CABINET

Monday 18 November 2024
10.00 a.m.
Council Chamber, Rotherham Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham. S60 2TH

Cabinet Members:-

Leader of the Council	Councillor Chris Read
Deputy Leader of the Council, Social Inclusion & Neighbourhood Working Portfolio	Councillor Dave Sheppard
Housing Portfolio	Councillor Sarah Allen
Children and Young People Portfolio	Councillor Victoria Cusworth
Adult Social Care and Health Portfolio	Councillor Joanna Baker-Rogers
Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy Portfolio	Councillor Robert Taylor
Finance & Safe and Clean Communities Portfolio	Councillor Saghir Alam

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

CABINET

Venue:	**The Town Hall, The Crofts, Moorgate Street, Rotherham. S60 2TH**
Date and Time:	**Monday 18 November 2024 at 10.00 a.m.**
Agenda Contact	**Governance Unit – governance@rotherham.gov.uk**

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.

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence

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

2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests or personal interests they may have in any matter which is to be considered at this meeting, to confirm the nature of those interests and whether they intend to leave the meeting for the consideration of the item.

3. Questions from Members of the Public

To receive questions from members of the public who wish to ask a general question in respect of matters within the Council's area of responsibility or influence.

Subject to the Chair's discretion, members of the public may ask one question and one supplementary question, which should relate to the original question and answer received.

Councillors may also ask questions under this agenda item.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 9 - 17)

To receive the record of proceedings of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 October 2024.

5. Exclusion of the Press and Public

There are no exempt items on the agenda.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

6. Looked After Children (LAC) Sufficiency Update (including the residential development progress update) (Pages 19 - 67)

Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the progress made to deliver the in-house children's residential development, the positive impact for Children in Care and financial efficiencies that will be achieved.

2. Approve the Care Leavers addendum to the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028.

3. Agree that the LAC and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy Delivery Plan be updated to increase the appropriateness and number of available accommodation options for Care Leavers as per the Care Leaver addendum to the LAC sufficiency strategy (see 2 above).

4. Note that on 16 October 2023 authority was delegated to the Assistant Director of Housing Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to acquire up to 100 properties in line with the Housing Acquisitions Policy, which includes scope to acquire properties to meet the accommodation needs of Children and Young Peoples Services.

5. Authorise the Councils Designated Property Officer, or relevant Strategic Director in their absence, to negotiate any additional accommodation required and complete necessary transactions, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer, Strategic Director Children's and Young Peoples Services, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services and the Assistant Director of Legal Services.

7. Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027 (Pages 69 - 102)

Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet approve the Leaving Care Strategy and approve the three-year plan as set out within the Strategy.

8. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (Pages 103 - 336)

Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet endorse the South Yorkshire Multi Agency Safeguarding arrangements which include the place-based Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP) Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.

2. That Cabinet approve the Local Authority involvement in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and receives appropriate reports on progress against the RSCP priorities and the Annual Report on impact of the RSCP in safeguarding children and young people.

FINANCE & SAFE AND CLEAN COMMUNITIES

9. September 2024-25 Financial Monitoring Report (Pages 337 - 362)

Report from the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £5.3m.

2. Note that actions will continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it is possible that the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2024/25 financial position.

3. Note the updated position of the Capital Programme, including proposed capital programme variations to expenditure profiles and funding.

4. Approve the adoption of the Department for Education's procedure to help local authorities financially assess Special Guardians as part of the process for setting up Special Guardianship Orders.

5. Approve the proposed debt write off detailed at 2.44

HOUSING

10. Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy (Pages 363 - 436)

Report from the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy (Appendix 1).

2. Approve the increase in decoration allowance from £25 to £50 per room, up to a maximum of £350 per property, as proposed in the Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy (Appendix 1).

3. Note the ongoing work to scope the future repairs and maintenance delivery model for Rotherham and agrees to receive a further update on this work in 2025.

4. Approve the Housing Services Gas and Carbon Monoxide Safety Policy (Appendix 2).

5. Approve the Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy (Appendix 3).

6. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make amendments to the following housing policies in line with operational, regulatory and legislative demands:

    - Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy
    - Housing Services Gas and Carbon Monoxide Safety Policy
    - Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy
    - Housing Services Fire Safety Policy
    - Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy as it relates to housing assets.

11. Temporary Accommodation Policy (Pages 437 - 514)

Report from the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the increase in homelessness and growing demand for temporary accommodation and the work being undertaken by the Council to respond to this demand.

2. Approve the adoption of the new Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy (Appendix 1).

3. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health for a 3-year period in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make operational amendments to the Policy when the need is identified.

4. Note officers' intention to continue to pursue opportunities for a 3-year period to increase the portfolio of Council-owned temporary accommodation to meet service demands, subject to available budget and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

SOCIAL INCLUSION & NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING

12. Household Support Fund Update (Pages 515 - 528)

Report from the Assistant Chief Executive.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the provisional allocations of the Household Support Fund Grant of £2.489m have been made as follows:

    a. £1.028m for food vouchers to children eligible for free school meals for school holidays up to and including Easter 2025.
    b. £1.156m to support applications from households for assistance with energy costs, through the Council's Energy Crisis Support Scheme.
    c. £150k towards the costs of the Council's Local Council Tax Support Top Up Scheme.
    d. £45k to support care leavers, being young people leaving foster or local authority care and living independently in their own accommodation who are responsible for paying their own utility bills, providing additional financial support through the cost-of-living increases.
    e. £60k to local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to support vulnerable households over Christmas / New Year through a supplement to the Crisis Support service level agreement.
    f. £50k to provide parcels of household items to be distributed through VCS community support including food banks, social supermarkets, and the Open Arms programme drop-in sessions.

2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Neighbourhood Working, to determine revised and final allocations for the Household Support Grant, to include provision for other eligible actions within the use of Household Support Fund should it not be possible to achieve full spend of the grant through the approved options.

13. Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (To Follow)

To receive a report detailing the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in respect of the above items that were subject to pre-decision scrutiny on 13 November 2024.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on Monday 16 December 2024 commencing at 10.00am in Rotherham Town Hall.

Sharon Kemp.

SHARON KEMP OBE,
Chief Executive.

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THE CABINET
14th October, 2024

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Allen, Baker-Rogers, Cusworth, Sheppard and Taylor.

Also in attendance Councillor Steele (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board).

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

57. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two questions from members of the public:

1. Mr Iqbal: Please could the Leader and Chief Executive extend an invitation, on behalf of the Petitioners, to all Rotherham Members of Parliament, Councillors, Council Officers and Local Dignitaries to the Petition Announcement Event at Rotherham Town Hall on 23 October at 5.30pm. The invitation was also extended to the solemn occasion of raising the Palestinian Flag event on 29 November at 5.30pm at the Town Hall. Mr Iqbal asked if his colleague, Mr Ashraf, could be emailed once the invitation had been sent?

   The Leader stated that he did not know what the arrangements were for those events. However, he confirmed that they would invite people and be in touch regarding the events.

   In Mr Iqbal's supplementary question, he ask for a written response to his question from the Cabinet meeting held on 16 September 2024 which was:

   "notwithstanding repeated requests made specifically to the Council's solicitor on multiple occasions, including in the Chamber, petitioners had not received the minutes of the second sub-OSMB group meeting from Tuesday 30 April 2024. Mr Iqbal asked when they would receive them?"

   Mr Iqbal also asked how long the Ukrainian Flag would fly for on the Council's premises and who the Cabinet spokesperson was?

   The Leader confirmed that a written response would be provided.

2. Mr Ashraf: Thanks to the Chair of OSMB for making the request to expedite the response from Cabinet to the petition at the last meeting. At that meeting, the Chair had advised that the particulars of the implementation of the ~~22~~ OSMB recommendations would be shared. A

month later they had not been shared. Could the letter be sent to Mr Ashraf's email address along with an explanation of why nothing had been sent for the last month?

The Leader explained that he had signed the letter off, and it would be sent shortly.

In his supplementary question, Mr Ashraf asked if, when the Palestine flag is raised on 29 November, could it remain raised until Israel abides by all international laws and UN resolutions affecting the rights of Palestinians including the refugees right of return? Until the Palestinian people are no longer under the occupation that had lasted 76 years? This was an apartheid that was more brutal and had lasted longer than the one in South Africa which Rotherham had helped to end. There was ethnic cleansing that decades ago wiped out 400 towns and villages from the face of the earth and still continues day after day. Genocides of the indigenous Palestinian people just to steal their land. Mr Ashraf stated that he had repeated, especially since the racist riots in August, that the petitioners were only asking for equality before the law and equal law for all. The Council's public sector equality duty under the Equalities Act 2010 that the Council was bound by should also make that clear. Quoting a Rotherham resident, Mr Ashraf asked if the Palestinian flag could be raised for a long as for the blonde, blue-eyed people of Ukraine whose occupation the Council did not hesitate to show compassion for and kept the flag raised?

The Leader stated that a decision had been taken at the meeting in September to raise the Palestinian flag on 29 November. The Leader would not commit to keep flying it for a prolonged period after that. The Council would join with organisations globally to fly the flag on 29 November.

58. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 16 September 2024 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings and signed by the Chair.

59. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that Appendix 1 to Minute 62 (New Applications for Business Rates Hardship Relief) and Appendices 2, 3 and 4 to Minute 63 (Dinnington Compulsory Purchase Order) were exempt under Paragraph 3, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1974. However, the meeting remained open to the public and press throughout.

60. FUTURE ROTHERCARE MODEL

Consideration was given to the report which detailed the options appraisal and sought approval to implement a new Rothercare model where the assistive technology elements of the service would be undertaken by an independent sector technology partner and Rothercare would continue to deliver the core service elements, engaging with the public and service users under a realigned delivery model. The recommendations in the report followed on from Minute 121, January 2024 – Digitalisation of the Rothercare Service.

The Council's assistive technology offer was delivered via its in-house Rothercare service. This was an 'end to end' service which managed referrals and triage, installation of equipment, the monitoring and responding to alerts. The service also procured all technical aspects including the hardware and software (alarm receiving centre, digital box/pendant, licences and peripheral technology).

Rothercare was a chargeable service funded through a mix of weekly charges to customers and a subsidy from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and therefore the pricing policy had been considered alongside the operating model.

The Council's intention was to use assistive technology to enable residents of Rotherham to remain independent within their own home for as long as possible. To achieve the vision there needed to be a significant increase in the use of assistive technology. Assistive technology could reduce dependence on formal care by helping to avoid early admission to care homes, reduce the amount of home care required and help to galvanise strength-based approaches to care. As such, this type of technology contributed to efficient use of resources across health and social care services and improved the quality of life for many users.

A number of options were set out in Section 3 of the report. Option 1, at paragraph 3.1, was the preferred option. This would allow Rothercare to continue to deliver the referral, triage, monitoring and response service whilst the assistive technology elements (identification of assistive technology solutions, installation, recycling, disposal and maintenance and procurement of assistive technology equipment) would be delivered by a technology partner from the independent sector. The following options were not recommended with the reasons detailed in the report: Rothercare continued to deliver all elements of the service in-house; an arm's length management organisation was used; and a commissioned technology partner delivered all elements.

Subject to approval, a formal procurement process would commence in Autumn 2024. A mobilisation period would ensue following the tender award which would be aligned to the revised Rothercare operating model from April 2025.

The weekly charge for the Rothercare service (2024-25) was £3.50 per week. The service costs and associated charge to customers had not been revised for an extensive period. The weekly service charge needed to achieve full cost recovery (2025/26) had been calculated at £6.88 per week. It was proposed that the weekly charge should increase from the current £3.50 to £4.50 (2025/26) for a 12-month period. This would cover the costs associated with the fact that the UK's telecom infrastructure analogue to digital upgrade programme was now underway on a national scale. As a result of the Analogue to Digital (A2D) programme the Council was compelled to replace the Rothercare's analogue units with digital units. These were installed in customers' homes and had an integrated Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) which were a component of digital boxes.

