

## IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION

- Date and Time :-** Tuesday 5 December 2023 at 10.00 a.m.
- Venue:-** Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.
- Membership:-** Councillors Pitchley (Chair), Cooksey (Vice Chair), Atkin, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Barley, Bennett-Sylvester, Z Collingham, Griffin, Haleem, Hughes, Khan, McNeely, Mills, Monk and Wilson.

This meeting will be webcast live and will be available to view [via the Council's website](#). The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

Rotherham Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair or Governance Advisor of their intentions prior to the meeting.

### AGENDA

**1. Apologies for Absence**

To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend the meeting.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 October 2023 (Pages 5 - 18)**

To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 October 2023 as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.

**4. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.

**5. Questions from Members of the Public and the Press**

To receive questions relating to items of business on the agenda from members of the public or press who are present at the meeting.

**6. Communications**

To receive communications from the Chair in respect of matters within the

Commission's remit and work programme.

**7. Corporate Parenting Panel - Update**

To consider any updates from the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**8. Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy Update (Pages 19 - 28)**

This agenda item will provide an update on the delivery of the new Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy (2023-2027) over the past 12 months.

The Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy (2023-2027) focuses on what the service know about children and young people, including their voices, and the information about local homes for children. The strategy also provides all the latest data trends, what the priorities are and the delivery plan to achieve these.

**9. Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027 Update (Pages 29 - 36)**

This agenda item will provide an update on the progress towards the Rotherham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027.

Information will also be provided about the referral pathway, which delivers a single point of access to services for victims of domestic abuse, along with details of victim and/or survivor engagement with support services.

**10. Work Programme (Pages 37 - 38)**

To consider and approve the Commission's Work Programme.

**11. Improving Lives Select Commission - Sub and Project Group Updates**

For the Chair/project group leads to provide an update on the activity regarding sub and project groups of the he Improving Lives Select Commission.

**12. Urgent Business**

To consider any item(s) the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

**13. Date and time of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on 30 January 2024 commencing at 10.00am in Rotherham Town Hall.

*Shua Kemp.*

Sharon Kemp,  
Chief Executive.

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**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION  
Tuesday 31 October 2023**

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Cooksey, Atkin, Baker-Rogers, Griffin, Haleem, Hughes, Khan, McNeely, Monk, Bennett-Sylvester, Wilson and Mills.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Z. Collingham.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-  
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

**119. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**Resolved:** - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 12 September 2023 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

**120. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**121. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items of business on the agenda that required the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

**122. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

**123. COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair advised that all the items regarding communication were covered on the agenda.

**124. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - UPDATE**

The Chair advised that the Corporate Parenting Panel met on 19<sup>th</sup> September and consideration was given to the following items during the meeting:

- A brief update was provided on the current position, regarding the recruitment and retention of foster carers.
- An update was provided on the Fostering Panel Review, which had been very positive and found that the Panel was very effective and well attended.
- A presentation was provided to the panel on the Independent Reviewing Officer Report.
- A presentation was provided to the panel on the Local Authority Designated Officer Report.
- A report was provided on Performance Monitoring for the period of quarter one, 2023/2024. The report provided a summary of performance for key indicators, a summary of service performance in comparison to the same period last year and trend data. It also included graphical analysis and the latest benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.

The next meeting would be held on 13 November 2023 and an update from that meeting would be provided to the Commission at the next meeting in December.

**125. SAFEGUARDING ADULTS PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

This agenda item considered an update from the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board, regarding the March 2022 to March 2023 Annual Report.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Moira Wilson, the Independent Chair of the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board. The Chair invited Moira to introduce the report and give the presentation.

The presentation gave an overview of the following content:

- The Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board had focused on three main priorities throughout the last year:
  - Going back to basics post-pandemic, by working with partners to ensure the six principles of safeguarding were embedded in practice and that making safeguarding personal was a part of everything the board did. The six principles focused on empowering people, protecting people, being proportionate, prevention, working in partnership and ensuring all organisations were held accountable for safeguarding within their organisations.
  - Systems, processes, and performance, ensuring that all services had appropriate systems and processes in place to support and safeguard adults effectively.
  - Strengthening the partnership, by ensuring that partners, organisations and communities worked together to prevent abuse from happening.
  - There was an action plan in place to monitor the progress of the three main priorities, this was monitored by the Safeguarding Adults Executive Group, which sat under the Safeguarding Adults Board.
- The Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board completed the following actions throughout the period of March 2022 to March 2023:
  - A new Strategic Plan was developed for the period of 2022-2025, which set the plan for the next three years.
  - The Safeguarding Adults Board and the Childrens Safeguarding Partnership completed a second joint self-assessment with partners, in September 2022.
  - A Safeguarding Adults Review (Samantha) was completed and published in March 2023.
  - Safeguarding Awareness Week was successfully held across South Yorkshire in November 2022. Safeguarding teams from Adults and Children's Services combined,

delivered twenty-seven awareness sessions across the borough, with over six-hundred attendees.

- The board hosted a Local Government Association Peer Review in July 23.
- The activities completed by the board during the period of 2022-2023, were as follows:
  - 3666 Safeguarding concerns were received in 2022-2023, this was an increase on the previous year.
  - 559 (15%) of the above concerns progressed to a safeguarding enquiry.
  - 634 safeguarding enquiries were completed in 2022-2023.
  - Of the completed enquires, 430 (68%) people expressed their views and wishes and 417 (97%) people had their outcomes met or partially met.
- Future activities the board had planned for the upcoming year, were as follows:
  - The board would hold a Board Development Day, taking forward the recommendations made by the Peer Review in July 23.
  - The board would develop a multi-agency learning approach, to ensure Safeguarding Adults Reviews were embedded.
  - The board would hold Safeguarding Awareness Week which would take place between the period of 20<sup>th</sup> November to the 24<sup>th</sup> November. Rotherham would host the Regional Launch Event.
  - The board would continue to develop joint working with Community Safety Teams and the Children's Partnership, to share learning and training.

