



**Walsall Council**

# **'In Our Hands' Engagement & Participation Framework**

**Updated October 2025**



Working Together for Children and  
Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

# Introduction: Why this matters

In Walsall, we believe the best outcomes happen when children, young people, parents and carers work alongside professionals as equal partners.

This framework explains how we listen to, involve and act on the voices of families to shape SEND services across education, health and care.

There are around 11,000 children and young people with SEND in Walsall, aged 0 to 25. Each has their own story, strengths and needs.

Our aim is simple: to make sure every child and young person feels valued, supported and included, and every family feels heard, respected and part of shaping the services that affect them.

The Children and Families Act (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2015) remind us that effective participation leads to better services, greater satisfaction and improved outcomes.

This framework puts that principle into practice for Walsall.



Walsall Council



FACE WALSALL  
PARENT CARER FORUM



# Our vision

We want Walsall to be a place where everyone's voice is heard, respected and acted upon.

That means children and young people helping to shape their own support and future goals, parents and carers influencing how services are designed, delivered and improved, and professionals working in genuine partnership with families based on trust, openness and shared accountability.

Our collective goal is to make participation an everyday part of how the local area works, not an additional activity.



# Engagement, Participation and Co-production in Walsall

When we talk about engagement, participation and co-production, we mean more than consultation. We mean genuine partnership working.

## **Engagement**

Creating opportunities for children, young people, parents and carers to connect with professionals and share their views. Engagement builds trust, strengthens relationships and helps us understand what matters most.

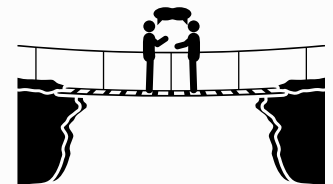
## **Participation**

Being actively involved in decisions that affect your life, your family or your community. It means being listened to, having your views taken seriously and seeing how they make a difference.

## **Co-production**

Working together as equal partners to design, develop and review services. It recognises that everyone brings valuable knowledge and experience, and that the best solutions are created when we work together from the start.

We often describe co-production as a bridge that connects families and professionals, built on respect, shared understanding and a commitment to improve outcomes together.



# Co-production in Walsall

In Walsall, co-production is embedded in everything we do.

It is about working together from the very beginning, planning, delivering and reviewing support side by side.

Our shared Working Together Charter, co-produced with FACE Walsall and the Parent Partnership Group, sets out our values.

**Open communication** – Everyone's voice is heard. We listen and respond with care and respect.

**Feeling welcomed and cared for** – We invest time in relationships and make sure partners feel included and accountable.

**Feeling valued and included** – We celebrate individuality and place inclusion at the heart of all we do.

**Working in partnership** – We agree outcomes together and build shared trust and understanding. These values guide every interaction across our SEND partnership, ensuring that lived experience continues to shape real change.



# Co-production with children and young people

Walsall's Youth SEND Forum brings together young people with SEND to share their experiences and ideas. Through open discussion, members explore what co-production really means and how they want to be involved in shaping the services that support them. The forum has developed its own understanding of co-production, what it is and what it is not.

Their message is clear:

“We want to be involved from the start, not just asked for our views at the end.”

The Youth SEND Forum continues to influence local decisions, ensuring that young people's voices remain at the heart of everything we do.

Their insight helps us understand what matters most to them and what support makes the greatest difference.

*“I've really enjoyed having fun and being a part of the youth forum. We talk about the help I get and what I think about it and how we can make it better for other people with super-powers like me.” - **Young person, aged 10.***



# Co-production with parents and carers

Parents and carers are central to Walsall's co-production journey.

Their insight, challenge and lived experience help us understand what works well, where change is needed and how to make improvements that last.

We work closely with groups such as FACE Walsall Parent Carer Forum and the Parent Partnership Group, who represent a wide range of family voices and experiences.

Together we review and shape local SEND services, co-develop guidance and resources for families and professionals and plan and deliver training, events and participation opportunities.