A transitional increase in the weekly charge (in addition to inflation increase) would be applied in subsequent years which would be an important step to sustain the critical service and balance income and expenditure without a need for further subsidy.

During the meeting it was reiterated that customers who were receiving a subsidised service would continue to do so until they left the service. Residents who paid the Rothercare charge as part of a tenancy agreement but did not wish to do so, would be offered an opportunity to have their needs for assistive technology identified prior to opting out of the charge.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), who advised that the recommendations be supported. They had requested that a progress report be brought back to OSMB 12 months after the implementation of the new model (April 2026).

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve option 1 to implement a new technology enabled care delivery model under a collaborative approach between Rothercare and an independent sector technology partner.

2. Approve a competitive procurement process and award of contract on the basis of a 5-year initial term. The contract will include potential extensions for up to 3 years (to be taken in any combination). The new arrangements will commence April 2025.

3. Agree the new charging policy and rates for Rothercare from 2025/26 for existing customers and the policy of applying a new rate to new customers from 2025/26 onwards.

4. Note the request from OSMB that a report is taken back to the Board in 12 months following the implementation of the new

technology enabled care delivery model (April 2026.)

61. SCRUTINY REVIEW - PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the outcomes from the Improving Lives Select Commission's spotlight review on preparation for adulthood, in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Preparation for adulthood (also known as transition) was the process by which young people who needed support or care, moved from services provided exclusively for children, to services provided for those over the age of 18, aiming to ensure a seamless transition. The Local Government Association described successful preparation for adulthood as "A successful transition from children's and young people's services to adult care services and support, needs the young person, their families, and professionals to work together with the young person at the centre of discussions." Legislation gave local authorities a legal responsibility to co-operate, and to ensure that all the correct people worked together to get the transition right for a young person.

The purpose of the review was to assess what measures were in place at that point in time, to support successful preparation to adulthood for young people in Rotherham with SEND and where required, to identify any potential gaps in provision or areas requiring further focus.

The review group consisted of the following members: Councillor Lyndsay Pitchley (Chair;) Councillor Wendy Cooksey (Vice-Chair;) Councillor Tony Griffin; Councillor Maggi Clark; and Councillor Taiba Yasseen. The review itself took place over a single afternoon, with many partners present to provide a range of perspectives and information.

The key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) were set out in paragraphs 2.16 to 2.19 and were: Partnership Working; School Effectiveness and Education Pathways; Inclusion and Communities; and Communication. Details of the discussion points were included in paragraph 2.20 of the report.

Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, welcomed the Scrutiny review. She confirmed that she met regularly with the Rotherham Parent Carer Forum and the Black Asian Minority Ethic Young People's Group and she would discuss the recommendations with them.

Cabinet were asked to consider the outcomes of the review and provide a response to the recommendations by December 2024.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet receives the report and considers the following recommendations:

    i. **School Effectiveness:**

    a. That the support pathways available for preparation for adulthood for children and young people with SEND in mainstream education, in both the early years and post sixteen settings is reviewed to identify any areas that may require further focus and developments.

    b. That education pathways relating to preparation for adulthood for children with SEND are reviewed, ensuring clear communication of the pathways to parents and carers.

    ii. **Inclusion and Communities:**

    a. That information relating to the support available to parents and carers within communities is developed, enabling a seamless service that supports and empowers parent carers.

    b. That the feedback from the Autism Strategy Consultation is reflected in the support offer available, to ensure children and young people feel safe within their communities, at school and online.

    c. That there is a further focus on enhancing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in relation to this area of activity, with a particular focus on improving engagement levels with children and young people with SEND in communities, such as the Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Roma-Slovak Communities.

    iii. **Communication:**

    a. That established networks and partnerships, such as the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum, are further embedded, to increase awareness raising and increase the number of SEND families that are engaged and reached in the Borough.

    b. That the process relating to Education, Health and Care Plans is reviewed to ensure the young person's voice is present throughout the process.

2. That Cabinet agree to respond to the recommendations by December 2024 in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

62. NEW APPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS RATES HARDSHIP RELIEF

Consideration was given to the report which asked Cabinet to consider applications for Business Rates Hardship Relief in accordance with the Council's Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy (approved by Cabinet on 12 December 2016.)

Application 1 for the award of hardship relief did not meet the Council's qualifying criteria as set out in the Policy, as an award would be considered to be giving the applicant an unfair trading advantage. The business undertook logistical activities, such as freight forwarding (particularly international freight), customs agent and order fulfilment. Their current financial difficulties were attributed to three main factors:-

- Liquidation of a major client, which resulted in a circa £15,000 debt write-off.
- The business was a victim of a large-scale fraud.
- During late 2022 business started to slow down, and this continued into 2023 and 2024 as the UK economy was in decline. Utilities and business expenses have continued to increase.

The company had limited liquidity due to the difficult trading conditions and the resulting rates bill represented a major challenge to the company's financial position. The ratepayer was applying for Hardship Relief with regards to their 2023/24 and 2024/25 rates liability. The financial implications of awarding the relief were set out in section 6 of the report.

Application 2 did not meet the Council's qualifying criteria as set out in the Policy, as an award would be considered to be giving the applicant an unfair trading advantage. The applicant had requested that relief be awarded on three empty properties for which the company was actively seeking tenants. These properties were proving difficult to let in the current climate.

The company stated that their financial forecasts indicated that, without tenants and with continued payment of business rates, their financial stability would decline further and, potentially, leading to insolvency by April 2025. They had already taken measures to minimise expenses, including the director foregoing a salary. The ratepayer was applying for Hardship Relief with regards to their 2024/25 rates liability. The financial implications of awarding the relief was set out in section 6 of the report.

Additional details regarding both applications were set out in exempt Appendix 1.

Resolved:

That Cabinet refuse the applications for Hardship Relief.

63. DINNINGTON COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet authority to make and then seek confirmation of a Compulsory Purchase Order ("CPO") for the acquisition of land and property interests identified on the plan and in the schedule in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report (the Order Land). This was intended to assist in facilitating the redevelopment of the Laughton Road shopping area as per previous Cabinet decisions in August 2023 and July 2024.

Since the Cabinet meeting in August 2023, considerable progress had been made in assembling the land and property required to deliver the scheme. However, the Council had yet to reach agreement on the acquisition of 9 remaining plots of land needed for the Scheme. Details of these acquisitions and negotiations relating to the remaining plots were set out in exempt Appendix 2 and 6. In light of the timescales involved in the CPO process, and in accordance with Government guidance, it was now prudent to commence the CPO process in parallel with those negotiations.

The draft Statement of Reasons attached to the report at exempt Appendix 4 set out the full reasons supporting the Council's use of its CPO powers. In particular, paragraph 6 specifically set out the reasons and paragraph 10, the specific justification for the use of the powers. A full land registry search had been completed and a Land Referencing Schedule compiled at exempt Appendix 3. Negotiations with landowners and other interested parties were on-going and the position with respect to those negotiations was set out in exempt Appendix 2.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Authorise the Council in the making of a CPO for the land shown coloured pink and edged red ("the Order Land") on the plan contained at Appendix 1 under section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 because it thinks that:

    a. The acquisition will facilitate the carrying out of the development, redevelopment, or improvement (including regeneration) on or in relation to the Order Land; and
    b. The development, redevelopment or improvement is likely to contribute to the achievement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the Council's area.

2. Authorise the Council in acquiring new rights under section 13 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 in respect of the land shown shaded in blue on the plan contained at Appendix 1 to facilitate the development, redevelopment, or improvement on or in relation to the Site.

3. Authorise in principle and subject to the confirmation of the CPO the appropriation of the land within the scheme to a planning purpose (to the extent that it is not so held already) to allow the redevelopment of the Order Land, pursuant to section 122 Local Government Act 1972;

4. Authorise the Council's Property Officer (Delegated to Assistant Director, Properties & Facilities), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy and the Assistant Director of Legal Services, to:

    a. Approve terms for the acquisition of legal interests (including new rights) to the extent not already acquired by agreement including for the purposes of resolving any objections to the CPO;
    b. Take all necessary steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the CPO, including, making further amendments by way of finalising the draft Statement of Reason (exempt Appendix 4) the publication and service of all relevant notices and the presentation of the Council's case at any future local public inquiry;
    c. Consider the outcome of the Equalities Impact Assessment and ensure appropriate steps are taken to meet the Council's Public sector Equalities Duty.
    d. Take all necessary steps to resolve any compulsory purchase compensation claims, including, if necessary, by way of making (or responding to) a reference to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber);
    e. Subject to 3 above authorise, the Council's Property Officer and Facilities (following the confirmation of the CPO) to appropriate the land referred to a planning purpose.

64. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Consideration was given to the circulated report, the contents of which were included as part of the relevant items and the details included accordingly.

65. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

That the next meeting of the Cabinet be held on 18 November 2024, commencing at 10.00am.

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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 18 November 2024

Report Title
Looked After Children (LAC) Sufficiency Update (including the residential development progress update).

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
Nicola Curley – Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service

Report Author(s)
Helen Sweaton, Joint Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality
helen.sweaton@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected.
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028 was approved by Cabinet in October 2022. The Strategy was developed in line with the duty to provide or procure placements for Looked After Children (LAC) by the Local Authority.

This report provides an update on the in-house children's residential development that was agreed at Cabinet on 17 February 2020. Previous progress updates have been reported to Cabinet in June 2020, September 2021, and October 2022.

The children's residential development responds directly to Rotherham Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) strategic intention to reduce the number of external residential placements for children and ensure more Rotherham Children in Care (CiC) and young people are placed within Borough, close to their family and community networks.

The new provision, along with foster care, third party placements, semi-independent provisions, and other family-based placements, aims to provide a mixed economy of arrangements which will seek to effectively meet Rotherham's statutory duties, outlined in the Sufficiency Strategy.

In January 2023, a new judgement for Care Leavers was introduced to the Ofsted Inspecting Local Authority Services for Children (ILACS) inspection framework. In March 2023, the Government introduced new national standards for the registration, regulation, and

inspection of supported accommodation for Looked After Children aged 16 and 17 years, to be overseen by Ofsted.

A Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review took place between 12 to 15 March 2024, at the request of the Council. The Peer Review identified *"Services are making a real difference to the lived experience of care leavers, however, the range of accommodation services needed for Care Leavers in Borough is insufficient."*

The Peer Review recommended the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028 be updated to better reflect the needs of Care Leavers in the context of the regulatory changes.

This report includes a proposed addendum to the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028 which summarises the needs of Care Leavers. The report also includes an update to the LAC Sufficiency Strategy delivery plan to better reflect the needs of Care Leavers.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the progress made to deliver the in-house children's residential development, the positive impact for Children in Care and financial efficiencies that will be achieved.

2. Approve the Care Leavers addendum to the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028.

3. Agree that the LAC and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy Delivery Plan be updated to increase the appropriateness and number of available accommodation options for Care Leavers as per the Care Leaver addendum to the LAC sufficiency strategy (see 2 above).

4. Note that on 16 October 2023 authority was delegated to the Assistant Director of Housing Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to acquire up to 100 properties in line with the Housing Acquisitions Policy, which includes scope to acquire properties to meet the accommodation needs of Children and Young Peoples Services.

