs were created: gardening, crocheting, knitting and crafting.

A total of 482 activity packs, of which about 150 were funded by Walsall For All, were distributed, benefitting 1,105 children. Although at first, they were only distributed in Caldmore, the packs proved to be so popular that there were requests from elsewhere in Walsall. The packs were divided between the four localities, with 106 going to the north, 325 to the south, 24 to the east and 27 to the west.

This was an excellent way for this active community group to keep in touch with its community.

Priority 1:

Connecting across communities

Testimonies from recipients of Caldmore Community Garden activity packs:



"Yes! The kids loved the rainbows and the extra crafts inside them. And not forgetting the lollipops – we called it the bag of fun!"

"We really enjoyed making different crafts and planting seeds. The packs are very good with instructions. They really made us happier."

"My children absolutely loved them. There was a variety of things for all my children who are nine, seven and four. My eldest enjoyed the light spinners, and my four-year-old has thoroughly enjoyed the art and crafts making various things."



Caldmore Community Garden produced activity packs for children and families during the pandemic.

Walsall for All Pledge

The aim of the project was to develop a meaningful local pledge, encouraging groups and providers to sign up to promote values and principles of inclusivity and integration. This project was delivered with the charity brap⁶, and despite a short delay due to the pandemic, the pledge has met most of its expected outcomes. The project delivery timeline had to be amended during the lockdowns, but gradual development of online training activity has helped to keep participants interested, with further sign-ups increasing after summer 2020.



"We have signed the Walsall for All Pledge because we are passionate about supporting our community to be an inclusive, empowering place where uniqueness is celebrated. We believe that together we are more!"

"I've signed the #WalsallForAll People Pledge because I love how unique, diverse, and creative our borough is. If you live or work in Walsall then you are a part of our community, so why not sign the pledge and get involved!"

Altogether, 86 organisations signed up to Walsall for All Pledge. These included 10 from the north locality, 25 from the south, 11 in the east and 10 in the west. A further 17 organisations with a Walsall-wide footprint signed, as did four that were not attached to any specific geographical areas. A further nine organisations that are based outside of Walsall, but which operate in the borough, also signed up. Most of the organisations that signed represent the community and voluntary sector. There is also some representation of education, faith, health and social care and private sectors, while some public sector and internal council services participated.

The pledge commits all staff within the participating organisations to adhere to the principles both internally and externally. In addition, 114 individuals added their signatures to the pledge. The sign-up form created by brap did not collect equality and diversity monitoring information, although the majority of individuals who signed up lived or worked in the south or central areas of Walsall. There was an equal spread of individual sign-ups across the other three localities.



⁶ brap is a Birmingham-based charity that transforms the way we think and do equality, supporting organisations, communities, and cities with meaningful approaches to learning, change, research, and engagement.

Priority 1:

Connecting across communities

Case study from a Walsall resident who signed the pledge



I signed up for two reasons: I want to personally engage in the conversation to learn, and ultimately help to reduce race inequality. I also want to help in leading my community into a better space, where people from different races feel welcomed and included.

I have been involved in various initiatives, including online groups and discussion events, looking at race inequality.

In addition, I have joined a very small, local group called "Breaking the Silence", which was created by a Ghanaian friend of mine. This group has fewer than 10 members, though, so it needs confidence and a plan to grow.

I want to do more – I want us to have more local conversations about race but I do not know how to go about it.

In terms of working with communities to make Walsall a fairer and more integrated place to live, work and learn, there is the challenge! I will carry on keeping my groups racism free, promoting local diversity-oriented events and calling out racial ignorance where I see it, and I am open to ideas about how we can develop a local conversation.

Quite a few people locally would be interested in getting involved in cohesion and integration. I know enough people to begin a network locally and I have the groups where events and activities can be promoted.

The pledge met the outcomes by undertaking the following activities:

- Organising The Pledge Conversation, in which 25 attendees shared their reasons for signing how they have committed to cohesion and integration, and participated in conversations around communicating with each other (outcomes 1 and 2). Most of the attendees were individuals representing community and voluntary and public sectors.
- Inviting those who signed the pledge to share their involvement in committing to it. Transforming Communities Together, a charity, and an individual from Streetly shared case studies.
- Carrying out an active social media campaign to encourage all Walsall residents and organisations to sign up and acknowledge their involvement (outcome 1).

LEGACY (pledge): There needs to be more opportunities, such as The Pledge Conversation, for individuals and organisations to connect and share goals, and for different sectors to be aware of how the pledge applies to them and how to adopt the commitment in their area of work to influence practice.

Places of Welcome

The Places of Welcome scheme was developed by Transforming Communities Together (TCT). Its aim is to open up venues to reduce isolation and to break down social barriers between residents and communities that might not naturally connect together. It also aims to alleviate poverty by offering free food and refreshments, as well as signposting and making residents aware of their rights and local services.



Volunteers and staff gathered outside a Place of Welcome in the Palfrey area of Walsall.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 16 Places of Welcome, which increased to 21 after a partnership with Walsall for All. Inevitably, due to the imposed lockdowns, none of the venues were able to remain open during the pandemic. During this time, the focus moved to searching for new partnerships and training. New topics were introduced into the training of coordinators, including social prescribing, vulnerability, Alzheimer's, palliative care, bereavement support, inter-cultural training and unconscious bias. Since the summer of 2021, over 20 venues have reopened, including three new venues: Bilal Academy, St. Joseph's and St. Mary's, all of which are Roman Catholic churches based in Darlaston and Willenhall respectively.

TCT has signposted service users to GPs, social prescribers, housing providers and private companies. There has also been increased promotion in press and social media.

Walsall for All was keen to use the Places of Welcome concept to develop support between the integration cold spots (the areas with little or no diversity) and **catalysts of change** (areas where there is good diversity practice that can be built upon or shared more widely).

Although there have been challenges due to COVID, the Places of Welcome coordinator (TCT) has maintained key relationships and support with all those involved in Places of Welcome. The team has been able to identify more ethnically diverse groups and increase this spread across the borough. It has engaged with organisations, such as Bilal Academy and Sons of Rest, to increase diversity within the network. It has developed good practice and exchanged it with other geographical locations. Brownhills was initially classed as a cold spot, but after working with Caldmore Community Gardens, there was an exchange of good practice.

Priority 1:

Connecting across communities

Places of Welcome quote from a resident attending in Brownhills



"My wife and I had the opportunity to 'pop along' to the lunchtime friendship social group at Brownhills Community Centre. It was brilliant. This demonstrates why our community centre is so good. It needs supporting by all, so on Wednesday pop along between 11:30am until 1:30pm, enjoy a free hot drink and a piece of delicious cake, take part in conversations and 'pick yourself' up. It really is FREE. You can make new friends and enjoy the company on offer, because we did. A wonderful initiative."

TCT is expanding into the Welcome Buddying Scheme, helping community members living within Walsall. Initially, it is offering them a 'friendly ear', guidance and practical help, so they can experience and enjoy the social and recreational activities that are available locally through the Places of Welcome network. Three buddies have been trained so far. Attendance increased by 15 per cent in 2021/22 and continues to record a monthly snapshot of the activity across the network. This should give us a better idea of how different localities and demographic groups engage with the project, identifying greatest needs. However, more cross-pollination of practice is needed and more work with under-represented groups and new communities will be a priority.

LEGACY (Places of Welcome): Strategically, TCT plans to secure longer-term funding, ideally through match funding and with Walsall for All. Funding will not only enable the continuation of Places of Welcome, but will also enable organisations to open their doors to the community. The Walsall for All Pledge needs to be adopted by all participating venues. There should also be an emphasis on increasing diversity by encouraging other community venues to become Places of Welcome, recruiting more buddies and through regular meetings of coordinators.



Community Dialogue participants at a training session in Walsall.

Community Dialogue

Community Dialogue is another project that has produced impressive outcomes, despite initial uncertainty created by the pandemic. The project aimed to create safe spaces for people to have honest discussions about integration and changing neighbourhoods. We wanted people to have the opportunity to ask difficult questions, share views, raise concerns and debate issues to better understand each other's views and beliefs – and to tackle divisions and misconceptions.

Walsall for All partnered with The Faith and Belief Forum (FBF) to deliver this ambitious project and 40 facilitators were recruited from diverse backgrounds and geographical areas, all of whom were trained in dialogue skills, conflict resolution and other important techniques. Facilitators had to attract participants who could commit to three sessions of dialogue in the given locality or exchange, with an initial target of 40 participants per each physical session. The pandemic hit at the point at which sessions were being rolled out borough-wide and the provider had to switch to a digital platform.

During the first lockdown, from March 2020 until July 2020, FBF had to work hard to retain participants who had initially expressed an interest. By using digital platforms, they retained their target of running 20 groups, facilitating three sessions each. On average, they attracted 12 participants per online session, which is lower than the original ambitious target of 40, but impressive if we consider the overall impact of the pandemic. Overall, they engaged with 122 people across the 60 sessions, with each participant getting to know their group gradually in three sessions. Of these 122 residents, there was a fairly even spread across the age ranges but participants were overwhelmingly female (75 per cent).

Participants were mainly from White British and British Indian/Pakistani groups, although included other White (Polish, Romanian) and Black African and Caribbean communities.

There were some heartening results from these sessions. One linked group created a podcast together, while others said they wanted to keep contacts with not only their linked group, but also with the other groups who took part in the online sessions.

People felt inspired to do something together post lockdown. These included:

- Building a community allotment – providing an opportunity for communities to do something together
- Organising a charity fundraiser together
- Supporting foodbanks
- Continuing the dialogues, having a mixture of face-to-face encounters as well as online
- Ensuring the sessions were inclusive for people with special needs. Online sessions work better for some people. However, there was a suggestion that the interactions could be more creative.
- Litter picks
- Community Action Days
- Feeding the homeless
- Coffee mornings

Priority 1:

Connecting across communities

The project created Walsall Community Builders, a spin-off activity to train dialogue groups to engage in community activism and social campaigning. A film documenting the dialogue journey was also created.

FBF added value to other projects that Walsall for All prioritised during the pandemic; for example, it explored the topic of Black Lives Matter during Black History Month.

LEGACY (Community Dialogue): Plans are underway to create Walsall Voices forums to enable communities to have a voice and to engage effectively with the local authority, the police, NHS and other services. There is potential for it to participate in other initiatives, such as the Pledge or Places of Welcome.

Quotes from participants in the Community Dialogue project:



"At a time when many have felt disempowered, I can say that this project has been immensely empowering - thank you for this opportunity."

"I'm so happy and proud of everyone here. Hearing everyone talk about their experiences and what this group means to them makes me so grateful for this session. I'm actually really emotional."

"Happy to join today, I didn't know any other cultures, I thought other people didn't welcome Asian people like me."

"I've found it quite educational this morning. It's interesting to listen to other people's stories."

"It's never going to bond unless we do the things we're doing right now."

"Even though we are all different people, our experiences are similar."

"Very good experience to listen to different people's experiences."

"Enjoyed the mindful discussions, learning everyone's opinions really makes you reflect."

Community Practitioner Research

The Community Practitioner Research Programme (CPRP) is a collaboration between the University of Birmingham and Walsall for All, aimed at training community practitioners in research methods and techniques. At the beginning of the programme, 14 participants completed the initial interview techniques training. They all identified their research topics and were matched with the mentors who were to support them during the research. The group of Community Researchers were diverse in age, gender and ethnicity, and included local residents and members of staff from local voluntary organisations and the statutory sector. They brought a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment as well as a wide range of expertise, personal experience and knowledge of the different areas within Walsall. Two of the Community Researchers agreed to share the stories of their involvement in the project, one of which is detailed below.



Front cover of the Community Researchers report.

Community Researcher one (CR1) was born in Somalia and came to the UK in the second half of 2000 as an asylum seeker prior to a successful application for residence. He had worked for various charities and the UN in community engagement. He is currently working for a voluntary organisation that aims to strengthen community cohesion and self-reliance, assisting disadvantaged people and communities. He heard about the project because of his involvement with Walsall for All. Having undertaken studies in Wolverhampton he was keen to continue his education. He applied because the project would enable him to build on his experience and develop his skills with a reputable academic institution, the University of Birmingham. The opportunity to attain a qualification and accreditation with the Open College Network was a particular attraction.