Their contribution is vital in helping us build an inclusive system that families recognise, trust and feel part of.

*“Over the past few years there has been great improvement in SEND services and activities for my children. I always feel valued and listened to when I get involved in partnership events to improve services.” – **Parent, Parent Partnership Group.***





# Our aims

This framework supports the SEND Code of Practice by promoting meaningful participation and partnership at every level.

Our aims are to embed participation and co-production across all areas of Walsall's SEND system.

**We will strengthen communication and feedback between families and services, and support staff and partners to work collaboratively and confidently with families.**

**Services will be shaped around the needs, aspirations and lived experiences of children and young people, ensuring that every decision and improvement is informed by the voices of those who use them.**

This approach creates a culture of shared ownership, mutual respect and continuous improvement. It ensures that participation is not a single event but a way of working that runs through everything we do.





# Our priorities

Our engagement, participation and co-production work supports the priorities set out in the Walsall SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023 to 2028. Together, we are focused on creating an inclusive local area where every child and young person can learn, achieve and thrive. These priorities guide all of our engagement and participation work in Walsall.

## **Localised high-quality provision**

Making sure children and young people can access the right support close to home through inclusive, well-supported schools and settings.

## **Early identification and help**

Spotting needs early and providing the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

## **Participate in decisions**

Building trust and working in partnership with children, young people, parents and carers to shape services and decisions together.

## **Supportive alternative provision offer**

Developing a strong and joined-up local offer that keeps children and young people connected to learning and ensures the right support is available when it is needed most.

## **Feeling valued and visible in the community**

Creating communities where children and young people with SEND feel included, visible and able to contribute.

## **Joint commissioning**

Bringing education, health and care partners together to plan and deliver joined-up services that meet local needs

# What our Self Evaluation Framework tells us

Our **SEND and Alternative Provision Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)** helps us to understand how well the local area is supporting children and young people with SEND, and where we need to improve.

It draws on evidence from practice, the experiences of families, and what our data tells us, giving a shared view of what is working well and what still needs to improve.

The SEF looks across every part of the SEND and Alternative Provision service – from early identification and assessment to inclusion, outcomes and leadership.

A key focus within this is how effectively we engage, listen and work in partnership with children, young people and families.



# What we are proud of

Families and young people are now more visible and active in local decision-making. Their voices are helping to shape strategies, services and guidance in a way that feels more joined-up and consistent.

Our Parent Partnership Group, FACE Walsall and the Youth SEND Forum all play a clear role in influencing priorities and holding us to account.

Co-production has become part of everyday practice rather than an occasional activity, and this has been recognised nationally as a strength.

The Local Offer continues to develop as a live space for sharing information, celebrating progress and promoting opportunities to get involved.

There is a growing sense of shared purpose across the partnership, with families seen as part of the solution rather than on the outside looking in.



# What we are developing further

We need to be clearer about how feedback leads to change so that families can see the difference their involvement makes.

We want to increase participation from a wider range of families, especially those whose voices are seldom heard.

We are developing better ways to measure the impact of engagement, so we can understand what difference it makes for children and young people.

We also need to build more confidence across all services in what meaningful co-production looks like in practice.

These priorities will help us strengthen how we listen, act and learn together, ensuring that participation continues to drive real improvement across the SEND and Alternative Provision service.



# Our next steps

Our next steps build on what we have learned through our self-evaluation and through feedback from children, young people, parents, carers and partners. They focus on strengthening participation and ensuring that lived experience continues to shape how we plan, deliver and review SEND and Alternative Provision in Walsall.

- We will continue to widen opportunities for children, young people and families to be involved in shaping decisions and services.
- We will make sure participation, the Local Offer and wider SEND improvement work are joined up, so families can see how their involvement helps shape change.
- We will improve how we share the impact of feedback, showing families what has changed as a result of their involvement.
- We will use consistent ways of gathering and reviewing feedback, so we can understand what's working well and where participation is making the most difference for children, young people and families.
- We will provide ongoing support and training to strengthen confidence across the workforce in working collaboratively with families.
- We will continue to celebrate and share examples of good co-production across schools, settings and services.