The Chair thanked the relevant officer for the presentation and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- Under the Care Act, a safeguarding concern was described as anything that an individual may be concerned about. A high



proportion of concerns were raised by the Care Sector and the Police, however not all concerns raised progressed to safeguarding enquiries.

- There were training and development opportunities provided to many agencies, to ensure thresholds for safeguarding were understood and that concerns raised were appropriate.
- In the report, the number regarding 'no abuse type recorded' had increased, this was due to changes to the safeguarding system within the local authority. Reassurance was provided that a process had been put into place to mitigate this and as a result employees were unable to close the system until the abuse type was recorded in the system.
- The Peer Review highlighted the positivity of the Safeguarding Champions Network throughout the local authority.
- The Safeguarding Childrens Partnership were focusing on so called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, and domestic abuse.
- Assurance was provided that the joint self-assessment was very comprehensive across both children's and adult's services. The Board worked with individual organisations to look at what systems were in place within organisations, to ensure that employees were trained correctly. This was monitored through the Performance and Quality Sub-Group. A stronger line of sight between individual organisations and the Safeguarding Adults Board was also being developed.
- The previous report was developed during the pandemic, the increasing number of safeguarding concerns was because of the impact of the pandemic and an increase in awareness raising.
- Adults with capacity had the right to refuse safeguarding support, however, this could be mitigated by building trust with individuals. Mental Capacity Act Assessments were completed in situations where it was felt that an individual may not have had capacity.
- The Board worked with people who did in some situations, have

complex needs and the board promoted a Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Approach (VARM). This was a multi-agency panel that focused on appropriate intervention, where required.

- A multi-agency training and development approach was important, to ensure that there would be a high level of confidence that there was consistency around mental capacity. Working with residential care homes was important, to ensure all employees were trained in all issues regarding capacity.
- A new training organisation had been procured to deliver all training agreed by the Training and Workforce Development Sub-Group. Individual organisations had a responsibility to ensure they had their own workforce training programmes in place.
- The board worked closely with the Police in matters of criminal activity and there was Police representation on the board. There were multi-agency systems in place to ensure criminal activity was reported to the police when required.
- It was noted that there was a good level of participation and engagement with the relevant Cabinet Member and the Safeguarding Adults Board.
- It was emphasised that safeguarding was everybody's business and responsibility. Safeguarding Awareness Week would be a good opportunity for the board to promote safeguarding across the Borough.

**Resolved: - That**

- 1) The Improving Lives Select Commission accept the report and note the progress made.
- 2) The Peer Review Report be shared with the Commission once it is in the public domain.
- 3) Invitations to the Safeguarding Awareness Week be circulated to the Commission.
- 4) A further briefing be circulated, with an analysis of data regarding outcomes partially or fully met.

**126. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION PRESENTATION**

This agenda item considered a presentation on Elective Home Education.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Pam Ward, Head of Service for Education, Sarah Whitby, Head of Access to Education and Rebecca Braithwaite, Officer for Home Education and Children Missing from Education. The Chair invited Sarah to introduce the report and give the presentation.

The presentation gave an overview of the following content:

- The associated legislation and statutory guidelines for elective home education were as follows:
  - The Elective Home Education Departmental Guidance for Local Authorities produced in April 2019, this was non-statutory for local authorities.
  - The Education Act 1996, inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
  - The Human Rights Act 1998, Protocol 1, Article 2, concerning the right to education.
  - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28, concerning the right to education.
- The Education Act 1996, inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 stated at 436a “to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities, so far as it is possible to do so, of children in their area who are not receiving a suitable education”. And at 437, “If it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.”

- An "efficient" and "suitable" education was not defined in the Education Act 1996. However, "efficient" had been broadly described in case law as an education that "achieves that which it sets out to achieve". A "suitable" education was described as one that "primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he/she is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he/she wishes to do so".
- The Elective Home Education Departmental Guidance for Local Authorities provided the following guidance:
  - That a named contact was provided to parents.
  - That the service should have ordinarily contacted home educated parents on at least an annual basis, so the authority could reasonably inform itself of the current suitability of the education provided.
  - That in all cases where it was not clear as to whether home education was suitable (including situations where there was no information available at all), the authority should initially attempt to resolve those doubts through informal contact and enquiries.
  - The guidance did not allow for officers to require entry to homes, right of access to children or place any obligation on parents to provide copies of work completed by children.
- The core work completed by the Elective Home Education Team in Rotherham consisted of the following:
  - Providing advice and guidance around the implications and expectations of elective home education.
  - Signposting to other universal services where necessary.
  - Determining whether efficient and suitable education was being received by the child, on the basis of information presented by the parent, this included consideration of the educational provision being received, progress being made, the environment where this was being delivered and any

known safeguarding concerns.

- To support a return to school through school Admissions procedures or Fair Access Protocol where required. Initiate legal enforcement procedures followed where parents refused to accept a secured school place and home education was unsuitable.
- Where there was a safeguarding concern, Social Care processes were followed.
- There was a lot of good work being completed by the team and the following examples were provided:
  - Working with families who were considering elective home education, to ensure that any decisions made were fully informed and that the next steps to remain in school were explored, where elective home education was not a preferred route.
  - Maintaining strong governance of elective home education in Rotherham through the Elective Home Education Multi-Agency Governance Group, including Social Care, Early Help, Health and Education.
  - Working on an individual and needs led basis with children and families through an enhanced offer where this was requested.
  - Ensuring strong and established relationships with school leaders, which enabled concerns about patterns of deregistration from schools to be explored and supported with the school.
  - Access for the elective home education community to educational events, such as the author events as part of Rotherham Loves Reading.
  - Promotion of NHS services through close collaboration to ensure that all parents and carers who home educated, had an awareness of health services and routine vaccinations available for their children.