5. Authorise the Councils Designated Property Officer, or relevant Strategic Director in their absence, to negotiate any additional accommodation required and complete necessary transactions, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer, Strategic Director Children's and Young Peoples Services, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services and the Assistant Director of Legal Services.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Care Leavers Addendum to LAC Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028
Appendix 2 Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy Delivery Plan (Updated 2024)
Appendix 3 Part A Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers
Looked After Children and Care leaver's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028
Operational Delivery of LAC Sufficiency Strategy Cabinet Report 17th February 2020
Operational Delivery of LAC Sufficiency Strategy - New Residential Provision Progress. Report June 2020
Operational Delivery of LAC Sufficiency Strategy - New Residential Provision Progress. Report September 2021
Pathways to Care: Extensions and Adaptations to Homes of Foster Carers, Special Guardians and Adopters – (revised policy 2021) Cabinet Report 16 August 2021
Operational Delivery of LAC Sufficiency Strategy - New Residential Provision Progress Report October 2022
Housing Acquisitions Policy. Cabinet Report – 16 October 2023
Review of the Housing Allocation Policy. Cabinet Report – 10 June 2024
Housing Delivery Programme Report – 2024/25. Cabinet Report – 22 January 2024
Ofsted Report - How local authorities plan for sufficiency: children in care and care leavers
Ofsted Report- How local authorities and children's homes can achieve stability and permanence for children with complex needs

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
No

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Looked After Children (LAC) Sufficiency Update (including the residential development progress update)

1. Background

1.1 The Cabinet report dated 17 February 2020 outlined Rotherham Children and Young People's Services strategic intention to reduce external residential placements and ensure more Rotherham Looked After Children and young people are placed within the Borough, close to their family and community networks. Progress updates have been reported to Cabinet in June 2020, September 2021, and October 2022.

1.2 Overall Cabinet have approved four phases of the development to deliver 20 residential beds and 2 emergency beds across 11 registered settings.

1.3 Phase One milestones agreed in the February 2020 Cabinet report were:

- A 4-bed home and 1-bed emergency accommodation (5 beds in total) to be operational by Autumn 2020.

Phase Two milestones agreed in the June 2020 Cabinet report were:

- Two x 2-bed homes and 1-bed emergency accommodation (5 beds in total) to be operational in March 2021.

Phase Three proposed milestones agreed in the September 2021 Cabinet report were:

- Two further 4-bed homes (8 beds in total) to be operational between October 2022 and 2023/24.

Changes to the Phase Three proposed milestones agreed in the October 2022 Cabinet report were:

- Change phase three from 2 x 4-bed homes (8 beds in total) to 4 x 2-bed homes (8 beds in total) to better meet current demand, improve occupancy rate and cost efficiency.

Phase Four proposed milestones agreed in the October 2022 Cabinet report were:

- Two further 2-bed homes (Partially funded by the Department for Education (DfE) Childrens Home Capital Programme to be operational by 2024/2025.

1.4 On 17 October 2022, Cabinet approved the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028. The Strategy was developed in line with the duty to provide and/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 and appropriate 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.

1.5 The Strategy set 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 care 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 five years.

1.6 The Strategy provided the underpinning needs analysis that has informed 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.

1.7 Whilst this Strategy is not primarily a financial one, it is expected that the commissioning intentions are essential to the sustainability of improved outcomes and the Council Budget. This report contains an update and impact analysis on the new residential provision as part of the operational delivery of the LAC Sufficiency Strategy.

1.8 In January 2023, a new judgement for Care Leavers was introduced to the Ofsted ILACS inspection framework. An LGA Peer Review, took place between 12 to 15 March 2024. The Peer Review identified Services are making a real difference to the lived experience of Care Leavers, however the range of accommodation services needed for Care Leavers in Borough is insufficient.

1.9 In March 2023, the Government introduced new national standards for the registration, regulation, and inspection of supported accommodation for Looked After Children aged 16 and 17 years, to be overseen by Ofsted.

The new standards are based on four key areas:

- Leadership and Management (Regulation 4)
- Child Protection (Regulation 5)
- Accommodation (Regulation 6)
- Support (Regulation 7)

1.10 Supported accommodation providers for 16- and 17-year-olds in care and Care Leavers were required to become Ofsted registered, regulated, and inspected from 28th October 2023.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Progress overview

The four phases of the programme aimed to deliver 20 residential beds and 2 emergency beds across 11 registered settings**.** So far, the programme has delivered 10 residential beds and 1 emergency bed across 6 registered settings. This includes 1 x 4 bed provision, 3 x 2 bed homes and 1 x 1 bed emergency provision. There is a current total in house capacity of 11 beds.

2.2 Progress Update

Phase One progress update
Objectives: 1 x 4-bed home and 1-bed emergency accommodation (5 beds in total).

Target	Achieved	Next Steps
4-bed home Autumn 2020. Met	Pegasus Three children now living in the home.	Complete.
1-bed emergency accommodation Complete	Phoenix	Complete.

Phase Two progress update
Objectives: 2 x 2-bed home and 1-bed emergency accommodation (5 beds in total)

Target	Achieved	Next Steps
2 bed home March 2021 Met	Beech Tree Registered with Ofsted March 2021. Two children now living in the home.	Complete.
2 bed home March 2021 Complete	Quarry House Registered with Ofsted September 2021. Step down Statement of Purpose transferred from Pegasus house (as per Cabinet report September 2021 section 2.2). Two children now living in the home.	Complete.
1 bed emergency accommodation Autumn 2020 Revised target Operational Quarter 2, 2022/23 Re-profile Quarter 1 25/26 BEHIND SCHEDULE	Name TBC – Property 1 Planning Permission achieved. Programme of works to prepare for Ofsted registration underway. Property is being used pre-registration.	Finalise programme of works. Deliver modifications. Register with Ofsted.

Phase Three progress update
Objectives: 4 x 2 bed homes

Target	Achieved	Next Steps
2 bed home Reprofiled to Quarter 1 23/24 Complete	Dragonfly. Registered with Ofsted July 2024. Two children now living in the home.	Complete.
2 bed home Quarter 2 23/24 Re-profiled to Quarter 3 24/25 BEHIND SCHEDULE	Name TBC – Property 2 Planning Permission achieved.	Property Purchased. Finalise programme of works. Deliver modifications. Register with Ofsted. Recruit staffing.
2 bed home Quarter 2 23/24 Re-profiled to Quarter 3 24/25 BEHIND SCHEDULE	Name TBC – Property 3 Planning Permission achieved. Property purchase delayed due to legal issue, now resolved.	Finalise programme of works. Deliver modifications. Recruit staff. Register with Ofsted.
2 bed home Quarter 4 24/25 BEHIND SCHEDULE	Property not yet identified.	Property Searches ongoing

Phase Four progress update

Target	Achieved	Next Steps
2 bed home May 2024 Complete.	Peacock Ofsted registration submitted. Manager and Staff team recruited. 2 Children matched.	Complete – Awaiting registration.

2 bed home Quarter 4 24/25	New build of purpose-built children's home approved. Programme of works agreed. Contactors in place and on site.	Complete works – due February 2025. Recruit staff. Register with Ofsted.

2.3 **Progress**

Accommodation

2.3.1 As discussed above, there is a current total in house capacity of 11 beds.

2.4 A further home, Peacock Lodge, is currently awaiting registration with the property complete and fitted out following purchase in Q3 23/24. Property 3 was purchased in August 2024 and is awaiting a programme of refurbishment ahead of submitting registration.

2.5 Approval was received for a new build children's home which is currently being built on previously vacant land. Property 1 is identified as the final emergency one bed provision with planning permission in place and a programme of capital works currently being developed.

2.6 Property searches are underway to identify the final property for phase 3, a more detailed breakdown on existing homes and those in the implementation phases is covered within the body of the report.

2.7 The identification of homes has been a challenge throughout all phases of the in-house residential programme. This is due to homes needing to satisfy both service requirements, be acceptable to Ofsted and granting of planning permission for the change of use of the property.

2.8 The following routes to acquire properties are utilised in collaboration with Housing and Asset Management:

- Open Market purchases.
- New build Housing developments.
- Corporate assets which can be refurbished and developed into children's homes.

2.9 All potential offers include a briefing outlining the required due diligence, incorporating input from Planning, Surveyor, Asset Management, Police, Education and Social Care.

2.10 From January - December 2023, 55 properties from the open market were identified as being potentially suitable as part of the in-house programme, of these 34 were short-listed for visits with 6 offers placed. 4 of these offers were accepted with 2 progressing through planning. Of this one property was purchased (property 3).

2.11 **Workforce**

Each home has its own dedicated and suitably qualified staff team; this comprises a Registered Manager, Deputy Manager, 6 Practitioners and support from a casual bank of Residential Support Workers. As the homes under phases 3 and 4 operate as small 2 bed homes, Registered Managers can be dual registered providing management across 2 homes.

2.12 The overall operation of the homes and strategic development is led by the Operations Manager for Residential Services. This post was developed to support the growth of the service following the opening of the first homes under phase 1. The post leads on workforce development with a rolling programme of training and development in place across the residential service in line with the therapeutic model of support delivered across in house provision.

2.13 Recruitment and retention of residential staff continues to be a challenge due to the competitive nature of the market, with this being a known national area of challenge. A residential recruitment operations group identifies opportunities to improve the pipeline of applicants, with workstreams including marketing campaigns, use of the residential recruitment landing page on the RMBC website, recruitment agency support and attendance at job fairs/recruitment events.

2.14 All open homes are fully recruited, along with Peacock Lodge, which is currently awaiting registration. A rolling programme of recruitment will support the successful opening of the remaining homes under phase 3 and 4.

Original Recruitment Requirements phase 3.

	2 bed home	**2 bed home**	**2 bed home**	**2 bed home**	**Total**
Casual	7	7	7	7	28
Practitioner	6	6	6	6	24
Deputy	1	1	1	1	4
Manager	.5	.5	.5	.5	2

Original Recruitment requirements Phase 4

	2 bed home	**2 bed home**	**Total**
Casual	7	7	14
Practitioner	6	6	12
Deputy	1	1	2
Manager	.5	.5	1

2.15 **Registration and Regulation**

There is no published timescale for Ofsted to complete the children's home registration process however historically this has taken around 16 weeks. Ofsted acknowledged that there were delays in processing registration applications (in a press release published on 29 February 2024). This predominantly is in response to the increase in requests for registration for supported accommodation providers.

2.16 Some delays to the registration process have been experienced. Registration for the first emergency accommodation, Phoenix House, was significantly delayed and although registration for the latest 2 bed home (Peacock House) has been submitted, this has not yet been processed by Ofsted.

2.17 All Rotherham registered children's homes are visited by an independent person once a month. The monthly visit is called a Regulation 44 visit or an Independent Monitoring Visit. The purpose of the visit is to make sure it is a safe place to live and that children are happy, healthy, and cared for. Regulation 44 Visits are carried out under Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. Registered children's homes also receive an annual inspection from Ofsted.

2.18 Although Ofsted reports are published in the public domain, the identity of the homes remain confidential and are not disclosed.

2.19 In October 2022, Rotherham Cabinet approved changes to the residential development programme in recognition of the challenges in the market and the complexity of children needing homes. These challenges are reflected regionally and nationally. In November 2022, Ofsted published a report, "how-local-authorities-plan-for-sufficiency-children-in-care-and-care-leavers" (background paper) about how local authorities plan for sufficiency, the report highlighted the lack of suitable homes available for children with complex needs and the difficulty local authorities face in finding homes for them. The report found that children's homes are often reluctant to accept referrals for children with complex needs due to sector-wide challenges with recruiting and retaining skilled and experienced staff, the potential for disruption for other children at the home and the perception that looking after a child with complex needs will negatively affect the home's Ofsted inspection judgement.