# Our commitment

Our approach to engagement and co-production is built on the shared values set out in Walsall's **Co-Production and Engagement Charter**.

It reflects a collective promise from everyone involved in SEND – children, young people, parents, carers and professionals – to work together with honesty, transparency and compassion.

## Our shared principles

- We communicate openly and respectfully, ensuring all voices are heard and valued.
- We work together from design to delivery, making decisions as equal partners.
- We focus on what matters to children, young people and families, tailoring support to individual needs.
- We recognise parents and carers as experts through their lived experience.
- We use restorative approaches to strengthen relationships and maintain trust.
- We provide clear, accessible information so families can make informed choices.
- We share responsibility for improving outcomes and hold each other to account with kindness and respect.

These principles guide how we engage, act and learn as a partnership.

They ensure that co-production is not a single event but a consistent way of working that shapes everything we do across Walsall's SEND and Alternative Provision service.

# Our Engagement and Participation Partners

This framework has been shaped through strong and ongoing partnership across Walsall. It reflects the shared commitment of families, professionals and services to work together for children and young people with SEND.

## **Our key engagement and participation partners**

- FACE Walsall Parent Carer Forum – representing parent and carer voice across the borough.
- Parent Partnership Group – providing insight, challenge and lived experience to shape improvement.
- Youth SEND Forum – ensuring that the voices of young people are central to planning and review.
- Walsall SENDIAS Service – offering impartial information, advice and support to children, young people and families, helping them to take part confidently in decisions.
- Local Offer Steering Group – bringing families and professionals together to co-produce accessible information and resources.
- Walsall SENCo Forum – connecting schools and settings to share good practice, promote inclusion and strengthen professional collaboration

Together, these partnerships ensure that lived experience continues to shape decisions, strengthen services and drive improvement across Walsall's SEND and Alternative Provision service.



# Walsall SEND – Working Together Charter

Open  
Communication

"ENSURE everyone's  
**VOICE** IS HEARD"



Be Transparent  
and CLEAR



**Actively listen**

at the first opportunity to ensure families  
receive the correct support.

Use Language that cares!



Be OPEN

HONEST and RESPECTFUL  
in ALL communications



Feel Welcomed  
and Cared for

Invest **TIME**  
for working  
together



ALL partners  
are involved and  
**ACCOUNTABLE**

**FEEDBACK...**

**YOU SAID...**  
**...WE DID!**



Respect  
everyone's  
opinion



**EQUAL PARTNERS**



Feel Valued and  
Included

Prepare children and  
young people for adulthood



Prioritise children and young people's aspirations!

**CARE**

for and about  
families lived  
experiences



Early  
intervention  
and support



**Celebrate**

children and young people as they are

Working in  
partnership

A shared  
understanding



COOPERATION

COLLABORATION

COOPERATION

Include  
Involve  
**AGREE**  
outcomes **TOGETHER**



# A shared journey

This framework is more than a document; it represents how we work together in Walsall.

It reflects the belief that real improvement happens when children, young people, parents, carers and professionals share ideas, make decisions together and hold one another to account with trust and respect. Every conversation, meeting and plan is an opportunity to listen, learn and act together.

Through this shared approach, we will continue to build a service that is inclusive, transparent and shaped by the voices and experiences of those it supports. By keeping co-production at the heart of everything we do, we can make sure that every child and young person with SEND in Walsall is seen, supported and given the chance to thrive.

**This framework has been co-produced with partners, parents and carers, children and young people in Walsall.**

Thank you to every child, young person, parent, carer and professional who has contributed to this work. Your honesty, insight and commitment continue to shape inclusion in Walsall and make a real difference every day.

