

Welcome to the latest Walsall for All newsletter. This is the first newsletter since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in March 2020. Over the last 10 months, we have seen communities step up and go the extra mile to support those who needed our help. We acknowledge the inspirational work that has been carried out across Walsall by our key workers, volunteers and residents, and we thank all those who have played their part and made a difference. Furthermore, we remember all those who have passed away due to COVID-19.

The pandemic has changed the way we deliver our Walsall for All activities and in this newsletter, we celebrate the success of some of our activities: Black History Month, ESOL, Youth Ambassadors, DWP Community Connectors, the Pledge and The Faith and Belief Forum's dialogue project and community awards.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and continue to engage and work with us in 2021.



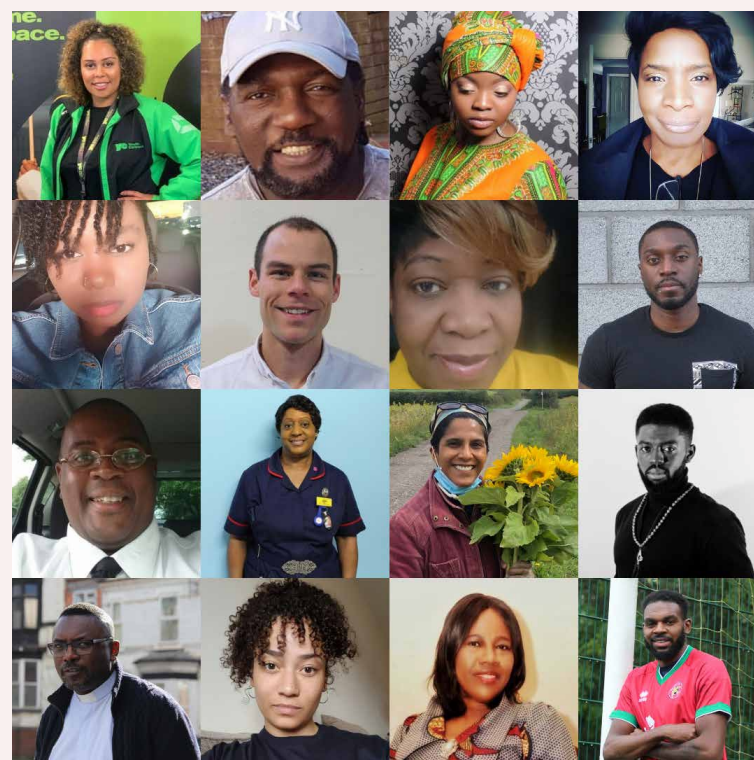
Walsall for All hosted its biggest ever celebration of Black History Month (BHM) in October 2020.

The nationwide event traditionally sees the country celebrate the achievements of well-known Black historical figures including Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. This year, perhaps more than recent years, an opportunity was presented to do more than just celebrate the enormous contribution from Black historical figures and Black communities in Walsall. This year, it was important to look closely at the Black experience past, present and future.

Throughout October, Walsall for All invited over 30 local people from across Walsall and the surrounding areas to share spotlight profiles, focusing on the meaning of Black History Month, what it means to be Black and British, inspiration and hopes for the future.

One of those featured was Walsall FC defender, Hayden White, who shared his hopes “to be as successful as possible, to continue to work hard and make a difference, whether that’s on the pitch or in day-to-day life”. Another contributor was internationally recognised photographer Denise Maxwell, whose work was recently featured at an exhibition in Walsall called We Are Here, which showcased some of the work of UK Black Female Photographers (UKBFTOG).

Walsall for All was also proud to share and celebrate the story and history of Walsall’s first Brit-African Caribbean Councillor Moses Whyte, written by Mkuu Amani. Moses continues to live in the borough as a much-respected figure and remains active as a Community Advisor.



Some of the individuals who contributed to the Black History Month spotlight profiles

On Monday 26th October, Walsall for All (in partnership with The Faith and Belief Forum) hosted the webinar, **Black History: Looking to the Future**. The event featured an impressive line-up of high-profile speakers from Walsall’s African-Caribbean communities. Each shared their own personal journey, aspirations and participated in a Q&A with the audience:

- Andre Reid, KIONDO
- Michelle Cummings, Walsall Council
- Chief Inspector Rod Rose, West Midlands Police
- Keith Fraser, Chair of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
- Jennifer Beth Blake, Change Partnership Ltd.

