

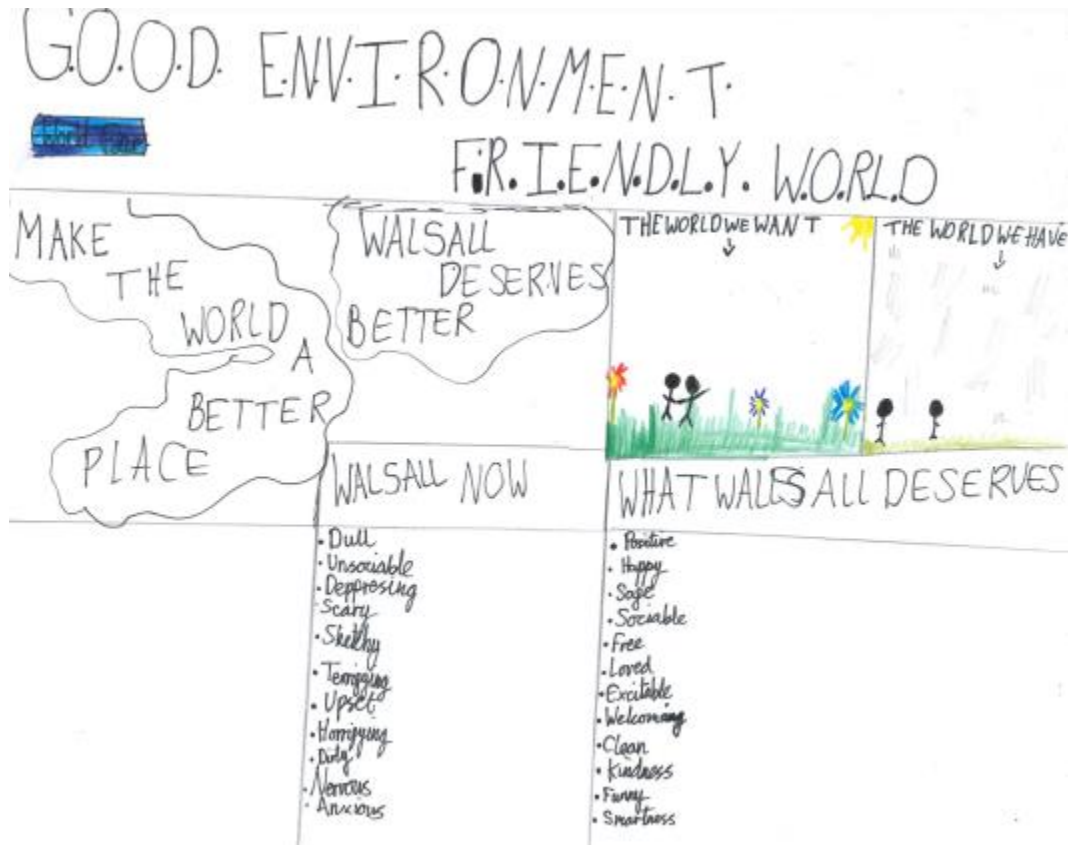


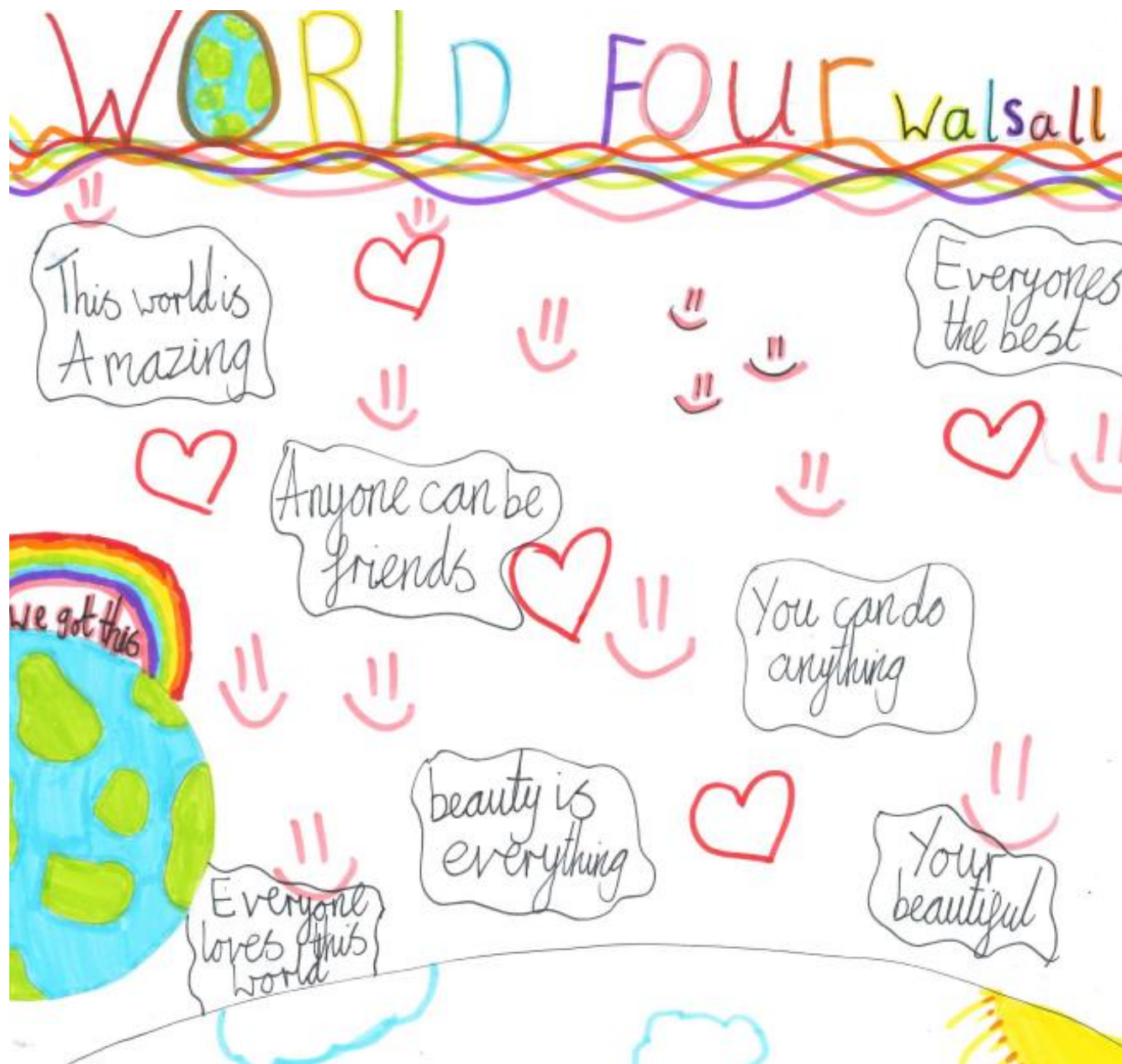
Walsall 2040 - Children and Young People Consultation Workshop Report