- Referral to year 11 support, to ensure that children who were electively home educated received advice and guidance aimed at increasing their chances of continuing in education, training and employment. In 2021-2022 only 3 year 11 leavers went on to not be in education, training or employment.
- Future areas of focus for the team were as follows:
  - Further exploration of what suitable and efficient education would mean in Rotherham, through the Elective Home Education Governance Group.
  - Engagement with Rotherham Parent Carers Forum, to explore the reasons why parents of children with an education, health and care plan and special educational needs and disabilities, elected to home educate.
  - Further work by the team to capture the reasons that parents were electing to home educate in Rotherham.
  - Ongoing work with colleagues in Early Help, to progress through an enforcement process in a timely manner where required.
  - Further information sharing sessions and/or briefings with Social Care and Early Help colleagues, to ensure a shared understanding between all staff, of the implications of a parental decision to elect to home educate.

The Chair thanked the relevant officer for the presentation and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- The School's Bill would have made provision for the development of a 'children not in school register' for all Local Authorities, this would have provided more powers to engage parents and escalate in situations where there was no parental engagement. It had been confirmed that this bill would not progress any further.
- The service was focused on ensuring an understanding behind the parental reasons for deciding to elect to home educate. The

number of parental reasons provided as 'unknown' were a concern of the service, this information was collected robustly during annual visits.

- Where there were safeguarding concerns for a child who was electively home educated, there was a multi-agency approach to provide any required support. There was a wealth of joint work completed with health partners, Early Help, Social Care and voluntary sector organisations.
- In some instances, parents were making decisions to elect to home educate, as they felt that their child was not equipped to deal with the rigour of the Key Stage Four curriculum, or the transition to secondary school.
- There was a focus on electively home educated children that had special education needs and disabilities (SEND), to ensure that the decision to elect to home educate was not as a result of needs being unmet in school. The development of the Early Years Education Strategy would ensure that any SEND need would be identified at the earliest opportunity and that schools would provide a graduated response where required.
- There was no financial support provided to parents who made the decision to elect to home educate. However, in situations where extra support was required, the team would refer the family to Early Help, with parental consent.
- There was a robust policy and process in place in Rotherham, which was supported by national regulations that schools were required to adhere to. The school was required to notify the local authority at the earliest point possible, when they were made aware that the parents of child were intending to elect to home educate. Therefore, the team were being made aware of children leaving school and were recording the notification as required. This ensured that the appropriate level of follow up action was completed, in line with the agreed policy. In relation to children who had never attended school, the team worked closely with partners

to ensure that they made the team aware of any home educated children, that the service may not already be aware of.

- Current guidance did not provide any requirements for parents or carers who decided to elect to home educate, to hold specific qualifications or vocations.
- There was no requirement on parents or carers who home educated, to provide a specific syllabus or entry to examinations. The team provided information to parents and carers who elected to home educate, on exam centres and how to register as an external candidate. The team also provided advice throughout the journey, of potential cost implications and logistical implications.
- The government was reviewing the Elective Home Education Departmental Guidance for Local Authorities provided in 2019 and had made proposals for amendments to the guidance. The team could ensure that concerns raised regarding safeguarding implications were fed back into the consultation response. Within the current guidance there was the requirement that any education that was received by a child, could not conflict with British values.

**Resolved: - That**

- 1) The Improving Lives Select Commission accept the presentation and note the progress made.
- 2) A session is arranged to capture views on the consultation and for this to be reflected in the response.
- 3) Concerns about safeguarding implications be fed back in the consultation response.
- 4) Information be circulated on receipt if it's a material factor in elective home education.
- 5) The Cabinet member raises with the commission if anything significant changes.



**127. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its Work Programme, and the Chair provided the following update:

- There was an addition to the work programme, following Cabinet's recommendation for an update on the Family Hubs Programme to be provided to the commission, this was scheduled for March 2024.

**Resolved:** - That the Work Programme for 2021/22 be approved.

**128. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES**

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activity which included the following:

- A visit to the MASH Hub was arranged and would take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November between 10:00-11:00am, at Riverside House.
- A workshop focusing on the Early Years Strategy was arranged for the 27<sup>th</sup> November between 11:30 – 1:30pm and would take place at the Town Hall.
- An additional meeting was arranged for the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum to present their Annual Report. This would take place on the 11<sup>th</sup> December between 10:00-12:00pm at the Town Hall.
- An additional meeting for the Rotherham Safeguarding Childrens Partnership to present their Three-Year Plan was arranged for the 22<sup>nd</sup> January between 1:00-3:00pm. This would take place virtually over Microsoft Teams.
- Invitations had been sent out to all members of the Commission, for all additional meetings and further information would follow in due course.
- Members were reminded that there was a member session on

Trauma Matters, scheduled for the 29<sup>th</sup> of November between 11:00-1:00pm at the Town Hall.

**Resolved:** - That the update be noted.

**129. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**130. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The Chair advised that the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission would take place on 5 December 2023 commencing at 10am in Rotherham Town Hall.

**Resolved:-** That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on 5 December 2023 commencing at 10am in Rotherham Town Hall.

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Lives Select Commission – 05 December 2023

**Report Title**

Improving Lives Select Commission – Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy progress update.

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Nicola Curley – Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service

**Report Author(s)**

Helen Sweaton  
[helen.sweaton@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:helen.sweaton@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy (2023-2027) focuses on what we know about our children and young people, including their voices, and the information about local homes for children. The strategy also provides all our latest data trends, what our priorities are and the delivery plan to achieve these.

This report provides an update on the delivery of the new strategy over the past 12 months.

**Recommendations**

1. Members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note progress made against the delivery plan for the Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy.