Topics focused on enhancing creativity and community voices in Walsall, empowering young people, policing, the criminal justice system, diversity and inclusion within organisations and leadership roles.

Over the course of the event, 170 people attended. Attendees praised the webinar as being inspirational, well-organised, thought-provoking and relevant. The quality and variety of speakers and the different perspectives each speaker brought to the discussion was also recognised.

One attendee said: “I thought it was brilliant to be looking and talking about the future of diversity. I liked the optimism.”

Jennifer Beth Blake, one of five speakers for the webinar and Director of Change Partnership Ltd., told us: “It was a pleasure to be involved and listen to all the contributions. As organisers, the Walsall for

All team provided me with great support as a speaker in order to ensure that I could access the platform effectively prior to the event. I felt my participation went smoothly.”

“I have had feedback from some of my contacts that they were impressed with the calibre of the panel line-up.”

Zara Khan, Positive Action Officer for Walsall for All and BHM Project Lead, added: “I’m so glad that Walsall for All’s Black History Month celebrations were engaging and informative for so many people.”

“We decided to do things a little differently this year and celebrate the lives, achievements and contributions of our local African and Caribbean communities, past and present. This is just the beginning. We hope to continue this work over the coming weeks and months.”

To read the spotlight profiles from Black History Month or watch the webinar recording, go to www.walsallforall.co.uk/bhm.



Panelists and facilitators from the **Black History: Looking to the Future** webinar.

Local church celebrates ESOL learning in the Darlaston community



Learners visit Walsall Leather Museum to learn local history and traditions. **Photo taken in August 2020**

All Saints Church in Darlaston has celebrated its second cohort of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) 'graduates' despite being forced to suspend learning for almost six months due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

The ESOL Language & Culture Club, funded by Walsall for All, has been running at All Saints since April 2019. The church is situated in the heart of the community and has become a key community hub and location for activities, where people from different backgrounds and with different life experiences can meet outside of workplaces, schools and homes. With no other ESOL provision being offered nearby, and thanks to their existing connections with the community, the church has been able to draw in a number of learners from varying backgrounds. So far, 39 out of 42 participants have completed the programme (two left the country and one left the programme due to personal circumstances).

Sessions are more than just English language classes as Reverend Gilbert David, Vicar of All Saints Darlaston and coordinator of projects including the Language & Culture Club, explained: "We, as a church, have decided to build strong

ties with our local community and the parishioners. We open the church doors on Sundays for public worship, but we also offer our church hall for the benefit of those who need it. In the Darlaston and Moxley parishes 50% of residents are migrants from as far away as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, Europe and Africa – many of whom need some help with basic English language skills; support with signposting to access services such as health, training, jobs, computer skills; and understanding of local traditions and customs so that they can better develop relationships with their neighbours."



Learners enjoyed the luncheon and cooking club sessions at All Saints Church. **Photo taken in December 2019**

"By providing a number of diverse learning activities as a church, we are fulfilling our duty by bringing communities together and educating them so that they learn about each other's cultures and values and in doing so increasing love, harmony, trust and respect amongst each other."

"As the Vicar of All Saints Church, I thank the ESOL Team, Walsall Council, Walsall for All and the project staff for their continuous support to achieving our goals."

Mohammed Saleem, Project Facilitator and ESOL Tutor, grew up in Darlaston and understands its communities well. Having initially been involved in the successful delivery of short courses as part of the 'Valued Communities (Active Citizens Fund)', he encouraged the All Saints Church team to apply for further funding and expand the activities on offer to help diverse communities, particularly those who may be disadvantaged. Mohammed said: "In all the years I have helped community and voluntary groups, I have discovered that helping others to learn and do things for themselves, for them to progress and achieve, makes me proud and happy. Getting involved in projects such as the Language & Culture Club is a great way to do just that - and make a real

difference in people's lives."