Report Author – Sureya Gulzar & Nike Morris

The MindKind Projects

February 2024





Executive Summary	3
Research background	4
Our Approach	5
Participants	8
Findings	13

Executive Summary

The "Walsall 2040 Children and Young People Consultation Workshop Report" encapsulates the collective insights and aspirations of over 250 young participants, aimed at shaping the strategic vision for Walsall's future. This initiative, spearheaded by the Walsall Council and The MindKind Projects, sought to directly engage children in dialogue about their current perceptions of Walsall and their hopes for the borough by 2040. Through a series of in-school workshops, the project has illuminated the concerns, desires, and priorities of Walsall's younger generation, providing a crucial perspective for the borough's strategic planning processes.

Key findings from the workshops reveal a nuanced view of life in Walsall, with a significant proportion of participants expressing concerns over safety, environmental cleanliness, and the need for more inclusive recreational and vocational opportunities. Despite these challenges, there was a strong sense of community and a desire for positive change, particularly in relation to creating safer, greener, and more vibrant public spaces.

The report outlines several strategic recommendations to address these findings:

- Enhance Safety through Community-Led Initiatives
- Empower Youth Leadership in Educational and Vocational Training and Development
- Foster Collective Ownership and Pride through Litter Reduction Initiatives
- Create, Enhance and Expand Safe Green Spaces in the Community
- Align Future Strategic and Development Decisions with the Aspirations of Walsall's Youth

This consultation underscores the imperative need to integrate the voices and visions of Walsall's children and young people into the borough's strategic planning. By doing so, Walsall Council and its partners can ensure that the borough evolves into a place that not only meets the current needs of its residents but is also prepared to support the well-being and success of future generations.

Research background

The Walsall Council led "We Are Walsall 2040" is a strategic vision aimed at ensuring Walsall will be the "most improved borough in the region, a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents in all neighbourhoods have the same life chances."¹ This collective vision, informed through consultations with residents and cross-sector allied organisations and professionals is a means of ensuring the success, health and wellbeing of future residents.

The "Children and Young People (CYP) 2040 Strategy" is currently being developed, focusing specifically on the needs and aspirations of the younger generation.in line with the wider partnership work of the Walsall Children and Young People Strategic Alliance and the wider 2040 strategy. .

In June 2023 the inaugural 'Children First' summit took place bringing together members of the Walsall's Children and Young People Strategic Alliance and other allied organisations to begin planning for the future generations of Walsall residents. Within this summit participants were asked to future scenario plan based upon current and potential future drivers of change. Within these in-school workshops children were asked their thoughts and the likelihood of these potential 4 scenarios that were created from the summit (Appendix 1)

In order to ensure that the CYP 2040 Strategy gives young people a voice and influence in shaping their future and the future of the borough The MindKind Projects have conducted seven in school workshops with over 250 participants. These workshops were designed to invoke and understand how young residents currently view Walsall, what their own personal visions of Walsall 2040 currently is and what they feel needs to happen to ensure that Walsall is a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents in all areas of the borough.

¹ <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/WAW2040>

Our Approach

The MindKind Projects used a quantitatively and qualitatively-driven multiple-method approach to collecting insights from participants. Opinions and insights were gained by working through a workbook that included open questions, future vision drawings, group discussions and whole class opinion polls.

Whilst the exact delivery for each workshop changed to meet the needs and allotted times dictated by the schools hosting each workshop loosely followed this itinerary.

Activity	Approach	Notes
Introduction and Ice-Breaker - Sit down/stand up - 'Ice Cream or Cake', 'Invisibility or Flying' and 'Cats or Dogs', 'Walsall - Good or Bad Place To Live?'	By beginning by asking questions unrelated to the strategy - such as we were able to create an environment in which individual opinions were central.	The icebreaker involved asking participants to sit down or stand up depending on their opinions.
Workbook Questions - 'What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?' and Positive and Negative Questions and Pie Chart Priorities Now Activity	These questions were generally unprompted to ensure answers were not guided and data gained was reflective of participants' genuine opinions.	In some workshops prompts and support was given. Prompts were general such as "What don't you like? What do you like? What are the best things?" etc. We advised that it can be feelings, places, people, events.
Workshop Questions - What will you look like in 2040? What will you be doing? Pie Chart Priorities 2040 Activity	By placing participants in the future, at the age they will be and draw their futures invoked unrestricted imagination and ambition.	We asked participants to first work out their ages (with support) and draw what they will look like doing whatever job they were in .
Workshop Questions - What Will Life Look Like In Walsall in 2040?	Participants were asked to think about the wider Walsall population in order to remove any personal positivity bias towards their future (invoked previously).	Worksheet prompts - Think About If People Are Healthy? Have Money? Have Jobs? What Kind? Talk to Each Other? Feel Safe? Use Technology and How? Think About Climate Change Are People Happy?