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Residential Update

**Background Papers**

Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Improving Lives Select Commission – Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy progress update.**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy has been developed in line with the duty to provide or procure placements for Children Looked After by the Local Authority. The legislation and guidance include Children Act 1989, Sufficiency Statutory Guidance 2010, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2011). The duty of ‘sufficiency’ requires Local Authorities and Children’s Trust partners to ensure that there is a range of sufficient placements which meet the needs of children and young people in care. There is also a responsibility to take steps to develop and shape service provision to meet the needs of all children and young people in care at a local level, as far as is reasonably possible.
- 1.2 The Strategy sets out how Rotherham Children and Young People’s Services will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and meet its statutory sufficiency duty by providing good quality care, effective parenting and support to children and young people in and leaving care. It describes the principles that are applied when seeking to commission the provision of secure, safe, and appropriate accommodation and support, to children in care and care leavers over the next three years.
- 1.3 The Strategy provides the underpinning needs analysis that will inform market management, seeking to ensure that there is the right mix of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people and that this provision mix provides positive outcomes and value for money. Whilst this Strategy is not primarily a financial one, it is expected that the commissioning and strategic intentions are essential to the sustainability of improved outcomes and the Local Authority budget.
- 1.4 The current Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy (2023-2027) was approved at Cabinet in October 2022. Key objectives identified in the strategy are below.

Our priority areas over the next three years are:

- More Young People aged 10+ are able to be cared for safely in their families and communities.
- Children and young people have access to a range of homes (internal and external options) that meet their needs and improve their outcomes.
- All services take the Rotherham Family Approach to ensure all Rotherham children and young people are “resilient, successful and safe,” evidenced by Quality Assurance activity.
- Children and young people are able to access the support they need when they need it because Health, Education and Care Services share a joint

understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and use this to inform commissioning and service delivery.

- Children and Young People and their families and carers are able to access CAMHs assessment and intervention when needed.
- Children, young people, families, and carers benefit from additional social value in Rotherham e.g., more employment opportunities.
- More children, young people and families benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and access employment.

**1.5** Key objectives of the Strategy are supported by a delivery plan which identifies actions and outcome measures. Key highlights from the delivery plan over the last 12 months are included in section 2

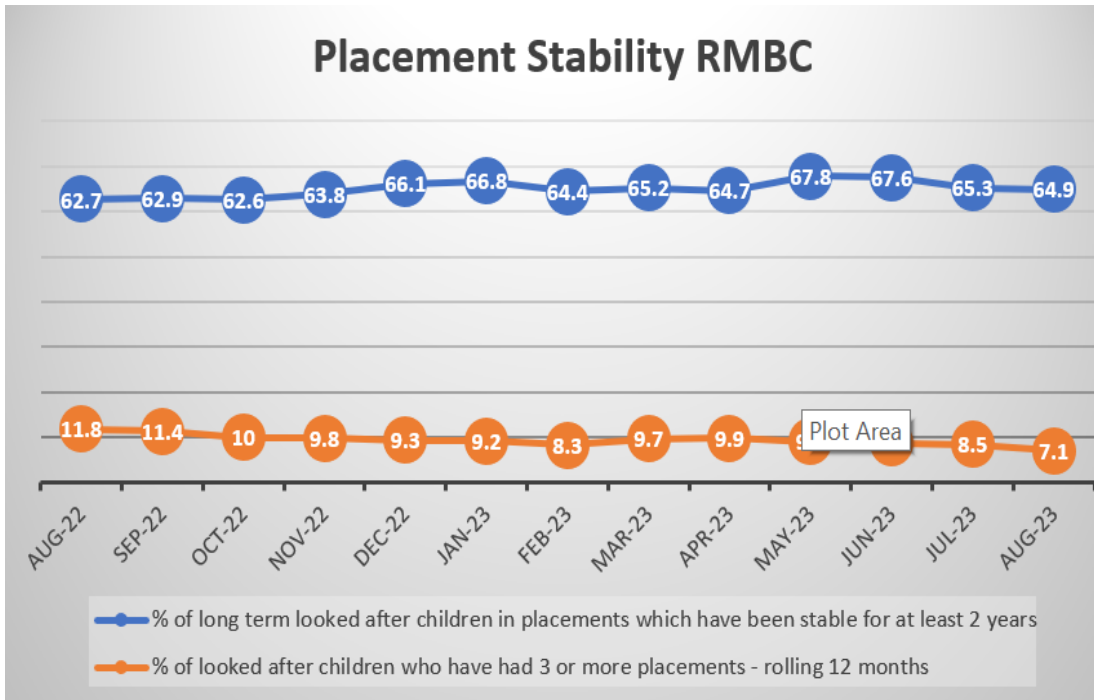
## **2. Key Issues**

**2.1** As of October 2023, there are 514 young people in care in Rotherham, over a 12-month trend this has reduced from 554 young people. A breakdown of our Children in Care and Care Leaver cohort by placement type is given below:

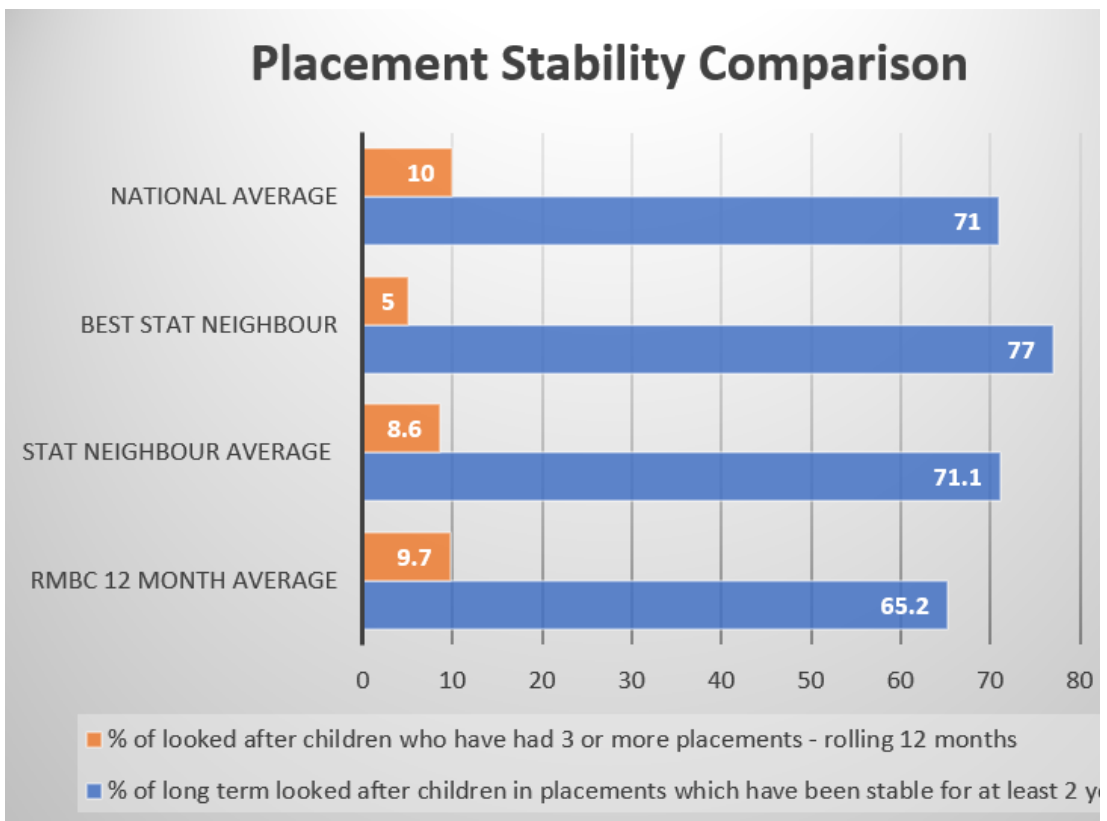
- There are 514 young people in care.
- 39% of children in our care are cared for in RMBC provision.
- 10% of children in care are placed in residential (47) unregulated (7) or secure (2) placements.
- 120 (23.3%) of children in care are currently living with in house foster carers
- 214 (41.6%) of children in care are currently in Independent Fostering placements
- 54 (10.5%) of children in care are living with parents or connected carers
- There are currently 322 Care Leavers open to the service, 197 of these young people are over 18 years old.
- 27% of our Care Leavers are living independently.
- 7.9% of our Care leavers have remained in staying put arrangements post 18.
- 9.5% of our Care Leavers are living with parents or family members

**2.2** The continued trend of a reduction in young people aligns to a focus on strengths-based practice and family intervention. The over-arching Sufficiency Strategy is focused on placement stability and the continued development of in-house provision.

**2.3** There has been a reduction in almost 5% of children in care who have had 3 or more placement moves over the last 12 months from 11.8% to 7.1%. This is significantly lower than the national average of 10% and only 2% higher than the best statistical neighbour.



2.4



2.5 Increasing local sufficiency is supported by transformation work across in house programme particularly on our fostering and residential programme.

2.6 The in-house Residential Children’s Home programme is currently in phase 3 and 4 following approval at Cabinet in November 2022. The phases will see

the development of 6, 2 bed children's homes creating 12 placements, running until April 2025.

- 2.7 There are delays to delivery of the Children's Home programme. The initial programme plan indicated all phase 1-3 children's homes should now be operational (see Appendix 1). Delays are because of challenges in identifying appropriate properties, recruiting staff and registration with Ofsted within the timeframes allocated. The target dates have been revised.
- 2.8 In 2023/24 Dragon Fly House has been successfully operationalised, with a second property being recently purchased which is awaiting appropriate registration with Ofsted.
- 2.9 Phase 4 is supported by 50% match funding from the Department for Education's Open Children's Home programme. As part of this a new build property has been identified, this will support with developing in house provision which is able to support a wider level of complex need. The home has passed through planning and is scheduled to become operational in Summer 2024.
- 2.10 The in-house residential homes provide a variety of residential placement types to ensure the needs of children under varying circumstances can be met, this includes step down children's homes, 2 bed and solo provisions.
- 2.11 Key developments across the in-house programme has been the development of a short-break hub linked to Liberty House. This has been developed following a successful application to the Department for Education's Short Breaks Innovation Fund. The grant is supporting 12 young people through an intensive short-break offer linking home, school and the community with the aim of ensuring young people are able to maintain education, have access to a sustainable short-break and avoid potential care entry.

#### 2.12 **Foster Carer Recruitment and Transformation Programme**

As part of the ambition for more young people to be supported by in house Foster Carers, there has been continued progress to expand the Foster Carer Recruitment programme. This includes both a digital and place-based marketing approach.

- 2.13 Current recruitment and retention of foster carers is successful, with a number of foster carers currently being assessed for RMBC and fewer foster carers resigning from the authority. Benchmarking of the Rotherham offer to Foster Carers takes place on a regular basis and remains competitive against neighbouring local authorities and independent fostering providers. Rotherham Council are continuously improving our offer to foster carers.
- 2.14 As of 31/09/23 there were 108 foster families caring for 120 children. Since April 2023 8 new foster carers have been recruited with a projection of an additional 12 carers to be recruited by the end of the year, this will mean a



net increase of 8 carers this financial year. This will create an extra 15 beds for children requiring a foster placement in Rotherham.

**2.15 Promote the Rotherham Family Approach to Commissioned Services through a Quality Assurance Framework.**

CYPS commissioning promote the Rotherham Family Approach in the first instance. The **'Rotherham Family Approach'**, encapsulates working restoratively with our families, using Signs of Safety as a way of managing risk effectively, informed by respectful, collaborative relationships that enable working with families to support them to be resilient and successful. Only when all family-based provisions are exhausted are alternative provisions considered. 83% of commissioned placements for children in care (excluding semi-independent provision) are within a family-based setting.