2.20 Children's homes in Rotherham consistently receive positive feedback from the independent visitors and during Ofsted inspections. Where recommendations for improvement have been made, these have related to disruption for other children when children with complex needs are living in the home, and the capacity of the workforce to meet the specialist needs of individual children.

2.21 In January 2024 Ofsted published a further report, "How local authorities and children's homes can achieve stability and permanence for children with complex needs" (attached as a background paper). This report acknowledged the challenges experienced across the country as well as in Rotherham and affirms Ofsted's commitment to addressing concerns and continuing to work with the sector to manage these sensitivities.

2.22 **Evaluation**

Placements

As of Q1 2024/2025, there were 9 in house residential placements, 8 of which had been made in the preceding 12 months. Placements are split across the 5 registered provisions with an active overall capacity of 11 beds.

2.23 Average occupancy presumptions are set at 85%, with progress showing that the 2 bed properties are achieving this figure on a more consistent basis. Occupancy rates given sometimes differ from original assumptions for 2 bed properties, this includes when a young person has needed a period of solo placement or where beds become vacant due to transition. Dragonfly opened in a phased way in Q4 to support a positive implementation and transition for placements.

2.24 Achieving full occupancy has been a challenge for the programme, particularly on the 4 bed children's home, Pegasus, completed during phase 1. This is often due to the difficulty in successfully matching young people to the home.

2.25 Average occupancy across the 4 and 2 bed homes since April 24 is included below:

Home	Beds	Average Occupancy this financial year
Pegasus	4	72%
Beech Tree	2	100%
Dragonfly	2	76%
Quarry	2	61%

2.26 Since commencement of the in-house residential programme, there have been 23 young people that have benefited from in-house residential care. Of the 23 young people, 13 (56%) were residing outside of Rotherham.

2.27 Of the 13 external placements successfully transitioned in to in house residential provision, 12 (92%) were either in high-cost external residential settings or in emergency provision prior to placement in-house.

2.28 The average length of placement including those placed currently is 296 days, this supports the overall strategy for in house provision to be short to medium term focused and support step down to family-based settings where appropriate.

2.29 Of the 23 young people who have benefited from in-house residential care, 4 (17%) have had a successful reunification back to family, 5 (22%) have transitioned into leaving care accommodation, and 11 (48%) remain in in-house provision with only 2 (8%) requiring accommodation in another external residential setting.

2.30 Placement information to date on the in-house residential programme has shown the service performing well in terms of providing step down opportunities linked to care planning arrangements for Looked After Children. This is set against national sufficiency challenges particularly a shortage of foster carers which can result in increased reliance on placement in residential provision.

2.31 **Outcomes for Children**
Case study demonstrating impact for children.

2.31.1 AB had resided in an external residential provision at distance from Rotherham since 2021.

2.31.2 AB's progress had been monitored via various children in care panels over the duration of his time in an external residential provision, with agreement to continue to support the placement at distance.

2.31.3 Through permanence panel, it was agreed to explore the possibility of AB returning to Rotherham. Following a number of planning meetings, AB was suitably matched to one of the new in-house residential homes.

2.31.4 Working collaboratively with education colleagues, the right in house residential home was selected, which allowed attendance at a new local education provision which could meet AB's needs. AB was integral to planning and leading the change. AB now lives locally, attends a local school with local peers and is able to see his family network regularly. This is supporting positive planning in preparation for adulthood.

2.31.5 The previous residential provision for AB offered care and education; the external placement cost was £6,436per week. The budgeted rates of the in-house residential home at 85% occupancy rate are £4,242 per week, therefore, the move achieved efficiencies to the Council of £114K per year.

2.31.6 The case study demonstrates the effective planning process to support step down arrangements as part of long-term placement planning, in this instance both the Looked After Children and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation workstreams were able to work seamlessly together to source newly developed residential and SEND education provision.

Sufficiency Plan Update in relation to Care Leavers

2.32 The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that it has carried out appropriate needs analysis of both its children in care and care leavers' placement and accommodation needs, and then should create a strategy that addresses the resultant sufficiency priorities and a clear local offer for Care Leavers. The delivery of the residential development programme remains a clear priority within the LAC Sufficiency delivery, but it is also important to focus explicitly on the needs of Care Leavers. The Care Leavers Addendum to the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy (Appendix 1) does just that and identifies a requirement to further develop provision to meet the needs of young people and young adults. It is also important to ensure that this provision provides positive outcomes and value for money.

2.33 The analysis of future need within the Care Leavers addendum suggests there will be 551 Care Leavers in Rotherham in 2027, this is significantly higher than the 353 Care Leavers in Rotherham in May 2024. In May 2024, 88 Care Leavers were accommodated in externally commissioned accommodation; the forecast number of Care Leavers in externally commissioned accommodation in 2027 is 156.

2.34 As current Care Leavers move into alternative arrangements, within family networks or by securing independent tenancies, existing available externally commissioned accommodation will be utilised (where this meets quality assurance and best value commissioning standards).

2.35 The gross budgeted spend on 16+ and 18+ is mainly externally commissioned accommodation in the region of £4.0m per annum. Increasing the amount of externally commissioned accommodation would result in further spend.

2.36 Better value can be achieved through meeting the accommodation needs of young adults by; increasing the number of dispersed properties, increasing the number of places in more cost-efficient group living accommodation and reducing the number of externally commissioned high-cost groups living placements. The financial implications are outlined in para 6.13. For young people and young adults who are ready to live independently the most value can be achieved by using increased dispersed properties sourced from HRA as opposed to spend on commissioned supported accommodation placements.

2.37 Whilst the Council can confidently project the number of Care Leavers (16/17) year olds transitioning through the care system over the next 3 years, based on current numbers of young people aged between 14-17, the types of properties that are required is more difficult to forecast.

2.38 Increasing the available dispersed accommodation, which can be provided with floating support is likely to reduce the reliance on higher costing commissioned services. An increase in dispersed accommodation by at least 21 beds, over the next 3 years, is likely to meet expected demand. Achieving above this number, will further reduce reliance on higher cost options if the complexity of the leaving care population remains the same.

2.39 Many Care Leavers identified in the needs analysis will not require the Council to source additional accommodation as they will be in a position to secure independent tenancies through the housing market, including through mainstream council housing allocations or in the private rented sector with appropriate support. Care Leavers receive priority in respect of housing applications in line with the current Housing Allocations Policy. The available data suggests at least 14 allocations to Care Leavers were made in the first six months of 2024/25. The true number is likely to be higher, because some Care Leavers will have received Band 1 priority for other reasons (e.g. because they were owed a homelessness duty). In June 2024, Cabinet approved a full review of the Council's Housing Allocation Policy. Agreement of a new policy (from 2025) will be subject to Cabinet approval and recommendation to Council.

2.40 In addition, part of the identified need for non-regulated dispersed accommodation for Care Leavers can be met through the Council's existing housing acquisitions workstream, which forms part of the Housing Delivery Programme. In October 2023, Cabinet authorised a new Housing Acquisitions Policy which included acquisitions for CYPS accommodation. A budget and authorisation are available for up to 100 acquisitions to meet general housing needs of all kinds in 2024/25 and 2025/26. Acquired properties must be held within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Whilst this will be of real benefit, there will continue to be significant pressures on allocation. The Council will continue to seek opportunities to acquire properties for Care Leavers as part of this wider programme, with the intention that they would return to general needs use once they are no longer required by CYPS.

2.41 The Assistant Director of Housing Services recently authorised a doubling of the number of HRA properties available for use as supported dispersed accommodation for Care Leavers linked to the Council's Care Leaver supported accommodation service, meaning that in total 20 dispersed properties will now be available for that purpose. Council officers are working on identifying suitable properties from within the Council's housing stock.

2.42 In order to reduce the time required to find locate or acquire new properties, and to disproportionate impact in one area of the borough, CYPS and Housing will be considering additional locations as well as the central area close to the existing provision.

2.43 The Council is also working with housing associations that are potentially interested in developing accommodation solutions for Care Leavers.

2.44 The option to increase the availability of dispersed accommodation through new build developments has been explored. Traditional build projects can take 18 months or more to complete, consequently this has been discounted as a solution to provide additional care leaver accommodation to meet the demand over the next two years. However, the potential use of modular accommodation, which has the advantage of a much faster build period, is being explored to meet various accommodation needs in the borough and this will include the potential to support Care Leavers.

2.45 Finally, the Council retains the option to enter into leasing agreements with private sector landlords, including for Housing of Multiple Occupation (HMO) accommodation. A delegation is sought from Cabinet to enable the relevant Assistant Director with responsibility for Property and Facilities Services to enter into lease agreements on the Council's behalf.

2.46 In order to maximise opportunities to increase availability of more cost efficient dispersed and group living accommodation described in 2.43, 2.44 and 2.45, through work with Housing Associations and Private Landlords and new developments, the relevant Assistant Director with responsibility for Property and Facilities Services would need to negotiate the acquisitions required and complete necessary transactions.

2.47 The options described in this report need to be considered in the context of the ongoing national homelessness crisis and growing demands on the HRA, and the wider housing stock, to meet a range of housing needs.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Option 1 Do nothing.

3.1.1 Although the residential development programme has not achieved the anticipated outcomes and associated cost avoidance and savings to date due to delays to delivery, once operational, homes are able to evidence positive impact for Children in Care and financial efficiencies in comparison to the procurement of external placements.

3.1.2 Failure to update the LAC and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan risks the needs of Care Leavers not being identified and met leading to poor outcomes.

3.1.3 The increase in the number of Care Leavers in future years will create a cost pressure if other available options for accommodation are not maximised. A wider variety of housing solutions are required to meet the needs of Care Leavers, an inability to negotiate and provide these presents a financial risk and may lead to poor outcomes.

3.1.4 This option is not recommended.

3.2 **Option 2.**

3.2.1 Approve the delivery of the updated LAC and Care Leavers Sufficiency Delivery plan, to include completion of the residential development programme and joint work between CYPS, Housing and Asset Management to enable the development of a wider variety of housing solutions for Care Leavers.

3.2.2 This option is recommended.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 A plan is in place, guided by the Voice, Influence and Participation Lead, for the consultation and engagement of Children in Care and Care Leavers in the development and implementation of the proposal.

4.2 It is recognised that it is critically important that Looked After Children are effectively. engaged and can inform and influence both the plans and implementation.

4.3 A communication plan is in place, which covers all key stakeholders including members of the public.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The in-house children's residential development will deliver:

- Property 1 (1 bed emergency provision) by Q1 2025/26
- Property 2 (2 bed residential provision) by Q3 2024/2025
- Property 3 (2 bed residential provision) by Q3 2024/2025
- New build children's residential home by Q4 24/25

5.2 The LAC Sufficiency Strategy delivery plan will be approved by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board by January 2025.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications:

In-house Residential Homes Programme

Revenue implications

6.1 The in-house residential homes programme is one of a number of actions within the LAC Sufficiency strategy to address the sustainability issue in the Children in Care placement budget.

6.2 The latest revised budgeted cost for the delivery of the 20 beds through the in-house Residential Home Programme (currently phased to be completed by the end of 2024/2025) is £5.2m. This is an increase when compared to the last reported position (£4.3m) to Cabinet in Sept 2022. The revised cost is based on the following:

- The revised costs (based on 2024 prices) represent the full year effect of all the homes being open and operational.
- Revenue budgets for the homes is through a realignment of the external residential placement budgets. An 85% occupancy level has been assumed.
- Budget for staffing and running costs of the homes have been updated for inflationary increases since 2022.
- Increased budgeted cost for Phoenix (emergency placements) is due to it being staffed as a 2-bed home; however, it is operated as a solo bed emergency home (for high complex placements).

