

SEND Self-Evaluation Framework

November 2025



Walsall Council



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Foreword

The Local Area Partnership are rightfully proud of both the impact their work is having on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and the innovative changes made to ensure continuous improvement in the work that we do.

We have continued to focus on developing our services at pace, informed by understanding the lived experience of children growing up in Walsall and with a focus on providing the right help for our most vulnerable children and families to deliver sustained outcomes. We are proud that our co-production has been recognised as a key strength by the Department for Education and NHS England, ensuring that services are shaped by the voices and lived experiences of those who rely on them.

"The local area partnership is committed and willing to establish an inclusive culture to improve SEND services for the children and young people in Walsall. Feedback from FACE, school, health and social care representatives included that coproduction has improved significantly and is now a strength in Walsall." – Department for Education/NHS England – Nov 2023

We have made significant progress in ensuring the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are identified accurately and assessed effectively. This reflects our commitment to delivering high-quality services that make a meaningful difference to the lives of children, young people, and their families.

Our commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to the needs of our community ensures that we continue to make significant and sustained progress in supporting children and young people with SEND. Our improvement journey has driven a cultural transformation, strengthening collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility with our families, schools, and partners.

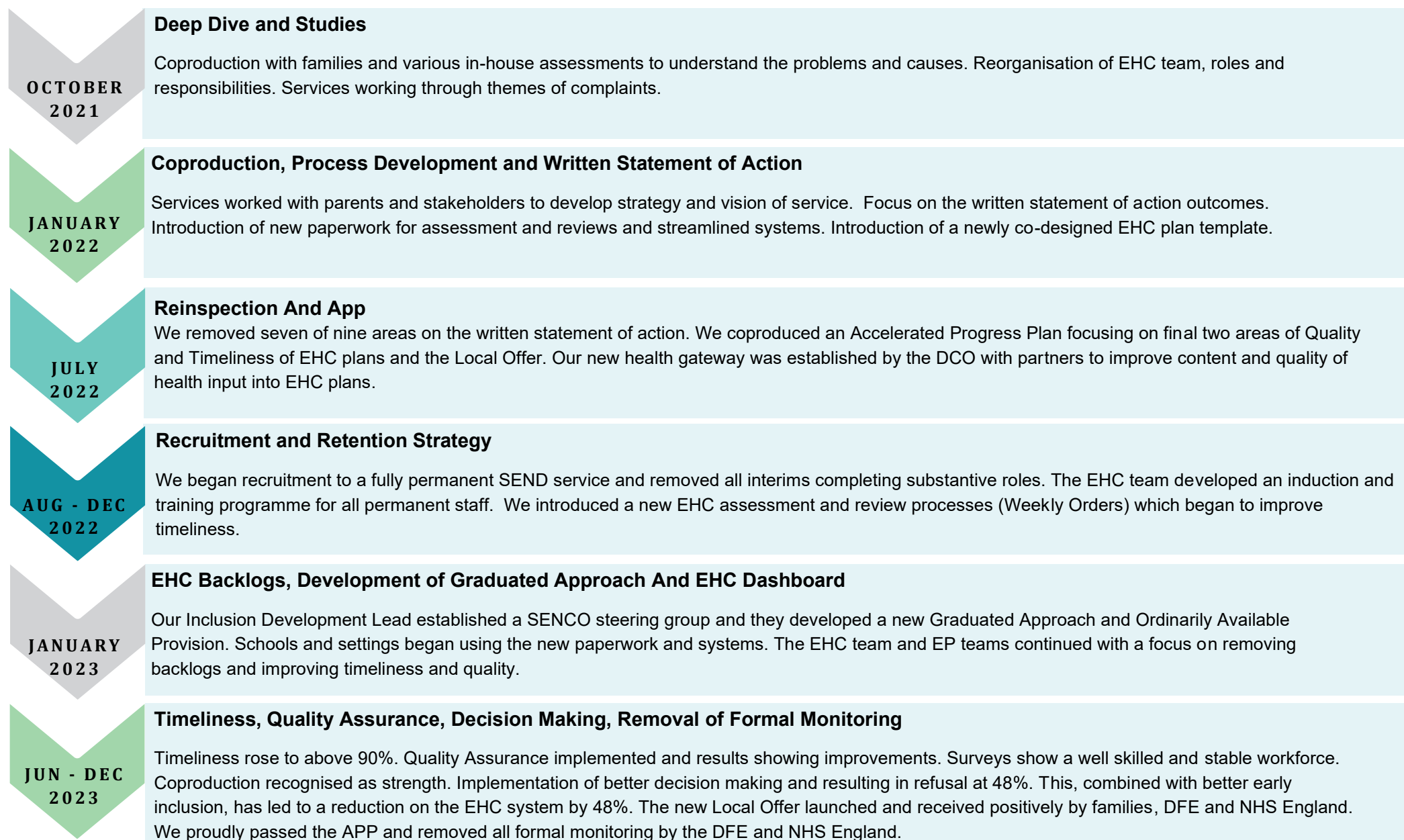
The lived experience of children, young people and their families with SEND is central to our developments and co- production is fundamental within our continuing work. We value and will continue to listen to our SEND community. We will continue to learn from what they tell us and ensure their voices influence our work and developments. By working together in partnership, we will provide the right support at the right time, for all children and young people with SEND across our community and ensure we deliver the very best outcomes based on their needs.

Our Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) and Working Together Charter have been co-produced with parents, carers, and families (including FACE, Walsall's Parent Carer Forum); children and young people with lived experience; early years settings; schools; colleges; frontline practitioners; the voluntary and community sector; the Local Area Inclusion Board (LAIB); and the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board. Both reflect a shared commitment to collaboration and inclusion.

Our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has highlighted forecast pressures on SEND and AP services in coming years, and where there are likely to be increased demand in future services. The Walsall Local Area Partnership will continue to innovate and improve in order to meet those needs.

Our Improvement Journey (2021-2023)

The Local Area Partnership are committed to transforming services so that we meet the needs of children and their families at the earliest opportunity. The continuous improvements made through our programmes have been acknowledged in the findings of a number of inspections.



Our Improvement Journey (2024)

**JANUARY
2024**

Strengthening Inclusion through the Walsall SENCO Forum

The Walsall SENCO Forum is now an established and integral part of our approach to strengthening inclusive practices across the borough. At our most recent forum, over 100 SENCOs, Inclusion Leads, and setting-based SEN Support Staff attended, demonstrating a high level of engagement and commitment to professional development.

**MARCH
2024**

Dedicated Support for Additionally Vulnerable Children and Young People

Our newly appointed Additionally Vulnerable Senior Casework Officer ensures the unique needs of all children and young people in this group are effectively addressed, providing tailored oversight and dedicated support. This new role prioritises proactive engagement to identify and meet individual needs, ensuring no child is overlooked.

**MAY
2024**

Strengthening Oversight and Collaboration in Alternative Provision

We established the AP Thematic Review Group to oversee and improve Alternative Provision (AP) in Walsall, implementing quality assurance processes and a centralized AP register to monitor outcomes and transitions. We created a bespoke AP definition, launched forums to amplify student and parent voices, and developed an online portal to enhance accessibility and collaboration.

**JULY
2024**

Strengthening Social Care Collaboration and Efficiency

The DSCO role, introduced in July 2024, has strengthened collaboration between Children's and Adult Services, establishing an efficient EHC Needs Assessment (EHCNA) pathway with improved operational oversight. A new social care form ensures consistent, high-quality advice for EHCP Sections D, H1, and H2, with all submissions now meeting the six-week statutory timeframe.

**SEPTEMBER
2024**

Further Strengthening EHC Team Stability and Efficiency

We have a stable EHC team, with 80% of colleagues now having over a year's tenure. Further team restructuring has introduced three Annual Review teams and a dedicated Assessment Team, supported by a comprehensive induction and upcoming IPSEA training to enhance service delivery across Walsall.

**NOVEMBER
2024**

Expanding Educational Psychology Services to meet Growing Demand

EPS recruitment continues to improve. The EPS team has grown from a workforce of 2.8 FTEs in Sept 2022 to 9.8 FTE in Nov 2024. The EPS continue to develop our traded relationships with schools. We currently trade with 52% of state funded settings with Walsall. The demand for our service remains high with settings increasing the number of sessions they wish to purchase. ELSA, SCERTS and EBSA training delivered by the EPS to support schools meet the needs of their students as part of their graduated response is highly rated. 81% of Education Psychology reports are submitted within 6 weeks of allocation and 93% within 7 weeks (this financial year to date)

Our Improvement Journey (2025)

**MARCH
2025**

Termly Pupil Tracking Partnership Audits Established

Termly pupil tracking audits were introduced to evaluate the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. By gathering families' lived experiences alongside professional input, these audits provide rich insights into the impact of support and drive continuous improvement across the partnership.

**APRIL
2025**

Parent Partnership Group and SEND Youth Forum Relunched

A new Parent Partnership Group and relaunched SEND Youth Forum were established, strengthening collaboration with children, young people, and families. These groups ensure the voices of children, young people, and families directly shape service delivery and drive co-production across all areas of SEND.

**APR-JUN
2025**

Preparation For Adulthood Co-Production and Steering Group

Multi-professional co-production days were held to shape Walsall's Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) framework and action plan. A PfA Steering Group was established, bringing together education, health, social care, and parent carers to set priorities, drive improvements and embed PfA from the earliest ages across the partnership.

**MAY
2025**

Local Offer Improvement Plan Finalised

Following a comprehensive review led by the newly appointed Local Offer and Engagement Lead, the Local Offer Improvement Plan was finalised and shared with partners in May 2025. Building on an already well-regarded offer, the plan sets out actions to further improve navigation, accessibility, and the quality of information available to SEND families.

**JUNE
2025**

Strategic Approach to Vulnerable Groups

Our Senior Casework Officers and EHC Team Manager have strengthened collaboration with key services supporting vulnerable groups, such as EHE, reduced timetables, CME, AP teams, and Youth Justice. Each group now has a dedicated link officer, ensuring tailored oversight and support. This approach enables timely, effective outcomes across all cohorts.

**JULY
2025**

Strengthened SEND & AP Quality Assurance Framework

A co-produced SEND & AP Quality Assurance Framework was implemented, embedding multi-agency QA partnership days and robust internal QA processes to ensure compliance, consistency, and improved outcomes for children and young people across the partnership.

**JUN - AUG
2025**

EHC Team Summer Training Schedule

A targeted summer training schedule was delivered for the EHC Team. The programme built skills, improved consistency, and reinforced quality assurance processes ahead of the new academic year. Subsequent termly training plans will be devised and implemented to ensure continuous development

**JULY
2025**

Annual Review Weekly Orders Introduced

Annual Review Weekly Orders, a weekly monitoring and tracking process, were introduced to strengthen timeliness, improve oversight, and ensure statutory deadlines are consistently met. The process enables early identification of barriers, while supervision and performance monitoring reinforce expectations around clear and timely communication of review decisions.

Proven Impact of Our Improvement Journey

Our journey of continuous improvement has had a proven positive impact on the experiences and outcomes for children and young People with SEND.

Excellent Timeliness of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans.



In the calendar year 2024 81.6% of new EHCPs were issued within 20 weeks, a 21.4 percentage point increase on the previous year. Compared to the national 2023 figure, the Walsall 2024 figure was 31.3 percentage points above national. In 2025 timeliness has continued to improve, with 98.7% of assessments completed on time.

Creating an Environment for Effective Practice



Initiatives such as the Early Inclusion Framework and the SENCO Forum have equipped settings and schools with the tools and training to support children and young people effectively. A SENCO Forum training schedule is planned for each academic year, enabling sessions to be tailored to identified training requests and key areas for improvement. The immediate impact of this was a 12% reduction in requests for assessment in 2024 as more children are effectively supported by schools.

Strong Engagement with Families



Since the Local Offer & Engagement Lead came into post in May 2025, the Local Offer website has seen a marked increase in usage and accessibility. The site now averages 10,282 visits per month, with 61,693 page views recorded in just six months (December 2024 – June 2025), compared to 57,568 views across the previous 12 months. This represents a 7.2% increase in half the time, evidencing the growing reach and relevance of the Local Offer. The rise in engagement reflects recent improvements in accessibility, website redesign, clearer communications, continuous feedback from our SEND families and strengthened co-production activity, ensuring the information is more tailored to families' needs.

Positive feedback received from our families



Feedback from families confirms that more children and young people feel that they're receiving the support they need.

Nominated for "Local Area Partnership Team Of The Year" award



Due to Walsall's commitment to collaboration across education, health, and social care, we were honoured to be nominated for the Local Area Partnership Team of the Year Award. This nomination recognised Walsall's unwavering dedication to improving outcomes and providing every child and family with the right help and support at the right time.

DFE and NHS England Comments when we passed the Accelerated Progress Plan in November 2023:

"The local area redesigned processes have resulted in improved EHCP timeliness."

"You have developed a new Quality Assurance (QA) framework which has been embedded into practice. Monitoring and reporting of QA outcomes has been strengthened with key stakeholders, reporting having been involved in the process."

"You now have a plan in place to monitor and improve the quality of annual reviews. Parent representatives told us that the quality of annual reviews has improved since the SEND revisit in June 2022 and have felt heard and valued throughout the process."

"A Walsall-focused Local Offer has been co-produced with children, young people and their families. You now have mechanisms in place to continually review and develop the content and information available."

"FACE representatives reported that parents and carers find the Local Offer accessible, easy to navigate and appreciate the use of jargon-free language."

"The local area partnership feels that the Local Offer now includes information that will help and support children, young people, parents, carers, education providers and service professionals in their day-to-day lives."

"The local area partnership is committed and willing to establish an inclusive culture to improve SEND services for the children and young people in Walsall. Feedback from FACE, school, health and social care representatives included that coproduction has improved significantly and is now a strength in Walsall."

2025 NHSE SEND Best Practice Awards Winner (Feb 25)

Our Advanced Practitioner Speech and Language Therapist, won the SEND Health Practitioner recognition category evidencing how an individual champions SEND and takes every opportunity to promote positive outcomes for children and young people. Suzanne has worked to develop the paediatric element of a new undergraduate dysphagia student programme and led on the mentoring and succession planning for the dysphagia workforce. Due to ever increasing service demands and limited capacity, Suzanne developed a new triage process which has seen a positive impacts in being able to more accurately identify the risk level of babies and children who are awaiting a dysphagia (safety of swallowing) assessment and in having a quality initial contact with families who having feeding concerns about their children. This has resulted in a decrease in initial waiting time to access the service and the ability to give concerned families the initial advice and support they need.

Suzanne has worked closely with Education staff to develop the special schools service offer with ongoing work with other Speech and Language Therapy Managers to ensure that the special schools and mainstream service offers are equitable across the service. Suzanne has led on Bitesize training sessions for Parents/Carers, increasing engagement with families of CYP who attend special school provisions. These sessions have now also been adopted by other services areas of the Walsall Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy team to reach a wider audience. Suzanne continues to work closely with many other professionals in Education and Health, including involvement in developing a pathway for supporting young people with complex needs who are not accessing an Educational provision with MDT working central to this.

Suzanne is passionate about supporting children and young people's communication skills using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) - where communication is supported using a range of strategies, not just spoken speech. Suzanne re-designed the communication book pathway including developing a range of single symbol boards and symbol communication books. Children can now receive a communication book as soon as a need is identified by a member of the Speech and Language Therapy Team; this has resulted in some very positive long term outcomes where children have gone on to receive a loan of a voice output communication device to support their functional communication in their daily environments. Suzanne is keen to listen to what families want and find important; family feedback will be sought out in an upcoming audit of the communication pathway in order to further shape this part of the service.

Suzanne now leads the Paediatric Dysphagia service and continues to be greatly involved within the special school service and in supporting communication skills through the use of AAC. Suzanne continues to strive to further develop these service areas with the aim to support the families and their children who access these services in the most efficient and effective ways possible.



Children and Young People in Walsall with an EHCP

Data as of 31st July 2025



4804

EHCP's maintained by
Walsall Council



16.0%

First language is not English
(0-25)



35.0%

Ethnic minorities (0-25)



32.6%

Pupil premium (school age)



207

Open to Early Help



194

Children in Need ongoing
assessments



15

Children on a Child
Protection Plan



14

Open to Youth Justice Service



95

Children in Care
29 Care Leavers (18-24)



45

Children not on a school roll
(CME)



101

Children in part-time
education provision



39

Children Electively Home
Educated (EHE)



6600

SEN support (nursery to sixth form)



18.3%

First language is not English (school census)



37.1%

Ethnic minorities (0-25)



49.4%

Pupil premium (school age)



255

Open to Early Help



140

Children in Need ongoing assessments



22

Children on a Child Protection Plan



12

Open to Youth Justice Service



65

Children in Care
17 Care Leavers (18-24)



32

Children not on a school roll (CME)



45

Children in part-time education provision



137

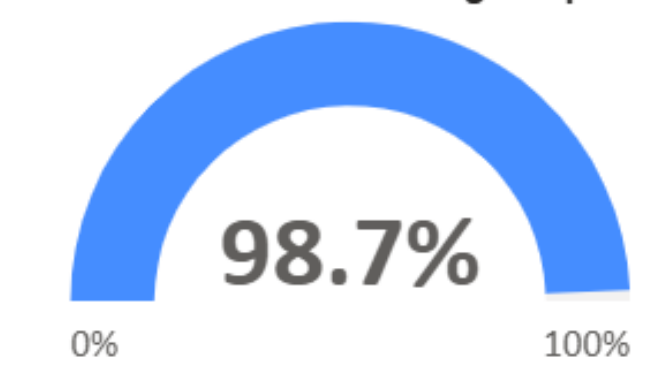
Children Electively Home Educated (EHE)

The needs of children and young people with SEND are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

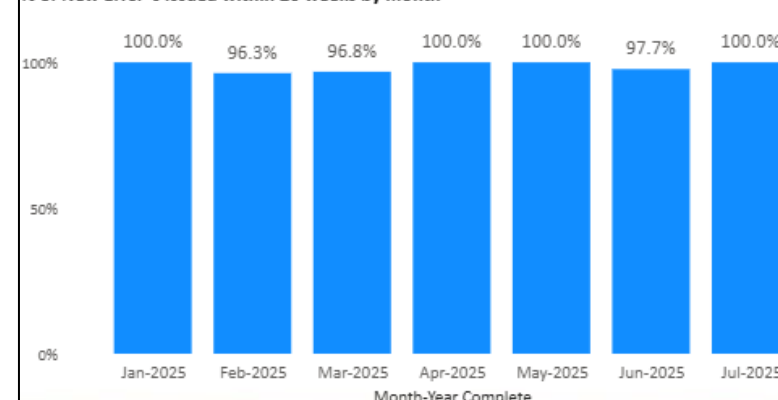
Key Performance Indicator – EHCP Timeliness

In the calendar year 2023 60.2% of new EHCP's were issued in Walsall within 20 weeks (excluding exception cases). In the calendar year 2024, Walsall made further improvements, with 87.1% of new EHCPs issued within 20 weeks (excluding exception cases). This was a 26.9 percentage point increase on the previous year and was 40.7 percentage points above national. The percentage of new EHCP's issued within 20 weeks in each month of 2025 confirms the progress being made by the team in meeting the statutory timelines. In seven months of 2025, over 96% of assessments were processed in 20 weeks.