Mr Balbir Singh, a recent graduate from the programme, highlighted the value of the classes and the difference they have made to him and his wife: "Thanks to the friendly and helpful tutors, I found the computer classes as part of ESOL easier than I thought I would. Mixing and making friends with other people from different backgrounds has made it a truly enjoyable experience. I knew very little about computers before coming here - my children would have had to help, but now I'm able to do things by myself and I'm able to help my wife use the internet."

"This was a wonderful experience, for me and my wife, and it has especially helped me to become more confident in myself. I would be more than happy to repeat the learning all over again!"



Rev. Gilbert David presenting a certificate to a graduate. **Photo taken in August 2020**

If you, or someone you know, would like more information or to take part in ESOL classes, please contact the ESOL Intelligence Team:

- Harjinder Lal - Harjinder.Lal@walsall.gov.uk
- Zishaan Mohammed - Zishaan.Mohammed@walsall.gov.uk
- Natalia Balan - Natalia.Balan@walsall.gov.uk

You can also visit www.walsallforall.co.uk/esol to see where your nearest classes are located.

Youth Ambassador Programme creates success and legacy in Walsall



The National Youth Agency (NYA), alongside Kicsters, have been working with Walsall for All to deliver **Your Voice Now**, bringing young people together from across Walsall to tackle local issues through social action.

Youth Ambassadors are defined as those who do good things on behalf of all young people that makes a difference. They inspire young people and give them a voice in the local community.

COVID-19 changed the way this project was delivered. Sarah Tiffany, NYA Youth Work Specialist, mentioned: *"Moving onto an online platform was challenging, yet exciting. NYA trained staff on platforms, writing policies, new risk assessments and writing a digital programme for young people. It made the programme accessible for young people who struggled socially and may not usually join face-to-face sessions."*

Eight Youth Ambassadors took part in regular meetings, including virtual events:

- The **Spoken Word Workshop** involved creating a spoken word piece using words, feelings and emotions.
- **The Virtual Tea Break** involved networking between young people and youth organisations.

One ambassador said: *"The sessions were fun. We developed leadership and communication skills. This opportunity provided that stepping stone for me."*

Another ambassador told us: *"It's given us an insight into who we are and where we come from in our community. It's also helped to establish that foundation to make those first steps to helping communities."*

Benjamin Williams, Project Manager for Kicsters said: *"We have enjoyed working with the National Youth Agency. Having that connection with a national organisation brought opportunities and ideas, as well as exchanging local and national approaches."*

Mike Collyer, Walsall for All Project Manager added: *"The NYA created a project that was inclusive and informal in its approach. It enabled young people to work at their own pace. The project has created a legacy by incorporating a local youth organisation to carry on the work."*

The NYA will visit in four months' time to check how the project is doing and showcase this work on their website.

The Youth Ambassadors programme will now be delivered by Kicsters and the opportunity to get involved is still available. To find out more, go to www.kicsters.co.uk/walsallyouthambassadors



DWP Community Connectors support women in Walsall during COVID-19 pandemic



The DWP Community Connectors Team, Bindy, Bally, Donna and Hayley are still offering opportunities to women digitally and via telephone. Photo taken December 2019

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is working with Walsall for All to support women in Walsall to move forward.

As part of the project, the DWP Community Connectors supported Jobcentres from March with Universal Credit claims in the Walsall borough. They ensured customers' payments were processed during lockdown. Communication was key, as welfare support emails and texts were sent to the women on the programme. Being compassionate and empathetic, the calls provided wellbeing tips to ease anxiety and concerns around home schooling and living under COVID-19 restrictions.

Since July, they have continued to support women digitally and via telephone, focusing on transferable skills to consider career changes and achieve future aspirations. By liaising with local providers, they promoted digital courses.

Currently, the Connectors produce a weekly newsletter, which includes local vacancies, school-hour vacancies, training opportunities and wellbeing advice.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

In September and October, 13 women attended the **Empowering Women Workshops**, delivered (in a COVID-secure environment) by Aaina Community Hub and Walsall Black Sisters Collective. One attendee said: *"It was very helpful, very empowering and helps you to move forward in life."* In addition, **Motivate Your Mind Workshops** were delivered virtually and face to face by Steps to Work in October. Workshops aim to identify anxiety triggers, teach techniques to managing anxiety and encourage a positive mindset. 21 women attended and as a result they set up friendship groups. All future workshops will be delivered virtually.