6.3 The delivery of all the new homes (i.e. 20 beds), when fully operational, is planned to deliver cost avoidance of £1.3m per annum (£0.9m reported in Sept 2022). This is based on the £6,500 per week budgeted cost (2024/2025) of an external residential care placement. The increase in the cost avoidance savings since the Sept 2022 report reflects the rise in the weekly cost of external residential placements due to inflationary pressures.

6.4 A financial evaluation of the phase 1 and 2 homes in 2023/24 showed a mixed picture in respect of the cost avoidance achieved – see table below:

2023/24	Actual occupancy rate**	Planned spend	Actual revenue costs	Comparable external placement costs*	Variance
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Ph 1 - Pegasus	63%	753	753	832	-79
Ph 1 - Phoenix	58%	374	534	356	178
Ph 2 - Beech tree	98%	426	641	644	-3
Ph 2 - Quarry	87%	426	621	576	45
			2,551	**2,410**	**141**

*Comparable external placement costs are based on the average unit cost of an external residential care placement on 31 March 2024 (c.£6,500).
** actual occupancy rate is calculated based on the number and duration of placements made in the year across all homes

6.5 The above variance can be explained by a number of factors, most of which are one-offs in nature:

- Pegasus: - under-occupancy was a factor, with placements at the home continually short of the full 4-bed capacity. There were one-off agency costs (£23k) relating to the previous year and the Brightsparks recruitment contract (£30k) for the whole programme charged against this home's budget.
- Phoenix: - low occupancy rate was the main factor for the poor value for money in 2023/24. This is exacerbated by the high staffing ratio (3:1) in place for a complex placement during the year (the budgeted staffing ratio is 2:1). There was prolonged furlough of the home in the year due to works relating to Ofsted registration.
- Beech Tree: - the high running costs of the home is due to increased staffing costs from the following: 1fte manager cost was charged (against a 0.5fte budget due to its dual registration), one-off agency costs (£13k) relating to previous year, and 3:1 staffing ratio put in place for one solo placement during the year.
- Quarry – high running costs was the main issue in 2023/24 due to the following: full time manager costs charged (against a 0.5fte budget), one-off premises costs (£11k) and high-level sickness cover in the year.

6.6 It should be noted that some of the above factors are one-offs and unlikely to recur in 2024/25. As a result, the above is not an indication of the cost avoidance savings position for these homes in 2024/25 and in future years.

6.7 It is expected that improved occupancy levels, decision making and effective cost control in the running of the homes will ensure delivery of the target operating model and the planned cost avoidance (see table below).

2023/24	No. of places	Planned spend**	Comparable external costs***	Cost avoidance savings
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Phase 1 - Pegasus & Phoenix*	4	1,212	1,573	-361
Phase 2 - Beech Tree; Quarry*	4	1,185	1,439	-254
Phase 3 – Dragonfly; W Lane; W Drive; & 2 bed home	8	1,836	2,304	-468
Phase 4 – Peacock; Rowan	4	918	1,152	-234
	20	**5,151**	**6,468**	**-1,317**

* Excludes emergency homes places
** Based on 85% occupancy level for the year
*** Assumed average unit cost for an external placement of £6500

6.8 Whilst two homes have been more expensive than the average cost of external provision to date, work is being undertaken to ensure the costs are lower than external provision in future. The following details the management actions and grip currently in place to drive value for money and reduce running costs of the in-house residential home programme:

1. Revised processes to necessitate the exploration of in-house provision prior to agreeing to commence external placements. These are currently only able to be progressed with the approval of the Assistant Director.
2. The service has also increased senior leadership capacity with a new Head of Service for Provider Services who has taken the lead on ensuring that in-house residential care services are deployed in the most effective manner. This will increase grip and governance over this project and ongoing resource deployment for Children in Care.
3. There is ongoing work and case clinics scheduled to review children and young people currently placed in external provision and work to be done to transition these children in-house where appropriate.
4. A revised campaign to recruit, and retain, residential care practitioners is underway – to address recruitment barriers and over reliance on agency staff usage (which reduces the quality and consistency of care offered but also increases unit cost).

6.9 Progress has been made in the delivery of the in-house residential home programme. As per the target operating model, the in-house residential home programme still represents a cost-effective approach to managing pressures in the Children in Care placement budget over the medium and long term.

Capital Implications

6.10 The revised proposal (approved at Cabinet September 2022) was for a change to Phase 3 from 2 x 4 beds to 4 x 2 beds and a proposed Phase 4 for a further 2 x 2 beds in line with a bid against the DfE's Children's Home Capital programme, with 50% match funding of the proposed 2 x 2-bed homes. This bid was successful and in line with the specified timescales, this will bring a further 2 x 2 bed homes online by March 2025.

6.11 The Capital Allocation set out in September 22 of a total programme spend of £4.362m remains the same. Overall projected capital spend on the programme is forecast to be in line with the allocated capital budget.

6.12 Set out below is the current capital projected spend against budget:

Residential Homes Programme	Bed capacity	Capital Budget	Spend to Date	Total Forecast spend	Variance against budget
		£'000k	£'000k	£'000k	£'000k
Phase 1 - Pegasus & Phoenix	4 beds	177	178	178	1
Phase 2 - Beech Tree; Quarry	4 beds	843	728	928	85
Phase 3 – Dragonfly; W Lane; W Drive; & 2 bed home	8 beds	2,228	609	1,888	-340
Phase 4 – Peacock; Rowan	4 beds	1,114	560	1,359	245
Total	**20 beds**	**4,362**	**2,075**	**4,353**	**-9**

6.13 **Updated cares leavers sufficiency strategy – revenue implications**

Current budgeted cost of accommodating 16+ and 18+ Care Leavers is £4.5m, comprised of £4.0m (external commissioned provision) and £0.5m (in-house provision – supported accommodation / disbursed). The above excludes grant funding and unaccompanied asylum seekers children income from the Home Office.

6.14 The objective of the updated Care Leavers sufficiency strategy is to increase available dispersed accommodation (externally commissioned including with floating support and in-house provision) to meet forecast future demand. This would reduce the use of (and reliance on) costly external supported accommodation properties. The following table summarise the proposed sufficiency plan (and the number of available beds) over the next 2 years:

	Apr-24	Mar-25	2025/26	2026/27
Commissioned placements				
Supported Accommodation 16+	52	49	38	38
Dispersed – floating support 18+	20	26	26	15
Group Living 18+	15	9	15	21
	87	**84**	**79**	**74**
In-house placements				
H supported accommodation	9	9	9	9
Dispersed properties	10	20	30	40
	19	**29**	**39**	**49**
Living independently	**32**	**32**	**32**	**62**
	138	**145**	**150**	**185**

6.15 The following table summarises the indicative financial cost of the above sufficiency plan and underlying assumptions:

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Commissioned Placements	1,813	1,603	1,320
In-house placements – dispersed	527	571	615
Living Independently	0	0	0
Total	**2,340**	**2,174**	**1,935**
Cumulative savings		**-166**	**-405**

6.16

1. Commissioned placements costs have been forecast using 2024 prices i.e. £1,160 for 16+ supported accommodation placements and £600 (average) for 18+ dispersed / group living properties.

2. In-house placements costs represent current Care Leaver supported accommodation plus additional dispersed properties costs such as council tax / rental costs. Associated costs of the dispersed properties relate to rent payments at an average of £92 per week. At 18 it is proposed that the tenancy would transfer to the young person, where eligible housing benefit would be claimed. Council tax is payable by CYPS for any children under 18 or void properties (the current Band A charge is £1,434 p.a). The Council has a Council Tax exemption scheme for Care Leavers aged 18-21.

3. The forecast savings reflect the increased availability and use of in-house dispersed properties compared to commissioned placements.

6.17 **Procurement Implications**

As an update report, there are no direct procurement implications to reference. The purchase of properties falls outside the scope of procurement legislation and therefore in these instances, there are no procurement implications. Where the Council are engaging contractors to deliver new build schemes or refurbish existing properties, this engagement must be undertaken in compliance with relevant procurement legislations (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023) and the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The Children Act 1989 S17 imposes a general duty on Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need which can include the need for accommodation.

7.2 The Children Act 1989 S33 (1) states "The Local Authority has a duty to receive a child into its care for the duration of any Care Order" Section 22 A – D of the same act provides for statutory responsibility for providing any looked after child with accommodation. Section 22 C (7) – (9) states that the responsible authority must ensure that as far as reasonably practicable the placement: -

- Allows the child to live near his / her home.
- Does not disrupt his / her education.
- Provides accommodation which is suitable to the needs of the child if the child is disabled.
- Is within the local authority's area.

The duties and powers of Local Authorities to provide accommodation under sections 20 and 21 of the 1989 Act are not affected by these provisions.

7.3 Section 22 G makes provision that "The responsible Local Authority must also take steps to ensure that they are able to provide sufficient accommodation within the Local Authority's area to meet the needs of Looked After Children". Section 22G requires Local Authorities, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for those children that meets their needs and is within their local authority area.

7.4 Considering the above legislation, the statutory duties, and responsibilities for Looked After Children, the proposal to increase accommodation provision falls within the legal requirements expected of a Local Authority. Any provision where accommodation is being provided must comply with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Guidance Regulations 2011 including the requirement to be an Ofsted regulated placement this is irrespective of the length of time the provision is provided.

7.5 Section 63 of the Children Act 1989 states that 'no child shall be cared for and provided with accommodation in unregistered children's homes. Where an unregistered children's care home provides care and accommodation to a child, the

person carrying on the home commits an offence. It will be necessary for the provision to be registered. However, consideration has been given to this at "Registration and Regulation" above.

7.6 For clarity, there is provision in law to place a child in an unregulated placement; this is usually where a child (aged over 16) needs support to live independently rather than needing full time care. This policy will allow the Local Authority to comply with its duties under the prescribed legislation.

7.7 To reduce the risks of any legal challenge, the Council needs to ensure that it fully complies with all relevant legislation and properly consults in relation to any proposals set out in this report.

7.8 There is no legal implication by following the recommendation proposed at 3.2.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 Recruitment of staff for the residential homes continues to be a challenge. HR will continue to support the service in the recruitment and appointment of staff.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implications to vulnerable children and young people are covered within the report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 A range of approaches will be used to ensure that Looked After Children play a key part in delivery of the strategy. The LAC Council have been involved with the development of the strategy and influence decision making and delivery.

10.2 Frontline staff, partner agencies, foster carers and parents/carers have been and will also be consulted and be able to inform the development and implementation.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency 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.

11.2 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.

11.3 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.

11.4 The development of residential settings is a priority within the strategy, this means there will be some low-level impact in terms of car use for staff getting to the

home/their place of work and transporting children. There will also be an increase in refuse from the individual homes as they support children and staff potentially.

11.5 In order to monitor and mitigate the impact the distances travelled will be monitored and the settings will access electric vehicles.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Education, Police and Health partners have been significantly involved in the implementation process and will continue to contribute to the effective delivery of the programme.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 This report relates to two key corporate risks for the Council – the risk of safeguarding failure and the risk of inspection failure in Children's Services.

13.2 The proposal will help improve support for some of the most vulnerable young children and young people in the borough. In addition, this work should reduce the risk of inspection failure in children's homes and help to improve the overall rating for services for Looked After Children.

13.3 Key operational risks include the risk of not being able to recruit the required qualified and experienced staff, timeliness of Ofsted registration and ability to identify and acquire properties that meet the specifications. All these risks, if realised, could cause delay to the overall implementation timescales.