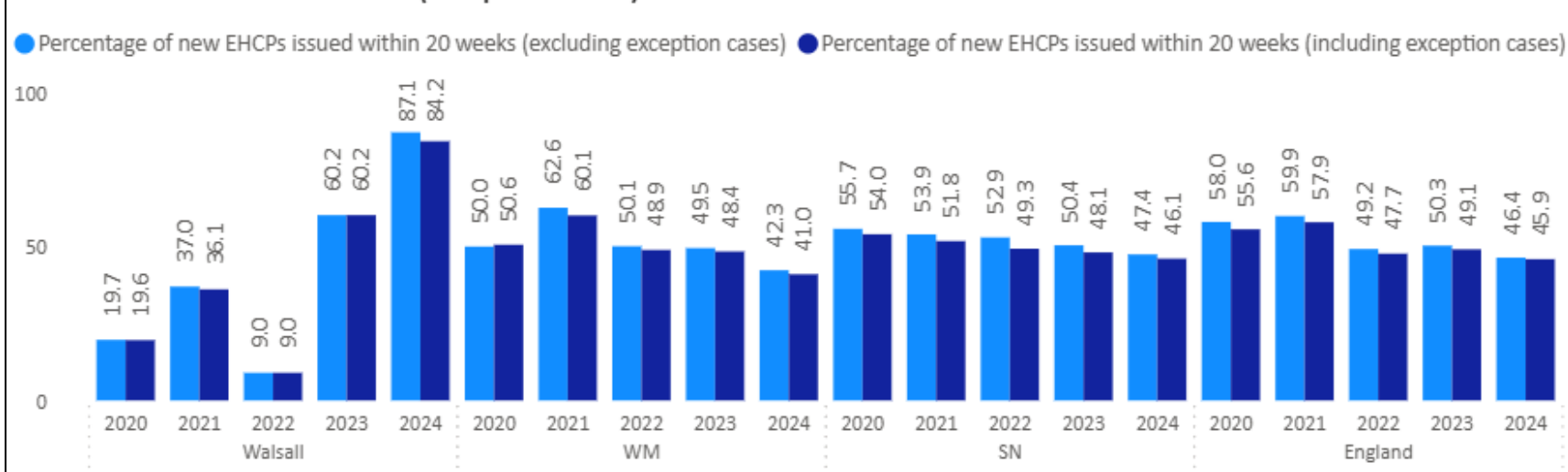
Calendar Year 2025 excluding exceptions



% of New EHCP's Issued within 20 weeks by month



% of new EHCP's issued within 20 weeks (SEN2 published data)



The needs of children and young people with SEND are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

The identification and assessment of SEND is underpinned by a culture of early intervention and robust multi-agency working. Practitioners across education, health, and social care in Walsall work collaboratively to identify and assess the needs of children and young people effectively, ensuring timely and well-coordinated support. Leaders demonstrate strong self-evaluation and continuous improvement, with evidence of significant progress in reducing backlogs and meeting statutory assessment timeframes.

"My health visitor was superb and supported me with a referral to the drs then onto the child development centre. Things moved pretty quickly, my daughter started physio and started her assessments with TAC and was diagnosed with Autism and Hypermobility within 6 months. In the process of diagnosis for both children I felt supported and heard." – Parent Feedback

Accurately identifying children and young people with SEND

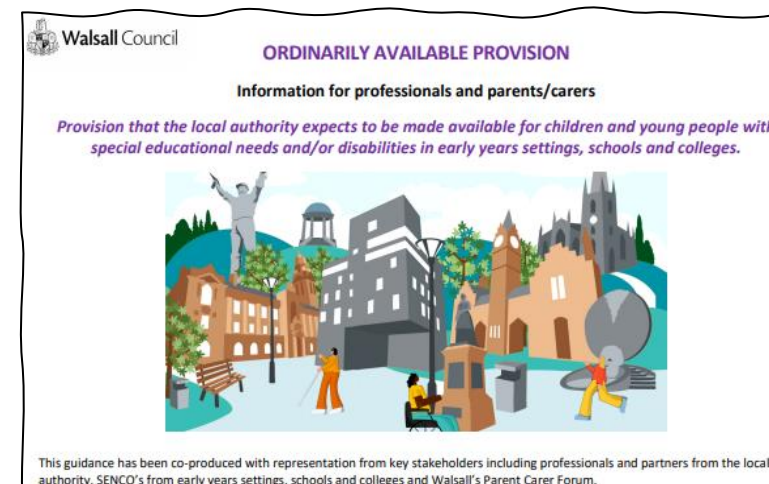
The Local Area Partnership is committed to ensuring that children and young people with SEND have their needs identified accurately and in a timely way.

The **Early Inclusion Framework (EIF)**, incorporating Walsall's Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) Guidance, reflects a strategic approach to enhancing support, pathways, and provisions for children and young people with SEND. By prioritising high-quality teaching and fostering strong family collaboration, it facilitates earlier identification of needs and ensures well-planned, impactful support through the implementation of a Graduated Approach, resulting in more robust and appropriate EHC applications from SENCOs and suspensions remaining below national for pupils with SEN support.

SEND Services have been expanded, including the Educational Psychology Service and the EHC team, to meet increased demand, ensuring effective assessments and improved outcomes for children and young people.

0-5 Autism Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) assessment compliance with NICE guidelines has been improved, demonstrating a commitment to best practice standards.

The **Designated Clinical Officer (DCO)** and **Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO)** have worked together to develop consistent awareness, skills, and knowledge among health and social care professionals. Together, they align pathways and drive continuous improvement in partnership working, resulting in improved timeliness and quality of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) advice.



Ordinarily Available Provision guidance available on our local offer

The needs of children and young people with SEND are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

Consistent identification of needs in a timely way

The Local Area Partnership has put significant measures in place to ensure that children and young people's needs are consistently identified in a timely way across education, health and care. We have a robust Early Notification Pathway and a review cycle in place to capture demographic data and identify emerging themes within our local area, enabling targeted support where needed.

Prior to 2023 we had more than 600 new assessment cases that were over the 20 week timescale. In December 2024 we had 0 cases outstanding. There are still 0 cases awaiting completion that are outside of timescale as of July 2025 and **EHC assessment timeliness rates are above 95% each month.**

A **dedicated Early Years Assessment Officer, a Children in Care Officer, and a dedicated NEET officer** have been introduced to support our most vulnerable children and young people and address need. Their work has reduced suspensions and exclusions, and has improved attendance.

HCP 0-19 universal service undertake mandated contacts from antenatal to 30 months (and beyond) to ensure early identification of any emerging developmental need and onward referral for further assessment. All mandated contacts are carried out face to face in the child's home or at local clinics and family hubs.

The **Speech and Language Team (SALT)** collaborate with Health and Education partners to ensure early identification of children's needs through universal screening. This approach strengthens collaboration across services, ensures timely and targeted interventions, and improves outcomes for children by addressing needs early and effectively. The SALT waiting list has decreased from 12 months to 4 months, ensuring families are getting support much sooner.

We have improved identification of pre-school-age children through the use of **monthly cross remit meetings** that bring together Health, Social Care, and SEND, ensuring children enter education with the necessary support.. This has resulted in significant increase in requests for EHC needs assessments.

Family Hubs provide a place where children, young people and their families can go to get advice and support when they need it. We have four family hubs in local communities across Walsall. Families have trusting relationships with staff and quickly share any concerns they have about their children's needs. This approach is particularly beneficial for preschool children, as it streamlines the assessment process. Family Hubs have introduced an enhanced speech and language offer that provides early walk-in advice and interventions. This has begun to reduce waiting lists, ensuring families get support at the earliest opportunity. Hubs also pick up children who do not meet milestones at the 2–2½-year development review, offering prompt follow-on support and re-checks.

A commitment to timely assessments is central to the **Families First for Children** approach and is reinforced within the Family Help Practice through the introduction of the new "Our Family" assessment of Need. This assessment ensures early and effective multi-agency collaboration, drawing on regular locality partnership meetings to address the unique needs of each child, young person and their family. By intervening promptly and working together, practitioners can identify challenges proactively and deliver tailored support, leading to improved outcomes.

CAMHS have consistently maintained an average Referral to Assessment time of below 6 weeks since May 2024.

Children in Care benefit from a dedicated multi-agency decision-making group meets weekly to review children in care who are undergoing statutory assessment. Membership includes the EHCP Team Manager, the Head of the Virtual School, a Social Care Manager, the Health Manager, and the Head of SEN. This structure ensures senior oversight, rapid decision-making, and accountability across services, preventing drift and delay in assessments.

The needs of children and young people with SEND are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

Strengths and Aspirations of Children and Young People

Professionals across the Local Area Partnership ensure that assessments, plans, and packages of care reflect the strengths and aspirations of the child or young person. Professionals work closely with children and young people, including those who do not use words to communicate, to ensure that plans reflect their needs and wishes.

Walsall's **Elective Home Education** (EHE) team comprises skilled teachers with expertise in various learning approaches, including SEND, offering tailored teaching and learning recommendations when education is unsuitable.

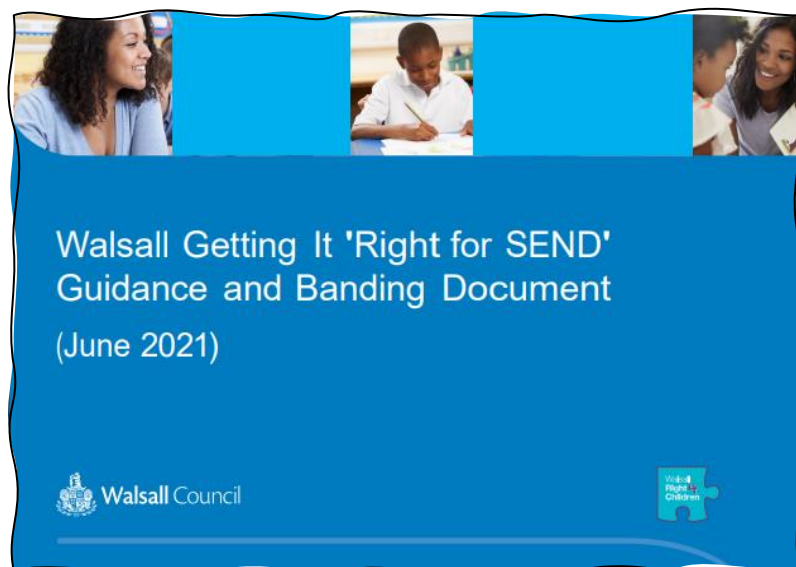
Regular monthly meetings between Walsall's EHE team manager and a senior SEN caseworker ensure updates, timely consultations, and smooth reintegration of children into school.

Understanding Criteria for Assessments and Services

The local area partnership has clearly communicated the criteria for accessing services and assessments of need. Robust decision-making processes are firmly established, involving multi-professional collaboration across education, health, and social care. These processes are designed to ensure consistency, fairness, and quality in service delivery by fostering a joined-up approach that ensures equitable outcomes for children, young people, and their families. The impact of this is demonstrated in the improved educational outcomes for children and young people with an EHCP.

Targeted professional development, particularly in speech and language development & parent infant relationships, has enhanced awareness across the wider partnership. This training equips staff with the knowledge and confidence to deliver consistent key messages to families, support early identification through tools such as Wellcomm assessments, and provide timely advice, guidance, and appropriate signposting for emerging needs.

There is a **robust training framework** which is reviewed annually providing half-termly training on identified topics. More than 85 professionals attend each session.



“Getting it ‘Right for SEND’” guidance documentation available to practitioners

The needs of children and young people with SEND are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

Timely multi-agency referrals

The local authority collaborates closely with our Designated Clinical Officer (DCO), Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO), Inclusion Hub, and Virtual School to support Additionally Vulnerable children and young people, ensuring their needs are identified and addressed through coordinated efforts across relevant agencies. The impact of this is that children and young people are getting the right resources they need to support them, in the right setting.

Links with the **Healthy Child Programme** (HCP) 0-19 digital team are fully embedded resulting in meaningful health information in the local offer.

The Early Years and SEN Team have completed **Portage training**, becoming qualified members of the National Portage Association. Their 4-star Portage Service rating reflects improved support, ensuring children are well-prepared to start their educational journey.

Walsall **Child Development Service Pathways** have been reviewed to ensure those babies and children with most complex SEND are supported within the TAC model and children with developmental delay and/or possible autism are signposted to services and resources such as health workshops/groups to ensure they are supported while they wait.

Jointly conducted EHE and EHCP annual reviews by **Walsall's EHE team** ensure timely identification and addressing of children's needs. Termly EHE reviews for families with children who have an EHCP, coordinated by Walsall's EHE team, are based on individual needs and include educational reviews, emotional literacy support, teaching guidance, and reintegration assistance. The 0-19 HCP team collaborates with the EHE team to provide health assessments for all EHE children and young people, and sessions led by the EHE team with families where English is not the first language have increased health assessment enquiries.

We provide robust **support for schools and settings** in meeting the medical needs of children and young people with identified health conditions, including access to training and resources from local health providers, with health teams attending SENCO forum to deliver bite-sized health spotlight training. This has included how to and who to refer to, in order to ensure CYP health needs are identified and assessed as early as possible. Health resources are added to a central SENCO area for reference

Our **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub** screening includes consideration of children with disabilities and will include education checks that would also identify SEND needs at the initial contact point.

The **DSCO** role has been developed to improve timeliness and quality of information sharing for EHCP. SEND case workers are part of the team around the family process and family help coordinators are part of EHCP processes.

The **Health Gateway Process** has improved the timeliness (93%) and quality of health contributions for EHCP Needs Assessments.

The needs of children and young people with SEND are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

Key Development Priorities



A SEN Support data review conducted in July 2025 identified patterns in identification rates, attendance, attainment trends, and use of reduced timetables. Training for settings to acknowledge and address these areas will be delivered during the 2025/26 academic year. Alongside this, the local area partnership will strengthen the ongoing monitoring of SEN Support outcomes and use these insights to target support, share effective practice, and work with schools where further improvement is needed.



Further promotion of the 0-19 SEND drop-ins and an assessment of the emerging needs of children and Young People attending these groups.



Develop and implement a training program for the EHC Team to strengthen knowledge and enhance support, incorporating IPSEA training and a continuous cycle of EHC plan Quality Assurance.



Educational Psychologists (EPs) to continue to strengthen capacity within schools and settings to support Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs by using their expertise to create impactful resources and deliver high-quality training.



Provide more robust support for schools and settings in meeting the medical needs of children and young people with identified health conditions, including access to training and resources from local health providers.



Currently parent partnership groups run every six weeks, with on average 8 parents attending, (14 on roll). These parents have a good relationship with the Local Offer and Engagement Lead. A key priority is to build on this to empower parents and carers by providing training and resources to help them understand the support schools should be offering for their children and young people. Enable parents to feel confident in engaging with and challenging schools to ensure their child's needs are met effectively.



The draft Family Help Strategy, now in its final sign off stages, sets out ambitious development plans to further enhance the accuracy and timeliness of Family Help assessments. The strategy commits to embedding a unified assessment framework across all partner agencies, underpinned by clear timescales and robust quality assurance. The strategy aims to reinforce a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement and to ensure that every assessment captures the full breadth of a family's needs.

Children and young people with SEND and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

Children and young people with SEND are empowered to participate meaningfully in decisions about their plans and support. Children, young people, and their families are actively involved in decision-making about their individual plans and support. The co-production of Education, Health, and Care Plans ensures that they are personalised, reflecting the aspirations and strengths of each child or young person. Families value the clear, accessible information provided throughout the process, supported by dedicated SEND case work officers who foster open and trusting relationships. This collaborative approach ensures that the voices of children and families remain central, influencing decisions and shaping services effectively.

"I am always informed of any changes or new targets quickly and I like to maintain good relationships with the people who work with my children. It's really important to show them respect and remember they also want the best for your child. Me and my children are always heard in this process and our views and opinions are listened to." – Parent Feedback

Impartial Information, Advice and Support

Many parents report positively on the effective information, advice and support that they and their children receive from a range of services.

Families are provided with **clear, accessible information** about the EHC process from the start, ensuring they understand their rights, available support, and how to contribute meaningfully. In response to feedback from families, each family is now assigned a dedicated SEND case work officer, offering consistent, location-based support to build trust and maintain open communication with the EHC team.

The **Local Offer** Engagement Lead ensures that all the information on the Local Offer webpages are up to date and evolve to ensure need matches provision.

Regular, co-produced **SEND Services newsletters** and communications are distributed to all schools, ensuring SEND families both in and out of borough are kept informed. These updates have a wide reach and receive positive feedback from families and professionals. They share key information, including training opportunities and ways to get involved in co-production.

Dedicated Senior Case Workers play a vital role in supporting children and young people with higher levels of vulnerability. They provide tailored support through co-ordinating with teams such as the Youth Offending Team (YOT), Elective Home Education (EHE) team, Health teams, and Inclusion teams such as Reduced Timetables and Exclusions. Working in collaboration, they identify and process support needs, assessment needs, casework requirements and joined up working with educational settings. This ensures a holistic approach to meeting each child or young person's needs.

Initial speech and language assessments focus on needs identified by parents, children, and young people, with collaboratively set targets that are meaningful, realistic, and achievable. These targets are regularly reviewed with families to monitor progress. Specific pathways have been established to address language and communication difficulties.



Screenshot from "Local Offer" Website

Children and young people with SEND and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

Children and Families Contributing to Decision-Making

Children and young people are at the centre of professionals' decision-making, empowering children and young people to be able to shape their futures, and giving families a voice in decisions made about each person's care and education.

EHC plans are co-produced with children, young people, and their families, ensuring plans are personalised, reflect aspirations, and build on individual strengths. Families are offered choices regarding support and interventions included in the EHC plan.

Our **Early Inclusion Framework** provides resources to actively involve children, young people, and their families in shaping the support they receive, ensuring their voices remain central to the decision-making process. The SEN Support Plan helps educational professionals document what matters most to the child and their family, fostering a shared understanding of strengths, needs, and agreed outcomes. Additionally, the One Page Profile and All About Me resource capture the child's voice as part of the Graduated Approach.

Health Needs Assessment Documentation has been enhanced to capture the voices of children and young people, ensuring their perspectives are considered.

Alternative Provisions in Walsall ensure the voices of excluded pupils are heard and considered throughout their educational journey. Throughout their time in AP, information on their education pathways, qualifications, aspirations, social challenges, and support needs are gathered and documented in a pupil profile, which is formally reviewed each term to ensure their needs are met. **The 0-19 Healthy Child Team** provides an Alternative Provision (AP) pathway offering tailored support to meet the individual needs of children and young people in AP settings.

From the inset, the development of the "Families First for Children" **Family Help Service** has been firmly rooted in genuine collaboration with families, recognising their invaluable expertise and lived experience. At every stage family voices have shaped the direction of work, from early consultations through to co-design workshops. In particular the "Our Family" assessment of need has been co-developed with families to guarantee that their perspective and priorities are not only heard, but central to all decision making. This approach ensures that individual plans of support are tailored around the unique circumstances of each family and consciously extended to include strengths and resources of the wider family network.

Children in Care benefit from The PEP "voice of the child" section, which uses age-appropriate questions, PECS, and visual prompts so that all children can share their views. Out-of-borough visits are undertaken to capture the views of children and carers in relation to educational decisions.

Tools like **My SEND Support Plan** and **My SMART Targets** are co-developed with families and used across schools.



