



the most deprived ward is 1.

The national rankings of Walsall's wards are remarkable. Only four wards are outside the poorest 20% of wards in England. Four, Blakenall, Birchills Leamore, Brownhills and Willenhall South, are in the poorest 1%. Another seven are in the poorest 10%.

In the West Midlands, only Sandwell had comparable rankings, with two-thirds of its wards in the poorest 10%. In Wolverhampton eight out of twenty were in this position, but in the rest of the urban authorities in the West Midlands the proportion was around a quarter.

Lifestyles in Walsall: storing up a future

This section summarises the results of a major survey of health-related behaviour in Walsall schools, both primary and secondary, in 2001.⁽³⁷⁾ The survey covered 2,485 primary school pupils, most of them aged 9 or 10 (Years 5 and 6), representing a third of the borough's school roll for those years, and 1,136 students in secondary schools, mostly aged 12 or 14 (Years 8 and 10), representing 16% of the borough's school roll for those ages. It is an authoritative statement of the way young people in the borough live, and should inform preventative health strategies for some years to come. The survey was also carried out in 12 other areas outside Walsall, and comparisons have been made with data from this larger reference population. Future analysis of survey data is being undertaken which will allow analysis according to population characteristics, for example by ethnic group.

Diet

Some of the most striking findings are those that identify strong indications of inadequate diets in parts of the school population. For example:

- 13% of those who took part in the survey did not have any lunch at all on the day before the survey. 36% had no more than a drink for breakfast on the day of the survey. This rose to 46% among girls aged about 14.
- Significantly more secondary pupils in Walsall reported having nothing to eat for breakfast compared to other survey findings: this was particularly so among girls around 12 years old, and to a lesser extent among girls around 10 years old in primary schools, of whom 10% had no more than a drink for breakfast.
- The results from girls aged around 14 gave cause for concern: 18% said they had not had

Table 6.2

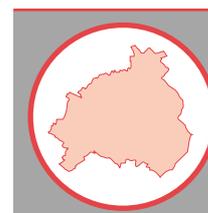
Education domain scores and ranking for Walsall wards, 2000

WARD	EDUCATION DOMAIN SCORE	RANK OF EDUCATION DOMAIN
ALDRIDGE CENTRAL AND SOUTH	-1.06	7461
ALDRIDGE NORTH AND WALSALL WOOD	.63	2008
BENTLEY AND DARLASTON NORTH	2.01	91
BIRCHILLS LEAMORE	2.49	19
BLAKENALL	2.63	11
BLOXWICH EAST	1.18	807
BLOXWICH WEST	1.59	289
BROWNHILLS	2.30	37
DARLASTON SOUTH	2.01	94
HATHERTON RUSHALL	1.10	950
PADDOCK	-.16	4705
PALFREY	1.01	1113
PELSALL	.92	1289
PHEASEY	.93	1270
PLECK	1.83	157
ST. MATTHEW'S	1.40	469
SHORT HEATH	1.53	326
STREETLY	-1.17	7662
WILLENHALL NORTH	1.10	949
WILLENHALL SOUTH	2.22	48

Source: DTLR

- 1% Poorest
- 10% Poorest
- 20% Poorest

lunch the previous day; and of the 46% who said they had had no more than a drink for breakfast on the day of the survey, nearly half had had nothing at all. 61% said they would like to lose weight.



- Compared with pupils in other surveys, significantly more secondary pupils in Walsall (aged around 12 and 14) said that they had fizzy drinks on most days. Lower proportions of Walsall pupils reported consuming dairy products on most days. The boys were less likely to eat wholemeal bread or vegetables compared to those in other areas, and the girls were less likely to eat fresh fruit.
- Significantly more pupils in Walsall's primary schools (aged around 9 or 10) drank fizzy drinks, and ate sweets frequently, compared to those in other areas. Over a half drank fizzy drinks, and over a half ate sweets or chocolates, on most days. More than a third of boys rarely or never ate salads. In the primary school sample, under a third of pupils said that they ate vegetables on most days.
- More girls in the Walsall survey reported that they would like to lose weight compared to those in other areas.

reduce the risk of cancer, after reducing smoking, and it has major preventive benefits for heart disease too. Eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day could lead to estimated reductions of up to 20% in overall deaths from chronic diseases.⁽³⁸⁾

Information is important but the choices people can make are shaped by the availability and affordability of food locally. Both national Government and Walsall's Health Action Zone have recognised that improving pupils' diet is a major objective for the Healthy Schools Programme. Resources have been put into a 'Good Grub for Kids' project, into the introduction of Breakfast Clubs, and work to improve the quality of school meals.