Since April 2020, the Community Connectors have assisted:



13 women into employment



22 women into training courses



4 women into work experience

The DWP Community Connectors are proud of the service they continue to offer, including employability support, job matching and sourcing new opportunities to secure and sustain a better future.

To find out more or to contact the DWP Community Connectors, go to www.walsallforall.co.uk/dwp-community-connectors or email walsall.communityconnectors@dwp.gov.uk

Walsall for All continues partnership work with The Faith and Belief Forum

The Faith and Belief Forum are working with Walsall for All to deliver the **Walsall Community Dialogue Project** and the **Walsall Community Recognition Awards**.

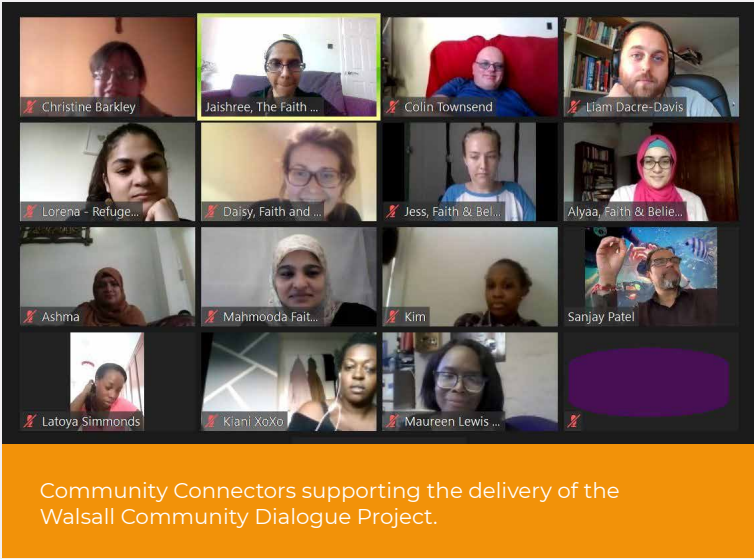


The Walsall Community Dialogue Project has been running since January 2020. Despite a pause due to the national lockdown in March, the project has now resumed.

With restrictions still in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital participants and facilitators remain safe. The project enables the use of virtual, safe spaces for people to come together and engage in conversations about the things that are important to them.

The project’s aims remain the same: to capture the voices, stories and experiences of those living in Walsall around the themes of identity, diversity, belonging and living together. The project enables new people to create connections with each other.

The Faith and Belief Forum have been training local people in Walsall to become Community Connectors to support the delivery of the project. Community Connectors have already met via video call to develop facilitation and community dialogue skills and the confidence to



deliver sessions within their community. Their first session, focused on ‘How Are You’, created a safe space to share the challenges and opportunities that people have faced since the start of the pandemic.

A community dialogue session recently took place with Midland Mencap and members of the Walsall Disability Hub. The group shared stories about how the last six months had been for them, including their struggles and successes. A shared sense of excitement about getting to connect online with people meant spirits were high as new hobbies were shared. A particular appreciation was also shown for the wellness walks by the Hub, as participants were able to get active outside and catch up with each other properly.

Walsall for All and The Faith and Belief Forum look forward to extending these conversations to our local community groups throughout Walsall.

The **Walsall Community Recognition Awards** are a chance to recognise and celebrate the vital work of local communities in making Walsall a welcoming place for people of all faiths, beliefs and cultures.

Like the Community Dialogue Project, the awards were also put on hold in March in the hope of being able to bring winners together to celebrate later in the year. Sadly, due to further restrictions this will not be possible in a physical way.

The award categories are:
Promoting Inclusion
Improving Access to Services
Health and Wellbeing
Supporting Women
Interfaith Relations
Inspirational Individuals
Inspiring Youth

Walsall for All and The Faith and Belief Forum feel it is important to shine a light on the inspirational work of the award winners across social media and our website. Virtual community conversations have been taking place, where award winners have had the opportunity to meet with others from their award category to network and share stories about the impact of COVID-19 on their sectors, organisations and communities.