Walsall 2040 4 Scenarios Read and Write	Please see appendix for scenarios.	Narratives were read out based upon the 4 scenarios created within the initial Children's Summit and participants were asked to give their thoughts. It was reinforced that these scenarios are not more important or likely than participants thoughts.
Walsall 2040 4 Scenarios Diary Entry		Participants were asked to choose 2 scenarios and write a short diary entry based upon what it would be like living in this scenario.
Walsall Of The Future Poster Design		Participants were asked to draw the future they want for Walsall in 2040 or their likely future.
'King of Walsall' Future Thinking Activity	An activity designed to empower participants to make aspirational suggestions unrestricted by current systemic challenges by evoking a character with unlimited resources and strategic power.	
Walsall 2040 Pledge	An activity to invoke a sense of collective ownership and call to action to young participants	Participants were asked to make pledges linked to making Walsall 2040 a positive place.

In order to address the fact that the workshops were undertaken in school settings it felt necessary to address the idea that participants were being 'tested.' Across all sites the importance of individuals' opinions and insights and the idea of no 'right' or 'wrong' answer were reinforced. Our participants were told that "There is no such thing as a right or wrong answer today. Only your answer." When participants asked if they could write a certain answer it was reinforced to the whole group that the answer was always yes.. We reinforced this message by allowing the participants to address the facilitators by their first name and shout answers out during some sections.

World 4 walsall



The PERFECT World for me



Participants

A total of 7 workshops were conducted across 5 schools. Across all of these workshops 251 participants took part. These participants were approximately 52% White British and 48% from ethnic minority backgrounds with an almost even split between participants that identified as male and those that identified as female. In order to ensure that the results were representative schools with catchment areas that covered different levels of deprivation were chosen. The ages and school years of participants were dictated by school availability.

Rushall Primary School -

28 Year 6 children took part in the workshop. Around 82% of participants were White British. . The school falls within an area in the 20% most deprived in England and has a catchment area ranging from areas belonging to the 50% least deprived areas in England to the top 10% most deprived area in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019²

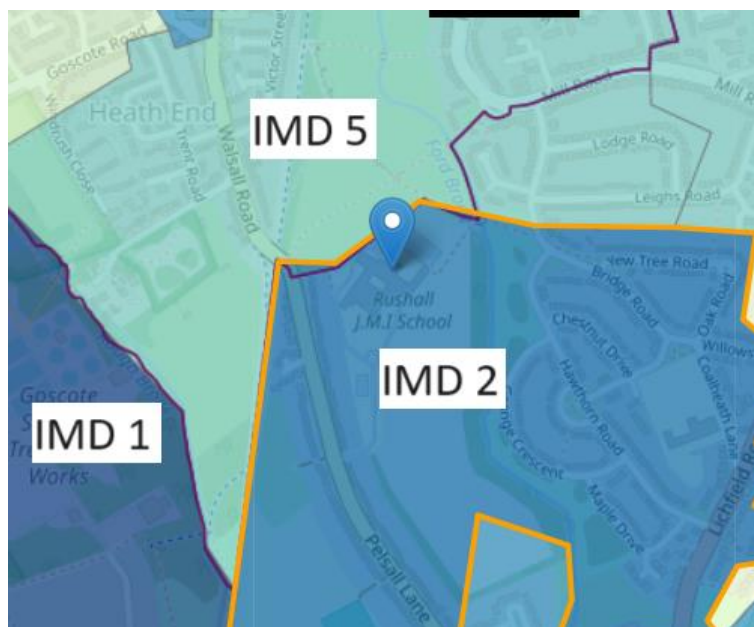


Figure 1 - Map showing location of Rushall Primary School and Indices of Deprivation

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Croft Academy

29 Year 6 children took part in the workshop. Around 60% of participants were from ethnic minority backgrounds and the majority of participants were British Asian, in line with the local population. The school is within an area of high deprivation, falling within an area in the 10% most deprived in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.



Figure 2 - Map showing location of Croft Academy and Indices of Deprivation

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

56 Year 4 children took part in the workshop. Over 80% of participants were White British. The school is within one of the least deprived areas of Walsall and is situated in one of the 40% least deprived areas in England and parts of its catchment zone includes areas belonging to the 50% most deprived according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.

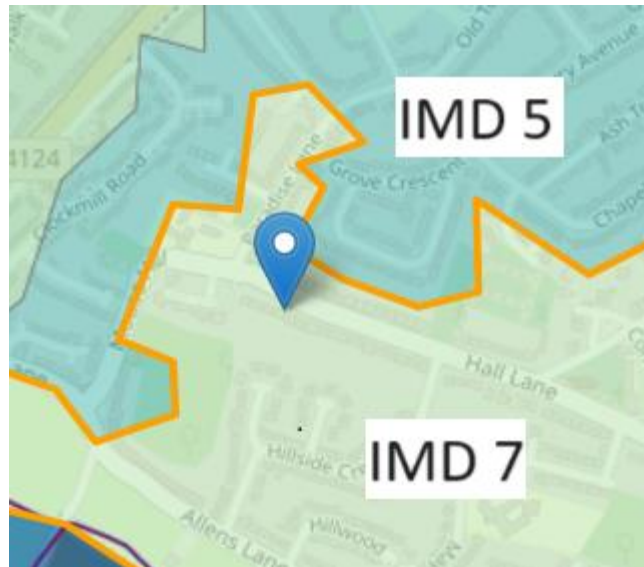


Figure 3 - Map showing location of St Michaels and Indices of Deprivation

Whitehall Junior School

83 Year 6 children took part in the workshop. Around 79% of participants were from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has a catchment area containing areas that individually are shown to be within the 10%, 20% and 40% most deprived in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.