Children and young people with SEND and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

Understanding Plans and Outcomes

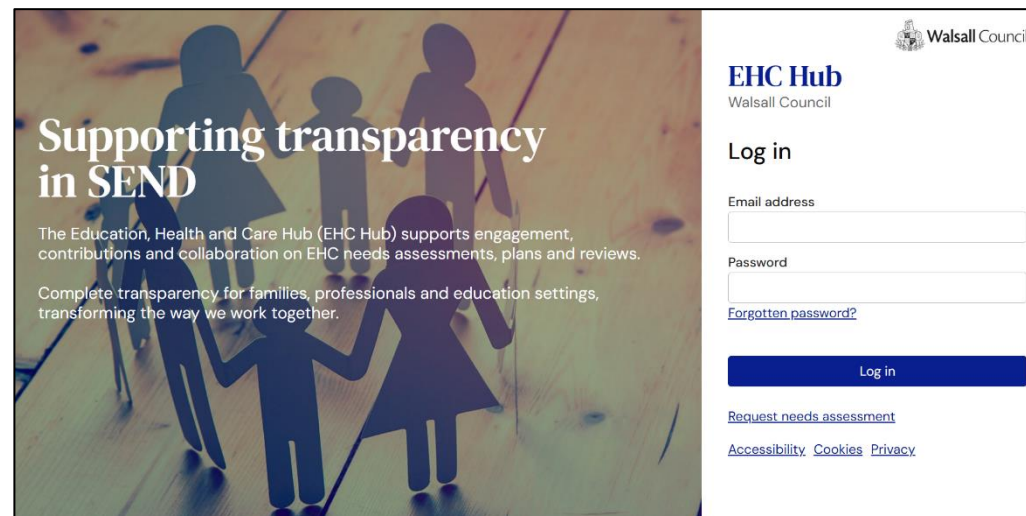
Children and young people are supported to understand the content of their plans and the support available to them, including the intended outcomes. Practitioners take time to explain what is possible and, where changes or requests cannot be met, the reasons are clearly communicated in a way that is accessible and age-appropriate. As a result, children and young people feel informed about their journey, know what to expect, and understand both the opportunities and the limitations of their support.

Walsall's Early Years SEN Team have redesigned **Initial Consultation Reports** to support Early Years settings in implementing robust Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycles. The new reports provide a clear outline of children's strengths and needs, focus on quality targets, and enhance the evidence and impact of interventions. 88% of Practitioners reported improved quality of their APDR processes, noting that the reports are clearer, more practical, and that it was easier to track progress and plan next steps. 10% stated that the new reports met their needs. The quality of APDRs submitted for Special educational needs inclusion funding (SENIF) requests and additional consultations has improved significantly.

SENCOs are using recommendations from the new reports to support children with similar needs, confidently initiating the Graduated Approach prior to external agency involvement.

Early Years Settings have increased confidence in the APDR process, resulting in benefits for all children in their care.

The **Walsall EHC Hub** enables families to review their draft EHC Plans, but also any advice received from relevant agencies. When the final plan is available it is also possible to download and print this from the EHC hub, and view the full assessment that informed the plan.



Children and young people with SEND and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

Key Development Priorities



Continuously evolve our Local Offer website to ensure it remains a valuable resource and continue to develop it to help children, young people, and their families easily access local information and support services across Walsall.



Provide workshops to help families better understand the SEND framework and their rights, while offering accessible resources in various formats to meet diverse needs and promote inclusivity.



Enhance the annual review process to fully involve families, providing clear guidance and accessible resources. Measure impact through family feedback, review timeliness, and progress on agreed outcomes.



Extend the current Quality Assurance processes to include the view of parents and families.



Continue to facilitate regular co-production events to bring together parents, carers, children, young people, and professionals, ensuring collaborative discussions that shape service development and decision-making. These events will focus on building trust, sharing ideas, and fostering meaningful partnerships to drive positive change in SEND services. Collaborative SEND work with parents and carers through a variety of co-production opportunities. PfA partnership days, EHC Plan Quality Assurance days, short breaks statement and service evaluation and SEN Caseworker interviews.



Plans are underway within Family Help to expand opportunities for meaningful participation, ensuring that families are not only consulted but are active partners at every stage. The strategy seeks to foster environments where children and young people feel heard, respected and empowered to shape the support they receive. This includes the introduction of regular children young people and parents/carer advisory panel, led by the Voluntary and Community Sector to ensure services are designed to embed lived experience into front line practice.



Therapy services are enhancing the service through evidence based practice through accessing the Care Aims training packages in order to provide a strong outcomes based strategy, that encompasses person centred leadership and practice to make best uses of resources to offer the most good and cause least harm.

Children and young people with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

Key Performance Indicator – Attendance

By school type the attendance rates across the autumn term 2025/26 were:

94.1% in Walsall primary schools for all pupils, just 0.8 percentage points below the national of 94.9%. In the autumn term 2024/25 the gap to national increased by 0.4 percentage points. For pupils in secondary schools the gap to national increased by 0.1 percentage points in the autumn term 2024/25 compared to autumn term 2023/24, with a 0.8% gap in 2024/25.

Walsall's gap to national for children with an EHCP in primary schools is 1.2 percentage points, the gap is slightly wider for children with an EHCP in secondary schools, at 1.3 percentage points. However, the gap to national has improved from a 3 percentage point gap in autumn 2023/24. Attendance in special schools for children with an EHCP is 2 percentage points higher in Walsall than national, Walsall have increased the gap to national from 1.7 in autumn 2023/24.

Walsall is currently on par with national for pupils with SEN support in secondary schools and just 1.0 percentage points below national for SEN support pupils in primary schools.

Attendance of children										
		Autumn 2023/24			Autumn 2024/25			Autumn 2025/26 (8th to 26th September 2025)		
Group		Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP
Primary Schools	All Pupils	94.3%	94.7%	-0.4%	94.1%	94.9%	-0.8%	95.5%	95.8%	-0.3%
	SEN with EHCP	90.7%	90.2%	0.5%	88.7%	89.8%	-1.2%	n/a	n/a	
	SEN Support	92.5%	92.9%	-0.4%	92.1%	93.1%	-1.0%	n/a	n/a	
Secondary Schools	All Pupils	91.2%	91.9%	-0.7%	91.6%	92.3%	-0.8%	92.9%	93.3%	-0.4%
	SEN with EHCP	82.0%	85.0%	-3.0%	82.9%	84.2%	-1.3%	n/a	n/a	
	SEN Support	87.8%	87.3%	0.5%	87.8%	87.8%	0.0%	n/a	n/a	
Special Schools	SEN with EHCP	89.2%	87.5%	1.7%	89.6%	87.6%	2.0%	90.5%	88.5%	2.0%

Children and young people with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

The delivery of timely and effective support is a key part of Walsall's SEND partnership. Children and young people with SEND typically receive the right help and support in a timely way, with practitioners across the partnership taking time to understand the needs of children and young people and considering how best to support them and their families

"My son's EHCP and being placed at his current school has been life changing not only for him, but our whole family. I have a happy child who loves going to school, he's still the boy that we love, we would never want to change him but he is a boy that is starting to understand this big scary world around him now" – Parent Feedback

Timely plans that meet needs

Services and professionals in Walsall think creatively and work together to ensure that children and young people with SEND receive the right support to meet their needs.

The **Families First for Children** approach is fundamentally driven by a response to need, rather than rigid thresholds and eligibility criteria. This approach ensures that support is not delayed until problems escalate, but is instead offered early and proportionately, reflecting the real circumstances and aspirations of each family.

The **EHC assessment process** is guided by the specific needs of the child or young person, ensuring that required funding and support are promptly allocated as soon as the EHC plan is finalised.

Families of children and young people with mental health needs have direct, timely access to CAMHS and the 0-19s team through a **Single Point of Access number**, with further signposting to community-based supports such as WYSA and Kooth, reducing the risk of being redirected between services and ensuring needs are met promptly.

There is a developed focus on the provision of **Speech and Language Therapy Services** for children across Walsall in order to make these services as accessible as possible for families and to ensure the early identification of children's additional needs. There is SALT provision developed within Youth Justice, Turning Point, Family Hubs and in the newly developing Family First project teams such as the Young and Thriving team.

There is a specific focus on children being brought to their **HV development checks** by 24-30 months in order to ensure needs are identified as early as possible so that interventions can be set in place.

SLT and OT attend the fortnightly 5-19 autism panel, this panel discusses whether a diagnosis is needed following a comprehensive assessment. Very early indicators show that time is being saved through fewer ADOS assessments being needed. In addition, CYP in highly specialised service such as Youth Justice can have their needs identified more promptly, meaning they can progress to MDT diagnosis discussion quicker.

Walsall's **Elective Home Education (EHE)** team has established an early intervention process, including pre-EHE meetings with a senior SEN caseworker, coordinating professionals' meetings, and requesting early EHCP reviews where appropriate to ensure children's needs are accurately identified before parents decide to home educate. This has meant that although we received 80 initial enquiries for those with an EHCP we have only registered 23 new cases as parents have decided to keep their child in school.

Children and young people with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

Supported waiting based on identified needs

The Local Area Partnership understands the frustration of waiting too long for a service. A wide range of services is available for children and young people while they wait, offering direct interventions and useful support.

Black Country ICB commissioned Black Country Health Care to undertake an **ASC pathway review**. The review highlighted positive use of CAMHS in the ASC pathway for children with comorbidities, has supported a pilot service redesign for children referred in to the Child Development Centre for under 5s ASC assessment. It also highlighted waiting lists in both CAMHS and Paediatric ASC pathways.

CAMHS teams provide interim check-ins, guidance, and support to ensure children and young people are well-supported during longer waiting times - 'waiting well'.

Our children, young people and their families have a comprehensive partnership support offer while they wait for a **paediatric** appointment. Our **Supported Waiting Partnership Network** meetings bring together themed, taught strategy sessions, along with multiagency face to face support across many services including Local authority teams such as Attendance, HAF and Short Breaks, Family Hubs, School Readiness and Family Partnership, and also Health teams across Therapies, 0-19 HCP and DCO. We have a wider partnership with our Inclusion and Advisory Service and voluntary and advocacy organisations. With support from our parent carer forum this forms a valued support offer while families wait to be seen.



Tackling tough moments, getting help now

Is your child on a waiting list to be seen by a paediatric health service?



Come and join us at Manor Farm Community Association for the first meeting of the Supported Waiting Network.

We have guest speakers to advise on a variety of monthly topics and many services who support with access to additional support for you and your child. Come and chat to other parents, find out what additional support is available across the partnership with our monthly themed support group.



9.30am-11.30am

Manor Farm Community Association
King George Cres, Rushall, Walsall, WS4 1EU



EBSNA* - Emotionally Based School Non- Attendance


A free 45 minute webinar for parents and carers

*Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance, or EBSNA for short, refers to young people who struggle to attend school because of a range of emotional factors.

These can include struggling with issues like low mood, anxiety and loneliness. The impact of EBSNA can range from the young person experiencing an occasional reluctance to attend school, to complete non-attendance. It can start suddenly or develop gradually over time.

Kooth have developed this free webinar for families to explore EBSNA as a complex issue and will give guidance on how digital mental health support can help.


For more information in how to access please use think link:
KoothBytes



Supported Waiting Partnership Network

Published on 10 April 2025

New monthly drop in for parent/carers of children in Walsall on an NHS paediatric waiting list.



Waiting lists in the UK have become a real concern, with many families facing prolonged delays.

Several factors contribute to these extended waiting times; there's been a notable rise in referrals for assessments nationally, the surge in demand hasn't been matched by resources. Specialist services are working harder than ever and dealing with more complex presentations and more appointments are needed to form a

Children and young people with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

Co-ordinated support and a shared understanding of the child

Successful joint working in Walsall has resulted in well-coordinated and persistent help for children and young people with SEND with multiple needs and vulnerabilities across education, health and care.

EHC Decisions involve a number of partners, including the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO), Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) and wider Health Partners alongside SENCO's and Inclusion Leads actively contribute to EHC decisions.

DCO and DCSO assistance is available to wider educational partners.

Proactive collaboration with the **Inclusion Hub** supports early intervention and alternative provision (AP) to reduce exclusions. We also quality assure the independent specialist settings attended by Walsall students with EHCP.

Walsall Virtual School provides comprehensive oversight and support for children in care with SEN Support and EHCPs. Every child has an allocated Education Support Officer (ESO), and a dedicated SEN Casework Officer is employed – a role not common practice in Virtual Schools nationally. This enables robust oversight from the point of referral for statutory assessment, through the drafting of EHCPs, to continuous monitoring at annual reviews and beyond.

Weekly multi-agency panels ensure effective decision-making and support for children and young people with EHCPs (assessments, issuance, complex cases, vulnerable groups, and high-cost), all with clear terms of reference.

The **strengthened Annual Review process** provides comprehensive and effective support to children, young people, and their families, ensuring their needs are continuously reviewed and met.

Universal therapy services (Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Speech and Language Therapy) are available across Walsall, alongside strong outreach services (ASD, Sensory, Early Years, Inclusion) delivering school support and high-quality training.

There is **strong ASC support** from Shepwell Special School's outreach team, ensuring accessible assistance for children and young people with autism.

Our **Youth Justice Service** now has a Speech and Language Therapist and an Education Psychologist embedded in the team alongside a CAMHS psychologist. Their Unmet need model and communication pathway helps to solve complex problems relating to health and education needs of children who have not had access to universal services.

The **Early Years SEN Team** supports families through fortnightly or monthly Portage sessions at home and individual consultations with Private, Voluntary, and Independent settings, childminders, nursery schools, and two-year-old provisions. The team focuses on providing early intervention for children aged 0–5, addressing barriers to accessing Early Years Entitlement, supporting transitions into settings and schools, and ensuring children's SEND needs are met as early as possible in their education.

Specific Training, including ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant), SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support) and EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) has been delivered by the EPS to support schools meet the needs of their students as part of their graduated response is highly rated. The impact of this is that the attendance of children and young people with SEN has improved in comparison to last year.

Children and young people with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

Support that evolves over time

Plans for children and young people increasingly reflect their aspirations and have well-planned outcomes across education, health and care. Effective processes include input from designated clinical officers and the designated social care officer.

The **Deaf and Hearing Support Team** supports children and young people aged 0–25, referred by health partners with diagnoses ranging from mild to profound, unilateral or bilateral deafness. The team works collaboratively with families and education settings to remove barriers and improve outcomes by optimising hearing technology, supporting language and communication development, and providing training and advice to education staff. A key strength of the service is the high-quality transition support offered to all children and young people with a hearing impairment (HI). This ensures smooth and well-planned transitions not only between key phases of education, but also during yearly moves within the same setting. By working closely with schools, settings and families, the team helps to secure continuity of support, minimise disruption, and build confidence so that every child and young person is well-prepared for their next stage of learning.

The **Visual Support Team** provides high-quality teaching and support to children and young people with varying degrees of sight loss, including those with additional complex needs in mainstream settings. The team works with families and education professionals to ensure children have appropriate access to learning, develop specialist skills, build self-advocacy and positive self-image, and foster inclusion and high aspirations across all settings. The service also places a strong emphasis on transition, supporting children and young people as they move through different stages of education and preparing them for new environments. This careful planning and collaboration helps to ensure continuity of support, reduce barriers, and enable each learner to approach their next step with confidence.

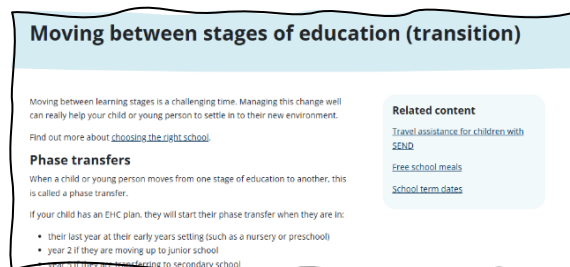
We have embedded **Successful transition support** for at-risk students with the Early Help School Transition Support Pilot, enabling smooth transitions from primary to secondary school and reducing exclusion risks.

The **0-19 Health SEND Team** offers weekly drop in session covering toileting, behaviour, fussy eating, sleep and emotions.

We have developed a Specialist advanced practitioner role for **dysphagia and complex SEND**.

All children in care on SEN Support and with EHCPs are RAG-rated termly, enabling early identification of risk and timely intervention. ESOs monitor progress through PEPs, ensuring concerns are escalated and addressed promptly.

School Transport evolves according to the needs identified each year in the EHC Plan. This can include personal assistance, specialist provision such as BSL trained staff for deaf children, and ensuring staff are trained in relevant health needs.



Screenshot from “Local Offer”
Website around school transition

Children and young people with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

Supporting wider needs and resolving barriers to learning

Children and young people with SEND and their families benefit from a culture of listening, flexibility and cooperation from professionals who support their best interests and provide individualised services to remove barriers to learning.

Our **Dedicated AP team** assists children awaiting mainstream placement, at risk of disengagement, or experiencing exclusions, ensuring continuous access to quality education. Our comprehensive AP network has a dynamic register of 55 providers offering diverse academic and vocational courses, creating safe, supportive environments where young people can achieve their potential. Rigorous quality assurance through regular inspections of AP providers, maintaining high standards in teaching, learning, safeguarding, and health and safety.

The AP team's work is reinforced by **Family and child-centered AP reviews**, ensuring that support remains responsive, personalised, and appropriate to individual needs.

The **Enhanced Healthy Child Programme** features a dedicated team of health visitors and school nurses, providing targeted support to children and families with SEND and ensuring tailored care from early childhood through the school years (HCP 0-19 SEND team).

The **HCP 0-19 Team** have a digital lead who works with innovative ways to engage and educate our families in Walsall through the 'Health for Kids' platform. Up to date health services and health initiatives are regularly added to the "SEN Newsroom" section of the local offer.



The **ChatHealth service** enables Young people to independently reach out to the School Nurse for health and wellbeing advice. This safe and confidential platform, designed by young people for young people, allows them to text a School Nurse directly. Teen ChatHealth is openly promoted so that young people can contact the service directly both for support and questions and comments/feedback on the 0-19 service.

Families First for Children centres on lived experiences and continuous feedback to tailored interventions. Significant training has been and continues to be delivered to practitioners from key partners, including VCS, Education & Health to ensure children and young people received early support. Our understanding of children and young peoples needs has enabled us to commission and deliver targeted support to those with SEND, such as the Community Activities Reducing Exploitation (CARE) project. The developing Adolescent and Participation service is focusing on specific provision for young people with SEND needs through a Monday night youth session.

There is also a developing SEND offer within the **Family Hubs services**, with a current focus on the provision of parenting support for parents of children with SEND (Barnardo's Cygnet and SEND parents sessions). Our family hubs are uniquely positioned to ensure children get the right support early, and to give parents the skills and encouragement they need to support children in their development. We are following the government's lead in 'Giving every child the best start in life' (pub 7th July 2025) and our aim is for 74.7% of 5-year-olds in Walsall to have a good level of development (GLD) by 2028-29.

Children and young people with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

Case Study – Building an Early Years-Focused Community Health Hub at Goldsmith Primary Academy

Windsor Academy Trust, one of Walsall's academy providers, is working with NHS partners to create a blueprint for "schools and health organisations to work together and create a fairer, healthier, and more hopeful future." As part of this work, Goldsmith Primary Academy, situated in one of Walsall's most deprived areas, has forged strong partnerships with Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust and Public Health Walsall to bring essential services directly onto school grounds, dismantling barriers to access and delivering crucial support in an environment where families already feel secure and connected.

Located in Blakenall, a community historically challenged by limited access to healthcare and high levels of disadvantage, the school is cultivating a dynamic health and wellbeing offer. This offer is thoughtfully tailored to local needs, with significant attention paid to supporting the foundational years of a child's life.

Key initiatives include:

- **Tailored Parenting Support Programmes:** These programmes are designed to empower parents and caregivers of young children with practical strategies. They focus on crucial aspects of early years development, such as managing challenging behaviours, establishing healthy routines, and strengthening family bonds during these formative years.

- **Community Health Workshops with an Early Years Lens:** Delivered in partnership with the NHS and Public Health, these workshops cover topics directly relevant to the health and development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Examples include:

- **Toilet training:** Expert guidance and practical tips for parents navigating this important developmental milestone.

- **Managing minor illnesses in young children:** Equipping parents with the knowledge to care for common childhood ailments at home and when to seek professional help.