CR1 enjoyed the training and found it particularly helpful in the development of his interviewing skills. Taking part in role play gave him the confidence to ask questions. He learnt how to develop questions and adapt them, if necessary, to ensure they were fully understood. Undertaking the interviews in the interviewee's first language then translating the transcription into English helped him to develop his interpreting skills.

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After each of his first three interviews, he met with his mentor and found this support beneficial, helping him to reflect on what had worked well in the interview and what might need to change.

The interviewees were chosen because of their roles as community leaders. On the basis of their experience, CR1 thought they would be able to provide comprehensive information about their communities. CR1 also tried to ensure his group of interviewees was diverse in age, gender and ethnicity. He enjoyed the interviews. One was more challenging as the individual was quite shy and her answers were brief. However, CR1 was able to probe, re-iterating that her answers would be confidential and that any information she gave could help the community in the future.

CR1 is looking forward to being presented with his OCN certificate when the current restrictions have been lifted. He hopes to use his skills, undertaking his own research projects in his current employment. He also hopes to undertake funded projects, not only in Walsall but also in other parts of the country, focusing on the integration of people in the UK.

Because of COVID-19 and a change of circumstances among many participants and their mentors, there have been some attempts to maintain communication with participants on a one-to-one or small-group basis. However, restrictions meant that sessions had to be cancelled. There were talks to merge Community Researchers with COVID-19 Community Champions, but it was decided that this was not a suitable environment for carrying out research interviews.

Eventually, four trained researchers completed 15 interviews and there were full transcriptions provided for 12 of these. The focus was on collating the available findings and producing a final report, which focused on:

- Experiences in Walsall
- Settling in the community and the sense of belonging
- Community safety and division
- Improving neighbourhoods and community relations in Walsall
- Building a better Walsall
- Impact of COVID-19

A final report by CPRP, University of Birmingham is [now available](#)⁷. Some of the key findings include:

- Interviewees were positive about their experience in Walsall
- Individuals developed positive relationships with their neighbours and described supportive relationships in their community
- There is a sense of being part of community initiatives and events as a way of bringing people together
- Community centres, associations and leaders were identified as playing a key role in developing community cohesion
- A need for a cleaner environment, such as more bins, green spaces and e-bikes
- A need for more community-related activities and meetings to strengthen community cohesion
- The impact COVID-19 has had on communities as well as individuals, such as isolation, bereavement, loss of businesses and jobs and no access to community networks and employment.

It confirms that the project has created opportunities for social mixing, both through initial training and through conducting the interviews. The report highlights evidence of social mixing and how this could be further developed, as recommended by the Community Researchers and research participants.

LEGACY (Community Practitioner Research): The final Community Practitioner Research report will influence the public sector training in cohesion and integration practice, as well as contribute to the legacy of Walsall for All. Specifically, the case studies and findings should also be incorporated into equality and diversity work in Walsall, such as corporate inductions and the Equally Yours board game.

The report has been published and can be [accessed online](#)². Participants will receive an accreditation from the University and will be included in the pool for future paid work.

Community Transport

This project aimed to bring people together from across the borough by supporting the transport costs for various activities. This included day trips between community organisations, integrated sports events and church day trips. It once enabled three Deaf/disabled residents to attend a Healthwatch consultation event that targeted specifically Deaf people so they could highlight the issues they experienced in accessing health services. Of those 87 residents who benefitted from these initial activities, 51 over 64 years and 25 were under 18s. This latter project was aimed specifically at young people. The split according to gender was fairly even throughout (40 male/47 female), with the number of residents classing themselves as disabled at 10. Of those who expressed themselves as having a religion, 13 were classed as Christian, seven as unknown and 39 residents as having no religion. As far as ethnicity is concerned, the figures



Walsall Community Transport bus with Walsall for All livery

Priority 1:

Connecting across communities

were overwhelmingly in the White British category (84). Although it is difficult to give an accurate figure of geographical spread of participants, it is evident that most were from the east, west and north localities. The only event attended by residents from the south was for the Healthwatch event.

The project was re-profiled when COVID restrictions meant that residents were prevented from meeting face-to-face. A new project was developed, Bringing Communities Together, which focused on using online platforms to enable residents to meet virtually. The types of activity funded included fun/fitness sessions, wellbeing workshops, mindfulness courses, dance classes and other social activities including bingo.

In addition to the Bringing Communities Together project, funding was also used to provide COVID support such as distribution of meals, activity packs, books and jigsaws. Through this project, 1,471 people benefited from funded activities.

LEGACY (Community Transport): The funding has enabled organisations to pilot new activities and new online methods of working, which will be particularly useful for those who do not yet feel ready to engage in face-to-face activities. Walsall Community Transport is now better established within communities and the council. The organisation has been used to support the borough's COVID response and vehicles have now been used for lateral flow testing and as mobile vaccination centres.

Deaf Community Support

The aim of the Deaf Community Support project was to create unique space for the local Deaf Community to learn about Walsall for All initiatives and at the same time to connect with people locally and receive information about available services. This project put a spotlight on the need for alternative formats when considering social mixing and the realisation that some communities will find it harder to participate in borough-wide initiatives than others. During the initial six months, the Deaf Community Support project was on target to meet its outcomes, having delivered the following events:



Healthwatch representative and BSL interpreter at sign café held on 22 October 2019

- Sign language cafés in October and November 2019, with discussions about the activities the group might be interested in. Participants suggested further priorities such as volunteering, creative arts and cyber security.
- Transport for four individuals to a local Healthwatch event that was specifically for members of the Deaf Community, to discuss local service provision for the Deaf and to discuss other topics predominantly related to the needs of the Deaf Community, particularly the issues faced by them when accessing health care. It raised the need for general Deaf awareness across the health sector, particularly for front-line workers.
- Signed song: A four-week project to raise awareness of Deafness by engaging a hard-to-reach cohort of Year 7 pupils at Blue Coat senior school to sign a song. This culminated in a performance to parents and teachers in February 2020.
- Sign language café on 2 March 2020. This event included speakers from Ryecroft Community Hub, Walsall Creative Factory and One Walsall who spoke to the group in more depth about opportunities they had previously expressed an interest in: creation of an app for the Deaf Community, creative work and volunteering respectively.

Had COVID not intervened, it is felt that the other items on the programme would have given greater scope for mixing as they involved going to different locations and mixing with groups that they would otherwise not have met. In particular, the creative arts sessions would have taken place with hearing members of the community, and this would have given further opportunities for mixing. Suggestions for the second year of the project included joint cookery sessions/demonstrations, visits to places of worship and a joint Deaf/Blind bingo session, amongst other things.

When COVID hit, it very soon became apparent that essential key messages such as the need for regular handwashing and social distancing were not getting through to the Deaf Community. Additionally, many of the Deaf individuals associated with this project were vulnerable and had additional needs. The requirement for social distancing for these already marginalised people, together with the fact that many of them are not computer-literate, meant that the only way to reach out was to physically visit them in their homes to check on them. The Deaf Support project was therefore re-focused for a four-month period to provide crucial help during the most difficult period, providing individuals with help on various basic tasks such as shopping, collecting medication, paying bills as well as keeping them up to date with the most recent Public Health and government guidance. Throughout this period of COVID support, contact was made with 31 people through the commissioned organisation (Deaf Support and Care Services), with several individuals being given regular assistance with shopping. Some vulnerable people were identified for ongoing additional help in the future and social care assessments.

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Case studies from the Deaf Support and Care Services (DSCS) Deaf support project:



One lady, who was referred from another Wolverhampton-based charity, had reduced mobility and her sister, who usually did her shopping, was unable to continue doing this during the lockdown. DSCS was able to provide weekly support for the lady. She was also referred for an adult social care and occupational therapy assessment.

One man had been visiting friends, unaware of the restrictions due to his lack of understanding of the latest guidelines. He was unable to understand the daily television COVID briefings because there was no BSL interpreter support. As this gentleman could not be contacted by mobile, the DSCS worker went in person to his flat to carry out a welfare check. The man's phone was broken so he had no way of contacting anyone or of getting food. The DSCS worker managed to sort out his phone, got him some shopping and got him a food parcel as he had very little money. He has now been identified as needing extra support by Walsall's Adult Social Care service.

The DSCS worker also contacted another couple. The lady was Deaf with cerebral palsy and her husband was elderly and Deafblind. They were unable to leave the house. They used the service several times.

The project provider ended the project three months early due to changes within the company affected by COVID-19.

LEGACY (Deaf Community Support): While Deaf cafés, cyber security, creative arts and the development of a Deaf app may be needed in the future, they will require dedicated funding. In the meantime, the immediate legacy is the provision of a Deaf awareness e-learning course. Thirty licences have been bought and are being used across the social and health care sector in 2021/22. Initial feedback from the training is positive.

Quotes from the provider of the Deaf Support project:



"The sign cafés provided a perfect opportunity to encourage people who are traditionally quite marginalised to, first, come together to socialise and, second, to meet/discuss ideas and share their thoughts on accessing other local community services/facilities. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic this opportunity has been put on hold for the time being but hopefully for not too long. It also created an excellent opportunity for people from other community groups and services in Walsall to not only raise their own community project profile but also look at ways to include and make their services more accessible to the Deaf Community."

"The school sign singing project was also a huge success for the school, the children and for DSCS Ltd. It provided a real opportunity to both raise awareness of BSL (British Sign Language) with the school but it also provided an opportunity for the pupils/students to learn something new (and useful) as well as build their confidence."



Staff and volunteers working at the Zebra Access stall in the Saddlers Shopping Centre, Walsall.



Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together



Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together

Measures

Social bonds – local good practice (Home Office indicators)

Young people develop increased cultural awareness, self-confidence and aspirations, feel empowered, and have a voice to make positive change in the community on the integration agenda.

Meaningful positive social mixing

Young people run projects to support meaningful social mixing and challenge prejudices – resulting in increased acceptance from young people.

Raising issues with local leaders/agency

Decision-makers gain a better understanding of views of young people and barriers to integration.

Methods of intervention	Output data	Outcomes
Youth Voices Now	13 Youth Ambassadors recruited, eight trained. Five taster sessions held. Four consultation events held. 100 young people engaged.	Youth Ambassadors Youth Ambassadors, representing young people from different geographical areas of Walsall, have a voice. Through representative consultations and events, ideas and suggestions are gathered for projects that help to improve lives of young people in Walsall neighbourhoods.

Methods of intervention	Output data	Outcomes
Walsall Arts for All	<p>Arts Connect coordinator recruited.</p> <p>Arts competition event completed with 10 schools, 136 pupils (9-16 years old) from Palfrey, Caldmore, Bloxwich, Darlaston, Blakenall, Willenhall, Streetly, Shelfield.</p> <p>Walsall Arts for All development day recruited 14 schools, incl. 34 staff and 660 children. Seven schools applied for Artsmark.</p>	<p>Arts Connect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists and teachers skilled at working with 'seldom heard' audiences. • Young people are engaged in discussions of identity, diversity and culture. • Arts curriculum in Walsall's schools is enriched and there is a good resource accessible, intercultural material. • Capacity of the Cultural Educational Partnership is increased long term.
UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools	<p>UNICEF initial promotion of the project with all schools. 11 schools expressed interest. Four started the process of accreditation and two secured Bronze.</p>	<p>UNICEF – Rights Respecting Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Walsall schools aware of the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools accreditation and aspire to achieve it. • All schools in Walsall are aware of UNICEF options and about their role in supporting integration and sharing best practice.
Interschool residential	<p>Five schools (Barr Beacon School, Bloxwich Academy, Blue Coat Academy, Grace Academy, Ormiston Shelfield Academy) completed preparatory work for Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the residential programme.</p>	<p>Interschool residential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for school pupils to meet, mix and connect with others from different backgrounds, by spending time away from home and school, and taking part in team-building and confidence-boosting activities in a neutral location. • Reduction in prejudiced views, intolerance, fear and hate crime in Walsall through intergenerational change and resulting greater social mixing across boundaries.

Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together

Youth Voices Now

The aim of the Youth Voices Now (YVN) project was to encourage and support young people from different backgrounds to build confidence, raise aspirations and access opportunities for meaningful social integration. However, the plans were significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project was delivered with the National Youth Agency (NYA). The initial target was to recruit and train 26 Youth Ambassadors, organise 12 taster sessions, four consultation events and social action projects and engage with 500 young people.