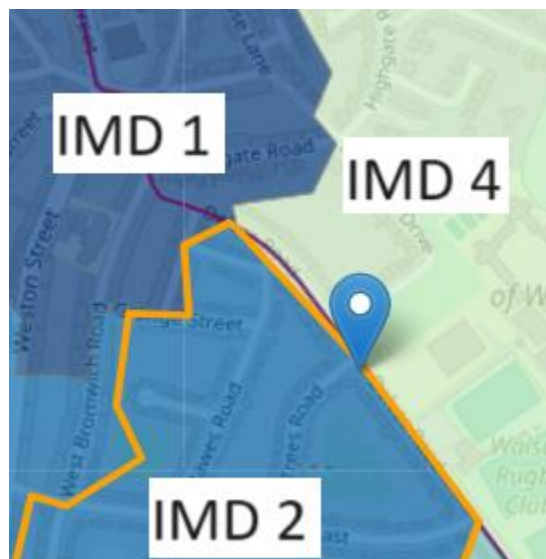


Figure 4 - Map showing location of Croft Academy and Indices of Deprivation

Blakenall Heath Junior School

55 Year 6 children took part in the workshop. Around 67% of participants were from White British backgrounds. The school is within the top 10% most deprived in England and has a catchment area containing areas that individually are shown to be within the 10% and 20% most deprived in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.

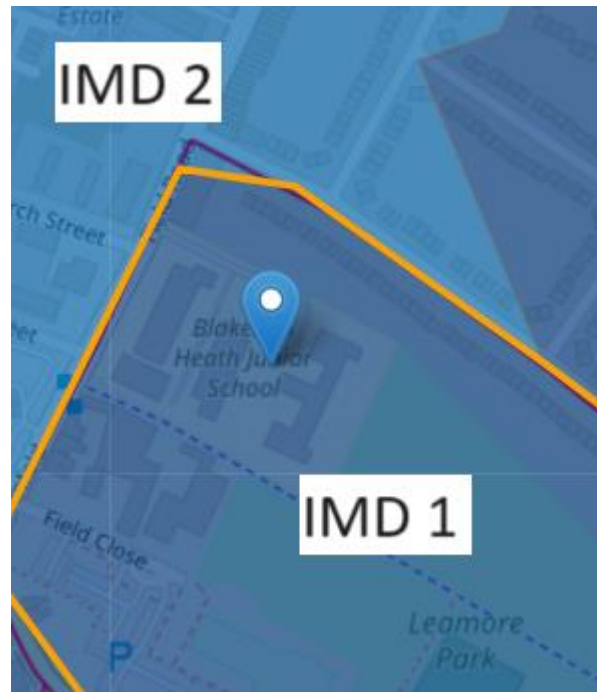
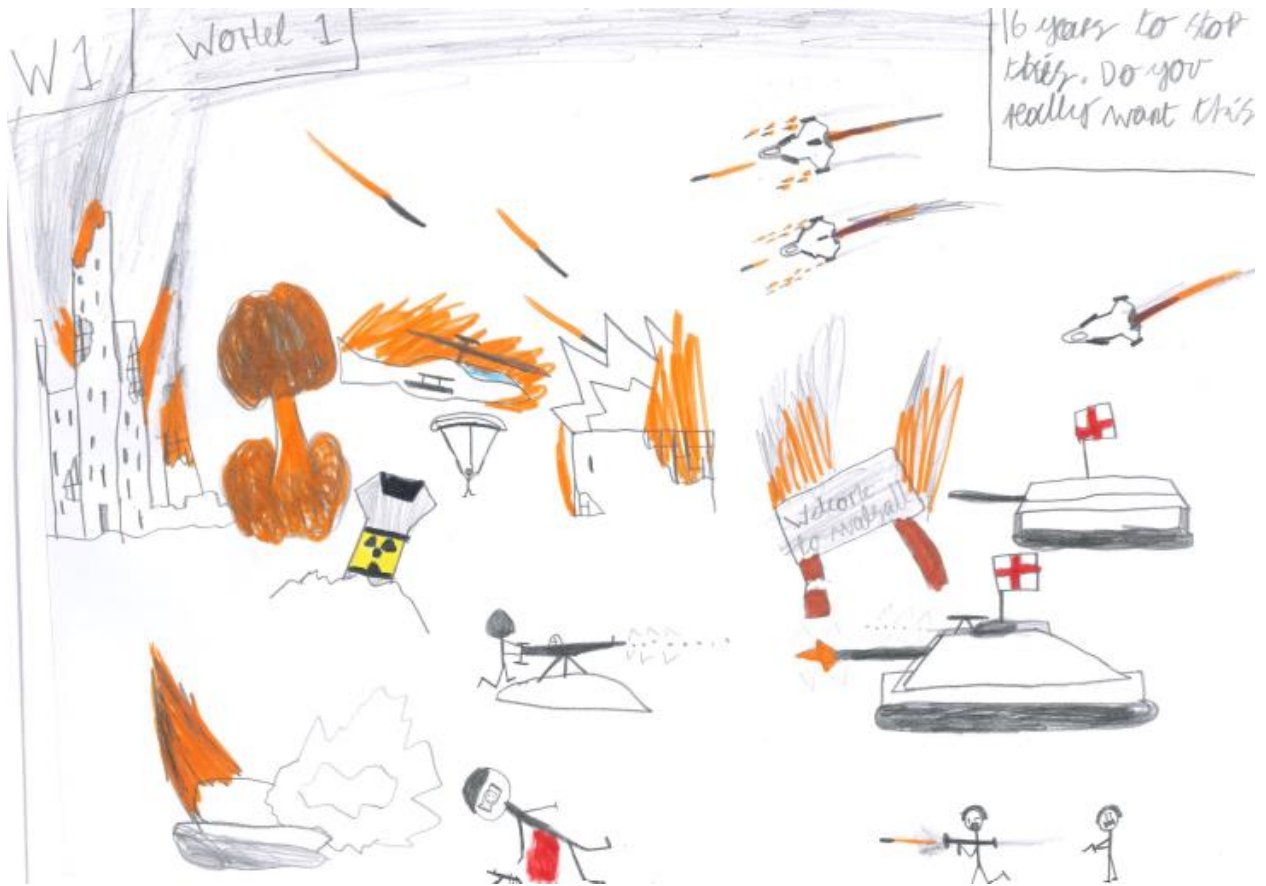


Figure 5 - Map showing location of Blakenall Health Jnr School and Indices of Deprivation



!This is the Walsall I want!