2.16 All commissioned services are subject to regular oversight and monitoring through the commissioning quality assurance framework; this includes assurance against placement provision across fostering, residential, 16+ along with a range of commissioned service contracts.

2.17 Quality Assurance work is timetabled on a regular basis and takes place in response to any concerns raised on an individual placement or provider level. Concerns are managed via contracts concerns process managed by CYPS commissioning with a view to commissioning social care placements which are compliant and achieve best value in terms of outcome and cost.

2.18 Commissioning work collaboratively with external residential and fostering providers to produce and monitor actions plans in response to 'less than good' Ofsted Inspection.

2.19 Currently 100% of all commissioned independent fostering agencies family-based settings were rated has good or outstanding as at the end of September 2023

**3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 Not applicable the report is for information purposes only.

**4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 The development of the revised Strategy involved collaborative working across Rotherham, including Children in Care and Care Leavers, First Response, Locality Social Work, Commissioning, Performance, Early Help, Legal Services and Finance.

4.2 Further engagement influenced the document including Public Health, the Integrated Care Board Rotherham Place, TRFT, RDaSH, Residential and Independent Fostering providers, In-house fostering, Rotherham Therapeutic Team, Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Children in Care Council.

4.3 The input from Improving Lives Select Commission will be valued. This will inform further implementation of the strategy.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 Not applicable the report is for information purposes only.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

6.1 Where there is a need for the Council to commission services from third party organisations to deliver the strategy, this must be done in compliance with the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended). Early consideration needs to be given in the development of any commissioned services to ensure the chosen delivery vehicle includes the flexibility to meet the requirements of the Strategy.

6.2 CYPS set a placement budget based on the reduction of a net 16 Children in Care children within the 2023/234 financial year (545 to 529). Current Children in Care numbers in October 2023 are 514. The reduction is ahead of the October profile (533) by 19 and the March 2024 profile (529) by 15.

6.3 Whilst placement numbers are ahead of profile the placement mix is creating a significant budget pressure with higher than projected numbers placed in external residential placements.

6.4 The key strategies of in house residential and in house fostering placement are at the core of the financial budget profile.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

7.1 Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no HR implications identified within the report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 The Sufficiency duty requires Rotherham Council to ensure that there is a range of sufficient homes which meet the needs of children and young people in care locally. The implications to vulnerable children and young people and vulnerable adults who are care leavers associated with this duty are covered within the Report and Appendices.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

## 12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

## 13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Progress against delivery of the Strategy is monitored through the CYPS Directorate Leadership Team with regular reporting to the CYPS Performance and Transformation Board.

13.2 To support with operational management the Children in Care Sufficiency Board meets on a monthly basis to identify progress against the strategy along with identifying and mitigating against ongoing risks and issues.

13.3 The ongoing main risks identified against successful delivery of the Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy are a short fall in externally commissioned placements due to high demand nationally, this in turn creates additional financial pressures when securing placements. This risk is mitigated in part through the continued development of the in house offer across both fostering and residential services.

13.4 A further identified main risk is the challenges faced on a national level recruiting both Foster Carers and Residential Children's home staff. Mitigations linked to recruitment are supported by the increased focus on digital and place-based marketing along with regular reviews of the Rotherham offer for both foster carers and residential staff workforce. Both areas are supported as part of the council wide Workforce Development Plan.

### Accountable Officer(s)

Helen Sweaton – Joint Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Quality

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive		Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (If appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley – Strategic Director,	08/11/23

	Children & Young Peoples Services	
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	14/11/23

*Report Author:*

**Helen Sweaton**

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

Public Report  
Improving Lives Select Commission

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Lives Select Commission – 05 December 2023

**Report Title**

Domestic Abuse Strategy Progress Report

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

**Report Author(s)**

Kayley Charlton, Community Safety Officer

[kayley.charlton@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:kayley.charlton@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected.**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

This report provides an update on progress towards the Rotherham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27. Information is also provided about the referral pathway, which delivers a single point of access to services for victims of domestic abuse, along with details of victim / survivor engagement with support services.

**Recommendations**

Improving Lives Select Commission note and make comments on the progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27

**List of Appendices Included**

Not applicable

**Background Papers**

Domestic Abuse strategy 2022 – 2027 [safer-rotherham-partnership-domestic-abuse-strategy-2022-27 \(saferrotherham.org.uk\)](https://safer-rotherham-partnership-domestic-abuse-strategy-2022-27.saferrotherham.org.uk)

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

Not applicable

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Domestic Abuse Strategy Progress Report**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Domestic Abuse strategy was developed in partnership with the multi-agency Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group, on behalf of the Safer Rotherham Partnership in 2022 and approved by Cabinet on Monday 24th January 2022. In the preparation of the strategy, the Council consulted with various stakeholders, professionals from a wide range of disciplines and statutory and voluntary sector partners, including domestic abuse service providers, voluntary and community sector organisations, South Yorkshire Police, NHS, as well as consulting with service users and members of the public. Using the information collected, the proposed priority areas of the strategy, potential gaps, and how these could be addressed were identified and agreed.
- 1.2 One aim of the strategy was the transformation of Rotherham's Domestic Abuse services, to ensure a more seamless pathway through the service for victims/survivors. From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 Rotherham Rise was awarded the contract to provide domestic abuse outreach services with a single point of access for domestic abuse victims at all risk levels.
- 1.3 Rotherham Rise provide a triage service ensuring every victim has the most appropriate support available. This includes one to one support, group work, counselling, and peer support. The service operates a helpline, website, and a webchat. Referrals can be sent via all partners/professionals or from a victim/survivor as a self-referral.
- 1.4 If a victim's needs are complex, the triage process could place them with the Council's in-house Domestic Abuse Assertive Outreach Service (DAAOS) This service provides support to individuals with additional and multiple complex needs which would otherwise provide a barrier to domestic abuse support. Additional complexities may include mental health, drug, and alcohol and/or children going through the care system, where a more intensive and person centred, face to face approach is required.