Due to the timelines and recruitment being impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, NYA had to revise its targets and achieved five taster sessions, four engagement events and social action projects. They managed to engage with 100 young people.

Youth Voices Now aims to develop the skills participants need to be Youth Ambassadors, in particular:

- Refining how they think about social concepts
- Giving them a better understanding of how to listen to others (including those who may interpret those concepts differently)
- Giving them a better understanding of ways to combine and represent different viewpoints fairly and ethically
- Developing their presentation skills and confidence.

The broad approach was for participants to undertake research based on a series of challenges that could inform social action projects, and to develop and present their findings in different formats. The research focused on a local context to ensure the findings and outcomes were specific to Walsall, for example what makes them proud, cultural identity, voice, positive change and events. As an overarching framework for content, the major social concepts considered for research and discussion topics were: (1) Youth 'voice' or social action and (2) identity, diversity and social mixing.

The taster sessions that took place before the first lockdown created social mixing between different schools, such as Blue Coat C of E Academy (south locality) and Barr Beacon Academy (east locality). Also, sessions at Blakenall Community Centre brought together young people from targeted youth support and young people from the youth centre. The Youth Voices Now project created a platform for young people who had not previously been involved in this type of work before to develop their voice on issues and pride in their town. Young people said they had felt unheard before, the tea break created space for young people and professionals to share ideas and communicate. They wanted to see more events like this to focus on listening to

the views of all as they felt this would benefit the youth voice in Walsall. The project was a great success; a greater sign-up with a wider group of professionals and young people would enable more voices to be heard and improve community cohesion. When they were told about the regeneration plan for Walsall town centre, they were keen to work on this project and had many good ideas to contribute to the discussion.

During COVID-19, NYA developed the project online and worked in a sensitive way so that young people felt comfortable when speaking through Zoom. However, some young people found social mixing challenging during the pandemic, particularly during the lockdowns. When the project changed to an online platform, some young people experienced confidence issues; speaking and being seen on Zoom was a barrier and some felt this was a significant challenge. To put this into perspective, the NYA team, project manager and support staff, had not met young people physically, which created problems as some young people did not have access to Zoom, so could only speak on the phone. Some young people had confidence issues and only towards the end switched on their camera.

LEGACY (Youth Voices Now): It has been suggested the YVN platform could continue, with Kicsters (a local organisation that works with young people) taking on the role of facilitator and recruiting young people, with a young person (18 years old) leading the 13 to 15-year-old YVN group, with advice from Kicsters. Young people are developing a 'How to create a social action project' guide for other young people.

NYA published its own evaluation in a video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=wY6O42zUqUQ

Response from participants of the Youth Voices Now project:



"I feel like I can talk more freely now and not constantly worry about saying the wrong thing."

"It is important to be open and not be narrow-minded in thinking we are right, accepting that others are entitled to have their opinion."

"Giving everyone an equal opportunity to be represented is important. Not just representing views individually, but also collectively."

"It's important to understand that not everyone can access the same opportunities. We may need to alter how we reach people to get a wider range of voices."

"I would never have been able to do that before." (One young person discussing hosting an online discussion with people they didn't know.)

Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together



Walsall Arts for All

Walsall Arts for All (WAFA) programme aims to enhance the arts and culture package offered to schools, with the emphasis on the social integration and cohesion objectives of the borough. An arts competition took place in 2019 bringing together ten schools and 136 pupils from eight areas across Walsall to create and exhibit artwork that reflected on community and culture. Following this, a project coordinator was recruited to lead on the delivery of Walsall Arts for All.



Artwork from the 'Who Are We?' project as part of Walsall Arts for All.

The feedback from the children attending the initial arts competition was positive. They took part in activities such as a drill and reggae music workshop, and a performance of Saltmine Theatre Company 'In Their Shoes'. Ormiston Shelfield Academy won the initial competition and the winning video is available on [YouTube](#). The remaining schools received vouchers to buy arts materials.

During the WAFA development day in October 2019, 14 schools, comprising 34 staff and 660 students, were recruited. Although the work has been put on hold for 18 months, WAFA retained its coordinator and is now planning to continue with the 14 schools and create seven pairs that will work together on the objectives set by the programme. Other qualitative work with schools is taking place already as four have applied for Artsmark accreditation.



Artwork from the 'Beyond My Wildest Dreams' project as part of Walsall Arts for All.

The school pairs are planning a range of activities from pen pals, exchange visits and joint trips, to identifying art ambassadors. The main objective is for children and young people to lead the planning of activities, events and the visits. They will be trained in artistic skills, techniques and tasters.

Ormiston Shelfield continues working towards a Platinum Artsmark award, and it currently leads Walsall's Cultural Education Partnership. With WAFA, it will actively promote the project through 2021/22 in all news outlets.

Quotes from students who participated in the Walsall Arts for All project:



"Loved connecting and celebrating cultures and communities."

"It made me feel really proud to see our art on display, just knowing it was our work made me feel proud."

Quotes from teachers:

"The children learnt the value of art – all art is art – children were allowed to be expressive"

"Meeting other schools from the community and allowing children to explore diversity in depth."

"Viewing different types of entries – different views of Walsall and diversity."

LEGACY (Walsall Arts for All): The project was reinstated in September 2021 and quarterly updates will be provided through the Walsall for All Board.

Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together

UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools

Walsall for All was keen to introduce the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools scheme to Walsall. Initial promotion has taken place with all Walsall schools, highlighting the concept of the scheme and the benefits of Bronze, Silver and Gold accreditations. The key aim of the accreditation is to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children's rights are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they are able to thrive. It is aimed at supporting young people who want to increase their understanding of difference and diversity, and who are keen to become active citizens within their communities. There was an intention, as part of Walsall For All, to look at ways of increasing integration through the education sector. Eleven schools initially expressed an interest and four started the process of accreditation. Two secured Bronze. Five secondary schools — Bloxwich Academy, West Walsall E-Act, Shire Oak, Blue Coat and Grace Academy — have been most active in UNICEF knowledge building and have been committed to future use of this concept.

The programme has been suspended in the interim period due to 2020/21 closures of schools.

LEGACY (UNICEF): We are reconnecting with the schools so they can complete the Silver or Bronze accreditation. This will also be promoted more widely through the School Heads Forum.



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Inter-school residential

As part of Walsall for All's offer to schools under the Young People Learning and Growing Together priority, it was agreed to offer a school residential to secondary schools within the borough. The aim of the project was to bring together young people from several schools, work together around the topics of diversity and cohesion, looking at what aspiration means and gaining knowledge and understanding of cultures in Walsall. Preparatory work was carried out before the planned residential, providing an opportunity for the pupils to get to know one another before the residential.

Following an initial exercise to gauge interest, a meeting was set up with head-teachers of five schools — Barr Beacon School, Bloxwich Academy, Blue Coat Academy, Grace Academy, Ormiston Shelfield Academy — who collectively agreed to offer the residential to Year 8 pupils and set the theme of the programme as 'aspiration'. The selection criteria was for a diverse cohort of pupils, representative of Walsall's diverse population, focusing on those who it was felt had potential to develop their leadership skills but who had not had an opportunity to do so.

The residential would consist of a mixture of outdoor activities, coupled with reflective workshops around themes and issues raised by the young people, who would seek solutions to these issues. The whole project would culminate in a celebration event where parents/carers would hear about the pupils' progress and see what they had learnt. However, neither the residential nor the celebration event could go ahead due to the social distancing restrictions that were put in place from March 2020.

However, the preparatory work that took place set the scene for exploring attitudes and positively influencing social mixing with young people and educational practitioners. The Walsall for All team carried out activities with each of the five schools, ranging from exploring identity, rules and expectations, to copy games and tower exercises, exploring leadership and a summary evaluation. Topics such as human trafficking, having a voice and what that means, and what equality means, were just a number of conversations from the statements.



Exercise to build a tower from newspaper

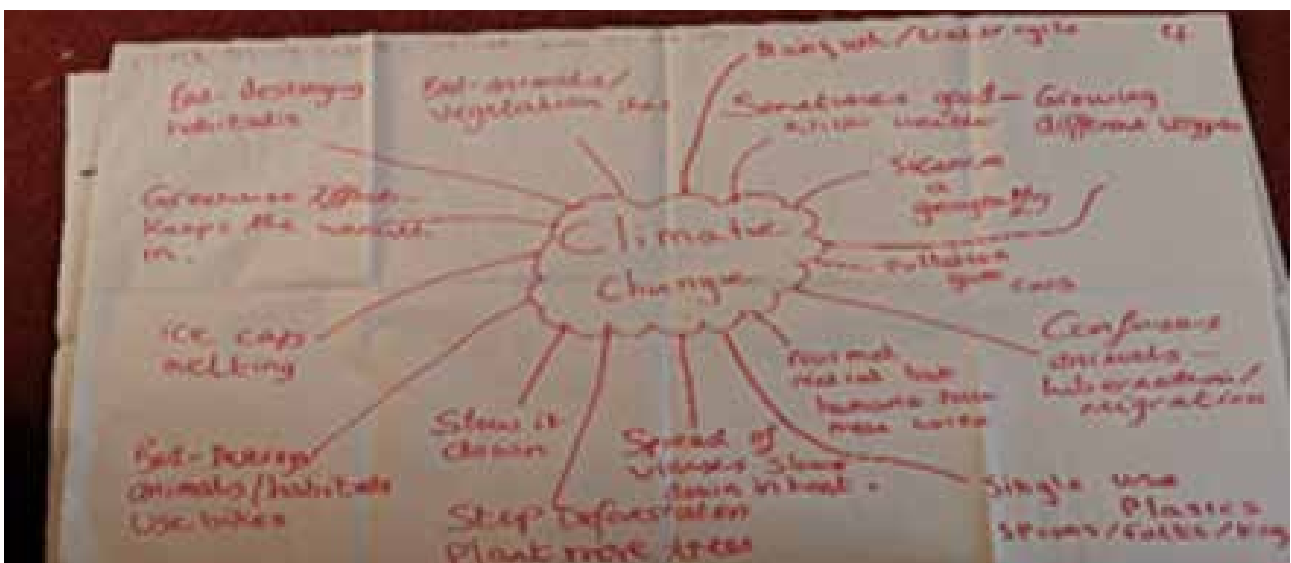


Using a ball of string to create a session evaluation

Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together

During the second preparatory phase, each school hosted an event for all participating schools. The idea of space, and especially young people's concept of what their space is and why it is important to them, was crucial to this project as it gave a chance for young people to show off their school or 'space'. To have four other secondary schools coming to you for two hours, where young people were hosts, presented and helped others feel welcome, was a big challenge. Each session had a theme and planned activities that were unique to the hosting school. For example, Barr Beacon focused on putting young people in charge of Walsall while Grace Academy focused on Ghandi's message 'be the change you want to see in the world'. Bloxwich Academy focused on creating one's own persona and how others influence the way we behave and act.



Feedback from the session where topics were discussed that pupils were passionate about

Although the residential didn't go ahead, the schools went the extra mile in their preparation work and hosting events. They were welcoming, providing food and drinks at every session and catering for the needs of the students (who also commented on how good the food was). The programme was delivered in a way that put young people at the centre and although young people were sometimes out of their comfort zone, they still continued to attend, participating at a pace that suited them. Some students felt anxious, worried and did not initially integrate with students from the other schools. By the final session, however, the same young people reported greater confidence, happiness and commented on the progress they had made on a personal and relational level. The young people each completed evaluations and said they had learnt a lot. The partnership between Walsall for All and schools has developed and will hopefully grow stronger.

Quotes from participants of the Inter-school Residential project:



"Don't let anyone dull your sparkle and don't be sad for who you are." (Bloxwich Academy)

"Enjoyed the different activities and thinking about how I can make others smile." (Grace Academy)

"I learnt today that anyone can open up and show your own opinion." (Blue Coat School)

"I have never been to Barr Beacon before and I like the school. The pupils from other schools were friendly too."

LEGACY (Inter-school residential): Pupils felt they had made progress on a personal and relational level. Good relationships resulted between participating schools, and between schools and Walsall for All.



Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together

National Citizen Service (NCS)

Measures	Methods of intervention	Output data
<p>Self-reported socio-economic status</p> <p>Challenging prejudice and stereotypes</p> <p>Awareness of inequality</p> <p>Diversity preference</p> <p>Positive meaningful social mixing</p> <p>Comfort with difference</p> <p>Trust</p> <p>Skills and confidence</p>	<p>National Citizen Service</p>	<p>240 participants originally to eventually took part due to</p> <p>23 brew and chew sessions</p> <p>Delivery of sessions in differ</p> <p>Participants to be signpost jobs, or further education.</p> <p>Number of participants.</p> <p>Delivery of service in differ</p> <p>Number of participants mo education, job or apprentic</p> <p>Individual pre-and post-out survey (limit to 10 minutes,</p> <p>Facilitator observation repo</p> <p>Case studies and quotes.</p> <p>App-based feedback mech</p>

	Outcomes
<p>targeted but 127 COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>delivered.</p> <p>rent communities.</p> <p>ed to apprenticeships,</p> <p>ent localities.</p> <p>oving onto further eships.</p> <p>tcomes and feedback (if possible).</p> <p>orts.</p> <p>anism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of Walsall's young people, including from integration cold spot areas, are attending the NCS or similar programmes. • Raised confidence and aspirations for young people, resulting in reduced isolation. • Meaningful social mixing for a cohort that would not otherwise meet with others from different backgrounds. • Vulnerable young people are given the opportunity to attend pre-NCS programme pilot and then NCS, resulting in increased self-confidence and opportunity for meaningful social mixing with others. • Young people challenge negative perceptions of others and have an increased understanding and respect for difference, resulting in more diverse networks including with others from different backgrounds. • Reduction in prejudice, intolerance, fear and hate crime in Walsall through intergenerational change. • Create space for young people (16-30-years-old) to meet in each other's community focusing on education, job search and building resilience and confidence.

Priority 2:

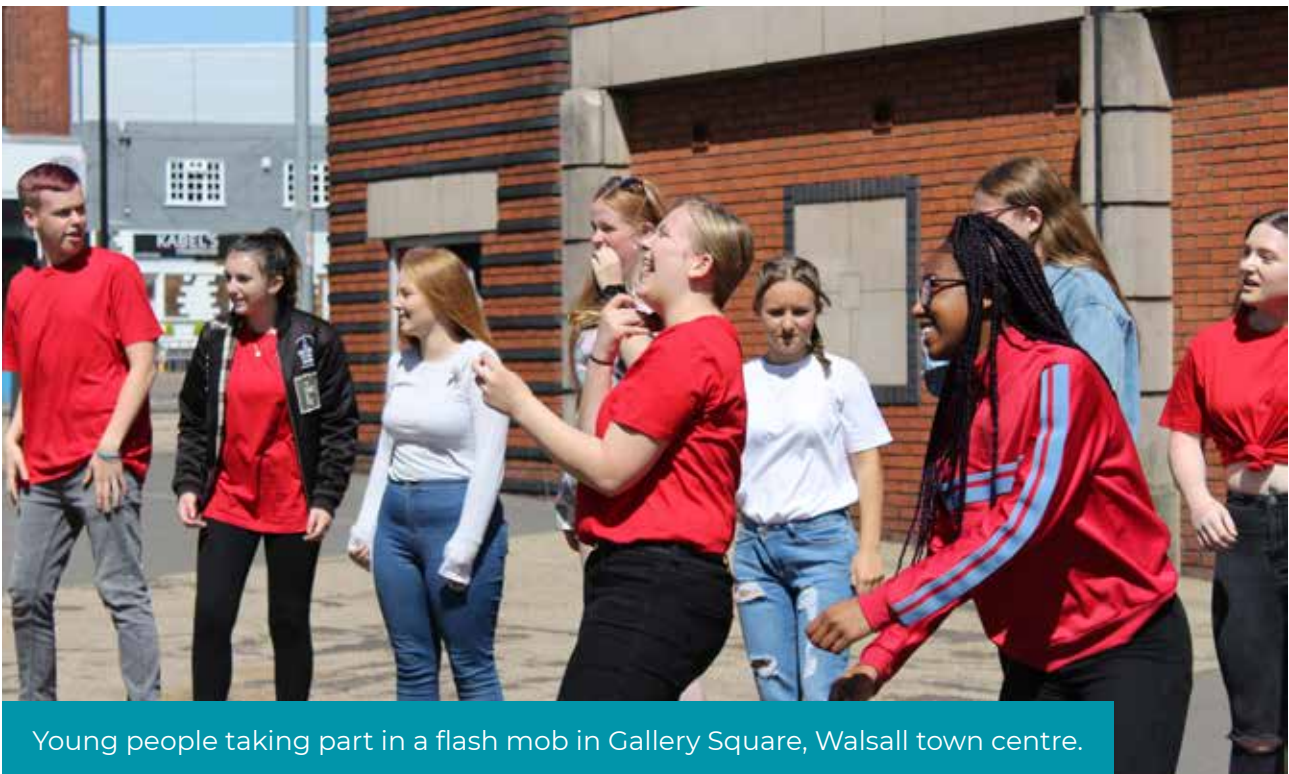
Young people learning and growing together

National Citizen Service (NCS)

NCS is a project that encourages 16 and 17-year-olds to get into leadership through cohesion/integration activities. The project attracted 36 young people from across the borough, who were then divided into three groups of 12. Each group attended two sessions — one at the Council House and one at the University of Wolverhampton. There was a fairly even split between male and female participants, with the diversity of the group accurately reflecting the demography of Walsall and included several young people of Asian and Black African/Caribbean heritage, a Polish young person as well as a transgender young person.

The programme included a social action project that the participants led on. One group supported a youth-work session at Bloxwich Leisure Centre, a second group led a clean-up project in Palfrey Park and in Caldmore, and the third group put on a fun day in Walsall Arboretum.

LEGACY (NCS): The 36 young people participating in the project gained valuable experience in teamwork and in team leadership, working with others that they had not met previously. It is hoped that these young people will have gained confidence and will be able to use their experience to good effect in the future.



Young people taking part in a flash mob in Gallery Square, Walsall town centre.



Jigsaw activity at a development session run by NCS and Walsall for All staff.



Group activity at a development session run by NCS and Walsall for All staff.

Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together

Walsall School Linking

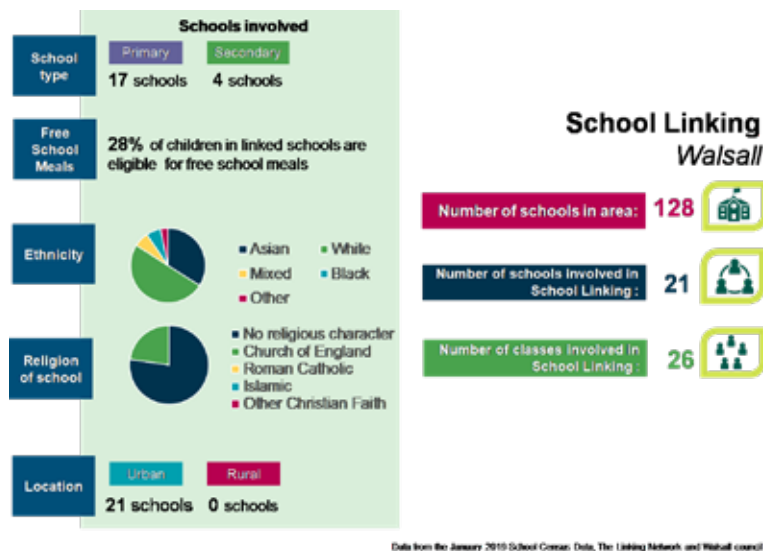
Measures	Methods of intervention	Output data
<p>Building a sense of togetherness with other children.</p> <p>Creating shared learning adventures from within the classroom.</p> <p>Helping children recognise their feelings, promoting recovery and developing trust, empathy, awareness and respect for others.</p> <p>Providing opportunities to contribute to the wider community.</p>	<p>School linking</p> <p>IFF Research and programme manager observation reports and interviews at various stages: neutral venue visits, linked visits and celebration events.</p>	<p>Build on the pilot with a further 21 schools in addition to the eight existing schools.</p> <p>Linking Network delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 schools, comprising 21 schools in addition to the eight existing schools. • 28% of children eligible for the linking network. • Pair schools with a similar demographic. • Develop long-lasting relationships between schools and pupils that span the cycle of the school linking programme. • Minimum of three meetings between schools (one at each school and one at a neutral venue).

	Outcomes
<p>urther 13 schools (in ng schools).</p> <p>data:</p> <p>26 classes, involved in</p> <p>for free school meals.</p> <p>ked difference in pupil</p> <p>relationships between</p> <p>last beyond the life-</p> <p>ng project.</p> <p>ts between partner</p> <p>hool and one at a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils have the opportunity to mix and engage with those from different backgrounds. • Children are given the opportunity to reflect upon their own identity and beliefs. • Parents have an increased understanding of the benefits of school linking and participate in end-of-year events with parents from different backgrounds. • Pupils and parents have an increased understanding and respect for difference, challenging myths and negative perceptions. • As a result pupils and parents have more mixed social groups and build networks with others from different backgrounds.

Priority 2:

Young people learning and growing together

Walsall School Linking



Statistics from the School Linking programme in Walsall.

Walsall's School Linking Programme is delivered by the Linking Network charity. The programme is based on bringing together a minimum of two classes, usually from demographically diverse schools, in a year-long programme within a local area. In Walsall, the programme was first launched in 2018, with 13 schools taking part. Twenty-one schools, comprising 26 classes, came forward to participate in the programme in 2019/20. The schools were from different geographical areas, to fulfil the aims of social mixing and reduce segregation. More than a quarter of children from these schools were eligible for free school meals and the largest ethnicities involved in the programme were White and Asian. A pie chart above provides more details about the characteristics of the schools involved. No rural schools were involved in the linking. Prior to activities with the participating classes and children, each school identified the lead teacher/s who would undertake training and would be responsible for coordination. Walsall for All supported schools with administration and transport arrangements.

The School Linking model was adopted by all integrated areas and, in addition to Walsall, Bradford, Blackburn with Darwen, Peterborough and Waltham Forest all implemented the programme in 2019/20. It was an MHCLG requirement that the School Linking Programme would take part in the national evaluation conducted with IFF Research. The research findings are still being evaluated and The Linking Network is currently building the Power BI data source to enable analysis of all the school links, and



School Linking Programme activities took place at various venues across Walsall, including the New Art Gallery.

the impacts and benefits across the country, including integrated areas.

During the programme, The Linking Network conducted surveys and observations with participating teachers and pupils. Younger secondary pupils were more positive in their survey responses compared to older secondary pupils, and this was confirmed in observations. Younger pupils in Key Stage 3 (KS3) were more likely to enjoy spending time with young people from different backgrounds, compared with pupils in KS4 and KS5. One-third of pupils in KS3 said they enjoyed it a lot, compared with less than a quarter of pupils in KS4 and KS5. Compared to other integrated areas, Walsall succeeded in providing a rich variety of different engagement approaches from sports to arts venues. Some meetings also took place within participating schools.

Quotes from teachers:



"The children are really enjoying themselves and are mixing better as the day goes on. The instructions were very clear from the beginning that the children were to mix."

"The children were happy. They listened to the artist well. They mixed reasonably well but there was little interaction during the activities. We could have done with more activities where they were 'encouraged' to speak to one another – for example, things in pairs where they would have to discuss with each other."

Quotes from children:

"I have made some new friends."

"I learnt some new things and met new friends."

"I am coming to the gallery with my dad at the weekend."

"I have made a new friend. I don't know his name, but we both like dogs and animals."

With some of the schools, secondary in particular, it was felt that some softer engagement activity prior to the linking might have been beneficial. Buy-in at very senior level in schools is essential to the success of the programme. This then filters down to the operational level with those teachers who attend the linking meetings. Until the onset of the pandemic, the programme created excellent opportunities for social mixing. Efforts were made to encourage the children to pair up with an individual from their partner school. Walsall for All was instrumental in using contact theory in facilitation of the activities to break the ice between separate cohorts of school pupils, and to supervise the development of these relationships throughout the programme.

LEGACY (School Linking): Plans are now underway to continue school linking between the 2021/2022 academic years. A new coordinator has been appointed to deliver the programme.