Findings

Current Views of Walsall

Demographics and Intersectionality

Just over 65% of all participants stated that Walsall was not a good place to live when asked the closed question of if Walsall was an overall good place or bad place to live. When asked to write answers to the question “What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?” around 60% of respondents wrote an answer that was overwhelmingly negative with 65% of respondents writing answers that were generally negative with some positive aspects. Schools that were in areas of higher deprivation or had catchment areas that contained areas of higher deprivation generally correlated with more negative responses to these questions. For example at Croft Academy, a school in the 10% most deprived areas of the country just over 75% of participants gave predominantly negative responses compared to 40% of participants from St Michaels Primary School.

Participants who were from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to give negative responses to the question ‘What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?’. The majority of participants from ethnic minority backgrounds participated in workshops delivered within schools that were within deprived areas. Findings pointed towards negative responses not simply being linked to deprivation. For example participants from ethnic minority backgrounds within the St Michael's Primary School workshops, a less deprived area of Walsall, approximately 10% more likely to give a negative response compared to their White British classmates. This was mirrored within the Blakenall Heath Junior School workshops, a workshop conducted within an area of higher deprivation with a predominantly White British cohort in which ethnic minority participants were 5% more likely to give generally negative responses.

The data suggests that gender does not play a decisive role in whether present day Walsall is viewed in a positive or negative manner, as evidenced by an early even gender distribution observed across the workshops. Despite minor variances, the consistency in gender splits reinforces the conclusion that gender is not a significant determinant in this context.

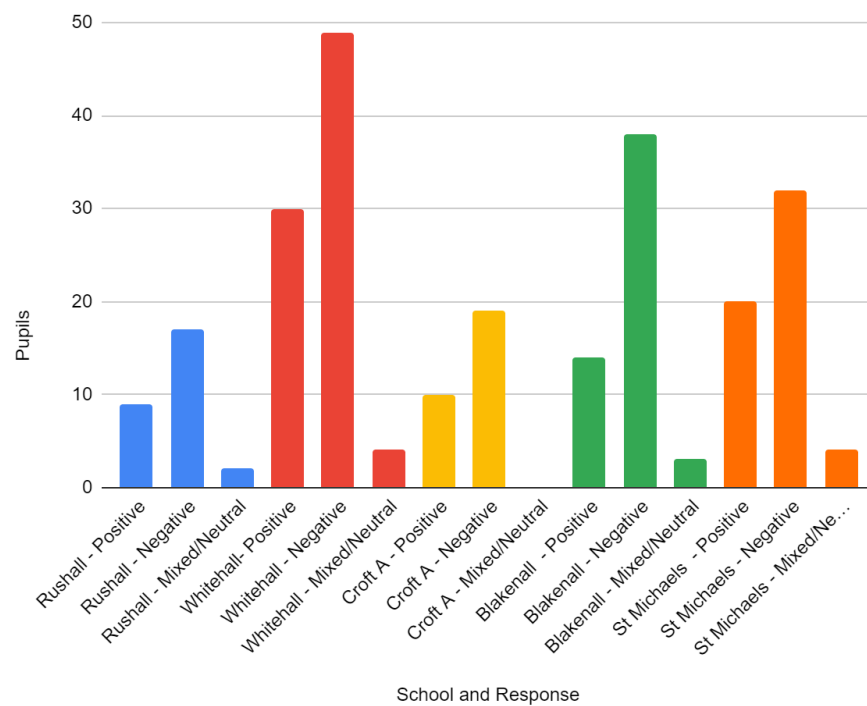


Figure 7- Chart Showing Nature Of Responses To The Question - 'What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?'

What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?

Good Things the good thing is family	Bad Things litter
Best Thing shopping with friend and family	Worst Thing murder. homicid

Good Things

Its a nice quiet place and peaceful,
shops like town.

Bad Things

litter
Racist people.
&

Best Thing

The nice nature and my house,
friends.

Worst Thing

Crimes

Good Things

shops

Schools

Bad Things

Litter

vandalism

Best Thing

Home

Family

Worst Thing

Stabbings

Death

Shootings

It really difficult because of following reasons : Lots of pollution, lots of illness, stabbing and lot bad medical.

What Is It Like Living In Walsall Now?



Key Themes

Key positive factors that transcended localities were linked to food, shopping and leisure infrastructure, particularly within Walsall town centre. Town centre facilities such as the 'Ninja Warrior' adventure site, swimming pool, Tenpin bowling, cinema and shops were all mentioned across workshops as well various takeaways and restaurants within localities. School was also mentioned as a key positive factor by a number of participants in every workshop.

Social connections through family and friends were also seen as one of the key reasons participants would feel positively towards Walsall as well as a sense that being born and/or raised in Walsall was a key factor in feeling positively towards it. Again the importance of social connections were detailed in the majority of workshops as being one of the key positives for Walsall's children regardless of where the children lived and went to school.

Across localities there was a tangible sense of feeling unsafe as a key driver for negative responses towards Walsall. Crime in various forms featured heavily in responses including murder, stabbings and gang activity. Whilst this sense of danger

was present across all localities it was clear that participants in certain areas of Walsall felt the impact of this more strongly and this resulted in a more negative view. Between 60 and 70% of participants within the Rushall Primary and Whitehall Primary workshops and 70% to 80% of participants within the Croft Academy and Blakenall Heath Primary School workshops cited some sort of violent crime as one of the bad or worst things about living in Walsall now. Within all localities apart from St Michaels Primary School crime was the primary reason Walsall would be seen in a negative light and these answers transcended demographic considerations including ethnicity and gender although worth noting is that a small number of participants from ethnic minorities mentioned racism within the Blakenall Heath, Whitehall Juniors, Rushall Primary and Croft Academy workshops.