14. Accountable Officers

Name, Helen Sweaton Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Quality. Children and Young People's Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	04/11/2024
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	25/10/2024
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	25/10/2024

Report Author: Helen Sweaton Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Quality. CYPS
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This report is published on the Council's website.

Appendix 1: Addendum

Section 6 Children in the Care of the Local Authority

Care Leavers

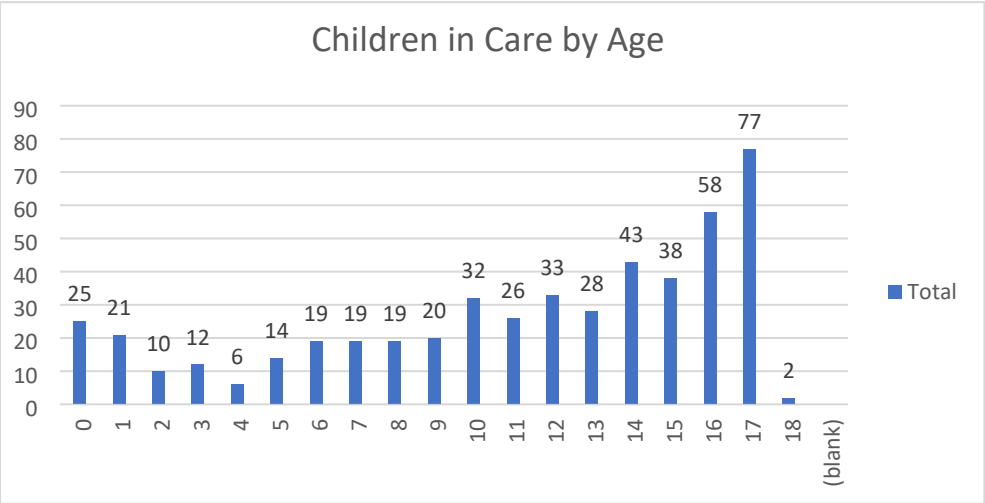
The Care Leavers Strategy Strategic Priority Two: Safe and Affordable Accommodation highlights the need for suitable accommodation for Care Leavers and acknowledges that sourcing the right accommodation is becoming more challenging.

The Strategy states agencies and services in Rotherham will work together to:

- Ensure there is a range of suitable accommodation options, including staying put, supported lodgings, semi supported, shared accommodation, houses of multiple occupancy and independent.
- Expand our in house supported accommodation to 20 dispersed properties which is staffed 24/7. These properties will help young people to get ready for independent living.
- Maintain close links between commissioning, children in care, leaving care, residential and in house supported accommodation to forecast accommodation needs and commission appropriate services.
- Establish a 16+ Panel to track young people to appropriate destinations.
- Work with trusted providers to ensure accommodation and support is of good quality.
- Support Care Leavers to develop independence skills, to ensure they transition positively to independent living, including budgeting, paying bills, food shopping, cooking and prioritising.
- Work with Care Leavers and services to jointly create Pathway plans which consider future living arrangements for young people, including what support will be offered to help to get them there.

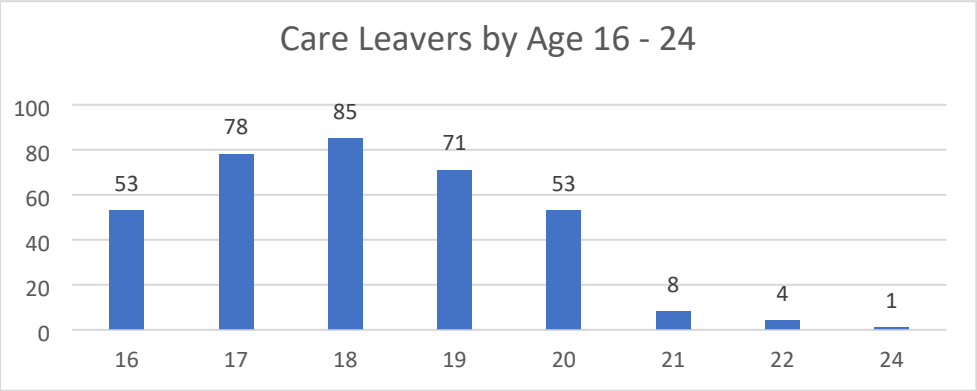
Analysis of children in care by age

At the end of May 2024 Rotherham had 502 Children in Care aged 0 – 18 with 135 of those children in care aged 16 - 17.

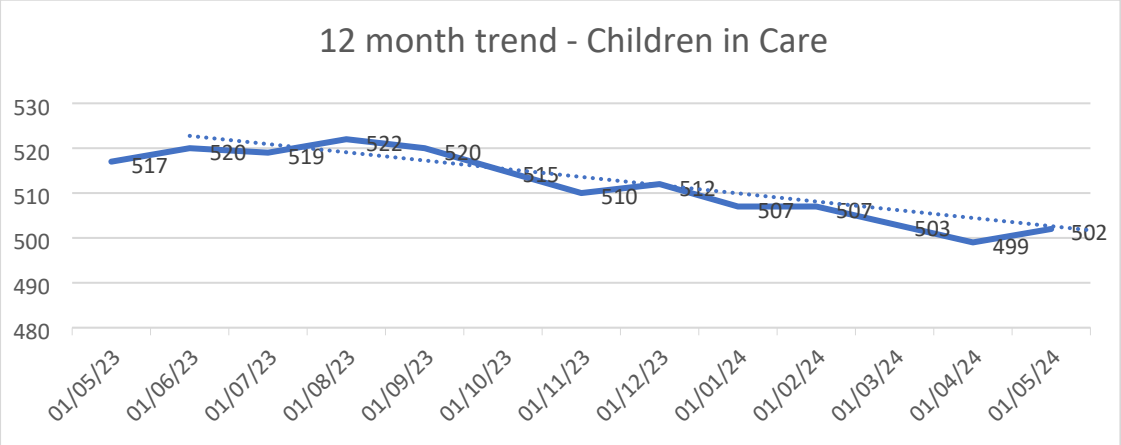


Graph 1

At the end of May 2024 Rotherham had 353 Care Leavers aged 16 – 24.
This includes any young person 16 and over who is currently or has previously been in the care of the Local Authority and who has an allocated Social Worker or Personal Advisor. This does not include those young people over 21 who no longer have an allocated Personal Advisor (however they may access support from the leaving care team).

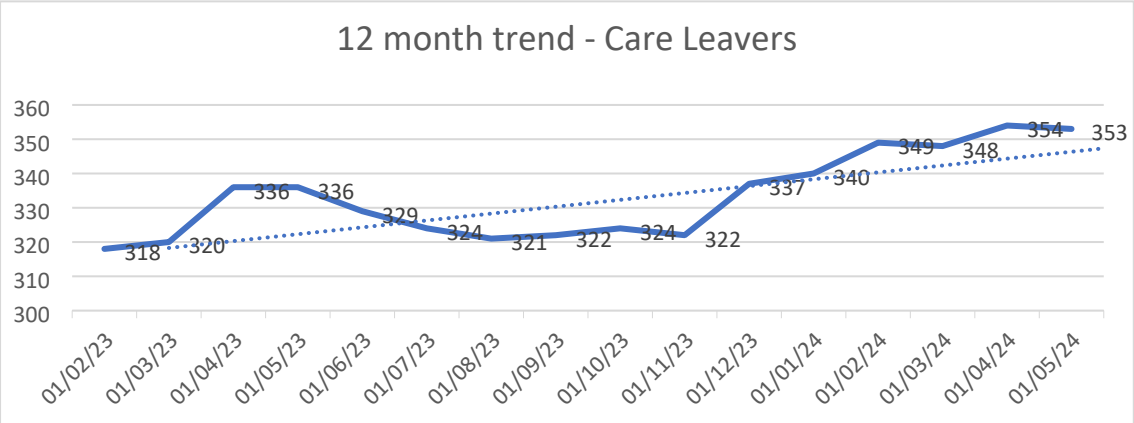


Graph 2



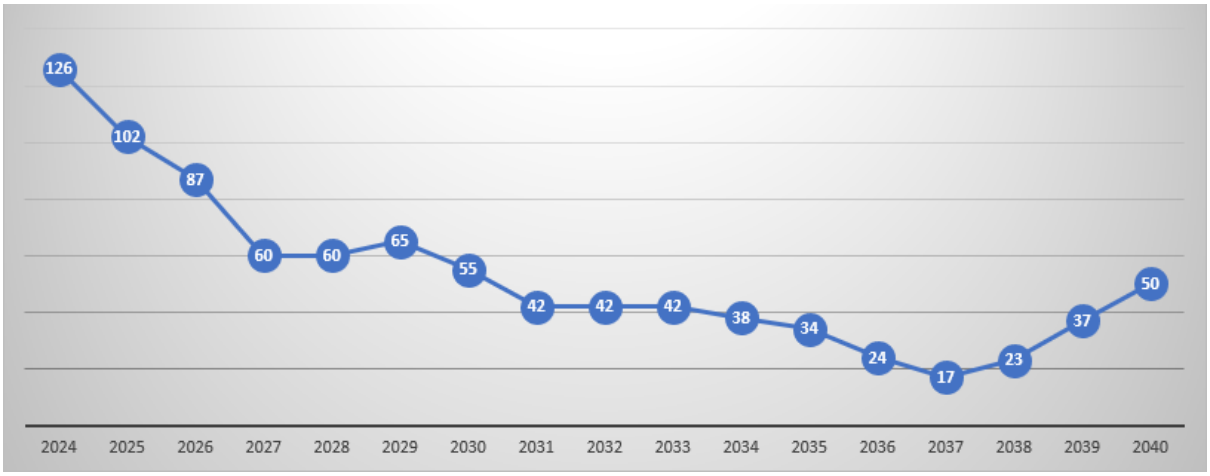
Graph 3

The number of children in care has reduced over the last 12 months.



Graph 4
The number of Care Leavers has increased over the last 12 months.

Graph 5 projects the Rotherham 16+ care leaver population for the next 16 years based on the current children in care remaining in care until they are 16. This does not reflect new entrances to care or discharges from care that are expected and therefore does not reflect the actual number of anticipated care leavers.



Graph 5

The graph demonstrates there will likely be a reduction in care leavers in 2031 as we see the impact of the reducing number of children in care.

Analysis of children in care Aged 14 – 17 years old

Table 1 show the breakdown on children in care aged 14 to 17 at the end of May 2024.

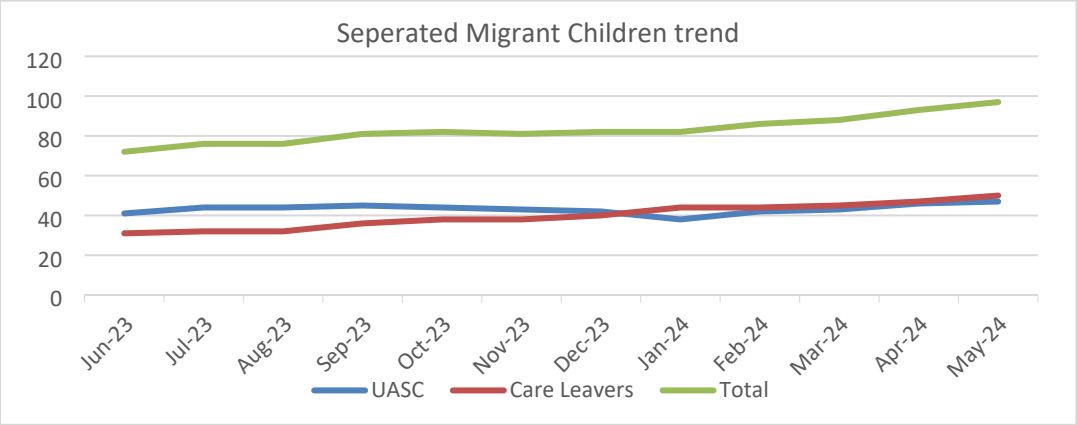
Number of Children & Young People (CYP)	Age				
Placement Types	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Grand Total**
H5 – Registered Provider of Supported Accommodation		2	16	40	58
H5 – Resid. Accom. not subject to Children's Homes Regulations.		1			1
K1 – Secure Unit			1		1
K2 – Children's Homes	8	12	5	4	29
P1 - Placed with parents or other with Parental Resp.	2	3		1	6
P2 - Independent living (flat/lodgings/friends/B&B)			2	6	8
U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	2			1	3
U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering	16	13	11	17	57
U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	14	8	22	9	53
Unregistered Unregulated Accommodation		1			1
Grand Total	**42**	**40**	**57**	**78**	**217**

Table 1

Rotherham will have an additional 40 children in care aged 16 and 17 within the next two years, not including any new entrances into care or discharges from care (increase of 30% per year for the next two years).