Priority 3:

Working and contributing together



Priority 3:

Working and contributing together

English Language Intelligence Unit

Measures	Methods of intervention	Output data
<p>Speaking English What is your main language? How well can you speak English?</p> <p>Equal access to educational opportunities and progress See MHCLG outcomes framework for full list of response options.</p> <p>Equal opportunities to reach employment potential See MHCLG outcomes framework for full list of response options.</p> <p>Rights and responsibilities / Safety (Home Office indicators)</p> <p>Culture (Home Office indicators) % reporting being knowledgeable and comfortable with diversity of local social norms and expectations.</p> <p>Stability (Home Office indicators)</p> <p>Meaningful positive social mixing Comfortable talking to people from different backgrounds. Proportion of friends same ethnic group – at least some friends from different ethnicity.</p> <p>Barriers to meaningful positive social mixing What sorts of things, if any, stop people from different backgrounds from getting on well together in this local area? See MHCLG outcomes framework for full list of response options.</p>	<p>English Language Intelligence Unit</p> <p>Virtual learning.</p> <p>Online learning.</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing questionnaires for learners.</p> <p>Interviews, videos, case studies.</p>	<p>Classes delivered in 3</p> <p>Geographical spread</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North – 2 • South – 25 • East – 4 • West – 7 <p>2000+ learners benefited from community, who benefited from provision.</p> <p>Out of the 2000+ learners, 1000+ completed provision.</p> <p>Geographical spread</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North — 82 • South — 504 • East — 58 • West — 219 <p>Between March 2020 and March 2021, the unit included providing C&D support to various bespoke handover sessions.</p> <p>Virtual learning included 300 home learning workshops completed.</p> <p>Delivery of two national technology in ESOL a</p> <p>Currently refined programme for parents and children</p>

	Outcomes
<p>8 provider venues across Walsall 2019/20.</p> <p>of providers:</p> <p>itted, including an additional 400 members of the refitted indirectly through the networks.</p> <p>ners, 863 accessed face-to-face community</p> <p>of these learners:</p> <p>and March 2021, 16 virtual ESOL classes ran. This COVID-19 information in different languages and dbooks on the topic. 450 learners were online.</p> <p>ded mental health and wellbeing checks.</p> <p>workbooks were posted out, of which 200 were</p> <p>nal best practice conferences on the use of and remote learning.</p> <p>vision to focus on couples classes, single gender, classes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents of Walsall have the opportunity to learn English in a way that suits them best and in different geographical areas. • ESOL learners are referred by a greater range of agencies. • Social mixing is encouraged and integration through English language learning in an informal and relaxed setting. • There are more innovative and creative ways of delivering community-based English language programmes that will help to integrate participants into their local communities. • Standards of ESOL community provision, opportunities for accreditation are increased. • ESOL service has opportunities to practise and develop bespoke language skills for accessing services. • To prepare participants with the skills to reduce isolation and to become less reliant on others. • More ESOL learners are able to access volunteering, work experience and job opportunities.

Priority 3:

Working and contributing together

The overall goal of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) was to integrate communities through English Language support. The aims were:

- To offer Walsall residents the opportunity to learn English in a way that suits them best.
- To encourage social mixing and integration through English language learning in an informal and relaxed setting.
- To support innovative and creative ways of delivering community-based English language programmes that will help to integrate participants into their local communities.
- To raise the standards of provision and opportunities for accreditation.



ESOL learners at the Women's Tour cultural event in October 2021.

Beneficiaries

The unit was initially established as a needs-led provision that stretched learners without making them anxious. Providers were identified and these developed the trust and relationships to engage with potential learners and give them the confidence to attend classes. As a result, a high-quality ESOL provision was delivered across the borough in a diverse range of communities, neighbourhoods and faith settings. English language provisions are in increasing demand, as the reputation of quality and effective delivery is shared by our service users and community groups.

In total, 38 community provider venues have delivered ESOL, all of whom experienced high levels of participation, social mixing and cohesion. 2,000 learners have benefitted and engaged with this community provision, either in the classroom or online. This figure includes service users who went on to support 400 other members of their community and children with their language skills.

To ensure that learning was not hindered, the ESOL Intelligence Unit responded swiftly and effectively within four weeks of the government announcing a national lockdown and established 16 online community ESOL provisions, which were accessed by 500 learners. This made the learning accessible and gave learners the chance to develop their language skills as they would in a classroom. Mental health and wellbeing checks were embedded into the learners' personal and social development.

ESOL home learning workbooks, created by the ESOL Intelligence Unit, were sent to 300 learners who did not have access to IT resources or were computer illiterate. These workbooks covered a range of topics, including the importance of staying safe and maintaining high standards of hygiene during the pandemic, which proved to be highly successful and engaging. Tutors video-called learners on WhatsApp to monitor progress and to offer support where needed.

This led to a significant uptake and interest in ESOL provision with the Intelligence Unit, which continually received excellent feedback from service users and community delivery partners.

Delivery

The unit has experienced a large volume of referrals, which has meant establishing additional classes to meet needs, including for couples, parents and children, as well as single gender (men- or women-only classes) and single language classes. The classes were split according to level and ability and the unit has maintained a flexible approach in this delivery, driven by community groups and service users.

Because of the ESOL provision, social barriers and attitudes to learning started to break down. People of different cultures and backgrounds engaged together through a shared common language. Examples included service users who may not have engaged in conversation with another community due to political, cultural and religious differences. Service users belonging to the Sikh and Hindu faiths attended a local mosque to learn English, and a class of White Eastern Europeans attended classes at Willenhall Gurdwara. Confidence was instilled within the Roma community of Walsall, which felt neglected and faced continued discrimination. Education was not deemed important 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, whereby trust and rapport were established and potential unlocked through quality learning.

Consideration was also given to activity taking place in faith settings. For example, religious protocols were researched and put into place, such as not holding mixed-sex classes. This attention to detail respected cultural and religious norms and was highly regarded by faith groups. This led to greater referrals and a high attendance rate.

Priority 3:

Working and contributing together

Understanding the impact of integration outcomes

Learners completed end-of-course evaluation forms to establish integration outcomes for ESOL provision. These also revealed if learners had moved on to further education or employment, and where they use their newly acquired skills.

Tutor and student interviews have also been completed to reflect the impact ESOL has had on communities, individual lives and social integration outcomes. Some of these are available on the [Walsall for All website⁸](#).

Case study — Vera Group, empowering women in Walsall

The Vera Group in Walsall brings together women from different European countries, empowering them to live full and meaningful lives. It also promotes women's self-esteem, positivity and self-confidence and provides non-judgmental support, advocacy and empowerment.

The group has delivered English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) since its inception and was chosen to receive funding to recruit, train and mobilise COVID-19 Community Champions. One member of the group, Inese, attended ESOL courses and through conversations in class, became inspired to volunteer as a champion.

Inese moved from Latvia to England with her husband about 10 years ago. When she first arrived here, Inese knew only simple English phrases. She struggled to make any friends who were English speakers and mostly communicated with people who spoke Latvian or Russian. Because of this, her English language knowledge did not improve much over the years. It was a huge barrier for her social life but also for her personal development, so the group's ESOL classes presented a fabulous opportunity.

Due to COVID restrictions, sessions were delivered online, which suited Inese as she did not have to arrange childcare while studying. Inese still had the opportunity to work in a group and to build her confidence when speaking in English. Inese is now much more comfortable speaking and writing in English. In fact, her confidence improved so much that she volunteered to become a COVID Community Champion.



Inese (with her husband), who participated in ESOL classes and volunteered as a COVID-19 Community Champion.

"ESOL classes often led to discussion around COVID and this inspired me to get involved. I learnt how many people were still unaware of information, especially regarding vaccinations. I was really inspired to help others and once I heard that I could volunteer as a Community Champion, I immediately knew this was something I wanted to do. My husband shared my enthusiasm and we both became champions."

"One of my main roles as a champion is speaking to other members of my community and spreading awareness. I often come across people who are sceptical, or even against the vaccine altogether. I've had the chance to share my own story and how I got the vaccine."

Inese is now considering continuing her studies at Walsall College to gain an accredited qualification.

LEGACY (ESOL): There must be sustained, long-term funding for ESOL provision to continue in the faith and community sectors. These projects have been delivered on a large scale and discussions need to take place with key stakeholders, such as West Midlands Combined Authority and Walsall College, to ensure community delivery continues and remains accessible for residents. Providers have been flexible and independent in their approach to delivering ESOL, which has supported cohesion and social integration outcomes. However, community providers rely on funding to sustain their activities. Furthermore, the branding and communications of ESOL through Walsall for All has had a significant impact on the success of projects. Communications should also be considered as part of the legacy to ensure information about ESOL provision in Walsall is available to all. In addition, a bank of multilingual volunteers should be considered, enabling them to contribute to society and be recognised for their involvement.



Priority 3:

Working and contributing together

Measures

Equal opportunities to reach employment potential

See MHCLG outcomes framework for full list of response options.

Equal access to educational opportunities and progress

See MHCLG outcomes framework for full list of response options.

Stability (Home Office indicators)

% accessing permanent employment.

% reporting satisfaction with local area.

% reporting familiarity and trust with local people and neighbours (overlaps with other outcome measures listed above).

Meaningful positive social mixing

Comfortable talking to people from different backgrounds. Proportion of friends from the same ethnic group – at least some friends from different ethnicity.

Methods of intervention	Output data	Outcomes
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Empowering Women / Motivate Your Mind	<p>Community Connectors - have made more than 380 contacts with women through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 Empowering Women workshops • 9 Motivate Your Mind workshops • 108 coffee mornings • 4 Moving Forward workshops. <p>They also supported women during COVID-19 (576 contacts) through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing calls • Notifying them of support available locally, such as Walsall Council Community Support, especially at the beginning of lockdown. • Notifying them about mental health support. • Job search support — assisting with job applications/CVs over the phone and digitally, helping with interview preparation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify those who are 'further' from the job market and develop a bespoke programme for entering work or volunteering. • Build self-confidence and self-esteem — participants feel it is possible to move into work by the end of the programme. • Increase the number of women moving into work from the targeted groups. • Increase the number of women moving into work focused training.

Priority 3:

Working and contributing together

Methods of intervention	Output data	Outcomes
Business and integration – inclusive employers conference	<p>Chamber of Commerce research with 64 businesses and 59 individuals on workforce diversity and integration in Walsall.</p> <p>Report identified areas of improvement and nine best practice initiatives.</p> <p>Diversity and Inclusion (virtual) Conference with Walsall businesses and employers. There were 43 attendees, including 17 businesses, and 10 organisations who presented best practice. The conference included three discussion groups. Best practice website and resources published.</p> <p>To monitor progress on equality, diversity and inclusion pledges that employers commit to.</p> <p>A follow-up questionnaire about monitoring and impact was completed by 37 businesses.</p> <p>5–19 businesses indicated they had or were planning to implement the practice following their involvement in, or awareness of, the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legacy website and resources providing data, good practice and continuous learning. • To be a catalyst for change and build on employers' understanding and contribution to the integration agenda. • Walsall people, regardless of background, can work together in harmony with equal opportunities for accessing employment and progression.

WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY CONFERENCE



Black Country Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Workforce Inclusion and Diversity

Walsall Council and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) appointed Black Country Chamber of Commerce, which has good connections to local businesses and experience of doing similar work, to support Walsall for All to increase the number of employers offering jobs and opportunities to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

The project provided an opportunity to:

- Understand what the current local workforce demographics look like and where some of the gaps are
- Raise awareness of various equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives to local employers
- Encourage local employers to be more inclusive.

Black Country Chamber of Commerce, with DWP, University of Wolverhampton and Walsall for All conducted a research project with businesses and employers. More than 64 businesses and 59 individual employees participated and nine best practice ideas were suggested, including clearer job descriptions and person specifications, diverse interview panel, employee voice, personal pronouns and exit interviews. These were shared with attendees at the Diversity and Inclusion Conference for Walsall businesses and employers on Thursday 15 July 2022.

The conference also included presentations and discussions around BAME, LGBTQ+, women, disabilities, young and older people in the workplace:

- 12 individuals from 10 organisations presented
- 48 individuals registered for the conference and 31 dialled into at least one conference session
- 36 businesses registered for the conference and 17 businesses attended
- 3 group discussions took place
- 2 additional best practices suggested at the conference were later promoted as part of the project's impact monitoring.