Litter and a sense of Walsall being 'dirty' or 'unclean' was heavily represented across localities also. Around 60% of participants who filled in the 'bad and worst things about Walsall' section stated that littering was an issue. This was also represented within class discussions at all workshops. Pledges made by participants also showed that Walsall children that took part in the workshops directly link litter with their visions of Walsall in the future with just under 50% of participants pledging that they will make Walsall a happier, healthier place in the future by litter picking.

Beyond this a small number of children also mentioned that living away from family members was also a key reason they didn't like Walsall. This included 6 pupils across workshops that cited family members living in another country as being a key reason they may feel negatively towards Walsall.

Walsall 2040 - Participants Views on The Future and Suggestions For Change

no crimes
healthy people
everyone getting along
no smoking
People talking to each other
no arguing

Across all workshops approximately 60% of pupils felt that Walsall would not be a positive place to live in the future. When asked which of the 4 future scenarios would be most likely 60% stated that scenario 1 - 'Poor Environment, Less Friendly World' would be most likely with the only exception being with the St Michaels workshops. Whilst this number generally correlates with that given to the current view of Walsall it is worth noting that a number of participants' view of the future was not impacted by their current view of Walsall. As such a number of participants that felt that Walsall was a negative place to live now felt that Walsall in 2040 would be a better place to live and vice versa. Many of the key future changes and drivers for future change (such as A.I/Technology) were the same regardless of if the future overall vision of Walsall was a positive or negative one, although the impact and effect of these drivers differed .

When asked specifically "What Will Life Look Like In Walsall In 2040?" positive, negative and mixed responses were represented across all workshops, regardless of location. As represented below the percentage of participants who responded with an overwhelmingly negative response ranged from approximately 57% within the St Michaels workshops to 69% within the Blakenall Heath workshops, again pointing towards deprivation having an impact upon perspectives of the future.

Future Safety and Crime

One of the primary responses from participants across all workshops related to feelings of safety and future occurrence of crime. The majority of responses around this theme were negative. Ranging from a generalised feeling of 2040 Walsall being unsafe and feeling 'dangerous' to more specific responses relating to an increase in murder, stabbings, gangs and violence. Whilst the majority of responses were negative a smaller percentage of participants felt that the future would feel safer with more police, less crime and a generalised feeling of future safety. Many workshops were conducted in schools with catchment areas within wards³ with higher crime and anti-social behaviour rates including Croft Academy (Birchills-Leamore), Blakenall Heath and Whitehall Junior School (St Matthews/Palfrey). Participants within these areas were marginally more likely to mention crime and safety concerns when envisioning Walsall in 2040. When asked to write postcards to the 'King of Walsall' many suggestions were related to decreasing crime including hiring more police and punishing people for crimes.

³<https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/home/profiles/ward-profiles/#:~:text=Walsall%20Borough%20comprises%20%20wards,services%20that%20they%20may%20require.>

I don't think it will not be here because it's that bad and terrible. I think it will be a murder scene.

Finance and Jobs

Children from areas of high deprivation were more inclined to focus on issues relating to employment and money, although similar responses were represented across locality. Approximately one third of respondents across all workshops mentioned finances and/or employment when discussing Walsall in 2040, pointing towards primary aged children being aware of the impact that finances will have on their lives in the future. Around a third of all participants across localities mentioned the need to either create more jobs, ensure workers get paid more money or reduce costs within 'King of Walsall' responses.

The majority of participants that mentioned jobs or finances felt that these issues would negatively impact life in Walsall, pointing out that people will have less financial resource due to a lack of money and/or jobs (with some connecting this to A.I./robots) and things costing more. However a minority of participants felt that the future will result in people having more money and/or jobs. Those that discussed the drivers for future prosperity generally pointed towards this being linked to future technological advances.

Homes and Homelessness

The need for adequate homes and to address the perception of homelessness in the future is clearly important to participants. Just under 15% of all participants cited the need for homelessness to be addressed by the fictional 'King of Walsall' and a number of participants pledged that they would directly address this to ensure that the future of Walsall is positive. Across all workshops only a very small percentage of participants directly detailed the feeling that residents in 2040 will have less adequate homes than today, although an increase in the financial drivers of homelessness was detailed by a large cohort of participants, as detailed above. When asked "What Will Life Look Like In Walsall In 2040?" answers directly relating to homes and homelessness were generally seen through a positive lens with some participants feeling that Walsall in 2040 will be better positioned to address these issues.

Dystopian Visions Of Walsall 2040

Approximately 8% of responses to the question relating to what Walsall in 2040 will look like felt that Walsall would either not exist or be a 'war-zone.' These visions of Walsall in 2040 were shared amongst participants across all workshops with only very slight variations based upon ethnicity, gender or levels of deprivation. Reflecting upon workshops it was noted by facilitators that when asked about this view participants who were of Asian British heritage were more inclined to link these concerns directly to current world events, particularly the current conflict in Israel/Palestine compared to drivers of this view being more generalised amongst other ethnicities. However the anecdotal nature of these observations underscores the complexity of the issues at hand and highlights the diversity of experiences within the community. While these individual accounts provide depth to our understanding, they do not necessarily constitute a comprehensive or statistically significant dataset from which broad, generalisable conclusions can be drawn.

A small number of participants also expressed concerns over technological advances having a very negative, almost dystopian impact upon Walsall with concerns around 'robots taking over' expressed.

Environment and Nature

Across all workshops nature and the environment was a key aspect of the young participant's vision of the future with around 20% of participants mentioning these issues through answers given within the 'What Will Walsall Look Like in 2040?' task, the 'King of Walsall' activity and 'Participants' Pledges'.

A small minority of participants felt that Walsall would have more green spaces, parks and nature and that issues relating to pollution, global warming and the climate crisis would be 'resolved' and improved from today's position. In most responses a general optimistic view of the future was given without elaboration on the reasons for these changes. When key reasons and drivers were given participants put this down to improvements in technology such as electric cars and society coming together to address these issues.