Walsall is a pilot for the National School Fruit Scheme. 12 schools have undertaken the pilot. The scheme has been extended to all Walsall primary schools with Key Stage 1 classes from April 2002. Every child aged four to six will be entitled to a free piece of fruit each school day.

Table 6.3 is reproduced from the Survey report which compares foods frequently eaten in Walsall with equivalent figures from other survey areas.

In the UK a fifth of all children eat no fruit in a week.⁽³⁸⁾

Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is considered the second most effective strategy to

Table 6.3 Walsall secondary school pupils responding that they ate specific foods 'on most days', 2001

YEAR 8 BOYS (AGED AROUND 12)	WALSALL 2001(%)	WIDER AREA (%)	YEAR 8 GIRLS (AGED AROUND 12)	WALSALL 2001(%)	WIDER AREA (%)
1 DAIRY PRODUCE	57	64	1 DAIRY PRODUCE	58	64
2 SWEETS ETC.	54	47	2 SWEETS ETC.	48	46
3 FIZZY DRINKS	51	42	3 FRESH FRUIT	44	50
4 CRISPS	46	47	4 CRISPS	44	49
5 FRESH FRUIT	39	42	5 FIZZY DRINKS	40	31
6 CHIPS OR ROAST POTATOES	34	31	6 VEGETABLES	38	46
7 MEAT	30	37	7 SALADS	30	27
8 VEGETABLES	27	29	8 WHOLEMEAL BREAD	29	31
9 SUGAR COATED CEREALS	27	27	9 CHIPS OR ROAST POTATOES	25	27
10 WHOLEMEAL BREAD	25	32	10 LOW CALORIE DRINKS	24	28

Source: Walsall Health Authority with Schools Health Education Unit, Exeter, 2001



Physical activity

Physical activity in childhood and adolescence is important both in maintaining physical and psychological health, and in preventing chronic disease in later life. It also contributes to the maintenance of a healthy body weight. This is important when considering that girls wish to lose weight, and the tendency of a significant minority to go short of food.

Pupils were asked on how many occasions they had exercised enough to breathe harder in the last week. 57% of primary pupils and 63% of secondary pupils said they had done so at least twice. It is recommended that young people should take part in what adds up to at least half an hour of at least 'moderate intensity' activity per day. Figure 6.1 represents a lower level than this. Boys generally exercise more than girls; and generally Walsall pupils were exercising less than their counterparts elsewhere. The percentage taking this level of exercise appears to increase up to Year 8 (around age 12), and then fall back, particularly among girls.

A significantly lower proportion of Year 10 boys in Walsall (aged around 14) undertook physical activity three times or more in the past week, which is a measure of a higher level of exercise, compared to elsewhere (39% compared to 47%).

Interestingly, enthusiasm for physical activity was not reflected in participation: 84% of primary pupils and 79% of secondary pupils said that they enjoyed physical activity 'quite a lot' or 'a lot'. This suggests that there is potential for promoting more physical activity.

Alcohol

38% of secondary school and 21% of primary school pupils had had at least one alcoholic drink in the past week. Levels of drinking among primary school children were not higher in Walsall than elsewhere, but levels in secondary school were.

The advised weekly limit for adult men is 21-28 units, and that for adult women 14-21 units. This level is believed to be inappropriate for children and young people although there is a lack of guidance on what constitutes sensible drinking for young people. Among boys around the age of 14, 4% were drinking over 21 units a week. Among girls aged around 12, 10% were drinking over 14 units, well over the percentage in other areas. The proportion of this group who had had an alcoholic drink in the past week was also well above the proportion elsewhere, at 27% compared to 22%.

Pupils aged around 14 in Walsall were significantly more likely to have bought alcohol from an off-license than their equivalents in other parts of the country: one in five had done so in Walsall.

This may be an area that would show significantly different results if the findings were broken down by ethnic group, since some cultures are far less likely to drink alcohol. Excessive consumption of alcohol is an important risk factor in stroke and coronary heart disease, as well as being a major factor in crime, violence, accidents, damaged relationships, unwanted pregnancies and time lost from work.

Figure 6.1

Percentage of pupils responding that they had exercised enough to breathe harder twice or more in the last week, Walsall and other areas.