Priority 3:

Working and contributing together

Following these activities, there was an opportunity to monitor progress on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) pledges that employers made:

- 37 businesses responded to the follow-up questionnaire examining monitoring and impact
- 5–19 businesses indicated they had or were planning to implement the practice following their involvement in, or awareness of the project

Although the aim of the project was to promote equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in employment, it has encouraged people from different backgrounds to have conversations and understand other people's perspectives.

Furthermore, the Chamber continued to deliver this project despite the challenges it faced with COVID-19. It has been flexible with the proposed delivery, explored alternative delivery methods to achieve outcomes and developed skills to confidently talk to businesses about EDI.

The Chamber will continue its work on EDI. For example, it is to deliver a menopause event around women in the workplace and has undertaken a commitment to train 150 people from under-represented groups to get them 'leadership ready'.

LEGACY (Black Country Chamber of Commerce and Industry): The [Walsall Diversity Project webpage](#)⁹ will remain accessible until April 2022. The Chamber has won the hearts and minds of businesses and has opened doors that were closed before. Furthermore, it will continue its ambition to be an exemplar in inclusive leadership and will support businesses in the area that need additional support and guidance.

Department for Work and Pensions - Walsall Community Connector Support

DWP appointed three Community Connectors to offer bespoke support for women in Walsall. This included confidence building, and equipping women with CV writing, application and interview skills. The connectors also supported with mental wellbeing and offered one-to-one tailored support within the community. Community Connectors delivered a number of projects to support women.

Empowering Women Workshops

Between April 2019 and October 2021, 18 workshops, both face-to-face and virtual, were delivered with Aaina Community Hub and Walsall Black Sisters Collective. More than 200 participants completed the workshops, which provided opportunities to increase confidence and self-esteem, promote mental health and wellbeing and support one another.



Empowering Women Workshops took place on a regular basis at Walsall College – The Hub as well as other local venues.

Participants' feedback from the Empowering Women Workshops:



"For the last five days I've been on the women's empowerment course, fantastic it was. My last day was today. I passed and received a certificate and a new pad that will help me do the courses I want to do now. This course helped me so much I can't thank the people enough. It's been life changing. I also passed my first-aid awareness course today and received my certificate."

"I have been rejected so many times before when looking for work and I feel my life wasn't in perspective. The workshops have helped me change my mentality and outlook."

Motivate Your Mind Workshops

Five sessions were delivered with Steps to Work to help unemployed women with identifying anxiety trigger techniques to manage anxiety and to encourage a positive mind-set. The women enjoyed this workshop and a few said they would have preferred a face-to-face activity. However, they have been offered further support from the Bridges Project that will include face-to-face interaction.

Priority 3: Working and contributing together

Final referral figures for both the Empowering Women's Workshops and Motivate Your Mind Workshops show:

- **432** claimants engaging in the project
- **134** claimants accessing employment/self-employment
- **215** training opportunities taken

Coffee mornings

From April 2019 to February 2020, Community Connectors delivered weekly coffee mornings at Caldmore Community Gardens and Ryecroft Community Hub. They were themed around opportunities available in the community, for example volunteering, different sectors of work and training. The sessions were also a safe space for the women to come together, make friends and encourage each other to raise their aspirations. Women were encouraged to attend coffee mornings in both the north and south of Walsall to promote opportunities for social mixing. From February 2020, support continued by phone and virtually. Feedback was positive and the women enjoyed the group discussions.



DWP Community Connectors' Christmas themed coffee morning at Caldmore Community Garden.

Moving Forward sessions

This workshop was designed by Community Connectors to offer guidance and support for women looking for work, upskilling or training. It included information and guidance to help women choose a career path, which continued into in-depth job search support, interview techniques and guidance on completing application forms. The skills women learnt enabled them to take positive steps to achieving their goals. Sessions were delivered at Aaina Women's Hub, Black Country Women's Probation Services and to mothers and female carers at Palfrey Infant School. All the women who attended were happy for the support and were booked in for individual follow-up phone appointments. The project also supported members of the travelling community to participate in beauty courses and to attend the community centre to further their careers.

Community Connectors have also been involved in other events, including:

- A **signposting event**, where more than 50 participants attended and enrolled with Walsall College as part of the project's exit strategy
- **International Women's Day**, where a presentation was delivered to participants via a group call, highlighting achievements of women through the ages with the aim of inspiring and motivating participants to reach their true potential.

Across all the activities, the connectors have engaged and supported more than 380 unemployed women living in Walsall.

LEGACY (Community Connectors): This project has supported women into work, improved their prospects and given them the confidence and connections to continue progress. As DWP Community Connectors offered an outreach service within communities, delivering a place-based approach in the north and south of Walsall, this has contributed to improving integration and reaching women who would not normally engage in a mainstream provision.

The aim now is to ensure the projects' activities are sustained through the Walsall Job Centre network. The provider will continue to work with partners with whom Walsall for All has worked with to deliver this project, ensuring everyone is able to access opportunities. The provider will also continue to deliver a place-based approach and promote jobs and opportunities through partners in the community.

Walsall Works

Walsall Works is an award-winning initiative funded by Walsall Council, which supports local people to find jobs, apprenticeships and access training. It also supports local businesses that want to expand and invest in their future workforce.

Walsall Works received funding from Walsall for All to undertake a number of activities:

- Supporting Ex-Offenders — "Identifying You"
- Engagement work with Aven House (women's refuge in Walsall)
- Working for All.

Priority 3:

Working and contributing together

Supporting Ex-Offenders – “Identifying You”

This project sought to provide identification documents to ex-offenders who live in Walsall with a view of integrating them into society and back into employment over 12 months. The main outcome was for ex-offenders to fill their time constructively and to become economically independent, to reintegrate themselves into society and to enhance their self-esteem. Ex-offenders have been encouraged to engage in training courses, allowing them to access job opportunities. The aim was to support 50 to 60 ex-offenders with identification documents and to remove barriers to employment.

Due to COVID-19, it has not been possible to meet the outcomes fully as there has been limited contact with ex-offenders and probation staff. However, over time, regular contact with ex-offenders and the processing of referrals received from probation officers has resumed.

Aven House

This project supported women at Aven House, a refuge for women. It aimed to support women to improve their self-confidence and to help them gain valuable work experience. The planned outcome was to improve integration between residents, but many aspects of the project were put on hold due to COVID-19.

The project explored and built on four elements:

- **Commitments from businesses** — working with businesses who have donated kindness boxes during the COVID-19 pandemic, which have been distributed to vulnerable families across the borough. Many local businesses have been impacted by the pandemic and lockdown and as a result have furloughed many of their employees. This has meant there has not been the opportunities for work placements for the residents of Aven House. Businesses are beginning to return and we are hopeful to secure opportunities in the coming months.
- **Eating Together** — this aimed to get residents to complete a Level 1 basic food safety and hygiene qualification, as well as Maths and English, to reduce obesity and to promote healthy eating to all residents. Due to COVID-19, this was put on hold and discussions have been taking place on how best to deliver this.
- **Raise your Game** — motivational workshops that aimed to increase confidence. An introductory session was proposed but due to COVID-19, there has been no access to Aven House.

- **Family Learning** — this aimed to secure funded places at the library for the children within the 18 families at Aven House. Unfortunately, libraries have been closed as a result of the pandemic and there have been minimal services, therefore it has not been possible to deliver this element. It was agreed that some of the funding should be used to buy laptops and 4G dongles for the Aven House residents. This allowed the residents to access training, courses and to find out about local opportunities.

Working for All

This project supported Walsall residents to find employment and to create a positive impact on participants' wellbeing and self-confidence. It also supported the local economy. It included Raise Your Game sessions, the creation of action plans, locality events and engagement with businesses.

Due to the lockdown restrictions, it has not been possible to deliver face-to-face events, therefore, all delivery has been virtual. As a result, seven Walsall Works roadshows have taken place over six months, with 2,344 video views. Raise Your Game sessions have been put on hold due to the restrictions but further sessions are planned, working with smaller cohorts. As the delivery has taken place via Walsall Works, the name itself creates a sense of belonging to Walsall and the local area.

LEGACY (Walsall Works): The legacy of this project will be integration of various vulnerable groups in society, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to continue delivery. The Employment and Skills team will support the organisations to access alternative funding to sustain and to enhance the delivery of projects.



Priority 4:

Living together



Priority 4:

Living together

Measures

Sense of belonging

to Walsall / the local area / the immediate neighbourhood.

Meaningful positive social mixing

Comfort with difference (if buddy is from different ethnic group).

Digital skills (Home Office indicators).

% reporting confidence in using technology to access digital services

% with personal access to the internet (including mobile data).

Rights and responsibilities / safety (Home Office indicators)

Awareness of key institutions, rights, supports and pathways to participation (also sits under safety and digital skills).

Equal opportunities to reach employment potential

There are opportunities in the local area to get the right support with finding and entering work.

Stability (Home Office indicators)

% accessing permanent employment.

% reporting satisfaction with local area.

% reporting familiarity and trust with local people and neighbours (overlaps with other outcome measures listed above).

Methods of intervention	Output data	Outcomes
<p>Welcome pack / buddy scheme (Nash Dom)</p> <p>Welcome pack, focus groups, feedback and surveys</p>	<p>Consultation with new communities and assessment of needs completed in May 2020.</p> <p>10 topics/services covered x 1600 copies and eight languages covered.</p> <p>20 buddies recruited, six pairs created and an additional 33 volunteers recruited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New residents know about their rights, responsibilities, services and community groups and voluntary organisations. • A network of buddies and volunteers support people who are new to Walsall through signposting and support building networks.
<p>Supporting victims of hate crime (Black Country Innovate)</p> <p>Hate Crime Survey</p>	<p>Hate crime partnership formed with regular hate crime data sharing.</p> <p>New campaign for reporting using video stories and social media.</p> <p>12 hate crime ambassadors recruited.</p> <p>Number of training sessions held.</p> <p>Research findings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All different communities are aware of hate crime reporting options, helping make people feel safer in Walsall. • Hate crime reporting is more accessible to all different groups. • Victims are provided with better support and believe it will result in a positive action.
<p>Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) community support</p>	<p>Regular engagement with gypsy, traveller and Roma communities on improving access to services and wellbeing.</p> <p>Public Health Working Group on GTR set up.</p> <p>Gypsy, traveller and Roma networks feeding into services/policies towards GTR.</p> <p>Transit site planning permission approved, in preparation.</p> <p>Training and development for staff and elected members is in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an increased understanding among Walsall residents, council, elected leaders, police and partners of GTR community – resulting in reduced tensions. • Transit site is available for those who have a need to stop on unauthorised encampment. • Walsall Council has regular networks/voice with GTR community to ensure service provision and policies better understand and meet their needs.

Priority 4: Living together



Front cover of the Welcome to Walsall packs.

Welcome pack and buddy scheme

The aim of the welcome pack was to support the integration of newly arrived communities in the borough. The pack provides information on services and local amenities, as well as information on rights and responsibilities of residents. This support would be assisted by a local buddying scheme, which would enable people to get help at an early stage so that issues could be identified and dealt with.

The **welcome pack** evolved through an initial consultation with focus groups to establish what information people from those newly arrived communities needed. Input from other stakeholders and professionals was also key to its development. The resulting pack consists of a folder and a directory of services and information. The directory contains information, such as health and wellbeing services, housing and benefits, transport, immigration and local services, and is available in eight languages (English, Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali). 1600 copies have been printed.

The pack was officially launched at an event held on 10 September 2021, aimed at welcoming Afghan families to the borough and it has now been disseminated to many residents and partner organisations. Although it is a little early to be able to give comprehensive feedback on its success at this stage, initial feedback has been encouraging.

It is a relevant resource both for new residents and professionals working with these groups.

The initial **buddy scheme** aimed to support integration of newly arrived residents to the borough and to aid meaningful social mixing. A buddy is someone who had previously been new to the borough and who would also have faced initial challenges settling in. Altogether, 20 buddies and 32 volunteers were involved in the scheme and full training, which included health and safety and safeguarding training, and information on referral mechanisms, was given.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the main challenge for the timely development and delivery of both the welcome pack and buddy scheme. This greatly affected the consultation and input gathering process for the welcome pack as most of the service providers and organisations had different priorities and limited availability. For the buddy scheme, this proved to be a major barrier in implementing the original plan of bringing people together. Activities were adapted and moved online where possible.