The vast majority of participants that mentioned 2040 environmental issues and nature within the 'What Will Walsall Look Like in 2040?' task presented these themes through a negative lens. These participants felt that Walsall will be more polluted, with less parks and the detrimental impact of global warming being felt. Participants suggestions within the 'King of Walsall' task include less trees being cut down, more parks being created and pollution being addressed.

The importance of nature and it's necessity for a positive 2040 was reinforced within posters created by a number of participants. The majority of drawings and posters completed that envisioned and wished for a happy, healthy Walsall in 2040 included a clear depiction of nature including trees, parks and fields.

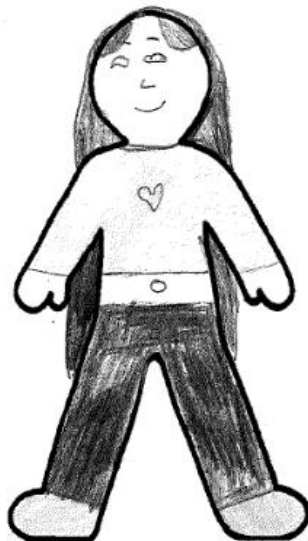
Leaving Walsall

Just under 10% of participants advised that they will be looking to leave Walsall in the future. Those that envisioned leaving all detailed overwhelmingly negative feelings towards present day Walsall with crime and antisocial behaviour often noted. Around three quarters of those that stated they would be looking to move away from Walsall were from schools with catchment areas in high deprivation.

Future Ambitions

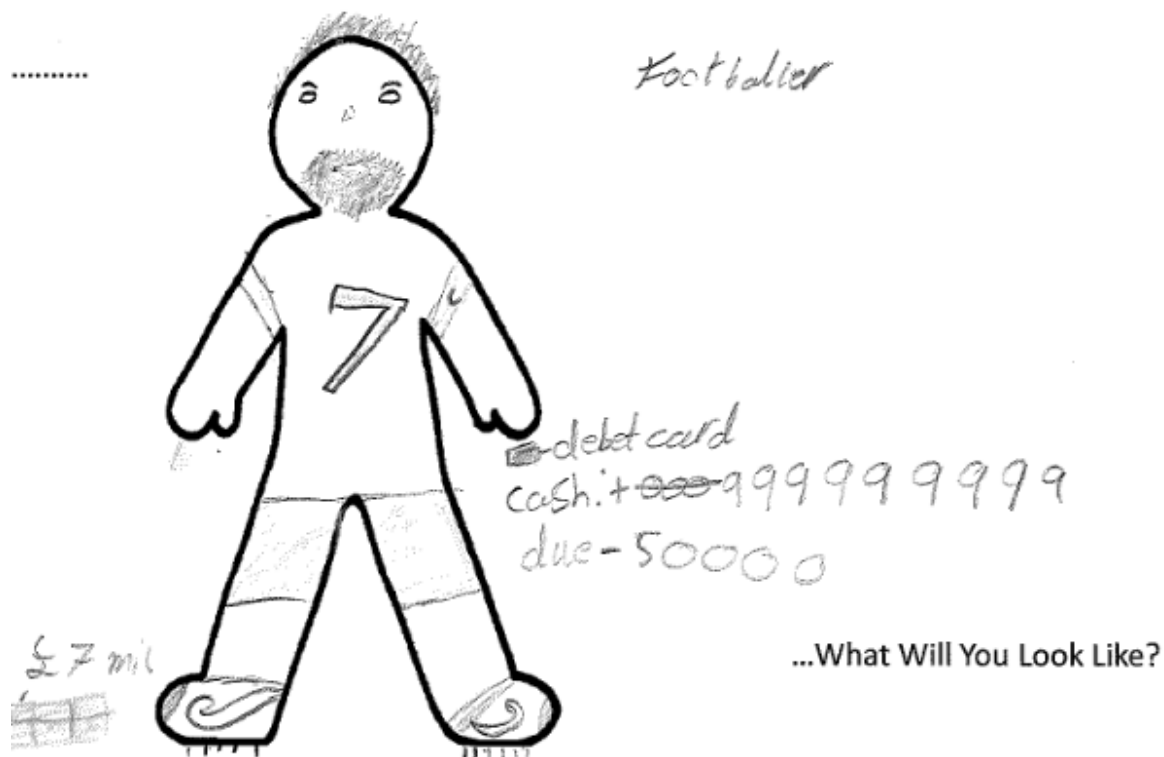
How Old Will You Be in 2040.....

26



...What Will You Look Like?

Nurse to help people



How Old Will You Be in 2040.....