Source: Schools Health Education

Smoking

16% of the secondary school pupils and 2% of the primary school pupils in the survey reported smoking during the past 7 days.

Significantly more girls about the age of 12 in Walsall had smoked than in other areas: 14% compared to 9%. Girls in secondary schools were markedly more likely to smoke than boys:

- at around 12 years old, 6% of boys had smoked in the last 7 days, compared with 14% of girls;
- at around 14, 19% of boys had smoked compared to 27% of girls.

Generally, 17% of secondary pupils said they

smoked 'regularly' or 'occasionally'.

Pupils aged around 14 were far more likely to have smoked more than 10 cigarettes in the last week than those aged around 12. 19% of girls aged around 14 had smoked more than 10 cigarettes, and 15% of boys. However, 29% of girls in that age group said they smoked regularly or occasionally, compared to 20% of boys.

This finding is alarming given that lung cancer death rates in women have increased since 1970, and are expected to increase further.⁽³⁹⁾ Also, smoking in mothers is linked to babies with low birthweight.⁽⁴⁰⁾

76% of regular smokers wished to give up smoking.

Of those with a parent who smoked, 23% of secondary school pupils smoked. The proportion rose to 35% among girls aged around 14. Where no parent smoked, only 10% of those pupils smoked.

Of those who had a close friend who smoked, 33% smoked. The proportion rose to 45% among girls aged around 14. Where secondary pupils did not have a close friend who smoked, only 2% smoked.

A fifth of primary school children thought that in the future they might smoke, or would smoke.

An international study of smoking in young people concluded that a combined approach was needed to reduce levels, including a complete ban on tobacco advertising, increasing prices, restricting tobacco product sales to tobacconists (rather than, for example, supermarkets), mass media education, and intensifying school education.⁽⁴¹⁾ As the White Paper, 'Our Healthier Nation', put it in 1999:

'Smoking is the most important modifiable risk factor for coronary heart disease in young and old... A lifetime non-smoker is 60 per cent less likely than a current smoker to have a coronary heart disease and 30 per cent less likely to suffer a stroke... While the proportion of young people starting to smoke is similar across social classes, by their 30s half of the better-off young people have stopped smoking while three quarters of those in the lowest income group carry on'.⁽³⁹⁾

Although there is a little evidence yet as to the effectiveness of strategies to prevent the uptake of smoking among children, it is recommended that a comprehensive, community-wide approach is likely to have the greatest long-term population impact. In Walsall, children as young as 3 years old are exposed to smoking education and prevention measures designed to reduce the uptake of smoking as part of the Healthy Schools Programme and PSHE curriculum. In terms of community-led approaches, Walsall's HAZ Steering Groups have commissioned a number of arts-based pilot projects that aim to address

smoking/ tobacco issues with young people in an engaging and innovative way. The Smoking Reduction Project Officer based at Walsall Council (funded through the HIMP Performance Scheme) launched the 'Validate' Proof of Age Card Scheme for 16-18 year olds in 2001 in order to reduce underage sales of cigarettes. In addition, the Officer is planning to pilot smoking cessation support groups with pupils from two secondary schools in 2002/03.

Drug use and awareness

38% of secondary school pupils and 18% of primary school pupils were fairly sure or certain that they know someone who takes drugs. This does not reflect the numbers who actually take drugs, but may indicate how close pupils are to a possible source of supply.

The Walsall figures for 'knowledge of a drug user' were slightly lower than elsewhere, with the exception of girls about 12 in Walsall, who were significantly more likely to know a drug user than their contemporaries elsewhere.

Significantly fewer pupils aged around 14 had been offered cannabis than those elsewhere.

28% of pupils aged around 14 had been offered drugs other than cannabis, compared to about 12% of those aged around 12.

15% said they had taken some form of illegal drug; 10% said they had taken an illegal drug in the last month. This is similar to other areas.

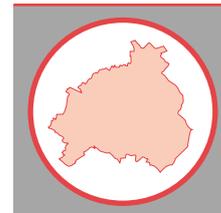
There is a sharp increase in experience of drugs between the ages of 12 and 14.

Fewer pupils in Walsall 'knew nothing' about listed illegal drugs than in other areas; and fewer in Walsall thought that these drugs were 'always unsafe'. For a number of drugs, there was a marked increase in the proportion of pupils believing they were 'always unsafe' between the ages of 12 and 14. This was the case with barbiturates, ecstasy, hallucinogens, and solvents; among girls only, amphetamines, opiates and poppers; and among boys only, heroin and tranquillisers.

