



Walsall Safeguarding Partnership
Joint Engagement Strategy 2020-2023

Introduction:

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership (WSP) has rightly identified the need to increase the engagement and participation of children, young people and adults in all our work.

This engagement strategy is aimed at Walsall Safeguarding Partnership organisations. The strategy is intended to provide a way for organisations and groups under Walsall Safeguarding Partnership to build an effective way of communicating with our 4th partners and working with them to develop and improve services provided. As our model has evolved, we have revised this strategy in 2021/22, extending a year until 2023.

“Community engagement works best where it is ongoing cumulative process enabling relationships and trust to build and strengthen over time” (Community Places, 2014)

Principles of engagement and legislation:

Service user involvement in the planning and evaluation of services has been established as a core principle across agencies involved in safeguarding. Increased service user involvement has been evaluated as promoting better care, and contributing to high levels of user satisfaction. It has become embedded within a range of guidance, policies and legislation.

There are many opportunities for children and young people to take an active part in shaping the ways they live, the services they use and local and national organisations. Children and young people have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them and this is promoted in law, policy and guidance e.g. the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and the Children’s Act (2004). Evidence shows that there are also benefits for the children and young people who are involved in decision-making such as personal development, improved self-confidence and empowerment.

The Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) approach, which has provided the framework for adult safeguarding practice, has been underpinned by a developing evidence-base around person-centred and outcome-focused practice. In this approach, the complexity of adult safeguarding processes to deliver outcomes, which are valued by service users, has been identified. Service users and professionals may hold differing perspectives of what constitutes a positive outcome. MSP highlights the need for Partnerships to “support engagement with the community”. By developing our approach to engagement in Walsall, we are making it clear that children, young people and adults are respected, listened to and empowered to influence our work.

Our Vision and Objectives:

Children, Young people and Adults, particularly those with care and support needs, are the 4th, equal partner, alongside the Local Authority, Health and Police within Walsall Safeguarding Partnership.

WSP's overall objective is to ensure any work undertaken by the Partnership consistently involves the voice of our 4th Partner. The 4th Partner is of equal importance as the statutory partners within the Partnership. They will be consistently engaged with the Partnership, co-producing with the Partnership and understanding the difference that is being made because of their involvement.

Successfully achieving engagement with our 4th partner can be achieved through 4 key approaches:

Consultation

A key approach for Walsall Safeguarding Partnership involves consulting with groups of people you wish to further engage with in the future. During this stage of engagement, practitioners will link with key groups / members of these groups to understand the best way to consult.. Consultation has allowed the Partnership to break down barriers between people who use services and professionals, building on people's existing capabilities (SCIE, 2015) It also has enabled the Partnership to scope out areas of importance for our 4th partner and can use this knowledge to drive further engagement activity. Examples of consultation include annual large-scale surveys, touch-base at community forums, hosting engagement events.

Representation

Representation of our 4th partner is a key element of engagement as the Partnership aims for them to be equal to other statutory partners represented in the Partnership. Representation can be physical and measurable e.g. e.g. representation at meetings and sub-groups, either through members of their group or through an engagement officer. It can also be recognised as colleagues in the Partnership representing and championing for the views of the 4th Partner who they have engaged with previously.

Decision-sharing

In engagement, decision-sharing involves our 4th Partner being empowered to shape services and future actions of the partnership. Examples of this include decisions around future commissioning of services or recruitment with WSP. 4th Partners can shape services / future actions of the Partnership through their ability to jointly make decisions with professionals. Decision-sharing allows for mutuality, where people are working together to achieve their shared interests, which will have been established through consultation and representation approaches.

Co-production

Co-production means not just 'taking part' but having true influence over decisions and actions. Co-production with our 4th Partner is an approach that combines the three above and includes co-design, co-delivery and co-evaluation of impact. Examples of co-production include jointly writing future engagement strategies, creating and delivering training or being led by our 4th Partner in a project they have designed.

Supporting the Strategy:

Consultation – annual large-scale survey (e.g. how do people understand safeguarding), quarterly touch-base at community forums.

Representation – deliver case studies of those they represent at partnership, nominate representatives to attend relevant meetings.

Decision sharing – joint decision on future priorities for the partnership, working together to commission services and recruit to posts.

Co-production – co-producing future engagement strategies, creating and delivering training.

It is the responsibility of all organisations within the Partnership to consider how they can include the voice of our 4th partners in their work and facilitate their services to become agents for change too. The Safeguarding Business Unit currently has one vacant post to progress the engagement agenda. The partnership and Safeguarding Business Unit will need to consider what resources are or should be made available to support the delivery of this strategy. Funding for the incentives provided to children, young people and adults we work with and what is appropriate for these incentives will need to be considered in future budgets.

A key element to supporting our strategy is the sharing of information, best practice and ideas with other people in similar roles. This includes working with colleagues in our Safeguarding Partnerships across the West Midlands as well as seeking feedback and challenge from organisations with experience in engagement such as Healthwatch, One Walsall and VCS/Community groups we work with.

Equality:

Participation and co-production should be delivered within agencies equality and diversity policies and principles. There should be a drive to engage with those who have not been engaged by us before or those with protected characteristics (Equalities Act, 2010), ensuring we involve the whole range of individuals which make up the Walsall community.

Governance and Evaluation:

All partners and organisations within WSP must show commitment to the engagement agenda. The implementation of the engagement strategy will be overseen by the Operations and Scrutiny Group and feed into the Executive Group.

The implementation of this strategy will be supported by a year on year delivery plan. The development and progress of a delivery plan will be overseen by the Operations and Scrutiny Group. The outcomes of the delivery plan will be reported back to the Operations and Scrutiny Group every quarter.

The Partnership will also be held to account by their 4th partner. A mechanism for feeding back progress on engagement will be included in future delivery plans to ensure that our 4th partners are informed on how their participation has been used to shape the Partnership.

The success of this strategy will be measured by:

- The number and variety of groups that have been reached through consultation activities
- Evidence that information gathered from work with our 4th partner is used to inform and drive change within WSP, as noted by outcomes in the delivery plan
- Evidence that information gathered is used to shape the priorities of the WSAP and WSCP and direction for sub-groups.
- The inclusion of our 4th partner at meetings and sub-groups where appropriate, either in their physical representation or through evidence of what their views being heard.

This strategy will need to be reviewed in 2023 to assess how the WSP has progressed through levels of engagement detailed above. This will allow for progress to be monitored and for the future strategy to be influenced and produced with our 4th partners.

References:

Making Safeguarding Personal – Care Act (2014)

Equality Act (2010)

Community Places 2014

Co-production in social care: What it is and how to do it - SCIE (2015)