Technology, telephones, volunteers and mental health were common themes during these conversations, as well as challenges and opportunities which the past few months have presented. One of those Community Conversations was on the Promoting Inclusion award category, where winners cited financial concerns and volunteer numbers, with many self-isolating, as key challenges. The need to re-invent the way services were delivered had presented many with opportunities to reach new audiences. There was a shared feeling that additional support was required for publicity to raise awareness of their services and to let people know that they are still up and running.

To find out more about the awards, please visit www.walsallforall.co.uk/community-recognition-awards.

Sign up to the Community Dialogue project

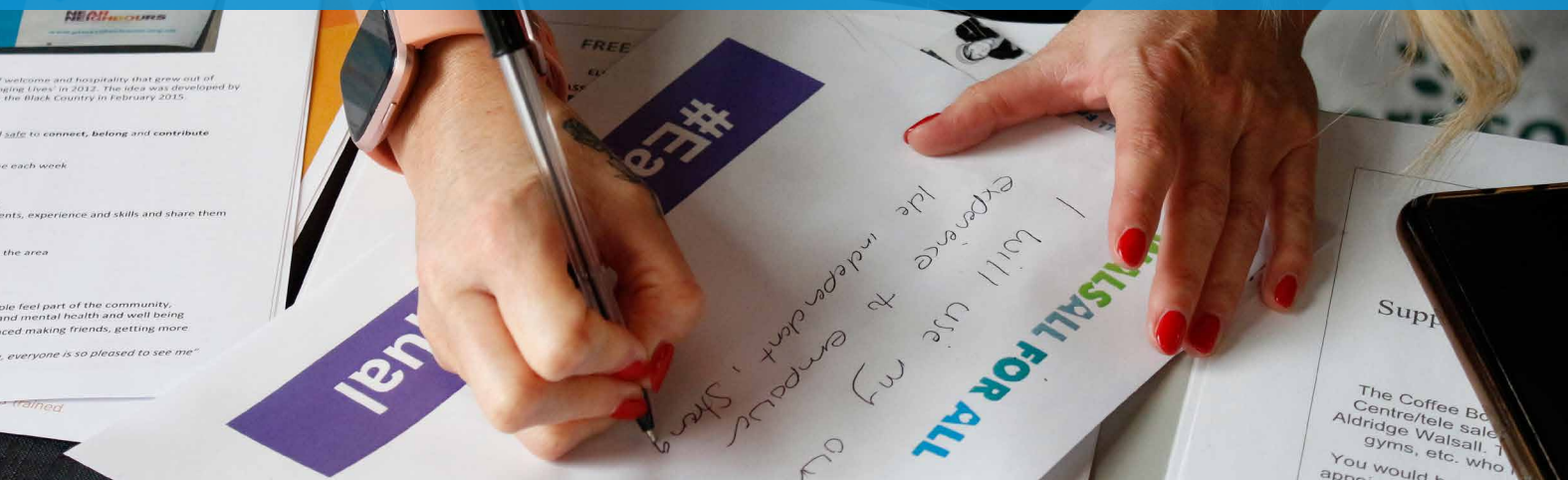
There’s still an opportunity to get involved with the Walsall Community Dialogue Project as an individual to meet new people from across the Walsall borough. To sign up, go to www.bit.ly/WalsallCommunityDialogue or email Daisy King: daisy@faithbeliefforum.org.

Call for organisations and individuals to “Pledge for change” in Walsall

Walsall for All Pledge - Case Study

Transforming Communities Together

**TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITIES
TOGETHER**



Walsall for All is calling for organisations and individuals living, working or studying in Walsall to sign the Pledge and promote inclusion and integration within Walsall communities. Within the Pledge are learning opportunities to develop understanding of these two key areas. Walsall for All have been working closely with *brap* to deliver this project.

The Pledge is split into two: the People Pledge and Organisation Pledge. These were shaped from a consultation that took place in July and August 2019, where individuals and organisations were asked to give their views on what the Pledge should look and feel like.

Anyone who wants to visibly declare their support for a more integrated Walsall should sign the People Pledge. You can be a resident, volunteer, student, elected representative or paid staff member.

Organisations can also sign the Pledge. This includes any group, business or organisation working with communities. You could be from the private, public, non-

profit, faith or community sector.