Separated Migrant Children and Young People

At the end of May 2024 Rotherham was receiving funding for 47 separated migrant children and young people at the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) National Rate (for under 18s) and 50 at the Care Leavers rate (18+).



Graph 6

The total number of separated migrant children and care leavers has increased over the last twelve months. The number of children under 18 has increased from 41 at the end of June 2023 to 47 at the end of May 2024 (37% increase). The number of care leavers over 18 has increased from 31 at the end of June 2023 to 50 at the end of May 2024 (62% increase).

Table 2 shows the number and breakdown of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children in care aged 14 and over at the end of May 2021

Number of CYP	Age				
Immigration Status	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Grand Total**
Asylum Seeker			1		1
Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK (ILR)				1	1
Leave to Remain			1	7	8
Pre-Settled Status – EU Settlement Scheme	1				1
Refused Asylum, appeal applied for				1	1
Settled Status – EU Settlement Scheme	5	2	4	4	15
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Child		1	13	19	33
Grand Total	**6**	**3**	**19**	**32**	**60**

Table 2

Table 3 shows the anticipated numbers of separated migrant children who will become 18+ (UASC) from 2024 to 2026. The table assumes that there will be 1 additional accommodated separated migrant child becoming 18+ every month and

that it will take a maximum of 12 months for young people to receive a decision of their rights to remain (R2R).

Movement	Jul-Sep 24	Oct-Dec 24	Jan-Mar 25	Apr-Jun 25	Jul-Sep 25	Jan-Mar 26	Apr-Jun 26
Start of Period	28	35	25	28	32	30	27
New in @ 18	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Turn 18 in period	4	3	8	9	2	5	1
Achieve R2R	0	-16	-8	-8	-7	-11	-12
End of Period	**35**	**25**	**28**	**32**	**30**	**27**	**19**

Table 3

The projection for 18+ (UASC) assumes a net 25% increase year on year based on the assumptions above.

Care Leavers with a disability

11 of the 135 children in care aged 16 and 17 are recorded on the Local Children's System has having a disability.

24 (11%) of the 217 children in care aged 14 to 17 are recorded on the Local Children's System has having a disability.

Summary

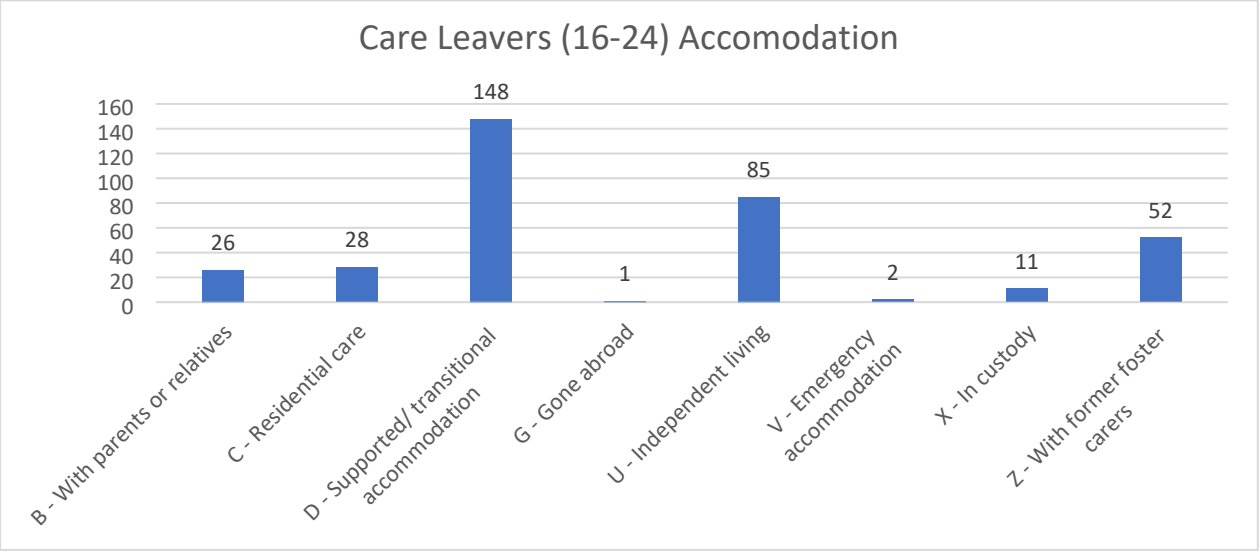
The projection for the total number of care leavers, after discharges from care, suggests a 25% increase year on year for the next 3 years.

The projection for 18+ (UASC) suggests a net 25% increase year on year based on the assumptions above.

There will likely be a reduction in care leavers in 2031 as we see the impact of the reducing number of children in care.

Section 7 Homes for Children in the Care of the Local Authority

Analysis of Leaving Care Accommodation



Graph 7
Care Leavers over 21 living independently in appropriate accommodation who are no longer allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) are not reflected in graph 7.

Table 4 shows the breakdown of provision types for children in care aged 16 to 17 at the end of May 2024

Number of CYP	Age		
Placement Types	**16**	**17**	**Grand Total**
H5 – Registered Provider of Supported Accommodation	16	40	56
K1 – Secure Unit	1		1
K2 – Children's Homes	5	4	9
P1 - Placed with parents or other with Parental Resp.		1	1
P2 - Independent living (flat/lodgings/friends/B&B)	2	6	8
U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA		1	1
U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering	11	17	28
U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	22	9	31
Grand Total	**57**	**78**	**135**

Table 4

Care Leavers with a disability

Table 2 show the number of disabled children and breakdown of provision types for children in care aged 16 to 17 at the end of May 2024.

Number of CYP with Disability	Age		
Placement Type	**16**	**17**	**Grand Total**
H5 - Registered Provider of Supported Accommodation		3	3
K2 - Children's Homes	1	4	5
U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering		1	1
U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	2		2
Grand Total	**3**	**8**	**11**

Table 5

Analysis of External Leaving Care Accommodation

Table 5 shows the number of young people aged 16 and over accommodated in external leaving care provision (excluding 18-year-olds UASC already in affordable shared accommodation).

Number of CYP	Age				
Provision Type	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**Grand Total**
Lot 1 – Group Living	16	31	10	1	58
Lot 2 – Dispersed with Floating support.	2	7	12	9	30
Grand Total	**18**	**38**	**22**	**10**	**88**

Table 6

Lot 1 – Group Living

58 of the 88 (66%) of the young people are accommodated in high cost, supported group living arrangements.

11 out of the 58 (19%) of those young people are aged 18 and over.

Lot 2 – Dispersed with Floating support.

30 of the 88 (34%) are accommodated in dispersed properties with floating support.

21 out of the 30 (70%) are aged 18 and over.

It should be noted that the availability of accommodation can influence where young people are accommodated. Where an outcome in the pathway plan for a young person is for them to live independently in appropriate accommodation in Rotherham the preference for the service is for the young person to be accommodated in a property that can transfer into their name, preventing the need for unnecessary home moves. This is dependent upon the level of support they need, however anecdotal information from the service suggests the majority of young people could receive floating support in their own dispersed property and the decision to utilise supported accommodation is usually based on the lack of availability of dispersed properties and floating support.

Analysis of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) in external accommodation

64 UASC aged 16 - 19 are accommodated in external leaving care accommodation.

Table 6 shows the number of USAC aged 16 and over accommodated in external leaving care provision (excluding 18-year-olds already in affordable shared accommodation).

Number of UASC	Age				
Provision Type	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**Grand Total**
Lot 1 – Group Living	12	20	7	1	40
Lot 2 – Dispersed with Floating support.	0	4	12	8	24
Grand Total	**12**	**24**	**19**	**9**	**64**

Table 7

Lot 1 – Group Living
40 of the 64 (63%) of UASC are accommodated in high cost, supported group living arrangements.
8 out of the 40 (20%) of those young people are aged 18 and over.

Lot 2 – Dispersed with Floating support.
24 of the 64 (38%) are accommodated in dispersed properties with floating support.
20 out of the 24 (83%) are aged 18 and over.

Summary

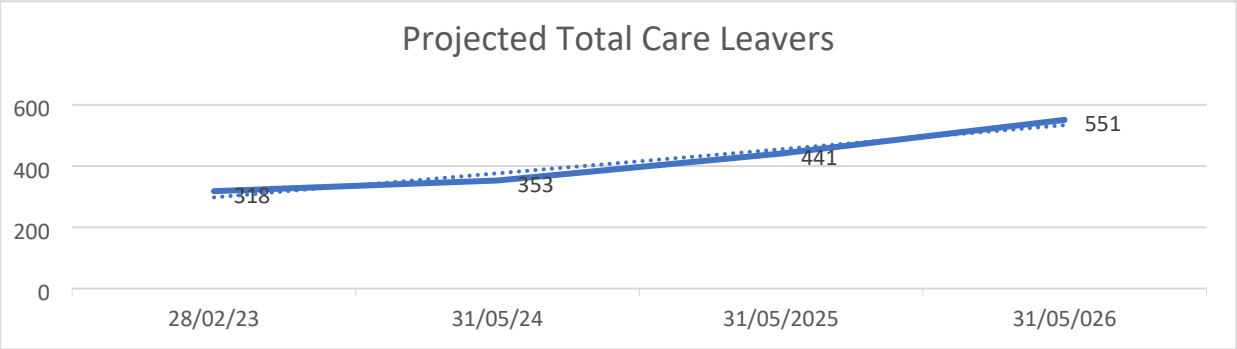
The analysis demonstrates 60 young adults (aged over 18) are currently accommodated in supported accommodation for young people. 28 may not be able to have a tenancy in their own name due to their immigration status. 32 young adults are awaiting availability of appropriate accommodation.

Supported accommodation is appropriate for 92 young people currently accommodated. When a young person is accommodated in a (dispersed) property that can transfer into their name, this prevents the need for unnecessary home moves, additional dispersed properties with the flexibility of floating support may be preferential.

There will likely be a reduction in care leavers in 2031 as we see the impact of the reducing number of children in care.