LEGACY (Welcome pack and buddy scheme): The welcome pack can be updated and added to. The buddy scheme has resulted in individuals being able to connect and share their experiences. Some friendships continue and, following the end of the buddy scheme, seven volunteers continue to work with Nash Dom and are committed to their future activities.

Case study



Maria arrived in the borough from Romania with her parents and two brothers when she was 13 years old. She faced many challenges on arrival: a language barrier and learning about a new education system among other things, and she had to make a huge effort to integrate. She initially took English lessons to improve her level of communication. When the COVID-19 pandemic happened, the family went through a major crisis and Maria found it difficult to stay isolated at home, in a crowded house, with the family on a very limited income and unable to travel back to Romania. Despite these challenges, she started searching for new opportunities for using her time well and connecting with others. This was how she came across Nash Dom's buddy scheme.

She signed up to the scheme with one of her best friends, Loredana. Initially both Maria and Loredana were shy but they both seemed to be driven with a desire to learn and to do new things. They participated in the scheme as volunteers, their confidence rapidly improved and they both transitioned from being participants to leading on some of the activities. They were linked with other volunteering opportunities, such as the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) programme and the Women's (cycling) Tour that took place in Walsall. Over the summer, they have also volunteered at Nash Dom's holiday activity scheme.

It has been a journey of self-discovery for both women. They gave trust in Nash Dom and were committed to helping others. The buddy scheme proved to be a perfect example of empowerment of individuals and mutual support in the community.

Priority 4:

Living together

Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Community Support

Walsall borough has an existing settled and itinerant gypsy and traveller population, and some recently settled Roma communities originating from central and eastern Europe. These diverse communities can be the subject of prejudice and negative views, particularly when there are unauthorised encampments but also in relation to Brexit. It was important for Walsall's Integrated Area programme to recognise this as an important area of work in the context of hate crime and social integration.

Working closely with Public Health, a Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) needs assessment working group was set up, which identified gaps in our understanding of different social impacts. The working group has considered a number of themes, from education to housing (both in brick and mortar as well as in settled accommodation), health inequalities and frequency of unauthorised encampments. It was decided that a specific project will be commissioned with the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, primarily to engage with people on unauthorised encampments but also to identify settled gypsy and traveller communities across the borough.

The research was concluded in August 2019 with an internal report - ***Solving a “problem” or meeting a need? - Engagement with Gypsies and Travellers in respect of need for transitional short stay provision site in Walsall.*** The Unauthorised Encampments Scrutiny Working Group considered its recommendations, highlighted several options including a transit site, expanding capacity on existing sites and ‘negotiated stopping’. As a result, between 2019 and 2021, planning permission has been sought and is now obtained for a Pleck transit site and its development is currently under consultation. A series of good practice briefings organised with Near Neighbours and Friends of GTR took place in Pleck, to raise positive awareness of the cultural needs of GTR communities and to reduce future community tensions.

The research report also highlighted that 70 per cent of travellers are now settled and this group is currently increasing. It is a longer-term goal to enable and facilitate better engagement with the settled GTR communities. However, consultation with travellers on the permanent site indicated they did not want to hold a formal forum and there was more to be done to build trust with public bodies. While the families are accepted in the localities where they live, it is important to tackle prejudice towards these communities on social media and on access to services.

Another important aspect of this project was for Walsall for All to identify trusted individuals from the GTR communities who could act as hate crime ambassadors, tackle negative perceptions and stereotypes held about GTR and raise awareness of hate crime reporting with these communities. While this is a work in progress, the online network set up alongside the Walsall Hate Crime project – Walsall Responses, recruited one hate crime ambassador from a

GTR background and the network is active in monitoring negative perceptions of the GTR on social media at grassroots level and also posting regular updates.

Training was developed and delivered to elected members in 2019/20. The feedback was positive and further training, aimed at elected members and professionals, is being developed to coincide with the opening of the transit.

LEGACY (Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community Support): Walsall for All must continue to develop better engagement with the GTR communities and to create positive campaigns that tackle issues that affect GTR communities negatively. Walsall for All, led by Walsall Council, will continue to deliver bespoke GTR training to public sector professionals and elected members. Implementation of the transit site will be closely monitored, ensuring good community relations and tackling of hate crime.

Supporting the victims of hate crime (Black Country Innovate)

As part of the priority 4 'Living Together' it was important to consider hate crime in the context of lived experiences in our neighbourhoods. Like other parts of the UK, racially driven hate crime was the highest of all the hate crime categories. Disability and LGBTQ+ hate crime is also significantly under-reported and, unfortunately, was sometimes accepted as "a way of life". The districts with less diversity often had higher instances of hate crimes reported compared to those that are more diverse.

'Supporting the victims of hate crime' project was delivered with Black Country Innovate (BCI). The initial goal was to achieve better awareness of hate crime, review the third-party reporting centres, improve partnership working and sharing of data with West Midlands Police, and finally, to involve a wider range of partner organisations into crime interventions.

Training

Substantial investment has been made into hate crime training since 2019 on all aspects, from the victim's experience and the bystanders role to volunteers' support.

Bespoke training for **hate crime ambassadors** was delivered with Communities Inc, designed around the victim support model. This takes into account the impact of hate crimes on the victims as well as the wider support network sharing the same or similar characteristics. As a result of this training, 12 hate crime ambassadors were recruited. The feedback from participants was excellent with 100 per cent feeling confident about supporting victims and better understanding the impact. The pandemic limited further focus on perpetrators and cooperation with Walsall College. The impact of learning across the localities has been limited, due to restrictions on face-to-face activities and some of the skills were not fully used at that stage.

Stand By Me Training¹⁰ was also delivered to individuals and organisations in Walsall. The focus was on the role of the bystander and the intervention they can make to identify, report and reduce hate crimes. The success of this training led to West Midlands Police offering the training to police volunteers and staff, and has been further extended to the Stand by Me Ambassador Training.

Priority 4:

Living together

Remedi¹¹ which specialises in restorative justice, delivered training for the Walsall for Hate Crime Support Service volunteers. The aim was to increase volunteers' confidence in reporting hate crime, support the victims and share knowledge of hate crime with the wider community. Of the 20 -24 volunteers that were to be recruited for this activity, 14 signed up. There is some further work to be done to evaluate its potential impact in different settings, for example, case conferences.

Partnerships and networking

An active WhatsApp group called Walsall Responses, was set up as a priority. It has 26 members, comprising the hate crime ambassadors, faith and communities and some representatives from statutory bodies (police, council, college).

The purpose of Walsall Responses is to monitor social media for emerging community tensions in different localities and to encourage the reporting of hate crime, where relevant. The information feeds into regular Community Tensions meetings between Walsall Council and the police.

To build on this new information exchange mechanism, there were some attempts to bring a hate crime conference or hate crime away day with the Safer Walsall Partnership in 2019/20, but restrictions on social mixing has meant this has not yet happened. Some further work will be required to fully understand how the hate crime reporting mechanism can be improved, particularly in understanding how to increase confidence in reporting from particular under-represented groups.

Promotion

Walsall for All regularly promoted hate crime reporting, which resulted in an increase in the number of followers and a significant increase in hate crime awareness. This has positively contributed to the 50 per cent increase in hate crime reporting in the borough between April and June 2021 compared to the same period in 2020. A number of promotional campaigns took place during the project, including **Hate Crime Awareness Week**. It raised the profile of the topic through social media and was supported by West Midlands Police communications team. Weekly messages were published on Facebook and other social media platforms.

Personal and impactful [hate crime films](#)¹² were created by Method in Motion, with four victims from Walsall sharing their experiences in two-minute interviews. The participants represent different genders and equality characteristics. The stories continue to be promoted across social media platforms but will require a 'campaign' approach, with further engagement with some important players, for example, social landlords.

Walsall Council and **Safer Walsall Partnership** reviewed their webpages in relation to hate crime reporting.

Hate crime research

De Montfort University was commissioned to do research into hate crime in Walsall, with the target of at least 250 participants. The responses from victims willing to participate was low during the first tranche of the research, so an extension has been agreed and 10,000 flyers are to be distributed in relevant areas. West Midlands Police also supported an alternative research model using Birmingham City University (BCU) consulting with their known hate crime victims. It is expected that through this research BCU will analyse data from a one-year period and the findings will inform the future hate crime strategy for the region.

The Hate crime victim support service is currently being developed with the aim of targeting a minimum of 25 contacts per month. This activity has been delayed due to the pandemic, but, two training events were completed in 2020 and 2021. The trained volunteers will need ongoing support and development. BCI has started advertising this service and further marketing will take place in 2021/22.

LEGACY (hate crime): It is important there is no return to the apathy to report hate crime, which historically had been a significant barrier. While reporting has increased, it is important that Safer Walsall Partnership continues to make hate crime its strategic priority, through local conferences, training and continuous data/research sharing. The next steps will be to work with Remedi and to develop a local strategic group, as well as increase awareness and stakeholder commitment. Black Country Innovate will produce its own report, which should inform any future fundraising frameworks and sustainability.



Volunteers supporting the Walsall Hate Crime Reduction Initiative project.

Walsall for All during the COVID-19 period

The Walsall for All programme experienced its biggest challenge between March 2020 and June 2021. Due to the pandemic and introduction of social distancing measures, it was difficult to see how some of the projects based on principles of social mixing could continue to deliver their outcomes. However, our partners and project coordinators showed great passion and commitment by trying different innovative ideas, which enabled most of the projects to continue while a small number were re-profiled to meet the needs of COVID-19 emergency support.

The main achievements during this period include:

- All our Walsall for All partners participated in food and emergency items distribution during the first lockdown, with Ryecroft Hub, Nash Dom, Black Country Innovate, Mindful Gifts, Black Sisters Collective and many others leading the way.
- 10 recurrent ESOL groups were delivered online and home learning packs were used for those who were unable to access a laptop/PC/smartphone. Feedback from the providers confirmed an average of 10 students participated in each lesson. The majority of the learners successfully engaged in the sessions online despite not using the technology before. Support was provided for the learners throughout, raising digitalisation standards across the board.
- Partnership work took place with Kicsters, Youth Connect, WHG and Walsall FC Community Programme to offer age-appropriate activity packs for children and young people. More than 700 packs were distributed across Walsall. In a similar but separate initiative, Caldmore Community Garden was supported by Walsall for All to develop and distribute more than 600 activity packs for children and families across Walsall.
- One of the Innovation Grant providers, Walsall Creative Factory, was featured in the [*Express & Star*¹³](#) as an example of adapting to new circumstances.
- A project set up to work with the Deaf Community in Walsall was re-profiled to provide much-needed support to the Deaf Community. Contact was made with 31 people through Deaf Support and Care Services, the commissioned organisation, with several being given regular assistance with shopping. Some vulnerable people were identified for ongoing, additional help in the future.
- As part of Volunteers Week, we invited Walsall residents to nominate an individual or a team who deserved recognition for their volunteering work. Approximately 70 individuals and teams were nominated between 27 May and 5 June 2020 through an online form. All nominees were thanked for their efforts and received a digital certificate. Some of the stories of those nominated were shared on social media.

- Being the most followed Walsall-based social media platform for COVID-19 related communications, we subsequently created a 90% increase in views since March 2020. Alongside Public Health, Walsall for All shared information in different languages and alternative formats, as well as videos which featured various faith and community leaders.

Walsall for All taking part in the national research

Walsall for All was one of the participating agencies in the development and publicity of the **Belong Network research project**¹⁴ on the impact of COVID-19 on societal cohesion, jointly with Nuffield Foundation and the University of Kent. The findings published as *Beyond Us and Them: Societal Cohesion in the Context of COVID-19 and Radical Kindness*¹⁵ provide an important historical record of what is happening to societal cohesion as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold and it will support policy to build resilience against future short-, medium- and long-term challenges. Since the publication, Walsall for All has delivered three webinars in relation to the findings, the Living Room Series, Radical Kindness Elevenses and Beyond Us and Them.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC, previously MHCLG) is a founding member and continuous funder of the Belong Network whose aim is to disseminate knowledge and best practice on integration. Bradford and Blackburn with Darwen and Waltham Forest are also taking part in this important piece of research, together with community partners such as Street Games, Volunteering Matters, the Jo Cox Foundation, Near Neighbours and Spirit of 2012.