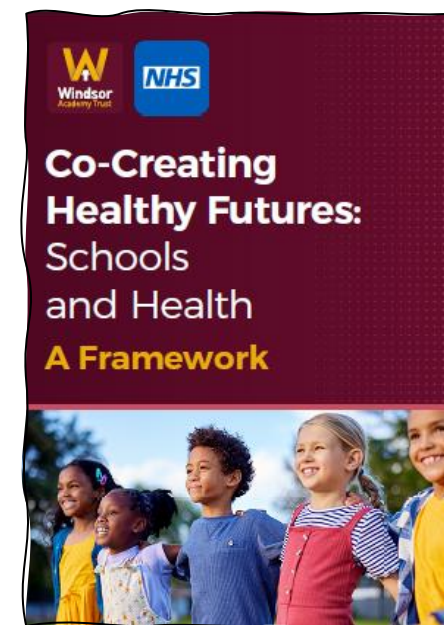
- **Understanding behaviour and promoting mental wellbeing in early childhood:** Insights into typical early years behaviours and strategies for fostering positive mental health from a young age.

- **Social and Friendship Support for Young Students:** Creating a nurturing environment for children to build early emotional resilience and develop crucial peer connections, laying the groundwork for healthy social development.

- **The Food for Life Initiative:** Promoting healthy eating habits from an early age through engaging, hands-on activities and accessible advice, ensuring young children and their families have the knowledge to make nutritious choices.

This innovative school-based hub model allows families, particularly those with young children, to access vital support in a familiar, stigma-free environment. It also significantly strengthens the relationships between the school, health professionals, and the wider community, creating a holistic support network for early years development.

By embedding accessible health services into the daily life of the school, Goldsmith Primary Academy is making prevention visible, inclusive, and readily available. This proactive approach is demonstrably improving outcomes for children in their earliest years and their families, right in the heart of their own neighbourhood.



Children and young people with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

Key Development Priorities



Speech and language therapy have long waits as is identified in the Trust board level risk. Work is underway to maximise use of limited resources and a paper is being prepared for the Place Integrated Commissioning Committee to understand the position and make recommendations. The service has been selected as one of 7 CYP SLT services in England to be part of a Transformation Programme exploring future models of delivery.



Develop a comprehensive, tiered model for the use of Alternative Provision (AP) to ensure timely and appropriate commissioning, supported by clear transition guidance for students. Collaborate with locality teams as part of the Families First model to enhance multi-agency understanding of AP and its access pathways, aligned with the AP Thematic Working Group Implementation Plan.



Optimise EHC assessment and review processes with transparent funding models, with strengthened support from DCO and DSCO roles.



Increase community-based SEND drop-in sessions and accessible support for families via the Local Offer, building on Family Hub resources for greater reach.



We are now coordinating a task and finish group involving a multidisciplinary team of professionals across all services in Walsall to explore how we can redesign ASC pathways and find sustainable solutions to reduce the waiting lists for children and young people following recommendations from the Black Country ASC pathway review



Finalise the redesign of the under-5s Walsall Child Development Service pathway to streamline and improve early intervention and developmental support.



Improve the attendance of children with an EHCP in primary and secondary schools.



Targeted training programmes within Families First for Children are being rolled out to enhance staff ability to recognise and respond to emerging needs swiftly and effectively, equipping them with the skills and confidence to deliver targeted interventions. Alongside this, we are supporting the voluntary and community sector to play a vital role in Family Help and early intervention the delivery of 'Whole Family Mentoring'. This will create a more agile, skilled, and compassionate support system that is truly responsive to the complexities of family life.



Establishment of a joint decision-making group within the Virtual School for all children with a social worker, ensuring coordinated oversight and prioritisation of education needs across services.



Family hubs will prioritise enhancing the home learning environment and strengthening SEND support over the next three years. This will help Walsall meet its local target of ensuring 75% of children achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) by their fifth birthday.

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Key Performance Indicator – Good Level Of Development (GLD)

The overall Good Level of Development (GLD) for Walsall is 66.5%. This has increased by 0.8 percentage points from 65.7% in 2024.

National GLD is 68.3% this has increased by 0.6 percentage points from 67.7% in 2024. Walsall is currently 1.8 percentage points below national. This gap has decreased by 0.2 percentage points from a 2.0% gap in 2024.

Pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) achieving a GLD has decreased within Walsall by 1.2 percentage points. Nationally the GLD for this group of children increased by 0.1 percentage points to 3.9%. Walsall are now below national for this group of children by 0.1 percentage points. SEND support outcomes are a key area for development for both settings and the SEND Team, for the next 12 months.

21.9% of pupils in Walsall with SEN Support achieved a GLD, this has increased by 0.4 percentage points. Nationally the GLD for this group of children has increased by 1.5 percentage points to 26.4%. Walsall remain below national seeing the gap increase from a 3.4% gap in 2024 to a 4.5% gap in 2025.

Group	EYFSP % GLD					
	2024			2025		
				(as of 01.09.25, highly provisional)		
	Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP
All Pupils	65.7	67.7	-2.0	66.5	68.3	-1.8
SEN with EHCP	5.0	3.8	1.2	3.8	3.9	-0.1
SEN Support	21.5	24.9	-3.4	21.9	26.4	-4.5

EYFSP - the percentage of pupils achieving GLD at the end of the EYFS

2025 figures as of 01.09.25, which are highly provisional and subject to change, validated results are due December 2025.

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Key Performance Indicator – Y1 Expected Standards of Phonic Decoding

For Walsall, 78% of Year 1 pupils are working at the expected standard in phonics, unchanged from last year. National results show that 80% of Year 1 pupils are working at the expected standard in phonics, also unchanged from last year.

The attainment gap between Walsall and the national result has remained unchanged at two percentage points below national.

Pupils with an EHC Plan shows a 2% decrease from 20% in 2024 to 18.0% in 2025. The gap to national has widened to 2.0%.

46% of Y1 pupils in Walsall with SEN Support achieved the expected standard in Phonics in 2025, 3% decrease from 2024, compared to national which has unchanged from last year.

Walsall remain below national seeing the gap increase from a 3% gap in 2024 to a 6% gap in 2025.

Group	Y1 Phonics - % Expected standard or above					
	2024			2025		
				(as of 09.10.25, validated)		
	Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP
All Pupils	78	80	-2	78	80	-2
SEN with EHCP	20	20	0	18	20	-2
SEN Support	49	52	-3	46	52	-6

Phonics - the percentage of pupils working at the expected level of phonic decoding

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Key Performance Indicator – KS2 Expected Standards in Reading, Writing and Maths

For Walsall, 58% of pupils met the expected standard in all of reading, writing and maths, down from 60% in 2024 (-2%). National results show that 61% of pupils met the expected standard in all of reading, writing and maths, no change from 61% in 2024.

The attainment gap between Walsall and the national result has increased in 2025 from a 1% gap to a 3% gap.

The percentage of Walsall pupils with an EHC Plan who achieved RWM at the expected standard has improved by 1 percentage point from 8% in 2024 to 9% in 2025, national remains unchanged with 9% achieving RWM. The gap to national has narrowed from a 1% gap in 2024 to no gap in 2025.

Pupils with SEN support shows a 1 percentage point decrease in achievement from 20% in 2024 to 19% in 2025. The gap to the national comparator has widened from 6 percentage points in 2024 to 9 percentage points in 2025.

Group	KS2 RWM - % Expected standard or above					
	2024			2025		
	Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP
All Pupils	60	61	-1	58	61	-3
SEN with EHCP	8	9	-1	9	9	0
SEN Support	20	26	-6	19	28	-9

2025 figures as of 11.09.25, which are provisional and subject to change. Source DfE published SFR. Validated results are due December 2025.

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Key Performance Indicator – KS4 Expected 9-5 pass in English and Maths

The percentage of pupils in Walsall achieving a grade 5 or above in English and maths has decreased by one percentage point in 2025 to 38%.

National results show that 45% of pupils achieved a grade 5 or above in English and maths, down from 46% in 2023. (-1%)

The attainment gap between Walsall and the national result in 2025 remained unchanged at 7 percentage points.

5% of KS4 pupils in Walsall with an EHC Plan achieved a 9-5 pass in English and maths in 2025, 1% lower than in 2024. Walsall increases the gap to national average from 1% below in 2024 to 3% below in 2025. SEN Support outcomes are a key area for development for both settings and the SEND Team, for the next 12 months.

13% of KS4 pupils in Walsall with SEN support achieved a 9-5 pass in English and maths in 2025 a 5% decrease compared to 2024. The gap to national has increased from 4 percentage points to 9 percentage points.

Group	% Achieving 9-5 Pass in English & Maths					
	2024			2025		
	Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP
All Pupils	39	46	-7	38	45	-7
SEN with EHCP	6	7	-1	5	7	-3
SEN Support	18	22	-4	13	22	-9

2025 figures as of 16.10.25, which are provisional and subject to change. Source DfE published SFR. Validated results are due February 2026.

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

The local area partnership ensures that children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps, with outcomes planned in collaboration with families and reflecting individual ambitions.

"I've seen how well my child is being supported to take their next steps with confidence. The help they had was practical and encouraging. They have learnt skills they need for the future. It's reassuring to know there's a real focus on helping my child find the right path and achieve their goals, whatever they may be." – Parent Feedback

Understanding and planning for aspirations

Children and young people feel included and listened to in meetings where adults talk about their futures. They feel empowered and able to shape their futures. This includes those who are educated other than at school, children in need and those who are looked after. Professionals make sure that individual packages of care, therapy plans and educational attainment reflect children and young people's views and aspirations."

Regular and focused **Pupil Tracking Audits** are conducted where the outcomes for each child are evaluated across the partnership.

Every young person is supported at **their Annual Review** to explore tailored courses and provisions, enhancing success, fostering motivation through active involvement, and reducing placement breakdowns by ensuring appropriate alignment from the start. The Annual Review Tracker and Weekly Order Meetings are used to support the EHC Team in meeting statutory timeframes for Annual Reviews confidently and consistently, with regular sampling and moderation to ensure a robust and uniform approach, reinforcing accountability and quality assurance.

The coproduction of an area-specific **SEN Support Plan** creates a transferable document that spans all educational phases, capturing essential information. Through a 'tell-it-once' approach, the plan integrates contributions from all advice givers, fostering a shared understanding of each individual's strengths and needs and ensuring seamless transitions without loss of time or information.

Comprehensive 1-1 **Information, Advice, and Guidance** (IAG) sessions are provided year-round in special schools, ensuring tailored support that meets each young person's unique needs and aspirations.

Plans that reflect and support ambition

Children and young people's voices are present in care planning and in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Their individual needs, aspirations and views are evident throughout. Positive multi-agency work supports children, young people and their families to contribute to the decisions made about their care and education.

We are consistently developing **person-centred EHC plans** by engaging young people and families, clearly linking aspirations, outcomes, and support with a focus on Preparing for Adulthood (PfA). We are committed to continually enhancing knowledge and understanding across our partnership to ensure all colleagues can identify and contribute to the development of high-quality, PfA-focused Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans. To achieve this, we have established a robust quality assurance process that ensures EHC plans consistently meet rigorous standards, are regularly reviewed, and align closely with the principles of Preparing for Adulthood (PfA).

SENCO forum events are a form of training delivered by our Inclusion Development Lead to empower schools and settings in understanding the importance of Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Transition Support

Most children and young people move between phases and across settings smoothly. Professionals communicate with each other and collaborate well with parents, carers, children and young people.

Implementation of **Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance** establishes consistent expectations for transitions for children and young people with SEND across all settings, ensuring uniformity in support. There are established processes for children and young people approaching transition points that are well understood by parents, carers, and professional partners, fostering collaboration and clarity

Permanently excluded children in Alternative Provision (AP) receive collaborative support, working closely with the AP Team, to identify Post-16 destinations, reducing NEET risk and improving outcomes. Transition planning uses assessment data to align opportunities with their strengths and needs, while mapped career pathways and high-quality advice ensure they achieve strong Post-16 outcomes.

Walsall's Family Hub network has led a borough-wide summer initiative focused on helping families support their **children's development and school readiness**. Through collaborative activities across hubs and community spokes, families engaged in play, learning, and social opportunities designed to build confidence and key skills. The initiative also strengthened parental understanding of child development and created exciting experiences for children, all while aligning professionals and services around a shared goal of preparing children for their next steps.

The **Early Help School Transition Support Pilot** effectively supports children with additional needs during their transition from primary to secondary school, addressing challenges and reducing the risk of exclusion. Through collaboration with two secondary schools and ten primary schools, the pilot successfully identified and supported 17 young people, ensuring a positive and seamless transition experience.

An **Electronic Phase Transfer Transition form** that allows the EHC Team additional time to consider and finalise planned placements.

A co-produced **Autism passport** is available for CYP to support with medical appointments and at transition points.

Collaborative efforts between EHC Senior Casework Officers, Virtual School, Health, and Social Care teams ensure that transitions for vulnerable children aged 0 to 25 are carefully planned and proactively managed.

There is **Early Identification** of the need for careful planning during primary transitions, recognising that vulnerable children may struggle in mainstream settings, leading to targeted support strategies.

Transition support has been extended throughout Year 7 to ensure every child feels settled and secure in their new school. This approach promotes a smooth adjustment to secondary education and has led to a noticeable reduction in requests for emergency annual reviews during the first term of the year.

A **Transitions Team** is in place in the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BCHFT) for those receiving therapeutic support and moving from CAMHS to AMHS to support in 'bridging the gap'.

The **Learning Disabilities Transition Community Nurse** supports transition to adult services and offers joint transition clinics with social care and health within Special Schools.

Transition Workshops and Health Assessments are delivered within schools by the 0-19 HCP SEND team for all stage of educational transition points to identify any unmet health needs and to support emotional health and anxiety around transition stages.

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Preparing for greater independence and adulthood

The local area partnership is committed to ensuring young people with SEND are well prepared for adulthood.

Comprehensive **supported internships** are available through Walsall College, offering tailored programs that equip young people with SEND with the skills, confidence, and work experience needed to successfully transition into employment and achieve positive long-term outcomes.

Walsall Council's supported internships provide customised work-based placements for young people aged 16–24 with learning disabilities and autism who have an EHCP and are ready to enter the workforce. These internships offer valuable practical experience and help develop essential employability skills, enabling smooth transitions into employment.

Preparing for Adulthood Training and resources have been delivered through the SENCO Forum. The 2024/25 programme, along with subsequent training schedules, supports schools and settings to embed PfA principles within SEN Support and EHC Plan reviews.

Our in-house **Adult Social Care offer** provides tailored support for individuals aged 14 and above, along with their families, to help them develop essential skills, enhance independence, and improve overall well-being.

The **SEND Home to School Travel Assistance programme** promotes greater independence, choice, and control for children and families across the borough.

Independent Travel Training is now available for children in year nine and above, where previously it was for post 16 young people only. This is a fourteen week training programme to enable independent travel.

Post-16 travel training is provided by Walsall's Home to School Transport Team to support young adults in preparing for adulthood, leading to better outcomes for students and a reduction in Post-16 travel assistance dependency.

We have increased uptake of **Personal Transport Budgets**, with 128 budgets currently in place, empowering families to manage their transport needs effectively.

The **Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)** project brings together health and education specialists, families and schools to improve support for neurodiverse children by providing staff training, early interventions, and fostering strong partnerships. A total of 10 schools are involved, with training co-delivered by North Star Inclusion, Occupational Therapy, and the 0-19 SEND team. Delivered flexibly to accommodate schools' limited capacity, the training enhances staff knowledge, creates supportive learning environments, and strengthens collaboration with families, resulting in better academic progress, emotional wellbeing, social inclusion, and preparation for future success.

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Key Development Priorities



Local Offer and Engagement Lead to provide training to help families understand the significance of Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) and equip them with strategies to support their young person in building independence, employability, and active community participation. Continuously refine transition processes by actively engaging all stakeholders, including families and schools, in planning, with a particular focus on vulnerable students during primary transitions.



Regularly evaluate and adapt feedback mechanisms to enhance service delivery, responding to the evolving needs and experiences of families.



Extend the SEND travel training offer to Year 9 SEN pupils, fostering earlier development of independence.



A PfA Framework Steering Group has been established, bringing together education, health, social care, FACE (Walsall's Parent Carer Forum) and the Parent Partnership Group. This group has developed an action plan which is evolving into a co-produced PfA Framework, enhancing resources and integrating these within EHCPs and Annual Reviews.



Implement additional support for students moving into post-16 from Alternative Provision at the start of each school year. Strengthen partnerships with a broader array of educational and vocational providers to create diverse Post-16 pathways and robust support systems for students in Alternative Provision.



Improve oversight of students accessing alternative provision that are on roll at a mainstream school where the Alternative Provision Team have not commissioned a place.



Continuously refine transition processes by actively engaging all stakeholders, including families and schools, in planning, with a particular focus on vulnerable students during primary transitions.

Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

The local area partnership ensures that children and young people with SEND are visible and valued in the local community, participating in a wide range of inclusive activities.

"I'm so happy to see how much my child is included and valued in our community. There's a real effort to support children with additional needs and help them join in activities. Seeing my child feel accepted and confident has been so good for our family. She has loved going to the HAF holiday sessions."
– Parent Feedback



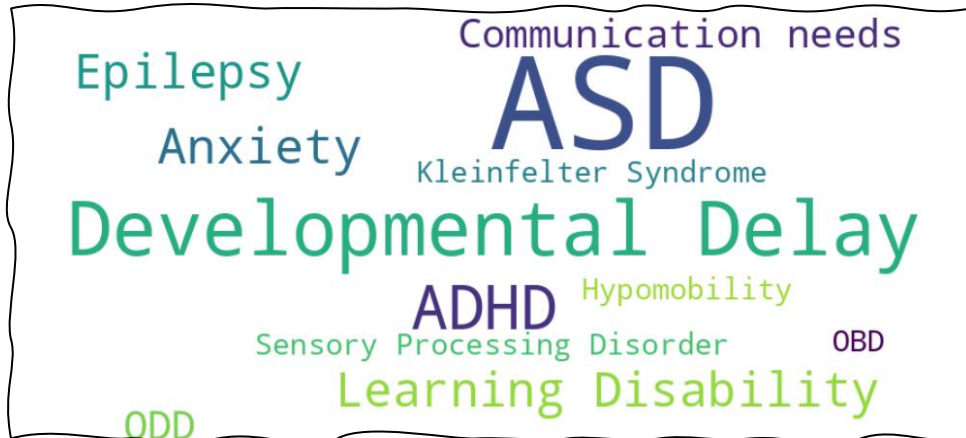
Monday Night @MyPlace

Sessions run on Monday evenings, 18:30–21:00.

Open to young people aged 11–24, particularly those who face challenges in social settings and have difficulty accessing mainstream activities.

Attendance typically ranges between 18 and 20 young people per session, depending on needs and referrals. There are 30 young people that attend on a regular basis.

Staff maintain ongoing communication with parents and other settings to support transitions into adulthood and encourage social opportunities with peers.