15% of pupils around the age of 14 had taken an illegal drug and alcohol on the same occasion.

47% of pupils said they had found school lessons about illegal drugs 'quite useful' or 'very useful'. This was particularly marked among pupils aged around 14 in Walsall, whose approval, at 60%, was significantly higher than in other areas.

A European Drugs Initiative Project, which aims to develop a system aimed at preventing and decreasing drug use among 10-13-year-olds, has carried out a detailed survey of drug use in Walsall, together with samples in Sandwell and





Israel, as part of its development process. The findings supplement those of the Schools Health Education Unit used in this section.⁽⁴²⁾

Bullying and safety in the streets

Bullying is widespread in Walsall as elsewhere, according to the Schools Health Education Unit research, though its incidence falls with age. Pupils were asked whether they felt afraid to go to school because of bullying 'sometimes', 'often', or 'very often'. Girls appear to be much more vulnerable to bullying than boys. The difference between the sexes appears to diminish with age: the level of bullying experienced by girls starts very high, at 52% in Year 5 (around age 9), and then falls more steeply than the level among boys to 24% at age 14. The level among boys falls from 34% at year 5 to 18% at Year 10.

Analysis focused on cases where bullying was persistent and may have severe consequences for the child or young person: that is, where pupils said they felt afraid to go to school because of bullying 'often', or 'very often'. Here, there is a different pattern between the sexes. Serious bullying experienced by boys seems to diminish with age, from 9% at the age of 9 (Year 5) to 4% among secondary school pupils. However, with girls, there is a peak at Year 8 (aged around 12), with a high level of persistent experience of bullying of 10% of girls.

Pupils were asked whether others may fear going to school because of them. Far fewer responded positively to this question. In the case of boys, 10% in Year 5 admitted that they might be involved in bullying, falling to 4% in Year 10. The proportions were much lower among girls, varying between 2% (Year 6) and 5% (Year 10). This may mean either that few bullies are responsible for the experience described in the figures above; or that respondents were simply less candid.

Primary school pupils were asked where the bullying occurred. The most common places were at school at breaktime, both inside and outside. There was lower incidence of bullying at or near home in Walsall than in other areas.

The picture on the streets was different for secondary school pupils. A third of them rated the safety of their area when going out after dark as poor or very poor, significantly higher in Walsall than in other areas. Girls felt more vulnerable than boys: 40% of girls aged around 12 felt unsafe in these circumstances.

Boys were more likely to feel unsafe during the day in Walsall than those living in other areas. Boys in Walsall were also more likely to feel unsafe going out in the day than girls.

Self-esteem and well-being

Results of previous Health Behaviour of School-Aged Children studies have provided evidence that young people who are socially well-integrated and are able to interact effectively with other people report significantly better health than young people who are isolated.⁽⁴³⁾

In terms of this report, this means a virtuous circle: such young people will be, for example, more likely to take up exercise, and therefore more likely to be healthier and to relate well to other people; and those with higher self-esteem will be less likely to be bullied, or to bully.

The Schools Health Education Unit study created a self-esteem 'score' based on responses to ten statements about social confidence and relationships with friends.

Among primary school pupils, in Walsall and elsewhere, boys generally score higher than girls. The proportion of pupils ranked as having 'high self-esteem' was generally lower in Walsall than in other areas, though not significantly so, except in the case of Year 5 boys (aged around 9).

The proportion of primary school pupils ranked as having 'low self-esteem' was generally higher in Walsall than in other areas.

Among secondary school pupils, again the scores for boys were generally higher than those for girls. While the proportions of boys with high self-esteem were similar in Walsall to other areas, the proportion of girls with higher self-esteem were significantly higher than in other areas among girls in Year 8 (aged around 12), and significantly lower in girls aged around 14.

Interestingly, there were significantly fewer pupils around the age of 12 in the low self-esteem category in Walsall than elsewhere, while there was little difference at the age of 14.

Relationships, sex, and sexually transmitted disease

The survey has detailed findings on these issues. Here, we confine ourselves to just two matters.

First, sources of information about sex. For boys both aged around 12 and around 14, school was the main source of information. For girls, friends and parents were the main sources, followed by school.

Questions put to pupils aged around 14 on the means of transmission of HIV infection showed lower awareness in Walsall than elsewhere. Awareness of HIV / AIDS was also lower in Walsall's primary schools than elsewhere.

The Children's Fund

The Children's Fund is a government initiative to