### **2. Key Issues**

#### **2.1 Progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27:**

2.1.1 An action plan was created to ensure the aims of the strategy are achieved. Currently 44% of actions within the plan have been completed which runs from 2022 – 2027 therefore it is currently on target for completion by 2027. Some key progress has been made is as follows:

#### **2.2 Drive change together:**

2.2.1 The partnership Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group meets quarterly and promotes integrated working across all sectors. To ensure a more cohesive approach to tackling domestic abuse, targeted presentations have now been delivered to all GPs across Rotherham via their allocated training day, to spot the

signs and promote the reporting of domestic abuse as well as ensuring all partners are aware of the single point of access support for victims.

## 2.2.2 Next steps:

- Continue to promote awareness of Domestic Abuse via various methods.
- Continue to learn from Domestic Homicide Reviews and share practice with all partners.

## 2.3 Prevention and early intervention:

2.3.1 We have improved the way we work with schools and nurseries; 100% of schools are now signed up to Operation Encompass (a police, Council and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse) and 53 nurseries – Rotherham is the only area in South Yorkshire to have 100% of schools signed up and the only area to have nurseries on board with the safeguarding process. An enhanced toolkit for Rotherham schools is also being developed to ensure staff are able to spot the signs, are trauma aware and trained, and know the pathways to report domestic abuse as well as where to get support for both victims and children.

2.3.2 Domestic abuse operational meetings are also under review such as the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), to ensure they are working as efficiently and as effectively as possible to reduce repeat incidents.

## 2.3.3 Next steps:

- Continue to develop the schools domestic abuse toolkit.
- Work to enhance the therapeutic / counselling support offer (ROTHACS)
- Continue to review domestic abuse operational meetings.

## 2.4 Minimising harm / early help support:

2.4.1 Rotherham Council work alongside Doncaster Council to provide a consistent domestic abuse training model and Community Safety officers monitor the attendance of this training regularly, ensuring this is well attended and promoted to all Rotherham partners. As well as requesting feedback on any training gaps, so that further training provision can be provided when needed.

2.4.2 A specific domestic abuse awareness campaign has been delivered to address peak support demand in Rotherham, for example, within the previous 2 years Rotherham incidents have spiked during the summer months of July and August, therefore a targeted social media campaign was delivered to capture those who may be isolated within those months to ensure victims and survivors know where to get support and that there is help available, sharing both local and national support offers.

## 2.4.3 Next steps:

- Continue to identify any gaps in training and aim to fulfil these.
- Continue to monitor trends and promote support at the earliest point possible

## 2.5 Responding to changing need and demand:

2.5.1 One significant achievement since April 2022 is the 13 specialist local authority properties that are fully furnished and equipped with target hardening essentials. These properties have supported 107 victims and children to date (including those currently in residence) and will hopefully accommodate many more in the future.

2.5.2 An additional 10 refuge units and 11 safer options houses have also been commissioned totalling a further 73 families who have received support.

2.5.3 The Homeless Prevention Fund has been set up alongside weekly partnership safer homes monitoring meetings. This fund has provided support to 146 families who without the opportunity of additional short term financial help, would otherwise have remained homeless.

2.5.4 The fund has also provided essential target hardening appliances for 232 properties to ensure victims/survivors can remain safely in their own home.

2.5.6 Next steps:

- Continue to monitor the homelessness prevention fund and provide support.
- Continue to work with marginalised groups and develop innovative ways of responding to their needs.

## 2.6 Justice and ongoing protection: Cranstoun - Inspire to change:

2.6.1 A vital part of the strategy is gaining justice for victims and ensuring ongoing protection. Domestic abuse perpetrators in prison will usually complete a probation led programme called 'Building Better Relationships' which is a cognitive-behavioural programme for adult men convicted of an intimate partner violence.

2.6.2 The Cranstoun Inspire To Change programme was commissioned as a county-wide programme by Doncaster Council with joint funding from Rotherham, Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley Councils, and the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner. It delivers domestic abuse interventions with male and female perpetrators aged 16 and above, including those with complex needs, to encourage, empower and support perpetrators to change their behaviour. It is a voluntary programme which plugs the gap for those who have not been convicted, but recognise they cause harm. Inspire to change tackles and challenges perpetrator behaviour and gives participants:

- An understanding of how to recognise the signs of domestic abuse.
- A better understanding of why they use violence or aggression in their relationships.
- An awareness of how attitudes and beliefs can affect behaviour.
- The practical tools to develop and maintain change.



- An improved and better life for themselves, their children and others affected by their behaviour.

2.6.3 The main program is 6 months long.

<b>Number of Referrals onto the Inspire to Change and Course Completions (Rotherham)</b>				
	Referrals	Referrals engaging	Started Course	Completed Course
Q3 2021-22	87	21	21	0
Q4 2021-22	130	11	11	1
Q1 2022-23	123	4	4	4
Q2 2022-23	97	3	3	11
Q3 2022-23	44	6	7	6
Q4 2022-23	33	15	8	5
Q1 2023-24	28	11	11	9
Q2 2023-24	31	13	13	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>43</b>

2.6.4 Overview & Steps taken:

In Rotherham, from the commencement of the program in September 2021 there has been 573 referrals, 78 individuals have started the program with 43 completing it to date, therefore a 55% completion rate.