Word cloud based on disability types of those attending the youth club

A variety of inclusive activities are offered, tailored to the interests and abilities of the young people attending:

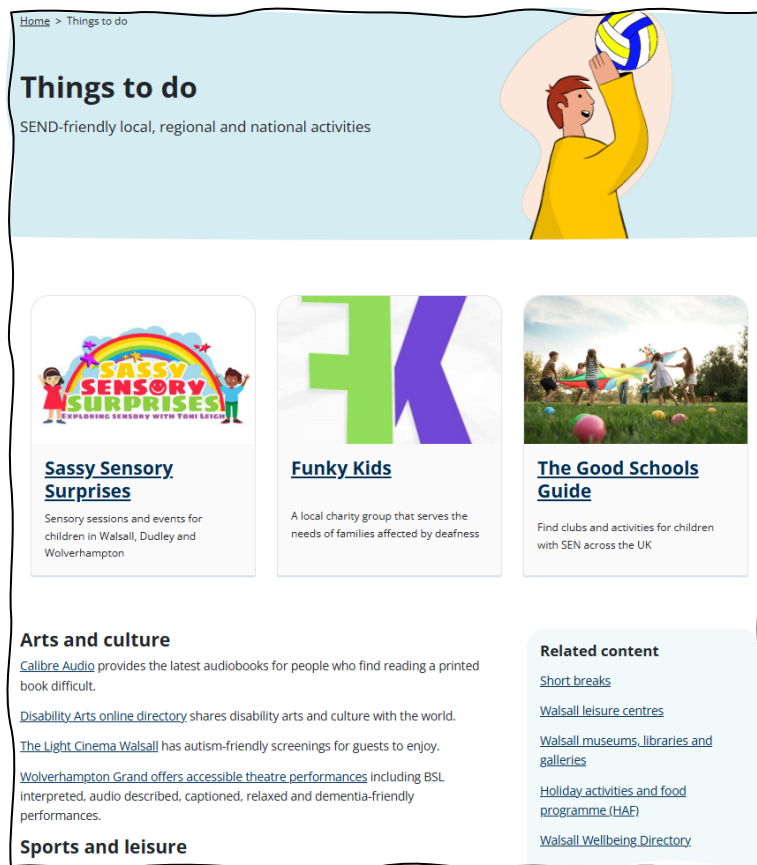
- Arts and crafts
- Sports and adapted games
- Board Games
- Go Karts
- Wheelchair Bikes
- Music
- Life Skills
- Themed Nights

All activities are designed to foster confidence, independence, teamwork, and creativity in a safe, supportive environment.

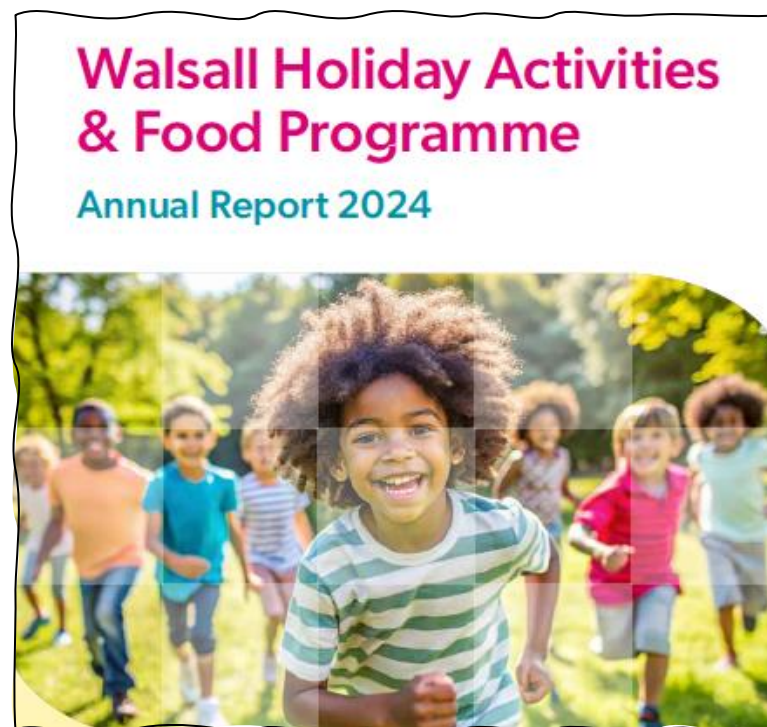
Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

Understanding what activities are available

Children and young people with SEND have a variety of opportunities to participate in activities within their communities.



The “Things to do” page on the local offer outlines community activities that are especially accessible for children and young people with SEN needs and disabilities.



Walsall council received investment of £1,806,210 in 2024 from the DFE to develop and co-ordinate the Holiday Activity and Food Programme.

As part of the developed programme:

- SEND coffee mornings were provided, allowing feedback from parents.
- All HAF providers were SEND trained
- Our Short Breaks programme was aligned with HAF for families whose needs could not be met through the HAF programme.
- Flexibility was offered on HAF delivery to make it more accessible to SEND families

Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

Supported to participate, have friends, and form relationships.

Children and young people in Walsall benefit from a broad and developing range of out-of-school activities.

Walsall's EHE service hosts a monthly **"Let's Get Together"** group, offering activities, social time, and opportunities for parents, children and young people to build connections and feel included. Key partners, including School Nursing and the Fire Service, attend to provide information and promote emotional literacy. This reduces isolation among EHE parents, children and young people, creates a support network for sharing experiences, advice and encouragement. Parents can also exchange educational resources and ideas.

Children and young people in Walsall attended the council's first 'Shaping my Tomorrow **Youth Summit** in August 2024. The event was attended by over a 100 aged 9- to 25 along with youth organisations and staff from the council's children's services. This event informed the development of the Shaping my Tomorrow participation strategy led by the Children and Young people Alliance. The Second summit took place in August 2025.

In March 2025, a Walsall teenager was named the winner of the Young Active Citizens Award, a regional accolade recognising the inspirational contributions of young people to their communities:

Walsall teenager named as Young Active Citizens Awards winner

Published on 24 May 2024

[Print](#)

An inspirational teenager from Walsall has been named as one of four winners in the Young Active Citizens Awards 2024.



The awards, launched by The West Midlands Lieutenancy in 2020, acknowledge the outstanding contribution and celebrate the extraordinary things young people across the West Midlands do.

Joel Rushton, 17, from Walsall, won the 12-17-year-old category after giving up his personal time to work with Walsall Council to shape services for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Joel, who himself has autism and anxiety, has used his own experiences and knowledge to make sure other people's voices are heard. He has also been instrumental in co-designing and producing Walsall Council's SEND Local Offer website which has received positive feedback from the local community and the Department for Education.

"I am so glad that I've been able to represent and help those that have gone through, or are currently going through, similar experiences to me and I feel honoured to have been given this award."

Joel Rushton

"We are so very proud of Joel. He has dealt with so much over the past few years and can still struggle every day to do what most of us take for granted, but he has pushed himself out of his comfort zone in order to help other people."

Alison and Elliot Rushton, Joel's parents

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Developing Confidence, Resilience and knowledge

The Walsall Local Area Partnership has given careful thought to how children who might not normally be able to enjoy some activities are included.

The **Children and Young People Strategic Alliance** embraces a collaborative approach, championing the philosophy that ‘today’s children are tomorrow’s adults’ and fostering a ‘Children First’ culture across Walsall.

Our **2024 staff conference** took place in June 2024 and was themed “Voices today shaping our tomorrow”. Young people led the conversations and the reflections to enable us to effectively plan and make our Walsall Right 4 Children aspirations and priority a reality

A **comprehensive WR4C participation offer** has been developed aligned to the “Shaping my Tomorrow” participation strategy, providing a wide range of opportunities for young people to be involved in shaping and delivery of our Strategies and services. Examples over the last twelve months include the All-Age Carers Strategy, young people’s involvement in senior leadership recruitment; shaping the pathfinders project, and the development of an adolescent offer.

We have created **dedicated resources** across the partnership to maximise opportunities to co-ordinate and support a range of participation and engagement activities in the Borough with children and young people, parents and carers. As part of this we are developing a range of opportunities to develop employment skills and experience, including the establishment of two apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities.

We have developed a **Shaping my Tomorrow - Youth Collaborative** – an approach aimed at maximising opportunities through existing youth forums (we have identified eighteen different forums), while amplifying youth voice and developing new opportunities for underrepresented and unheard voices. Examples of youth collaborative activities have included Shaping the Town Centre master plan, youth debates between young people and Cabinet members (topics include fairer access to work experience and job opportunities and fairer access to positive activities), development of the Town Centre youth hub, development of a young people friendly scheme working with businesses across the borough to provide welcoming and safe spaces for young people.

The **Local Offer Engagement Lead** employs diverse and inclusive methods to ensure the voices of children and young people with SEND are heard and represented.

The **Youth SEND Forum** was established in March 2025, which meets regularly to discuss a range of topics within SEND services, and leading the creation of a Children and Young People’s Co-production Charter to embed their voices in decision-making.

Seldom Heard communities

The 0-19 HCP Team has conducted community engagement events across Walsall, including sessions at local mosques, ESOL colleges, the MindKind Hub, and centres for fathers and Asian women. These events aim to promote the 0-19 HCP and SEND teams among seldom-heard communities. The team has a Health Visitor for vulnerable families including asylum seekers and travelling families ensuring children and young people are seen and supported when they move into our community with the delivery of 1:1 bespoke targeted support.

The 0-19 HCP team also continues to offer community engagement events including a programme of presentations across local schools and nurseries for childminders to support easier access to community health services for seldom heard community groups to facilitate the growth and development of children and families and support early identification of SEND.

Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

Key Development Priorities



Further strengthen communication across initiatives to ensure accessible feedback loops among children, young people, families, and service providers.



Establish transparent processes showing families how their feedback is used, reinforcing trust and encouraging continued engagement.



Increase awareness and accessibility of SENDIAS Service and similar support resources within the community.



Develop additional opportunities for parents and carers to participate in strategic planning and feedback processes, empowering them as advocates for their children's needs.



Use clear, plain language in documentation and communications, with translations and adaptations for varying literacy levels or primary languages.



Foster community-based peer support networks for families to connect, share experiences and support one another.



Build stronger partnerships with schools and community organisations to create a broader support network reaching families where they already engage regularly.



The Alliance has commissioned “Going where the silence is”. A Project that seeks to address the persistent and systemic gaps in early intervention and prevention services for groups of children and their families who are too often overlooked or unheard by traditional support frameworks. The project's aim is to proactively identify and engage with these silent or hidden groups before difficulties intensify, working to understand the barriers that keep them isolated and tailoring solutions that bridge this divide.

Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND, setting a clear strategic vision and high expectations across all services and provision. Through strategic co-production and robust governance, they have established a culture of continuous improvement, underpinned by aspirational goals for inclusivity. Families and professionals value the openness and accountability of leaders, who prioritise partnership working and ensure that the voices of children, young people, and their families shape services and decision-making.

"I think leaders have improved SEND in Walsall. They are making services better, which shows they care. My child's views are always listened to. It's great to see they are trying hard to make a difference." – Parent Feedback

An ambitious strategy and aspirational culture

Leaders in Walsall have high ambition for children and young people. They work strategically across the partnership to develop robust systems, policies and opportunities for children, young people and their families.

During the Ofsted **ILACS Inspection** in May 2025, leaders were praised on their ambitious work:

"Leaders have forged mature relationships with partner agencies. There has been significant work to gain the commitment of all partners in actively engaging with the support agenda for vulnerable children. This has enabled the ambitious development of services to create a seamless, multi-agency service for all children who live in Walsall. Partners are involved in multi-agency quality assurance. This, and the joint development of services, has led to a partnership with a clear sense of purpose, vision and direction in meeting children's needs." – Ofsted ILACS report – Published July 2025

There is a comprehensive **SEND and AP strategy** focused on quality first teaching, effective transitions, and workforce development to meet diverse SEND needs.

There are **clearly defined aspirations** for SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) students to be 'valued, visible, and included' in their local communities, supporting them in achieving fulfilling lives.

We prioritise **localised high-quality provision**, early identification and support, inclusive decision-making, and a robust Alternative Provision offer.

Our **SENCO Forum** is well-established. Promoting and celebrating good practices across schools, settings and partnerships, fostering a culture of high expectations and quality.

Walsall's **Family Hub network** is actively engaged in strategic collaboration across disciplines to enhance services for families and children of all ages. This includes ambitious planning that builds on existing strengths, with a clear focus on integrated pathways, shared resources, and cross-sector knowledge exchange. These efforts are aligned with the borough's target of ensuring that 75% of children reach a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028.

Prioritised Investment by senior leaders (circa £350k) into short breaks to meet the increasing needs of families locally.



Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

Clear understanding of responsibilities and accountabilities, allowing for swift decision making

Leaders across the partnership have a clear understanding of their statutory duties and individual accountabilities within the wider area strategy. They are proactive in ensuring that all partners are aware of their roles and responsibilities, regularly reviewing governance structures to maintain compliance with statutory requirements. Through robust oversight and transparent reporting, leaders ensure that responsibilities are distributed appropriately and that all agencies contribute effectively to the shared vision for children and young people with SEND. This collective approach underpins a culture of accountability and continuous improvement across education, health, and care services.

There is **Dedicated SEND governance** within the ICB, supported by a Senior Programme Lead, DCO, Administrator, and an Executive Lead for SEND, with each provider Trust appointing a SEND Executive Lead.

The **SEND Partnership Board**, co-chaired by the ICB's Head of SEND, ensures SEND remains a priority in strategic initiatives across health organisations.

The **SEND Partnership Operational Group** plays a key role in overseeing and unblocking operational barriers, tracking and monitoring projects to ensure effective delivery and development, while providing oversight and appropriately delegating responsibilities. Established Inclusion Steering Group with 18 Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) from various educational settings, contributing to Walsall's improvement efforts and co-production.

The **SEND Health Steering Group** is a robust partnership forum where information is reported from our PCF and partnership agencies on areas of progress and development within SEND Health.

We **involve families and stakeholders** in decision-making processes, allowing for swift consensus on necessary changes to enhance services, and regularly reviewing outcomes with them to ensure changes meet their expectations and needs, making adjustments where necessary.

Challenging ourselves to improve experiences

Leaders across the partnership routinely challenge themselves and each other to drive improvement in experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Through a culture of reflective practice and open dialogue, leaders are unafraid to ask difficult questions, scrutinise data, and hold one another to account.

There is **strong strategic coproduction**, with regular large-scale coproduction events and continuous parental engagement in all strategic groups.

Our **Improvement Journey** (outlined at the beginning of the self evaluation) evidences our leadership commitment to challenging and improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Embedding the **voice of children and young people** into service improvement is a strategic priority supported by robust feedback mechanisms, such as the Local Offer website, as well as large-scale and smaller informal coproduction sessions. These approaches ensure continuous evaluation, quick adjustments, and responsive improvements that align with the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND.

The **SEND Partnership Board** demonstrates highly effective leadership, fostering openness, transparency, and a strong commitment to continuous improvement and learning. Key partners inspire others with their creativity, innovation, and solution-focused approach, as evidenced by the significant progress achieved within the SEND agenda.

Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

Key Development Priorities



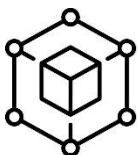
Strengthen communication and accessibility of co-production events to ensure wider parental and community engagement.



Embed tracking and reporting mechanisms within the SEND Partnership Operational Group to improve transparency on project progress and outcomes.



Increase visibility and awareness of feedback loops, such as the Local Offer website, to encourage greater family input and demonstrate responsiveness to feedback.



Continue refining Walsall's AP Framework to ensure it is high-quality, needs-led, and supports the borough's most vulnerable learners so that Walsall's AP Framework becomes more responsive, effective, and targeted, improving quality, addressing gaps, and supporting better educational and life outcomes for young people.



Continue to increase cross-agency collaboration to streamline support for children with SEND, ensuring cohesive services across Health, Education, and Social Care.



Enhance parent and carer training and resources to empower families in supporting their children's education and wellbeing.



Develop targeted initiatives to improve transitions between educational stages, focusing on both academic and emotional support for students with SEND.



Strengthen feedback collection from children and young people directly to ensure their voices remain central in shaping services and improvements.



Increase outreach and awareness efforts to inform families about available support and the pathways to accessing services.

Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people with SEND and their families

Leaders actively engage with children, young people, and families to shape services, with co-production central to service design and delivery. Young people's voices are central to decision-making and service development.

"I really value how leaders in Walsall take the time to listen to families. They have made us feel involved and included in decisions about the support for our child, they genuinely care about our views. Knowing that our feedback helps shape services gives me confidence that we're being heard and that our child's needs are a priority." – Parent Feedback

Co-production with groups with different needs

Co-production with children, young people, parents and carers is at the heart of service design in Walsall. Leaders listen to and value the views of parents, carers, children and young people, with a number of initiatives ensuring that groups are engaged in the way best suited to their needs.

Walsall's **SENDIAS** offers free and impartial support to children and young people with SEND, along with their parents and carers, while actively contributing to strategic groups such as the LAIB and Local Offer Steering Group.

We have Implemented '**All About Me**' boards above all bedspaces and placed placemats at each bed for families to note important information, allowing staff to make reasonable adjustments and improve hospital experiences for children and young people with SEND.

There is **strong representation** of parents and carers on all key strategic and steering groups, including the Autism, Mental Health, and Local Offer Steering Groups, ensuring their voices are central in decision-making. The agenda of the SEND Health Steering Group is set so that parent/carers feedback is the first item on the agenda. This ensures that we can routinely consider feedback monthly and any associated actions monitored by the Steering Group

Robust **opportunities for co-production** with parents and carers through both large-scale events and targeted strategic sessions, fostering meaningful collaboration and shared ownership of SEND initiatives.

Creation of the **SEND Co-production and Engagement Charter** and the 'In Our Hands' Engagement and Participation Strategy, both designed and authored by families from the Parent Carer Forum.

The **SEND Partnership Operational Group** oversees effective delivery by bringing together Health, Social Care, parents/carers, local authority, and education representatives, ensuring comprehensive support for children and young people.

Big conversation feedback loops take into account lived experiences of children and families, to ensure that strategic processes and commissioning activities reflect the diverse needs of children and their families.

Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people with SEND and their families

Services shaped by children and young people's experiences

Many strategies and services within Walsall have been co-designed with children and young people with their needs, experiences, ambitions and outcomes in mind.

The **Local Offer Website** includes a feedback platform for families, while representation of FACE on all strategic groups ensures parents and carers have a voice in shaping its design and content. Additionally, 'In Our Hands' sessions held across four localities collected input on the Local Offer from over 70 parents.

Monthly structured dialogues and discussions have been established between FACE and Local Offer Engagement lead to discuss presenting issues.

The **Little Voices initiative** was set up by the Patient Relations & Experience Team at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust in partnership with Pelsall Village School. This is an innovative engagement project where school children review paediatric services at Walsall Manor Hospital and provide feedback directly to senior healthcare leaders.

We introduced the '**it's okay to ask**' campaign in the Paediatric unit, encouraging parents, carers, and children and young people to voice concerns and ask questions freely to all staff.

'**Martha's Rule**' is being piloted in Walsall Health Trust. This is a major patient safety initiative for inpatient hospital care providing patients and families with a way to seek an urgent review if their or their loved ones' condition deteriorates and their concerns are not being responded to.

The **Child Development Centre** employs diverse methods to gather feedback from children, young people, and families, ensuring every voice is heard and represented.

A **survey** with 400 young people was recently undertaken by health visitors, to obtain feedback about the service and their needs.

A **SEND Young Person's group** helps shape the Local Offer website and SEND services. Young people are involved in recruitment panels, alongside the EPS Team, Head of SEND, Outreach Services, DCO, DSCO and parent/carer reps, contributing to final decisions.

Local Politicians treat Children with SEND as a priority. Local councillors regularly visit schools and settings. Leaders provide updates to elected members through scrutiny and briefings with the portfolio holder for SEND, ensuring accountability.

Young Voices Project: The five-year Joint Forward Plan commits to developing and implementing a model that actively listens to and acts on CYP voices in SEND service development, review, and delivery. This model, co-created with CYP, leverages best practices to expand existing voice and influence initiatives, identifies gaps, and seeks innovative ways to strengthen CYP impact. Representing input from 4,000 CYP, the project outlines clear recommendations and an actionable plan to enhance engagement.

We capture student and parent views during **termly student reviews** to evidence the impact of Alternative provision and student experiences within Alternative Provision. These views are collated and analysed to inform future service delivery. This also allows us to triangulate information provided by schools and to challenge any discrepancies that arise.

Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people with SEND and their families

Transparent communication around service changes

Leaders across Walsall are committed to transparent communication with children, young people and their families. When changes are made to local services as a result of feedback, clear updates are provided. Where it is not possible to implement a suggested change, leaders explain the reasons openly, ensuring families understand the constraints and the rationale behind decisions. This approach helps to build trust and ensures that families feel valued and informed, even when their preferred outcome cannot be achieved.

FACE Walsall's **monthly breakfasts** foster open dialogue between parents, carers, and professionals, drawing high attendance and covering diverse SEND topics such as Health, CAMHS, and SENDIAS. These events are complemented by continuous communication with the SEND community through FACE's active social media updates on developments and improvements.

A **SEND Services feedback form** was circulated through SEND Service Communications, FACE and SENDIASS to gain more robust feedback around services. Feedback has helped shape our You Said, We Did approach and directly influenced changes to the SEND Local Offer.



FACE Walsall Parent Carer Forum

- Families and Carers Empowered -

Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people with SEND and their families

Key Development Priorities



Continue to develop the Parent Partnership Group (established March 25) to broaden engagement with parent and carers across the borough, ensuring they meet regularly to discuss topics, share experiences and actively participate in the development of SEND Services..



Further collaborative SEND work with parents and carers through a variety of co-production opportunities. PfA partnership days, EHC Plan Quality Assurance days, short breaks statement and service evaluation and SEN Caseworker interviews.



Integrate community voice more effectively by applying the SEND Co-production and Engagement Charter and 'In Our Hands' Strategy across services.



Increase young people's input in service development through the SEND Young Person's group.

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND in their local area

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:

Our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Shows:

The number of children in Walsall is increasing and likely to increase further.

Poverty is increasing locally.

There is a correlation between people living in poverty and prevalence of SEND.

1 in every 7 children is accessing additional support via SEN Support or EHCP this is likely to increase.

Some children for example Pakistani boys are disproportionately represented in the SEND system.

Whilst the number of children needing support increases the resources available to the system is not enough to keep pace.

Reforms are highly likely and could change the way the system operates.

There is a need for us to think systematically about the support in place and how we ensure that children's needs continue to be met.

This relies on a heavier focus on inclusion - welcoming people, places and practice can help meet need earlier and it is what children have asked for.

Parents are a child's primary educator and play a significant role in children achieving positive outcomes.

There is evidence from children, parents and practitioners that transitions can be trickier to navigate yet insufficient evidence we are addressing this.

There is evidence that parenting support including models such as Positive Behaviour Support can have a significant impact.

The greatest impact can be felt if we act earlier in the earliest years of a child's life.

There are signs right from the Early Years that the graduated response/early intervention could improve the outcomes for children.

The biggest areas of growth are likely to be in speech, language and communication and social, emotional and mental health.

There is evidence that preventing, reducing and delaying needs can come from effective multi-agency responses.

There is a need to consider the way we integrate services and support as a partnership.

Pressures across key services are reported now ahead of these likely increases - what we are doing today will not stand the test of time.

Outcomes for children with SEND are improving in terms of their achievements at schools and we need to maintain this progress.

There are a high number of children with SEND who come into the care and in the youth justice system showing they are disproportionately experiencing poorer outcomes than their peers.

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND in their local area

Leaders in Walsall demonstrate a thorough and shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area. Comprehensive data systems and reports provide clear insights into service demand and outcomes, enabling responsive and informed decision-making. Regular engagement with schools, parents, and key stakeholders ensures that leaders stay connected to the lived experiences of children and families, using this feedback to refine services and drive improvements. This collaborative approach ensures that local provision is well-aligned to meet the diverse needs of children and young people effectively.

"I've really noticed a change, there are more chances now to share my views about my child's needs, and it feels like services are actually listening and working together to support us better. It's reassuring to know that the people making decisions understand what families like ours are going through" – Parent Feedback

Gathering timely and accurate information.

Leaders gather accurate, timely information about children and young people with SEND in their local area and monitor the changing needs of the population, including using the perspectives of children, young people and their families

The entire partnership, plus local people have developed our **SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**. This will further improve our understanding of future needs from the population, local and individual levels and help shape our medium to long term commissioning intentions.

Leaders regularly gather and provide feedback through the Directors Management Team (DMT), extended DMT, performance reviews and scrutiny sessions, ensuring responsive, strategic oversight.

A **comprehensive data dashboard** provides robust governance by tracking SEND service demand and outcomes, providing valuable insights across the area. Oversight is maintained through regular action plan reviews and monthly performance analysis conducted by Children's Services Managers and Access and Inclusion Senior Management.

The **Pupil Tracking Audit Initiative** drives continuous improvement in the SEND service by combining data-driven insights with feedback from children, young people, and families. This integrated approach identifies trends, gaps, and areas for targeted improvement while ensuring services remain person-centred and responsive.

We hold a comprehensive **health data dashboard** incorporating key performance indicators such as the 6 weeks return of health advice, GP LD Health checks and waiting time information.

Walsall's Family Hubs use local data and direct engagement with families to build a clear understanding of children's developmental needs. This insight enables the hubs to continuously refine and redesign their multi-agency offer, ensuring services are responsive and targeted. Strategic planning across health, education, and voluntary sectors supports the creation of integrated pathways, shared resources, and collaborative working. These efforts are central to achieving the borough's goal of 75% of children reaching a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028, with Family Hubs positioned as key drivers of early identification, holistic support, and inclusive service delivery.

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND in their local area

Understanding experiences, backgrounds, identities and barriers to access

Leaders in Walsall consider the diversity of the population carefully, with much work undertaken to understand the children and young people of the area. Leaders consider the backgrounds and needs of groups who may struggle to access support, ensuring their views are represented in shaping the support they receive.

Leaders conduct **school visits** to assess needs, share best practices, and review the notional SEND Budget, building strong school connections and insight.

Children and young people with **additional vulnerabilities** receive targeted support from case managers within the EHC team. Vulnerable groups include those who are EHE, EOTAS, LAC, or highly mobile, providing targeted support.

Our established **quality assurance processes**, guided by the EHCP QA Framework, include multi-agency panels that review Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) with a particular focus on understanding background, identity and barriers to access. The insights gained are used to inform training and have led to improvements in the quality of EHC plans.

The **SENCO Forum and Headteacher groups** (Special School Heads, PNS, and WASH) provide leaders with valuable insights into the experiences of children, young people, and families, while also addressing key issues with a National SEND focus. Actions arising from these discussions are monitored by the SEND Partnership Operational Group.

Sharing information across agencies and learning from different perspectives

Agencies in Walsall routinely meet to discuss how to work together creatively and solve problems. An established culture to innovate and share responsibility has put children at the centre of strategy, effective commissioning and joint working.

The **Local Area Inclusion Board** meets six-weekly and is made up of leaders from the Parent/Carer Forum, SENDIASS, Health, the Local Authority, and Education. The aims of the board are to work together to:

- Ensure that opportunities for children and young people are maximised, enabling them to benefit from high quality services that improve outcomes.
- Create a sustainable SEND and alternative provision system that is easier for families to navigate.
- Ensure that SEND and AP services in Walsall are delivered in line with national and local strategic objectives by working.

The Board members are of a seniority within the organisation they represent to effect change and identify additional resources as and when necessary.

Walsall's **Home to School Transport Team** has reduced costs and removed numerous individual transport routes through joint commissioning with Staffordshire CC, Wolverhampton CC, and South Staffs College. The team has improved efficiency and service delivery by commissioning new routes over the past year, reducing the number of routes per school. Routes to SRP schools have been replaced with funding, empowering schools to manage their own transport.

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND in their local area

Key Development Priorities



Enhance the accessibility and usability of the Data Dashboard and SEND Scorecard, ensuring they are intuitive and adaptable to evolving areas of enquiry. These improvements will enable effective insight-sharing across teams, fostering a more collaborative and efficient approach to managing SEND services.



Expand the frequency and scope of school visits by leaders to gather comprehensive feedback, share best practices more widely, and strengthen relationships with a broader range of educational settings.



Fully embed quality assurance processes guided by the EHCP QA Framework to ensure a collaborative and robust approach to assessment and planning. Regularly update these processes within the EHCP QA Framework to reflect evolving best practices and incorporate feedback, supporting continuous improvements in EHC plan quality.



Fully embed pupil tracking audit cycles throughout the coming year and beyond to ensure findings consistently inform policy, shape practice, and drive the continuous improvement of SEND services.



Regularly share analysis of the above with the Local Area Improvement Board (LAIB) and the Partnership Operational Group (POG) to uphold transparency, accountability, and strategic oversight.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Key Performance Indicator – Exclusions

In the Walsall primary school permanent exclusion rate for all pupils in the 2024/25 academic year stands at 0.02 (unpublished Capita data) this is equal to the published 2023/24 academic year rate and slightly lower than the national 2023/24 rate of 0.03. The exclusion rate for pupils with an EHCP in primary schools is significantly lower than national (0.20 below) in the 2023/24 academic year and 0.04 below national for pupils with SEN support.

The Walsall secondary school permanent exclusion rate for all pupils in the 2024/25 academic year stands at 0.17 (unpublished Capita data) this is 0.03 percentage points below the published Walsall 2023/24 academic year rate and below the national 2023/24 rate of 0.25. Both Walsall rates for children with an EHCP and children with SEN support are lower than national in the 2023/24 academic year, with children with an EHCP 0.35 below national. The exclusion rate for secondary pupils with SEN support in the 2024/25 academic year (unpublished Capita data) is significantly higher than the published 2023/24 rate at 0.62.

In the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years the permanent exclusion rate in Walsall for children in special schools with an EHCP is 0.10. The national rate is lower than Walsall at 0.08 for the published 2023/24 academic year.

Rate of Permanent Exclusions by Academic Year										
		2023/24			2024/25			2025/26 (September 2025 only)		
Group		Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP
Primary Schools	All Pupils	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.02	n/a		0.00	n/a	
	SEN with EHCP	0.09	0.29	0.20	0.08	n/a		0.00	n/a	
	SEN Support	0.10	0.14	0.04	0.07	n/a		0.00	n/a	
Secondary Schools	All Pupils	0.20	0.25	0.05	0.17	n/a		0.01	n/a	
	SEN with EHCP	0.17	0.52	0.35	0.62	n/a		0.00	n/a	
	SEN Support	0.52	0.80	0.28	0.52	n/a		0.03	n/a	
Special Schools	SEN with EHCP	0.10	0.08	-0.02	0.10	n/a		0.00	n/a	

2023/24 Academic Year

Source: DfE publication 'Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, academic year 2023/24'.

2024/25 Academic Year onwards

Source: Walsall figures from Capita One.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Key Performance Indicator – Suspensions

The Walsall primary school suspension rate for all pupils in the 2024/25 academic year stands at 1.92 (unpublished Capita data) this is 0.41 above the published 2023/24 academic year rate and 0.35 below the national 2023/24 rate of 2.27. The suspension rate for pupils with an EHCP in primary schools is 8.85 below national in the 2023/24 academic year and 4.11 below national for pupils with SEN support at 5.01 compared to the national of 9.12.

The Walsall secondary school suspension rate for all pupils in the 2024/25 academic year stands at 23.94 (unpublished Capita data) this is 1.32 percentage points below the published 2023/24 academic year rate and below the national 2023/24 academic year rate of 22.61. Walsall 2024/25 rates for children with an EHCP (unpublished Capita data) are higher than the Walsall 2023/24 academic year rate and 6.83 higher than the national 2023/24 academic year. For children with SEN support the Walsall 2024/25 figure is 3.54 percentage points higher than last academic year, at 57.48, however, Walsall remains just below the national 2023/24 rate of 57.51.

In the 2023/24 academic year the permanent exclusion rate in Walsall for children in special schools with an EHCP was 7.57. The national rate is 4.95 higher than Walsall at 12.52. The unpublished 2024/25 Walsall rate is lower than the Walsall and national 2023/24 rates.

Rate of Suspensions by Academic Year										
		2023/24			2024/25			2025/26 (September 2025 only)		
Group		Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP	Walsall	National	GAP
Primary Schools	All Pupils	1.51	2.27	0.76	1.92	n/a		0.06	n/a	
	SEN with EHCP	10.05	18.90	8.85	11.95	n/a		0.25	n/a	
	SEN Support	5.01	9.12	4.11	4.82	n/a		0.12	n/a	
Secondary Schools	All Pupils	25.26	22.61	-2.65	23.94	n/a		1.29	n/a	
	SEN with EHCP	62.54	55.71	-6.83	78.69	n/a		4.98	n/a	
	SEN Support	53.94	57.51	3.57	57.48	n/a		3.06	n/a	
Special Schools	SEN with EHCP	7.57	12.52	4.95	4.02	n/a		0.29	n/a	

2023/24 Academic Year

Source: DfE publication 'Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, academic year 2023/24'.

2024/25 Academic Year onwards

Source: Walsall figures from Capita One.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Leaders in Walsall are proactive in commissioning services and provision that meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including those requiring alternative provision. Services are commissioned based on evidence of what works and in consultation with families. Through a strategic focus on expanding local placements and specialist resources, leaders have reduced reliance on independent providers while ensuring high-quality, needs-led support. The development of a robust Alternative Provision framework, alongside rigorous quality assurance processes, ensures that children and young people have access to safe, tailored education and support that aligns with their aspirations. Families and professionals value the emphasis on inclusive, community-based services that prioritise positive outcomes for every child.

“Over the past few years there has been a big improvement on services and activities for my children. I always feel valued and listened to when I get involved in the partnership events to improve services.” – Parent Feedback

Our placement strategy...



Mainstream First: We want all our children and young people to be able to access a mainstream setting if this is the best option for them. We want to have a fully inclusive approach within our schools, colleges and early years settings, and for every mainstream setting to make their best endeavours to remove barriers to learning.



All ages, all types: We are committed to offering appropriate educational places for children and young people including Early Years and Post 16. Our settings will be equipped to ensure carefully planned transitions take place and that all children are prepared for adulthood. We will look to widen our primary need boundaries in terms of our Special Schools to develop ‘multi-need’ provision to assist in placing complex learners.



Community-Based Learning: We believe that children should, where possible, be educated within their local community, fostering a sense of belonging and connection. We strive for local schools to welcome and support families of children with SEND, reducing travel time for students. To achieve this, we are establishing SRPs (Specialist Resource Provisions) and Hubs across the borough to cater to a broad range of needs.



Graduated placements: Our model of placements includes four main types that increase in specialism and support. These are wholly mainstream, SRPs, Specialist Hubs and special school. These settings give children opportunities to continue with elements of mainstream learning which will enhance their specialist support.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Services developed around need and informed by evidence

Services and systems across the partnership have been intentionally designed around the needs of children and young people with SEND. Leaders routinely draw on local and national evidence of what works to inform their approach, ensuring that provision is both responsive and effective. Services are commissioned based on evidence of what works and in consultation with families.

Health service providers play a vital role in maintaining a **graduated response** across all settings, utilising prioritisation tools and evidence-based practices to deliver consistent, needs-led support.

We have implemented **feedback mechanisms**, such as “You Said We Did” sessions, to enhance service delivery and address family needs effectively.

Regular and focused **pupil tracking audits** are conducted across the partnership. These audits provide valuable insights that drive improvements.

We have implemented a **tiered system of provision**, offering increasing levels of expertise and tailored support to meet diverse needs effectively. Our commitment extends to continually identifying and developing settings that deliver the best outcomes for learners while ensuring sufficient specialist placements are available within Walsall.

By **maximising local resources and expertise**, Walsall reduces reliance on independent specialist provision and prioritises the delivery of high-quality, locally accessible services for all children and young people in need of support.

Advanced modelling has been conducted to project the number of EHC plans expected in the coming years, identifying the proportion of pupils likely to require specialist placements. The forecasting model also accounts for the proportion of pupils with EHC plans who may require independent specialist provision. Assumptions within the model are reviewed regularly to ensure accurate planning and responsiveness to changing needs, supporting a proactive approach to meeting future demand.

Joint commissioning arrangements to make the best use of resources

Leaders from education, health, and social care work collaboratively to pool expertise, funding, and resources, ensuring that services are delivered in the most efficient, equitable, and sustainable way possible. Regular joint meetings enable partners to identify gaps, avoid duplication, and target support where it will have the greatest impact. As a result, children and young people with SEND benefit from a seamless offer of support that is responsive to their evolving needs and delivers improved outcomes across all aspects of their lives.”

Regular reviews of health service delivery models are conducted to strengthen the wider workforce and ensure responsive, needs-led support. Business cases are being developed to address capacity gaps in response to rising demand for health services, using data and evidence to ensure solutions are targeted and effective.

Walsall’s Family Hubs commission a variety of services to ensure families receive early and accessible support. This includes additional Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) capacity and drop-ins to expand universal access, counselling for emotional wellbeing, and wellbeing support from voluntary sector partners. Walsall Housing Group also contributes by promoting parent-infant relationships and breastfeeding support. These services are embedded within the Family Hub model, helping families build strong early connections with professionals and access holistic support from pregnancy onwards.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Reducing vulnerabilities to abuse and neglect

Leaders in Walsall recognise that children and young people with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. This understanding is central to their approach when commissioning and evaluating services.

We have implemented an **AP procurement framework**, commissioning quality assurance (QA) visits to assess the standard of education provided by AP providers. Health and safety, as well as safeguarding audits, conducted for unregistered providers to ensure high standards across all AP settings.

Walsall has an established locality model within four localities across the borough where the Family Help Teams are co-located with key partners including Police, 0-19 Health, DWP, Domestic Abuse Practitioners, and Social Care. The aim of the locality Family Help Service is to build on the positives of partnership Early Help and the Family Safeguarding model for children in need and child protection, to create integrated multi-disciplinary Family Help Teams.

There has been a focus on understanding children's and family's needs and providing purposeful multi-agency support through the Family Safeguarding Model. For many children and families this draws on the professional network around the family, and where needs are identified that families are supported through consultation and/or direct support from Adult Specialist Practitioners.

"Family Help helped me with a routine in the home because things had broken down, no one really communicated as well as we should of at home. They helped us to get out and do activities with the kids, and helped with our relationship, to be honest the main thing they did was just to be there and be someone to connect with and speak to,. most importantly I didn't feel alone". – Parental Feedback



Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Suitable full-time educational provision and compliance with statutory requirements

The local authority has robust systems in place to identify the needs of children and young people who require alternative provision, including those who have been excluded from school. Needs are assessed promptly and accurately, and suitable full-time educational provision is arranged without delay. Regular monitoring and quality assurance checks confirm that alternative provision is tailored to individual needs and supports positive outcomes for all learners.

There has been a 15% increase in commissioned places across **Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs)** within mainstream schools over the past four academic years. Approval has been secured to expand SRP placements by an additional 122 places to meet growing demand. The Local Authority is actively engaging with mainstream schools to establish new SRPs, with several schools already in the planning stages and others in discussions about potential development. Ongoing engagement with Independent Special Schools ensures commissioned placements are available for pupils with more complex needs.

Walsall ensure that the **Statutory Day 6 Duty** for permanently excluded pupils is met through the commissioned place process, providing access to suitable full-time education without delay. On entry, pupils' needs are assessed promptly to establish a baseline, and this information is used to plan their next steps, whether reintegration to mainstream, continuation in AP, or transition to specialist or post-16 provision. Leaders commission placements through the AP Framework, which includes rigorous due diligence on safeguarding, health and safety, and curriculum suitability. Strong oversight is maintained through the QA and KPI frameworks, with annual QA visits, enhanced reviews for unregistered providers, half-termly monitoring by AP Keyworkers, and termly data returns. These processes ensure that all AP is safe, tailored to individual needs, and consistently supports positive outcomes, compliance with statutory requirements, and sustainable progression pathways for learners. During Academic year 24-25, 17 pupils with an EHCP/SEN support were permanently excluded, 94% were on roll at a suitable provision by day 6.