Walsall for All believes it is important to sign the Pledge because it sets the foundation for the journey to committing to cohesion and integration, providing opportunities to showcase best practice and developing connections with others who have similar goals and values.

As of 13th December 2020, 73 organisations and 96 individuals have signed the Pledge, making it almost 170 sign-ups in total. Some of the organisations signed up to the Pledge include: Nash Dom CIC, Walsall Black Sisters Collective, Manor Farm Community Association, Walsall Housing Group (whg), Walsall College, One Walsall, The New Art Gallery Walsall, The Faith & Belief Forum and many more.

All those who sign up to the Pledge receive a digital badge to include in promotional material, resources to help develop understanding of equality and inclusion and the opportunity to learn about unconscious bias.

Transforming Communities Together

is a charity that was formed in 2014. They support people and communities to thrive and flourish across the Black Country, Staffordshire and Shropshire. They have shared their thoughts on signing up to the Pledge and the work they do that incorporates their commitment.

Why did you sign up to the Walsall for All Pledge?

“We signed the Walsall for All Pledge because we are passionate about making sure all people and communities in Walsall thrive and flourish. The Pledge resonates with all our work streams - community cohesion, health and well-being, and social and financial inclusion. The Pledge also echoes our key values of listening, celebrating, partnering and empowering.”

Could you share some examples of your commitment to the Walsall for All Pledge?

*“Places of Welcome are vital spaces to allow people of all backgrounds and cultures to connect with one another. We are working hard to reflect the wonderful diversity that we have in Walsall. This includes a recruitment campaign to increase the diversity of our trustee board and hosting events. We also started **Bringing People Together** during COVID-19, which connects people virtually, through the shared principles of invitation, welcome and mutual respect.”*

How do you work with communities to make Walsall a fairer and more integrated place to live, work and learn?

“We will continue to work with our community organisations to develop the Places of Welcome and Bringing People Together networks. Both streams of work

focus on creating safe spaces, whether physically or virtually, where everyone is welcomed and inclusion and integration is actively encouraged.”

“Our Just Finance team empower people to understand the changing financial picture due to COVID-19 and encourage people to be as financially resilient as possible, whilst our Preventing Shocking Debt team provide support for those with financial difficulties.”

“And our Near Neighbours team have supported groups to get online and worked closely with the NHS to look at the adverse effects of COVID-19 on BAME communities.”

Are there any individuals or organisations that you would like to work with that have similar interests or ideas to develop cohesion and integration projects?

“Partnership is one of our key values. We will continue to work with organisations like The Refugee and Migrant Centre, Nash Dom, Afghan Community and Welfare Centre Walsall and a broader range of other groups.”

Responses provided by:

Su Parker - Bringing People Together and Places of Welcome Coordinator.

Nicky Thomas - Places of Welcome Facilitator in Walsall.



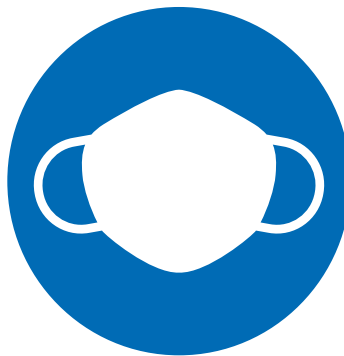
To learn more or sign up to the Walsall for All Pledge, go to www.walsallforall.co.uk/pledge



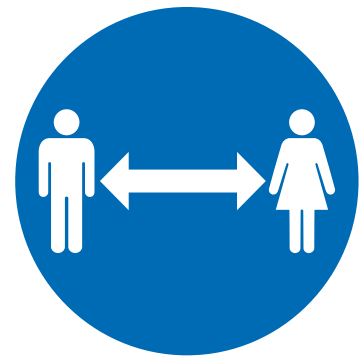
We must keep on protecting each other.



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

STAY ALERT ► CONTROL THE VIRUS ► SAVE LIVES

Get in touch to find out more about Walsall for All

Address: Walsall for All, Resilient Communities, Walsall Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP.

Facebook/LinkedIn: Walsall for All

Instagram/Twitter: @walsallforall

Email: walsallforall@walsall.gov.uk

Website: www.walsallforall.co.uk