Best practice regionally and nationally

Walsall for All delivered presentations in three Local Government Association Special Interest Group conferences (London, Coventry and online) on community cohesion and sharing best practice from the Walsall for All Integration Area Programme. A presentation was also delivered to the West Midlands Combined Authority Community Cohesion Round Table in March 2021. This was well received and another round-table event is being planned.



Youth Connect delivering activity packs to children and young people in Walsall.

Express & Star¹³ - <https://www.expressandstar.com/entertainment/walsall-entertainment/2020/05/05/walsall-creative-factory-brings-community-together-through-arts/>

Belong Network research project¹⁴ - <https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/news-and-events/beyond-us-and-them-covid-19-research/>

Beyond Us and Them findings¹⁵ - <https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/research-projects/>

Walsall for All Review in 2020 (Publicus)

Publicus was commissioned to undertake a review of Walsall for All, with the aim of understanding the programme and its experience of being part of the DLUHC (previously MHCLG) Integration Areas pilot. Most importantly, it was an opportunity to see how lessons learnt could inform the development of the Walsall for All model and the work of the equalities, cohesion and integration team in Walsall beyond the Integration Areas Programme.

Publicus engaged with stakeholders through more than 75 hours of interviewing between June and September 2020. There was a universal agreement that the work of Walsall for All was valued, that it should continue and that its development should be supported.

Though the first wave of the government Integration Areas Programme was near completion at the time, the activity that Walsall for All has created remains current and vital.

Designing the review was split into three parts:

- **Modelling the system** to understand the concepts behind local cohesion and integration and the role of Walsall for All in influencing and informing this agenda.
- **Identifying stakeholders** that can interrogate the model, identify actors who are best placed to share insights and go beyond the obvious
- **Developing questions** to ask of those stakeholders and to validate or refute the model that has been developed under Walsall for All.

Among those interviewed were:

- Strategic stakeholders
- Operational stakeholders
- Frontline staff
- Other integration areas
- Cohesion and integration experts in other parts of the country.

The process aimed to be informative and engaging, offering stakeholders a good and productive reflective experience.

Key findings from the review:

- **A distinctive delivery model (asset-led interventions)** — a large portfolio of project-based activities made up the delivery of the Walsall for All programme. Publicus was able to identify some activity that would not have been possible without Walsall for All's investment. There were models of commissioning activities and creating activities, both having an emphasis on external design and local delivery. There were also indications of asset-led intervention, such as ESOL and communications activity.

- **A team of change-makers** — the Walsall for All team had the skills and competence to deliver and make a difference. The team is highly motivated by a passion and belief in the significance of its work and it has sophisticated mobilisation of using knowledge of subject areas. Stakeholders described the team as teachers and learners; active in supporting each other's development and happy as one.
- **Strategic deficits** — although Walsall for All has developed some good relationships and has completed some good change-making work at an operational level, at a strategic level the engagement and impact has been more limited. Stakeholders shared that it would be better for Walsall for All to act as a stronger, strategic partner to augment its efforts. Strategic actors are fundamentally interested in Walsall for All's work and would like to work closely together to deliver strategic benefits.

Several models were analysed by Publicus Ltd¹⁶, ranging from disbanding the Walsall for All team, maintaining it within Walsall Council, to allowing another organisation to host. The challenge was recognised in maintaining the social value already built, while developing coherent governance and strategy.

Establishing Walsall for All as an independent arms-length equality, cohesion and integration body was rated the highest for retaining the current energy and expertise and managing longer-term risks for stakeholders, communities and public agencies. For this reason, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation was recommended. The Walsall for All Partnership (LIP) Board agreed this option offered:

1. A coherent governance model. It would be based on an association-form CIO with Trustees and Members. The members would contribute to core funding and agree to a **balanced constitution**.
2. A sustainable resourcing model. It would enable, at least partially, staff transfer. The participating members would benefit from consultancy and expertise already built, for example, around public sector equality duty or cohesion. Additional funding could be sought from funding bodies for innovation or demographic changes. Income generation model could be developed and incorporated into the resourcing.



Walsall for All partnership board meeting at Walsall College – The Hub.

End-of-Programme Recommendations



Walsall for All task and finish group meeting at the Council House.

Establishing Walsall for All as a strategic and independent body

The main legacy of Walsall for All will be its **distinctive delivery model**. This model is based on commissioning open to diverse inputs, creativity and local geographical sensitivities, with social mixing in mind. The innovation projects in particular attracted smaller or new voluntary and community sector providers with no previous experience of bidding. They were valued for their 'lived experiences' and creativity. This drive, combined with some of the larger community assets, such as community associations, maximised the learning about what really matters in social integration across Walsall. Many of the localities previously assessed as 'integration cold spots', became hosts of the important conversations, for example Pelsall and Brownhills in relation to hate crime or the Community Dialogue scheme. This approach is highly valued in the metropolitan areas at risk of segregation.

As the review by Publicus in 2020 confirmed, this model had been supported by a **team of change-makers** who did not only act as commissioners but also as catalysts for networking, coaching and shared learning across the borough. To retain this distinctive delivery model with similar commitment to learning, the future Walsall for All will have to constitute itself as a stronger strategic partnership with its own status and governance, independent of DLHUC (former MHCLG) and Walsall Council. This will create an opportunity to incorporate some of the existing change-makers into the operational make-up of the organisation and enhance the existing assets.

Priority 1: Connecting across communities

Connecting across communities proved to be the strongest and most comprehensive priority. From the Pledge, instilling common standards of inclusivity across the sector, to Places of Welcome and innovation projects, it generated new physical spaces and ideas. Community research helped us gain insights into barriers and lived experiences of our residents and think about solutions. While all of the projects experienced a reduction in activity during social restrictions, most have recovered or found other ways of engaging, for example, online or via emergency support. Community Transport, aimed at bringing people together from different geographical areas, has been most impacted by COVID-19 but the principle of accessible transport remains an important element of connecting the districts, volunteers and assets.

Priority 1: Recommendations

- The Walsall for All Pledge needs to continue as a required standard across the sector, ensuring as many organisations as possible sign up and have the opportunity to share good practices with the aim of improving standards of diversity and inclusion. There should be more opportunities such as “The Pledge Conversation” for individuals and organisations to connect and share goals, and for different sectors to be aware of how the Pledge applies to them and how to adopt the commitment in their area of work to influence practice.
- Strategically, Places of Welcome needs to secure longer-term funding, ideally through match funding and in partnership with Walsall for All. Funding will not only enable the continuation of Places of Welcome but will also enable more organisations to open their doors to the community. The Walsall for All Pledge should be adopted by all participating venues. There should also be an emphasis on increasing diversity by encouraging other community venues to become Places of Welcome, recruit more buddies and through regular meetings of coordinators.
- The final Community Practitioner Research report should be used to influence the public sector training in cohesion and integration practice. Specifically, case studies and findings featured in the report should be incorporated into equality and diversity work in Walsall, such as corporate inductions and the Equally Yours board game.
- It is recommended that Deaf awareness continues to be a priority area of training for health/social care settings.
- The Saltmine Creative School Theatre programme has been well received, with great impact on children and families and it is recommended across all primary/junior schools.

Priority 2: Young people learning and growing together

Walsall was encouraged to focus on young people by the national Integration Area Programme as all integration areas have designed some interventions in this area. Initially, there was a concern that due to the loss of youth services in the previous decade, the public sector in Walsall did not have sufficient infrastructure to support it. Eventually, it was agreed it would primarily focus on giving young people a voice and pathways into social action/positive activity. One of our innovation projects under Priority 1, led by Princes’ Trust, was also aimed at increasing young people’s skills, particularly those from deprived areas, through participation in the NCS project.

We wanted to engage with schools, enriching their curriculum around equality, diversity and social cohesion. Compared to other priorities, any targets relating to schools had been

End-of-Programme Recommendations

negatively affected by school closures during the pandemic. Therefore, it is important that Children's Services and the wider education sector reflect on what can be achieved in the current climate and review their future priorities for schools. This should include a more in-depth focus on social mixing, using Walsall for All as an example of good practice.

Priority 2: Recommendations

- It is recommended that Kicsters and Walsall for All continue the Youth Voices Now platform, taking on the role of a facilitator, recruiting young people. Young people have developed a 'How to create a social action project' guide for other young people which will require further promotion.
- Walsall Arts for All project was reinstated in September 2021 and quarterly updates will be provided through the Walsall for All Board and Children's Services.
- Walsall for All is currently reconnecting with the schools for School Linking and UNICEF accreditations. It is recommended that Children's Services adopt these concepts in future strategic priorities.

Priority 3: Working and contributing together

While priority 1 and 2 focused on changing the organisations, physical spaces and networking activities, priority 3 has been most focused on individuals experiencing barriers and the role of education and employers in supporting these individuals. From ESOL in the community to Empowering Women sessions, as well as supporting the vulnerable groups into workplace (Walsall Works), the virtual Inclusive Employers Conference came just in time to sum up the borough-wide aspirations in this area to create a model for the future.

Priority 3: Recommendations

- For ESOL provision to continue in the faith and community sector, there must be sustained, long-term funding. The projects delivered have been on a large scale to ensure community delivery continues and remains accessible for residents. Communications should also be considered as part of the legacy to ensure information about ESOL provision in Walsall is available to all. In addition, a bank of multilingual volunteers should be considered, enabling them to contribute to society and be recognised for their involvement.
- DWP's aim is to ensure the empowering women projects' activities are incorporated into the Walsall Jobcentre network. The provider will continue to work with partners, ensuring that everyone can access opportunities. The provider will also continue to deliver a place-based approach and promote jobs and opportunities via partners in the community. It is recommended that DWP continues to work with Walsall for All to identify new initiatives and funding.

- The Walsall Diversity Project Inclusive Employers Conference webpage will remain active until April 2022. The Black Country Chamber of Commerce has inspired the businesses and opened doors that were closed before. As recommended, it should continue its ambition in partnership with Walsall for All — to be an exemplar in inclusive leadership and support local businesses.
- The legacy of the Walsall Works project will be the integration of various vulnerable groups in society and equipping them with the skills and knowledge. The Employment and Skills team will support the organisations to access alternative funding to sustain and enhance the delivery of projects.

Priority 4: Living Together

In terms of developing a better understanding of segregation and tensions impacting on our neighbourhoods, priority 4 has been our most ambitious priority. Before the programme started, some complex themes had not been treated as equally important in different localities, yet, through dialogue, they have started to gain more attention. These include integration of migrants, understanding the needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities and social and emotional cost of hate crime.

Priority 4 Recommendations:

- The welcome pack and buddy scheme should be a permanent resource, updated and promoted regularly. The partners will have to play a more visible role in promoting the resources available and developing new materials with service users.
- Walsall for All must continue to develop better engagement with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) communities and create positive campaigns that tackle issues that affect GTR communities negatively. It is recommended that Walsall for All partner organisations adopt bespoke GTR training to public sector professionals and decision-makers. Implementation of the stopping site should be closely monitored, ensuring good community relations and tackling of hate crime. Representatives of the GTR communities should be more visible under the Walsall for All umbrella.
- It is important that there is no return to the apathy to report hate crime, which had been a significant barrier historically. While reporting has increased, it is important that Safer Walsall Partnership continues to make hate crime its strategic priority by identifying future fundraising frameworks and sustainability. As an immediate action, a local conference, training and continuous data/research sharing should take place.

Communications work

- A report focused on the communications and engagement work of Walsall for All is available to read separately. This report discusses how any Walsall for All communications has raised awareness of the programme, its priorities and the brand. It also examines how it has become a leader in sharing information for the community and voluntary sector, and for the wider borough.
- Communications for the programme should continue to promote the long-term strategy of creating stronger integrated communities. The main recommendation would be to ensure that communications continue for as long as needed and to enable our platforms to be the go-to place for information, inspiration and resources on cohesion and integration in Walsall. This could be achieved through a dedicated resource (as current) or incorporating into mainstream communications or community cohesion work in Walsall.



WALSALL FOR ALL

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