Places are commissioned at two **Pupil Referral Units**, one AP Free School and 2 Independent Schools, alongside a wide range of commissioned alternative provision placements, ensuring that diverse student needs are met and that learners can access a broad selection of qualifications.

Impact example: The commissioning agreement between Walsall Council and The Mercian Trust – The Ladder School will deliver significant improvements in both cost efficiency and service quality for KS4 alternative provision. By commissioning 60 places at a fixed cost of £25,500 per student per year, the council achieves predictable budgeting and a lower cost per pupil. The termly roll-on, roll-off system maximises flexibility, allowing each place to support up to three students annually as they transition between mainstream, specialist, and alternative settings. Robust induction and initial assessments ensure that every student receives appropriate support from the outset. Embedded Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a regular monitoring schedule provide transparent oversight, enabling the council to track student progress and evaluate outcomes effectively. Placement stability is prioritised, with students remaining on roll at The Ladder School, except for reintegration to mainstream or transition to specialist SEND placements.

The Council has established a comprehensive AP network, with a dynamic register of 55 quality-assured providers offering both academic and vocational pathways in safe, supportive environments where young people can achieve their potential. This approach has:

- Increased flexibility in commissioning, enabling placements to be closely tailored to individual needs.
- Improved value for money through transparent commissioning and competitive cost negotiation.
- Ensured that only quality-assured providers are admitted to the framework, raising standards and strengthening placement stability.
- Built stronger relationships with providers, creating a more sustainable and accountable AP market across the borough.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Clear objectives for children and young people in alternative provision

The local authority is working with schools to ensure that every child and young person in alternative provision has a clear, individualised intervention plan. With that plan setting out specific objectives, tailored support strategies, and measurable outcomes, with regular reviews to monitor progress. Importantly, each plan includes a pathway for the next steps, such as reintegration into mainstream education or transition to specialist provision, so that children and young people are supported to achieve their full potential and return to the most appropriate educational setting as soon as possible.

For students in commissioned places, Walsall Local Authority does not require a separate intervention plan but ensures that each school maintains its own school-based plans, which contribute to evidencing progress against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Evidence is gathered through provider data returns and termly review meetings with the LA, focusing on attendance, attainment, engagement, emotional well-being, and reintegration or transition pathways.

The KPIs cover:

- Attendance and punctuality
- Academic progress and outcomes
- Engagement in interventions and support programmes
- Behavioural improvements
- Reintegration and progression planning
- Safeguarding and well-being
- Student voice and involvement

Through this structured framework, the LA ensures that intervention planning is not only in place for each young person but is also monitored, reviewed, and adapted as required to secure the best possible outcomes, including successful reintegration into mainstream education where appropriate or progression into post-16 education, training, or employment.

For the Year 11 permanently excluded cohort accessing AP, including both registered and unregistered provision, Walsall piloted an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) process last year. This highlighted the need for further work with schools and APs, particularly in evidencing short-term placements. As a result, we are working with schools and providers to ensure that relevant information is shared with APs and that schools actively oversee the creation of individualised plans. These plans set clear expected outcomes, track progress, and identify next steps. This remains a key development priority and is embedded within the AP Team Service Development Plan, which sets out how this will be achieved.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Key Development Priorities



A comprehensive review of additional specialist places will take place over the next 3-5 years to ensure capacity aligns with forecasted demand. This proactive approach enables effective planning and resource allocation to meet the evolving needs of children and young people, including mapping and delivery of health services to support educational inclusion and attainment.



Families First for Children is actively developing the Inclusion Futures model to ensure that every child has the opportunity to remain engaged in education and to access provision tailored to their individual needs. This model is rooted in a commitment to early identification of barriers to learning and close collaboration between families, schools, and multi-agency partners. Through proactive, personalised support plans and a focus on nurturing strengths, Inclusion Futures aims to address challenges before they escalate, reducing the need for exclusion. The approach harnesses the expertise of educational professionals, family support workers, and community mentors to create flexible pathways that keep children at the centre of their learning journey. Where mainstream education is not suitable, the model emphasises the importance of timely, high-quality alternative provision that is responsive to each child's circumstances, ensuring continuity of learning and positive outcomes.



Engage with mainstream schools to establish new SRPs, with several in planning stages and additional schools in discussions for development



Increase local specialist placement availability by identifying and developing new settings, reducing reliance on independent specialist provision.



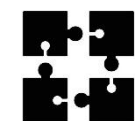
Broaden Primary Need categories within special schools to create multi-need provision, enabling better placement options for children with complex and layered needs.



Further engagement of schools to support with the effective and appropriate commissioning of AP for students on the roll of mainstream school.



A health Inclusion Nurse role has been recruited to within the 0-19 HCP team to enhance the health support framework for youth justice and Alternative Provision in schools. This role will start to be embedded at the autumn of 2025.



A review has been undertaken in Q1 and Q2 of 2025 on Children's equipment services across Walsall, this highlighted opportunities of integrated funding for children's equipment for health and social care services through the Better Care Fund integrated community equipment service. Subject to approval from all partners an integrated commissioning model for children's equipment could be in place from April 2026.

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

Leaders in Walsall demonstrate a strong commitment to evaluating services and driving continuous improvement. Regular quality assurance processes, supported by robust data analysis and stakeholder feedback, ensure services remain responsive and effective. Improvements such as the elimination of assessment backlogs and the sustained timeliness of Education, Health, and Care Plans reflect their dedication to high standards. Families and professionals recognise the impact of these changes, which have enhanced the quality, efficiency, and accessibility of support for children and young people with SEND.

“As a parent, I felt genuinely valued and listened to throughout the professional conversations. It’s clear that partnership and co-production remain central to the work being done to improve outcomes for children with SEND in Walsall. The commitment to continuous improvement and best practice was evident throughout the event.” – Parent Feedback

Evaluating whether services are improving outcomes

Leaders from education, health, and social care work together to rigorously evaluate the impact of their services and provision, focusing not only on whether children and young people with SEND have received support, but on whether that support is leading to improved outcomes.

Local Area Inclusion Boards meet every six weeks to review progress, using a combination of data analysis, case studies, and feedback from children, young people, and their families. This collaborative approach ensures that resources are targeted effectively and that services are continually refined to maximize positive outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.

Taking action to ensure sufficiency

Leaders regularly review the sufficiency of services and provision to ensure they meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND in the local area. Through ongoing analysis of data and consultation with families and partners leaders identify gaps and act swiftly to address them.

Walsall’s **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** highlights forecasted growth in need for services, and what provision is required to meet that need.

The **Education Psychology Service** has experienced significant growth in demand, which has been met by increased capacity (from 2.8 FTE in 2022 to 9.8 FTE in 2024), enabling more assessments as part of the EHCP to be undertaken in-house. Management functions have also been absorbed within this team, reducing reliance on locum senior staff. This has also enabled the service to increase trading activity with schools, with strong relationships meaning the high demand for services can be met.

In Summer 2023, we introduced our **Early Inclusion Framework**, enabling more applications to be appropriately redirected while equipping schools to better meet children’s needs through OAP and SEN Support. The framework is supported by dedicated Early Inclusion Framework resources.

Since the introduction of the **SEN Social Care Gateway** in November 2024 there has been a significant increase from 60% - 87-95% in the number of social care contributions towards EHC Needs Assessments. Social care needs for children not currently known to services have been screened. Where appropriate, these cases have either progressed to a SEND conversation to determine if a social care assessment or provision is required or have been signposted to Walsall’s Local Offer and the Family Locality Hubs for further support.

81% of **Educational Psychology Reports** are submitted within 6 weeks of allocation and 93% within 7 weeks (this financial year to date).

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

Using information and feedback to improve services.

Leaders draw on a wide range of information sources to evaluate and improve their services and provision for children and young people with SEND. This includes analysing outcome data, reviewing case studies, and gathering regular feedback from representative groups, children and young people, and their families. Insights from service users surveys are routinely discussed at LAIB, ensuring that lived experience and measurable outcomes drive continuous improvement across education, health, and care.

Walsall's Family Hub network is underpinned by a robust governance structure that includes monthly working groups and a dedicated steering group. These forums enable continuous evaluation and improvement of services, ensuring alignment with local priorities and national guidance. The partnership works closely with Walsall Together and the Integrated Care Board to drive strategic planning and service development across disciplines.

Walsall leverages **attendance data** from all schools in the area to identify specific pupil cohorts and schools with attendance challenges, enabling targeted interventions. This analysis has highlighted a key area for improvement in the attendance of children and young people with SEND.

Using **multi-agency data and feedback**, the network identifies emerging needs and adapts services accordingly. This includes co-located support across health, education, and social care, and a shared commitment to achieving the borough's target of 75% of children reaching a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028. The steering group also ensures that family voice is embedded in decision-making, and that services are inclusive, responsive, and evidence-led

There has been **significant improvement in SEND services**, driven by a commitment to progress following Ofsted and CQC's Local Area SEND inspections in 2019 and 2022: At the end of 2022, the Local Authority faced a significant challenge, with timeliness at 0% and over 600 open assessments, most of which were delayed beyond 20 weeks. To address this, new systems were introduced, and a skilled and trained EHC team was implemented. Weekly monitoring of these revised systems ensured steady progress, achieving 90% timeliness by the end of 2023 and sustaining high performance throughout 2024. These measures successfully cleared the backlog and transformed service delivery, ensuring more efficient and effective support for children and young people.

Our **evidence-based, multi-professional decision-making process** has significantly reduced the number of EHC plans in the system and overall demand, with open assessments continuing to decline steadily throughout 2024. These strengthened processes have also positively impacted school placements, transport, and funding efficiency. Additionally, the average time to complete EHC assessments has been significantly reduced, with the average timeliness for 2024 being 81.6%. This achievement places Walsall in the top 4% of Local Authorities for timeliness, reflecting a commitment to delivering effective and timely support for children and young people.

Walsall's **SEND Quality Assurance Partnership Days** are a pivotal part of our Quality Assurance Framework. These sessions bring together colleagues from education, health and social care, alongside parents and carers, to reflect on the quality and consistency of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) across the partnership. Using real plans as the focus, partners consider how clearly provision is described, how effectively outcomes are written, and whether the plan demonstrates a full understanding of the child or young person and their needs. Discussions are open and constructive, helping to build a shared view of what good looks like and where further improvement is needed. This approach reflects our ongoing commitment to co-production and continuous improvement, embedding quality assurance as a shared responsibility within the culture of the local area SEND partnership.

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

Clear processes for evaluation and improvement

In Walsall there are robust and transparent processes that require all services and providers to regularly evaluate and improve their provision. These processes include scheduled self-assessments, peer reviews, and joint quality assurance visits, as well as the systematic collection of feedback from children, young people, and their families. Findings are discussed in multi-agency forums, and action plans are developed to address any identified areas for improvement. This ongoing cycle of evaluation ensures that provision remains responsive, effective, and aligned with the evolving needs of children and young people with SEND.

There is **Continuous evaluation of Health SEND services** to improve pathways with a focus on prevention, managing waiting times effectively, and making every contact count.

The **Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO)** is a specialist role within Walsall children's social care directorate which has a focus on improving the links between social care services and the SEND system. The role supports the contributions from care to education, health and care needs assessments and planning. The role also supports strategic functions such as supporting with policies and pathways that support agencies to work more collaboratively to identify and support those with SEN needs. Situated within the children's disability service, the role supports to embed SEND reforms and will promote practitioners understanding across children's social care, family help and specialist services to develop a greater awareness of the needs of children with special educational needs and or disabilities.

Evaluating Effectiveness of Alternative Provision

Walsall has established clear processes to evaluate the effectiveness of the alternative provision it commissions. The Alternative Provision Team routinely analyse a range of outcome data, including academic progress, attendance, and reintegration, alongside feedback young people, and their families. Where evaluation identifies that provision is not leading to improved outcomes, staff act swiftly.

Walsall LA utilises a **robust KPI framework** covering attendance, attainment, behaviour, emotional well-being, safeguarding, reintegration, and post-16 destinations. Providers submit data termly, which is scrutinised by the LA at review meetings alongside wider contextual information. In assessing progress, the LA also takes into account each student's educational journey prior to entering AP, ensuring that improvements are measured from an appropriate baseline.

Evaluation includes analysis of attendance and progress improvements, AP pathways, successful reintegration into mainstream education, and transition into sustained post-16 education, training, or employment. Student reviews, capturing student voice, provide further assurance that provision is safe, supportive, and meeting individual needs. Where provision does not meet expectations, the LA will implement improvement actions with providers and, if necessary, escalate through contractual measures or commissioning reviews.

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

Oversight of commissioned Alternative Providers

The local authority maintains **rigorous oversight arrangements** for all alternative provision it commissions, with particular attention to the safety and suitability of each setting. This includes regular site visits, health and safety checks, and ongoing quality assurance checks for both registered and unregistered providers.

- All AP providers go through procurement due diligence (financial, safeguarding, health & safety, quality of provision).
- Oversight is delivered through the QA Framework: annual QA visits, full reviews for unregistered providers, and half-termly monitoring visits.
- Student reviews capture student voice, staff interviews, and data checks used to triangulate evidence.
- Providers are assessed using a RAG-rated QA Tracker, informing commissioning decisions and improvement planning.
- Where concerns arise, the LA implements co-developed action plans or escalates to contractual measures/removal from the framework.

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

Key Development Priorities



Maintain momentum in SEND service improvements with a focus on Annual Reviews, Preparation for Adulthood (PfA), SEN Support outcomes, and attendance.



Continue to uphold excellence in timeliness, with a target to achieve 90% or higher by the end of 2025.



Develop targeted initiatives to reduce NEET rates through collaboration with the Skills and Employability Directorate.



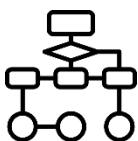
Maintain effective financial management of the High Needs budget, aligning spending with national averages while improving outcomes.



Implement continuous evaluation and pathway improvements in health services, focusing on prevention, waiting times, and maximising impact.



Improve attendance and reduce persistent absence of children and young people on the roll of a school with SEN Support, focusing on secondary pupils and transitions between year groups.

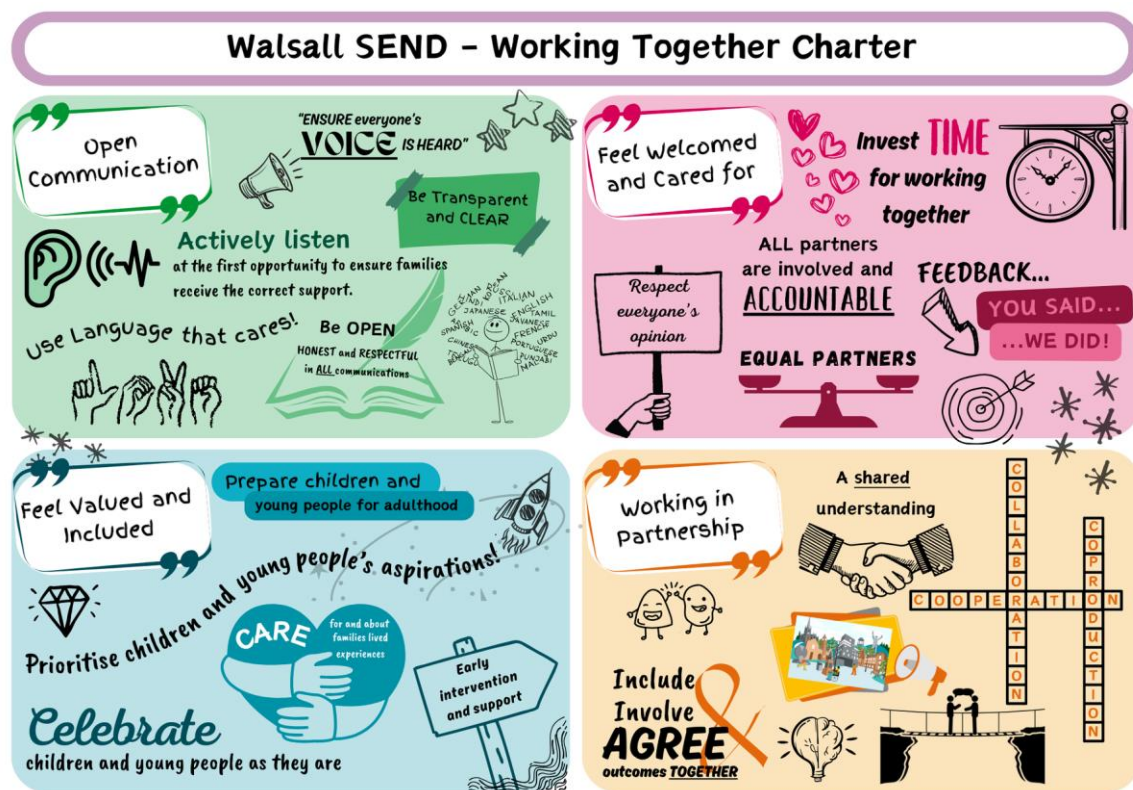


A pathway plan and flowchart have been developed for social care contributions into EHCP reviews. This work is being co-produced with Education and Partnership Officers within Family Hub Localities. The pathway aims to establish a consistent approach, ensuring that children and families with unmet social care needs are appropriately supported through signposting to universal services, or through assessment and provision where required.

Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

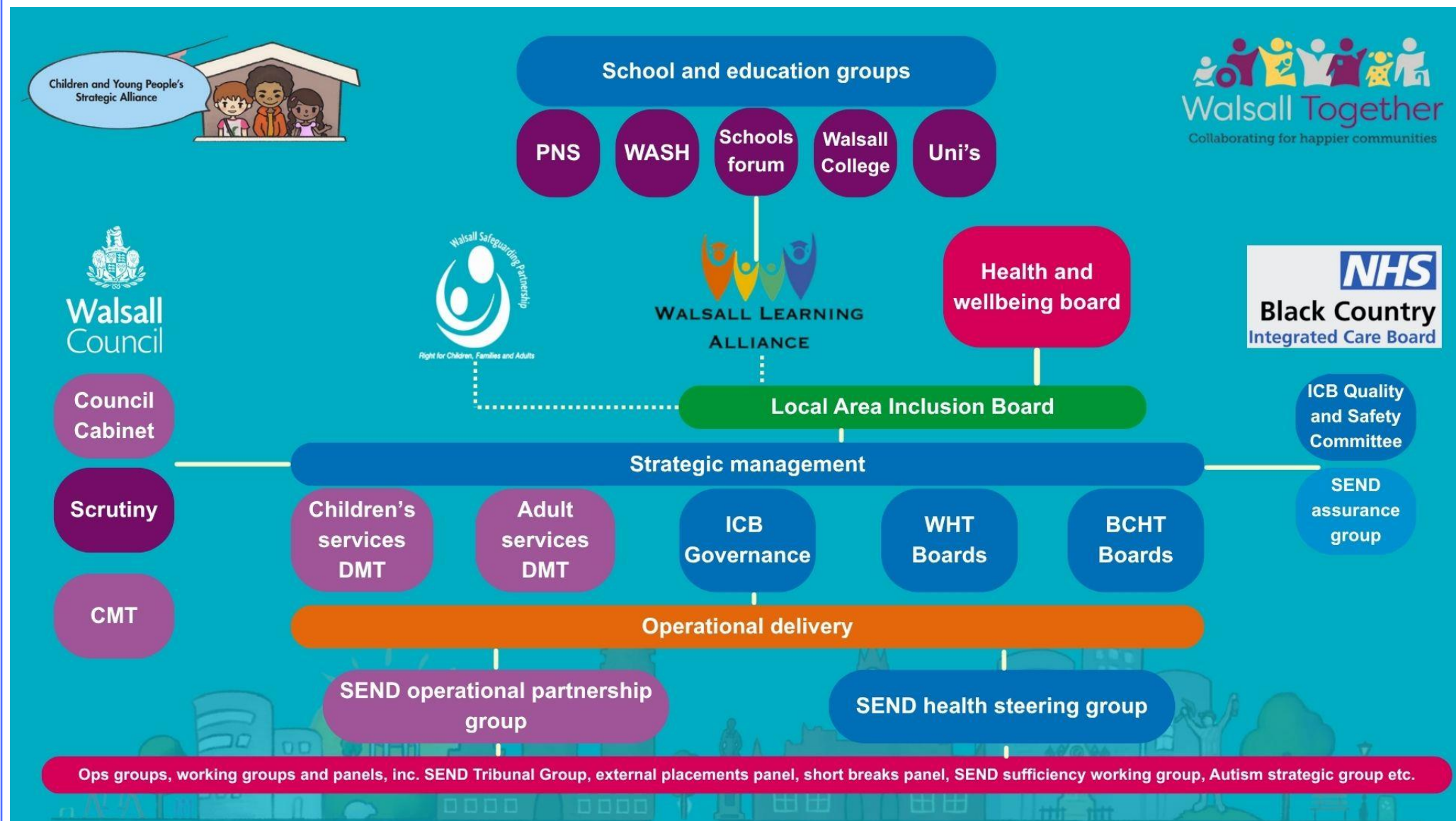
Leaders in Walsall have created an environment where effective practice, co-production, and multi-agency working thrive. Collaborative structures, such as the SEND Partnership Operational Group, strengthen relationships between education, health, and social care, ensuring coordinated and cohesive support for children and young people. Clear governance and strategic oversight drive innovation, exemplified by the Children and Young People 2040 Strategy, which prioritises children at the centre of the borough's vision. Families and professionals value the inclusive culture and shared responsibility that underpin the local area's commitment to achieving the best outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

'The Partnership boards leadership is highly effective, all key partners are open and transparent, and all are committed to improve and learn lessons, they inspire others and are creative, innovative and solution focused. This has been demonstrated through the progress made to date within the APP and the wider agenda of SEND.' - NHS England



Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

Accountability structures across agencies

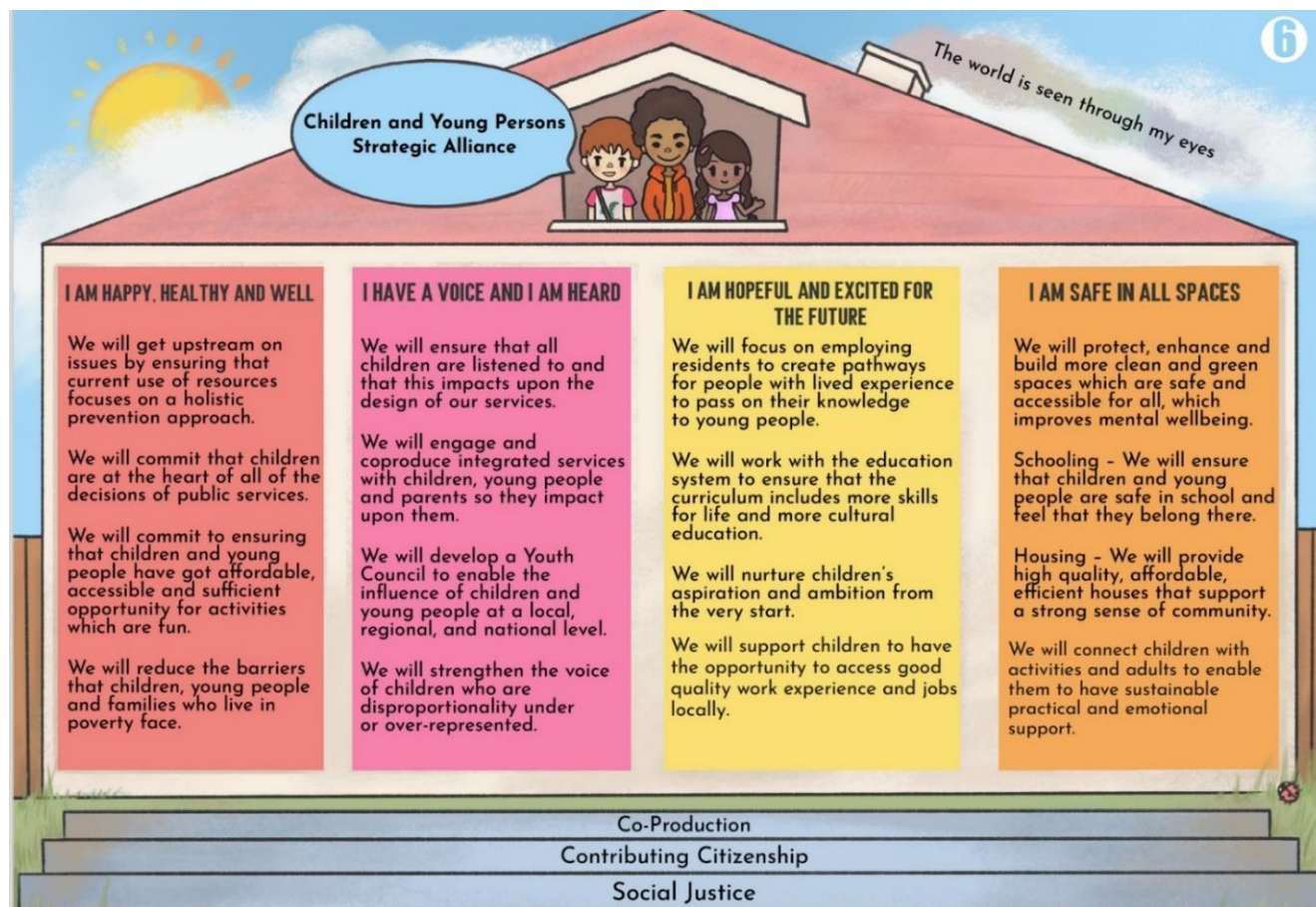


The Walsall Children and Young Person's Alliance

We recognise that a key enabler to building on our Walsall Right for Children vision and achieving better outcomes for children growing up in Walsall is collaboration and building a mature partnership platform from which to deliver the right help at the right time.

In Walsall, we have worked hard to develop a strong Children and Young People's Alliance to improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families. In 2022 the alliance committed to "regularly consider how the lived experiences of children and young people in Walsall can be improved".

This, in turn, led to the "Children and Young People We Are Walsall 2040" strategy, recognising that children born in 2022 will be adults in 2040. Looking at long-term outcomes for these children has enabled the partnership to explore more effective strategic collaborations and long-term decision making across partnerships.



The four key priority areas in the illustration are based on what children have told the alliance, and the learning from their work so far. Through its work, the alliance is joining the dots with other partnership boards to maximise opportunities to nudge system change to improve the lived experience of children growing up in Walsall. The key challenge in joining the dots locally is that Walsall not only operates at a local level but also has to consider the Black Country infrastructure in which the Integrated Care Board (ICB) operates. It is a complicated and changing system that is key to getting it right for children, particularly those with complex health and social care needs. This has provided significant challenges in both the development of the Family Safeguarding Model, SEND joint commissioning and the development of Family Hubs as we work with partners to balance the allocation of resources across the Black Country Local Authorities, something which has been recognised as a strategic risk.

Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

Working together and sharing identification of risks.

Robust processes and integrated systems are firmly embedded across the partnership, enabling practitioners from education, health, and social care to collaborate and share relevant information. Regular multi-agency meetings and clear communication protocols ensure that emerging needs and potential risks to children and young people with SEND are identified early and addressed promptly.

A strong partnership approach has improved **school readiness**, particularly in speech, language, and communication needs. Initiatives like 'Time 2 Talk,' Walsall Family Hubs and Early Help Volunteers provide vital family and community support.

The **SEND Health Action Plan** is regularly reviewed collaboratively and holistically to enhance SEND services.

Family Help and Health Visitors work closely together to identify and prioritise risk, with the family safeguarding model used to ensure risks are clearly communicated and acted upon across multiple agencies.

Clear understanding of roles and how best to work together

In Walsall, leaders ensure that practitioners across education, health, and care have a clear understanding of their individual roles and responsibilities within the partnership. Through targeted training, regular multi-agency meetings, and a culture of open communication, professionals are empowered to collaborate effectively and share expertise. This ensures that support is well-coordinated and consistently focused on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

We have implemented the **Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO)** role to enhance the social care contribution to SEND strategy through:

- Training and development for social care staff on SEND statutory duties. This has led to significant improvements in the quality of social care advice and a notable increase in timeliness.
- A monthly training offer was introduced to social care workforce in January 2025–June 2025.
- A revised training offer, co-produced and co-facilitated with parents/carers, has been promoted for September – December 2025.
- A designated link between social care, health, and education with representation at weekly panels to discuss and action specific cases.
- Weekly attendance at SEN Panel meetings for all EHC New Assessments, Post 16 and Higher Needs Funding requests. Attendance promotes a coordinated approach across the partnership to ensure there are no unmet social care needs requiring any provision either from children or adult social care services.
- A quality practice process is undertaken by the Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) to ensure that all social care advice is written within children & adult practitioners' professional expertise. This process ensures that the advice is accurate, consistent, and aligned with statutory requirements and best practices.

Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

Skills to understand needs and aspirations

There is investment across all partners in Walsall to enable comprehensive training and development, ensuring that practitioners across education, health, and social care have the expertise and confidence to understand and respond to the diverse needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND. Through targeted professional development, collaborative working, and a shared commitment to inclusive practice, practitioners are empowered to create environments where every child and young person feels valued, supported, and able to thrive. This culture of continuous learning and partnership ensures that support is tailored, aspirations are recognised, and inclusion is at the heart of all provision.

Specialist training has been completed by EPS team members, including: IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice) Level 1 training. IPSEA Training Certificates. Level 3 IPSEA law training for senior staff that work with the Tribunal service. SEND Awareness Level 1 and 2 e-learning modules as part of induction through the Council for Disabled Children (CDC).

Mandated SEND training completed by Health partners, with the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) expanding the training offer. Effective training for teams ensures they feel empowered to advocate for CYP within SEND.

All new starters within the 0–19 HCP team receive induction training which includes MDT SEND training for staff, this includes delivery from Physiotherapy and SLT. Sessions include EHCP awareness.

Encouraging a focus on children and young people

Leaders foster a culture of collaboration where practitioners from across education, health, and social care are encouraged to work together with a focus on the individual needs and aspirations of each child or young person. When existing options are not sufficient, practitioners are empowered to think creatively and identify alternative solutions.

The **Family Hub partnership** in Walsall is strong, creative, and collaborative. A recent example—the Summer Learning Passport project—demonstrates how partners work together to design engaging, inclusive initiatives that meet the needs of local families. This project reflects the commitment of Family Hub leaders to fostering environments where innovation thrives and services evolve through shared vision and teamwork. Many more examples across the network highlight how leadership enables partners to flourish and deliver meaningful impact.

In Walsall there are a number of programmes designed to **provide alternative solutions** and meet diverse needs. For example the CARE project for at-risk youth, SEND transition support, young carers support, the LGBTQ Voice Group, Parenting Programmes, and the Reducing Parental Conflict project.

Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

Ensuring the right knowledge and skills to reduce harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation

Leaders ensure that practitioners working with children and young people with SEND are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to recognise and respond to the heightened risks of harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Through robust training, clear safeguarding protocols, and a culture of vigilance, practitioners understand the specific vulnerabilities faced by children and young people with SEND. Multi-agency collaboration and proactive risk management mean that concerns are identified early and addressed swiftly, ensuring that safeguarding is at the heart of all practice and that every child and young person is protected and supported.

The **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards** (DOLS) panel provides robust oversight, ensuring legal compliance and the appropriate handling of children where DOLS applications are required in order to safeguard their welfare. The number of children requiring this level of support has decreased significantly in Walsall with just a small number of children that remain subject to these orders.

Key Development Priorities



Promote inclusive and sustainable community engagement, ensuring children and young people remain at the heart of Walsall's long-term development as a Child Friendly Borough.



Implement the Children and Young People (2040) Strategy, focusing on meaningful engagement with children and young people through the phases of Big Action.



Create a clearly defined pathway for schools, families and other professionals to support them to set clear expectations about attendance, identify and support vulnerable groups at all points of transition and respond to attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity.

How SEF Actions Address JSNA Findings

As part of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and evidence-led practice, we have mapped the actions within this Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) against the key findings of the Walsall SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This ensures our improvement journey remains closely aligned to the evolving needs of children, young people, and families in Walsall, and that our priorities are responsive to the challenges and opportunities identified through robust local intelligence.

JSNA Finding	SEF Action(s) Addressing the Need
Rising child population and increasing demand	Expansion of specialist places (SRPs), forecasting and sufficiency reviews, mainstream-first placement strategy
Poverty and higher SEND prevalence	Early Inclusion Framework, Family Hubs, targeted support for vulnerable groups
Disproportionate representation (e.g., Pakistani boys)	Community engagement initiatives, Health Inclusion Nurse, targeted data analysis
Systemic pressures and high needs funding deficit	Demand forecasting, sufficiency planning, strengthened governance and joint commissioning
Over-representation in care and youth justice	Pathways and resources within specialised services ensure that children in care and youth justice have their needs met in a timely manner.
Need for systematic thinking and stronger inclusion	SENCO Forum, Inclusion Hub, co-produced QA framework, multi-agency panels
Challenging transitions	Early Help School Transition Pilot, extended Y7 support, Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) Steering Group
Long waiting times for autism/ADHD assessment	ASC/ADHD pathway review, supported waiting offer, multidisciplinary task and finish group
Delays in diagnosis, inconsistent communication, unclear pathways	Health Gateway, DSCO/DCO roles, Local Offer improvement, EHC Hub transparency
Attendance and attainment gaps	Pupil Tracking Audits, targeted attendance work, SEN Support data review and training
Children, young people, and families want to be heard and involved	Parent Partnership Group, SEND Youth Forum, co-production events, "You Said, We Did" feedback loops
Parenting Support (Positive Behaviour Support Models)	Current focus within Family hubs on the provision of parenting support for parents of children with SEND (Barnardo's Cygnet and SEND parents sessions). We are following the government's lead in 'Giving every child the best start in life' (pub 7th July 2025) and reaching our 74.7% GLD target.
Need for better data, sharing across agencies, and integration	Shared dashboards, routine multi-agency panels, strengthened governance structures

How we will deliver our priorities

Strategic Delivery

Professionals across Walsall understand that for us to deliver cohesive, holistic support to our children and families we must work together with the child's or young person's aspirations and needs at the centre of our efforts. To enable this we are dedicated to working together for better outcomes, through embedding the key development priorities from this framework into service and delivery plans.

Local Area Partnership Governance

The SEND Partnership Operational Group, with representation from parents/carers, the local authority, schools, and other education settings, will formally oversee the effective delivery of the Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) and associated action plans. All action plan will be regularly updated, presented to the Local Authority Inclusion Board (LAIB) and published on the SEND Local Offer. The Local Area Improvement Board, with representatives from FACE (Walsall's Parent Carer Forum), SENDIASS, Education, the Local Authority, Health and Social Care, will oversee and challenge progress.

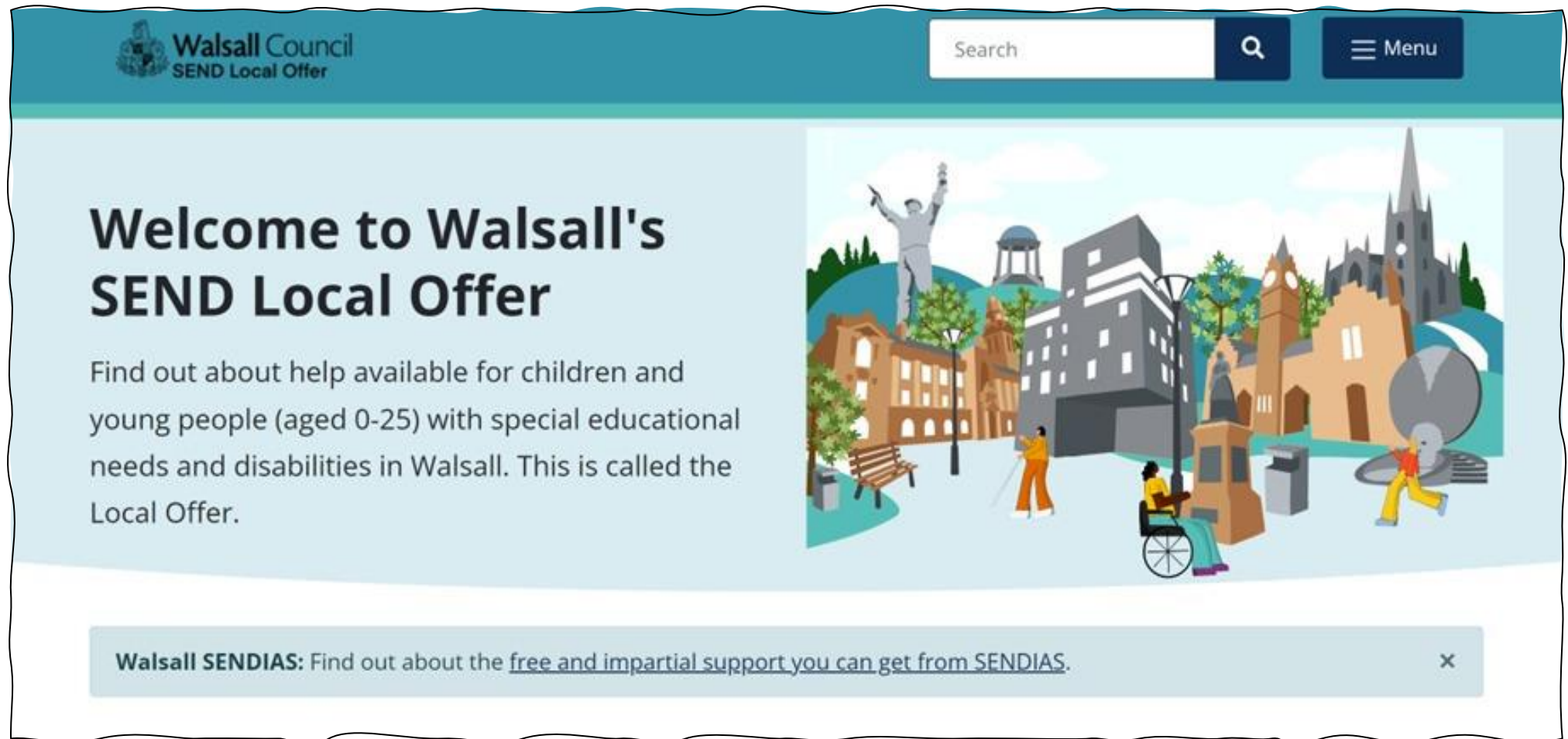
Reviewing and Monitoring

The SEF will sit alongside our local area Working together for better SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy which supports our continuous journey of self-improvement. In collaboration with strategic partners, including the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Walsall Learning Alliance (WLA), we are committed to achieving positive outcomes for children and young people while addressing areas requiring improvement.

Our ambition is to ensure that the area partnership fosters arrangements that consistently lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people. We are dedicated to taking decisive action where improvements are needed and maintaining open communication across the partnership. Through our 'you said, we did' approach, we will provide honest and transparent feedback, sharing the improvements we implement and acknowledging any challenges we face.

Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disability

For full information about the services, advice, support, and activities that we offer to children and young people aged 0-15 with special educational needs and disabilities, please see our local offer website.



<https://send.walsall.gov.uk>