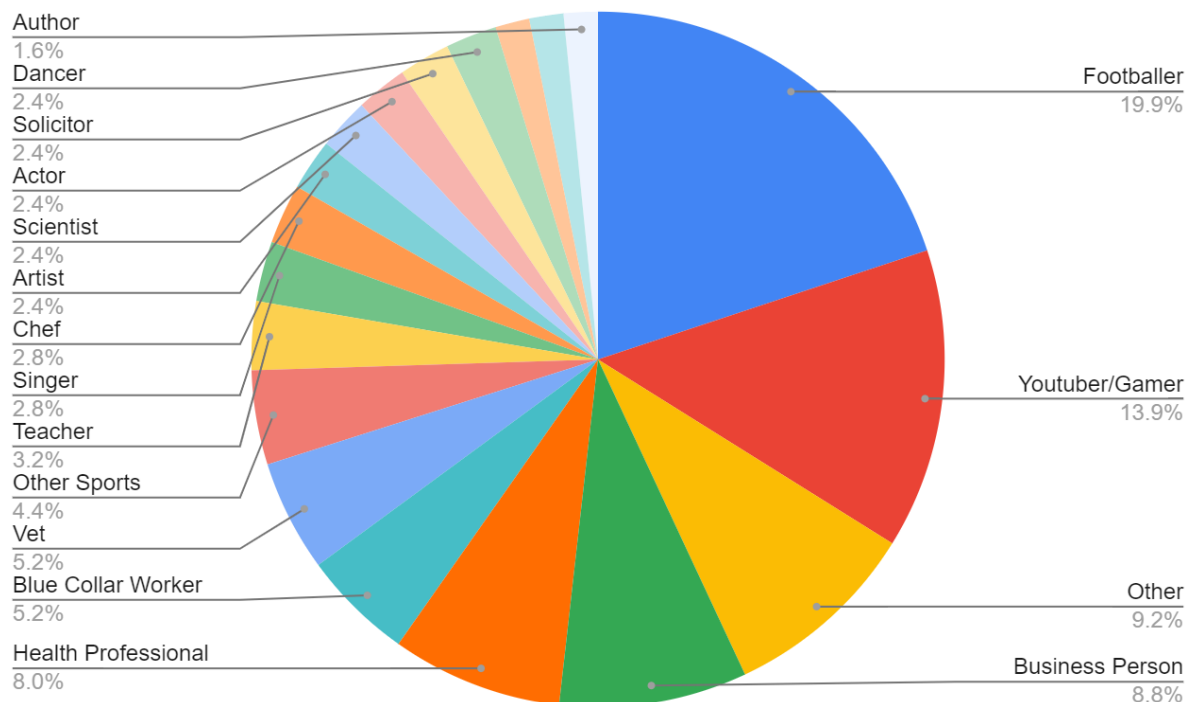
26



...What Will You I
Scientist

Across all workshops participants were ambitious about what jobs they wanted in 2040. Just under 20% of participants wanted to be a footballer when they grow up, the most represented answer for boys. Just under 14% of participants stated that they would like to be Youtubers or gamers in the future. Around 8% of participants stated that they

wanted to be health professionals including doctors, surgeons, nurses and dentists and around and a similar percentage wanted to be some kind of a 'businessperson.'



Social Connectedness and Kindness

A key theme running throughout each aspect of the workshop was the importance of the nature of human connectedness to present feelings towards Walsall as well as opinions on what the future will look like. This theme runs throughout concerns related to crime and antisocial behaviour, family and friendships seen as positive factors influencing opinions on Walsall and other key themes including but not limited to homelessness and concerns around social breakdowns. One of the key ways in which this is evidenced is found in the fact that of those that made pledges approximately 45% of respondents advised that they will ensure that Walsall 2040 is a happy, healthy place by interacting with those in their community in a positive manner. Examples of this include but are not limited to acts of charity, generally being kind to one another and helping others.

POSTCARD

I think they need to talk to others about getting along with each other and respecting one another and how to spend money and upgrade Walsall.



To the king of Midlands
Walsall Castle
Walsall, UK

Your Pledge To Making Sure Walsall in 2040 is A Happy, Healthy Place

I, [redacted] will help make Walsall a friendly, happy, healthy and environmentally friendly place to live in the future.

I will do this by..... donating charity, protest, stop littering, pick up litter



I will do this by..... no littering and respecting this town/city



I, [redacted] will help make Walsall a
friendly, happy, healthy and environmentally friendly place
to live in the future.

I will do this by..... *don't drop litter*
and give to charity.

I, [redacted] will help make Walsall a
friendly, happy, healthy and environmentally friendly place
to live in the future.

I will do this by..... *Work together because*
~~none~~ none cares about walsall



Hello, to make this earth better
you can make more advanced technology.
make a law to stop crimes, throwing litter.
Also, give what every country need.

POST

MAKE Walsall a better place

have you ever
wonderd how
2040 will
be like?
well today
's your day!!!
well its your
opion not
mine.



this im
my opinion
of how
2040
will look
like.

(hoffly
good).

here



Recommendations

This consultation demonstrates that on the whole Walsall's young people are committed to ensure that Walsall 2040 is a positive and thriving place to live, learn and work. Whilst our young people are on the whole feeling pessimistic about the town's future it is essential that cross-sector strategy is aligned to the wants and needs of our young people. With this in mind we recommend the following actions.

Enhance Safety through Community-Led Initiatives

Implement and expand community-led safety initiatives that empower residents, including young people, to contribute to a safer Walsall. This could involve the development or enhancement of neighborhood watch programs, youth advisory councils to local police, and children and young people community forums where residents can voice concerns and collaborate on solutions. Investing in lighting, surveillance, and other infrastructure improvements in key areas could also enhance public safety.

Empower Youth Leadership in Educational and Vocational Training and Development

Develop youth-led educational and community service projects and programs and training opportunities that are directly aligned with the future career interests expressed by young people, such as in sports, gaming, vlogging, healthcare, and business. This is essential given the documented concerns relating to job and financial prospects. These projects not only provide practical experience and may support future prosperity but will also instill a sense of civic responsibility and community engagement, particularly when linked to wider future drivers of change including environmental.

Foster Collective Ownership and Pride through Litter Reduction Initiatives

Launch a borough-wide campaign that positions litter reduction as a cornerstone of community pride and future well-being. This initiative should include school-based programs where students lead litter clean-up efforts and recycling projects, linking these activities to broader lessons on environmental stewardship and civic responsibility. Encourage local assets and community leaders to support and participate in these efforts, showcasing litter reduction as a shared goal that benefits everyone. Incentives to support future focussed activities such as litter picks should be linked to the leisure commodities pinpointed by children and young people.

Create, Enhance and Expand Safe Green Spaces in the Community

Develop stewardship programs that encourage local residents, schools, and community groups to take an active role in caring for green spaces and creating a sense of ownership. This could include volunteer opportunities for planting, clean-up days, and educational programs on environmental conservation. Special consideration must be made to ensuring these green spaces are seen as safe community assets.

Align Future Strategic and Development Decisions with the Aspirations of Walsall's Youth

Re-establish a representative permanent youth advisory council to provide input and feedback on strategic and development plans cross sector and organisation and integrate future focussed studies and youth-led research into planning processes to anticipate and align with the future needs and wants of Walsall's youth.