2.6.5 The significant rise in referrals and therefore drop-in engagement rate seen in Quarter 4 21-22 to Quarter 2 2022-23 was due to Cranstoun accepting referrals that were incomplete or inappropriate referrals, some without the perpetrators consent, as well as issues around staff shortages due to the much higher referral rate than they were initially commissioned for.

2.6.6 These issues have been addressed and Cranstoun have taken steps to ensure that they are only accepting appropriate referrals into the programme. Alongside this, the Police Crime Commissioner has provided additional resources to address staffing issues and to clear any waiting lists or backlogs.

2.6.7 Cranstoun staff have delivered several training programmes with partners to both promote their service but also to educate them on what a good referral looks like. An additional training session for Rotherham is arranged during safeguarding awareness week (November 2023).

2.6.8 Cranstoun has reported that 91% of victims / survivors report the abusive behaviours have stopped or reduced because of Rotherham perpetrators attending the programme.

2.6.9 Next Steps

- Continue to attend contract monitoring meetings with Cranstoun and South Yorkshire partners to address any identified performance issues.

**2.7 Victim / survivor engagement with domestic abuse support services:**

2.7.1 Within the first 2 quarters of the commencement of the single point of access domestic abuse service, the victim engagement rate was 44%.

2.7.2 This is because there were two methodologies for calculating the engagement rate. Previously Rotherham Rise and the Domestic Abuse Assertive Outreach Service (DAAOS) had used differing methods to calculate engagement rates.

2.7.3 Steps taken:

A consistent definition was introduced across the two services to provide a more accurate reflection of engagement.

2.7.4 Rotherham Rise data previously included inappropriate referrals such as people who had not given consent to be contacted or did not have a contactable phone number as non-engagement. This was not giving a true reflection of clients engaged by Rotherham Rise who were appropriate to their service. The definition of engagement and the rate is now measured consistently from those where initial contact has been successful.

2.7.5 Where victims inform Rotherham Rise that they do not want support, many still receive immediate triage support such as safety planning, target hardening or signposting before declining further support.

2.7.6 Close monitoring across a range of performance indicators, including referrals and engagement rates, is taking place through contract monitoring meetings with Rotherham Rise. The outcomes of monitoring are being used to help understand the impact of the new contract and service arrangements.

2.7.7 Next steps:

- Continue to collect and report engagement rates to the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group and the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board in order to identify and address any necessary improvement action.

**3. Options considered and recommended proposal.**

3.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27 and invites comments on progress from Commission members, therefore no other options are presented.

**4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 Not applicable.

**5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision.**

5.1 Not applicable

**6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.
- 6.2 The following services commissioned by RMBC and highlighted within the body of the report, were formally awarded a contract following the successful completion of individual procurements, undertaken in accordance with the Council's Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations (as amended).
- Domestic Abuse Refuge .
  - Domestic Abuse Community Outreach Support Service.
  - Target Hardening for Domestic Abuse victims in private rented or own property

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 Under section 58 (part 4) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Local Authority is required to provide support for victims of domestic abuse. They must.
- (a) assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based support in its area
  - (b) prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area, and
  - (c) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 Protecting vulnerable children and protecting vulnerable adults are adopted as continuing priorities by the Safer Rotherham Partnership from 2022-2025. The Domestic Abuse strategy and Domestic Abuse Action Plan reflect continuous work in both these areas.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 There are no direct equalities and human rights implications associated with this report.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 There are no direct CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change implications associated with this report.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 There are no direct implications for partners associated with this report.

### 13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The production of this report for scrutiny ensures that the minimum legal requirements are met.

#### **Accountable Officer(s)**

Emma Ellis, Head of Service, Community Safety and Regulatory Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Rob Mahon	24/11/23
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	24/11/23
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Claire Cox	24/11/23
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		24/11/23
Head of Procurement	Lorna Byne for Karen Middlebrook	24/11/23
Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment	Sam Barstow for Paul Woodcock	24/11/23
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Alam	24/11/23

*Report Author: Kayley Charlton, Community Safety*

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

**Appendix 1: Improving Lives Select Commission –Summary Work Programme 2023/24**

**Chair: Cllr Lyndsay Pitchley**  
**Governance Advisor: Natasha Aucott**

**Vice-Chair: Cllr Wendy Cooksey**  
**Link Officer: David McWilliams**

The following principles were endorsed by OSMB at its meeting of 5 July 2023 as criteria to long/short list each of the commission's respective priorities:

**Establish as a starting point:**

- What are the key issues?
- What is the outcome that we want?

**Agree principles for longlisting:**

- Can scrutiny add value or influence?
- Is it being looked at elsewhere?
- Is it a priority – council or community?

**Developing a consistent shortlisting criteria e.g.**

- T: Time: is it the right time, enough resources?  
 O: Others: is this duplicating the work of another body?  
 P: Performance: can scrutiny make a difference?  
 I: Interest – what is the interest to the public?  
 C: Contribution to the corporate plan?

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
<b>13 June 2023</b>	Counter extremism in schools/ Radicalisation of young people and extremism
<b>25 July 2023</b>	CYPS Performance and Year End performance Rotherham Youth Justice Service Progress Report
<b>12 September 2023</b>	Written Statement of Action Update Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report
<b>31 October 2023</b>	Adults Safeguarding Partners Annual Report Elective Home Education Presentation
<b>5 December 2023</b>	Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy Update Domestic Abuse Strategy Update (Council Plan Performance)

<b>30 January 2024</b>	Child Exploitation Update (Including post abuse support) Carers Strategy Update
<b>5 March 2024</b>	Early Help Update Family Hubs Update

<b>Suggested Review Activity</b>	
Early Years Strategy – Workshop held on 27 <sup>th</sup> November 11:30-1:30pm	
Pandemic Related Risks to Children’s Development - TBC	
Preparation for adulthood (with health?)- TBC	
<b>Suggested joint work with Health Select Commission</b>	
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Update	
Place Partners Adult Mental Health Services	