Section 8 Future Need Projections

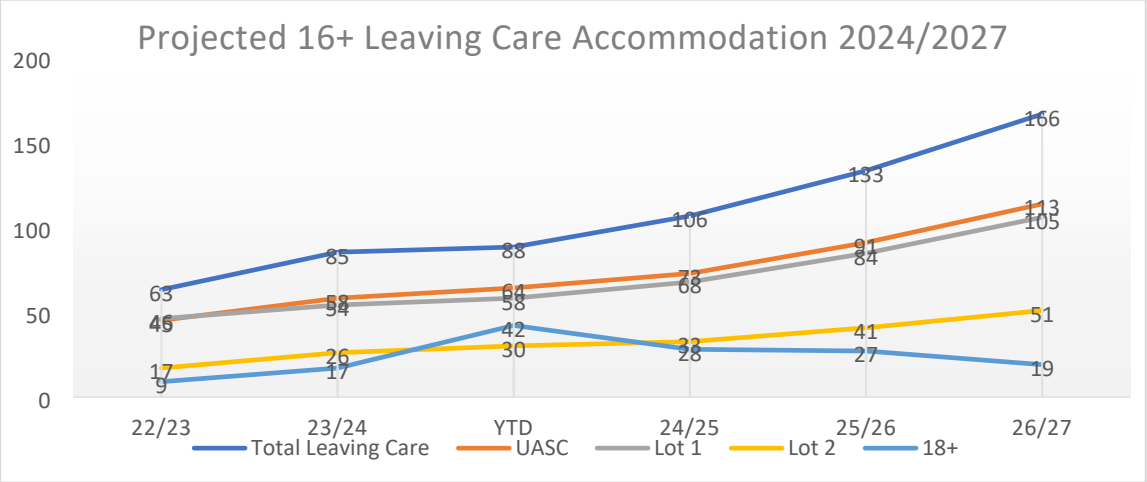
Number of Care Leavers Projection



Graph 8

Based on the anticipated 25% increase in the number of the Care Leavers for next 2 years there will be 551 care leavers aged 16 – 24 in Rotherham in the 26/27 financial year.

Projected demand for 16+ leaving care accommodation to March 27



Graph 9

If no changes are made to available in house provision and/ or practice, the projection indicates 166 young people will require external accommodation in the financial year 26/27.

The projection for total leaving care, UASC, Lot 1 and Lot 2 projections assume a net 25% increase year on year after discharges from care based on what we currently know about the 14-year-olds in the system and allows for 5% of care leavers not requiring provision.

The table shows the projected demand for 18+ (UASC) from 2024 to 2026. The table assumes that there will be 1 new 18+ (UASC) accommodated every month and that it will take a maximum of 12 months for young people to receive a decision of their rights to remain (R2R).

Movement	Jul-Sep 24	Oct-Dec 24	Jan-Mar 25	Apr-Jun 25	Jul-Sep 25	Jan-Mar 26	Apr-Jun 26
Start of Period	28	35	25	28	32	30	27
New in @ 18	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Turn 18 in period	4	3	8	9	2	5	1
Achieve R2R	0	-16	-8	-8	-7	-11	-12
End of Period	**35**	**25**	**28**	**32**	**30**	**27**	**19**

Table 8

The projection for 18+ (UASC) assumes a net 25% increase year on year based on the assumptions above.

Group living 18+. The 32 (Number of care leavers) is split 20 group living (9 in affordable) and (11 high cost), then 12 currently in dispersed. The 32 also assumes 50% will achieve rights to remain within 12 months of being placed. Demand could peak at 42 if there are further delay with processing rights to remain.

Summary

The analysis of future need demonstrates an increased need of an additional 47 group living placements and 21 dispersed properties over the next two years. This is in addition to the continued requirement for available housing for those ready to take on their own tenancies. (Currently 32 young adults are waiting for this).

As the preference for the service is for the young person to be accommodated in a property that can transfer into their name, preventing the need for unnecessary home moves, additional dispersed properties with the flexibility of floating support may be preferential.

Although demand is likely to reduce from 2031 the reduction could be managed by reducing the external accommodation commissioned.

Annual Expenditure Projection

Lot 1 – Group Living

The average cost of a Lot 1 – group living accommodation is £1,200 per placement per week.

The projected cost of the 58 young people is £3.6m per year.

The projected cost of the young people aged 18 and over is £686K per year.

Lot 2 – Dispersed with Floating support.

The average cost of a dispersed properties with floating support is £438 per placement per week.

The projected cost of the 30 young people is £683K per year.

The projected cost of the 21 young people aged 18 and over is £478K per year.

The Council receives the Government contribution for UASC at £230 per week, which means a high percentage of current placement cost is being covered by the local authority.

Summary

The analysis of future need demonstrates an increased need of an additional 47 group living placements and 21 dispersed properties over the next two years. The financial projections above demonstrate the financial implication of externally commissioning the required accommodation is in excess of £5.2m. Better value can be achieved through meeting the accommodation needs of young adults through delivery of the accommodation strategy, increasing the number of dispersed properties, increasing the number of places in the more cost efficient in-house group living accommodation and reducing the number of external group living placements.

Homes for Care Leavers Projection of additional need

Table 9 demonstrates the required accommodation to meet the projected need. Current Capacity assume our ability to meet need internally and externally.

Whilst we can confidently project the number of care leavers (16/17) year olds transitioning through the care system over the next 3 years, based on current numbers of young people aged between 14-17, the types of properties that are required is more difficult to forecast.

By increasing our Dispersed with Floating support provision by 38 over the next 3 years it is likely to meet expected demand. Achieving above this number it is likely to reduce the reliance on higher costing commissioned services, both Lot 1 – Group Living and Lot 2 - Dispersed with Floating support and if the complexity of our leaving care population remains the same.

An increase in the complexity of our leaving care population is likely to mean an increase in demand for the higher supported/high-cost group arrangements.

All the projections with this paper assume that colleagues in Housing can identify suitable housing solutions for care leavers at the current rate, and that this does not create additional demand for dispersed properties.

			Type of accommodation			
	Number of care leavers	Number of Care leavers in external acc	Registered Provider of Supported Acc (16+)	Dispersed properties – floating support	Group living 18+	18+ (own tenancy)
Total (16-19)	353	87	52 (9 in house)	20 (10 in-house)	15	
26/27 Forecast Capacity required (16–19)	551 (based on forecast in graph 8)	166 (based on forecast in graph 9)	49	51	6	62
25/26 Proposed Additional capacity			38	26 Delivery of 20 additional in-house (10 already committed)	15	32
26/27 Additional capacity			38	15 Delivery of 10 additional in-house	21	62

Table 9

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Looked After Children and Care Leaver Promise	Aspiration	Objective (What do we want to do)	Action Owner (Who will be responsible)	Timescale (When will it be done by)	Progress report
All Promises	All services take the Rotherham Family Approach - "would this be good enough for my child?" to ensure all Rotherham children and young people are "resilient, successful and safe", evidenced by Quality Assurance activity.	Promote the Rotherham Family Approach to commissioned services.	Paul Stinson	2023-2028	Quality Assurance Framework in place. Exploration with sub-regional Local Authorities and health and education partners to further develop the quality assurance.
		Develop and deliver the Quality Assurance Framework to measure the use and impact of the Rotherham Family Approach with children and young people.	Paul Stinson	March 2023	
Promise 1 - We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm	Children and young people have access to a range of homes (internal and external options) that meet their needs and support them to achieve their potential.	Commission homes, interventions, and services that are high quality, compliant, regulated and deliver best value.	Paul Stinson	2023-2028	
		Transform the offer to Rotherham Council foster carers to ensure all children, young people and families receive the help they need	Rebecca Wall	December 2022	
		Continued development and delivery of in-house residential children's homes, promoting residential care as an intervention not a destination	Rebecca Wall	March 2024	
		Work collaboratively with external residential and fostering providers to	Paul Stinson	June 2023	

		ensure all homes for children meet the required regulatory requirements and provide assurance of the quality outcomes delivered			
		Ensure all homes for children meet the required regulatory requirements and provide assurance of the quality outcomes delivered by the Council.	Rebecca Wall	2023-2028	
		Contribute to the delivery of the foster carer recruitment programme in line with development within the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.	Paul Stinson	March 2023	
		Contribute to the delivery of collaborative approaches, frameworks, and bodies to manage the market effectively in line with development within the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.	Helen Sweaton	2023-2028	
		New Action Commission supported accommodation, accommodation and support for Care Leavers that are high quality, compliant, regulated and deliver best value.	Paul Stinson	2024-2028 2025/26: 2026/27	Commission 20 supported accommodation places (exploring block booking arrangements). Commission 18 supported accommodation places (exploring block booking arrangements).

		New Action Work with private landlords/ commission providers to secure 20 additional dispersed properties.	Paul Stinson Kevin Fisher	2025/26	
		New Action Work with private landlords/ commission providers to secure 6 Group living 18+	Paul Stinson Kevin Fisher	2025/26	
		New Action Deliver 10 additional Hollowgate dispersed beds.	Mark Cummins	2025/2026	

		New Action Work with Housing to enable the provision of appropriate accommodation options to secure 32 independent tenancies.	Monica Green	2025/26	
		New Action Through Housing acquisitions/ work with private landlords/ commission providers deliver 24 additional dispersed beds.	Paul Stinson Kevin Fisher	2026/27	
		New Action Work with private landlords/ commission providers to secure 6 Group living 18+.	Paul Stinson Kevin Fisher	2026/27	

		New Action Work with Housing to enable the provision of appropriate accommodation options to secure 30 independent tenancies.	Monica Green	2026/27	
Promise 8 - We will help you to be happy and healthy	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 to ensure children and young people are able to access the support	Develop joint strategic needs analysis, commissioning processes and funding arrangements alongside partners.	Helen Sweaton	December 2023	Joint Commissioning Strategy 2024 – 2027 approved by Cabinet and endorsed by Place Board.

	they need when they need it				
	Children and Young People and their families and carers can access CAMHs assessment and intervention when needed..	Develop a CAMHs pathway to improve access to assessment and intervention for looked after children.	Helen Sweaton	June 2023	CAMHs pathway established for Children in Care. Reviewed arrangements for the provision of psychological oversight to RMBC therapeutic services has improved the relationship with CAMHs.
Promise 9 - We will help you to explore and be ready for the world of work	Children, young people, families and carers benefit from additional social value in Rotherham e.g. more employment opportunities.	Enable social value principles and outcomes to be integrated into the whole commissioning cycle for services for children and young people.	Paul Stinson	2023-2028	Commissioned contracts are achieving social value e.g. Digital Foster Carer Recruitment contract.
Promise 1 - We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm	More Young People aged 10+ are able to be cared for safely in their families and communities.	Develop and Deliver the Early Help Strategy	David McWilliams	December 2022	Early Help Strategy 2024 – 2028 approved by Cabinet. Capacity in Family Group Conferencing
		Increase capacity in Family Group Conferencing	David McWilliams	April 2023	
		Develop 'Wrap around' Edge of Care Services for families with young people aged 13+	Monica Green	January 2023	
Promise 9 - We will help you to explore and be ready for the world of work	More children, young people and families benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and access employment.	Expand the Supporting Families program.	David McWilliams	April 2023	Increased Number of families achieving significant and sustained progress through the supporting families' programme.

END

Appendix 3
PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Looked After Children (LAC) Sufficiency Update (including the residential development progress update)	
Directorate: Children and Young People's Services	**Service area: Looked After Children**
Lead person: **Helen Sweaton**	**Contact number:** 07554436546
Is this a: [x] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency 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.

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.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? *(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)*	x	
Could the proposal affect service users? *(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)*	x	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? *(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)*	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? *(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)*	x	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? *(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)*	x	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? *(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)*	x	
If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason		

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6.**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4.**

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity
If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made**.** Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation. Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).
• **How have you considered equality and diversity?** Rotherham's Looked After Children will have protected characteristics. All care planning will take account of the needs of the individual child and seek to match their needs with an appropriate placement. Issues around race, disability, maternity, belief, gender and sexual orientation are carefully considered in the referral matching process when deciding where looked after children and young people are placed. The Looked After Children's Council meets regularly. The LAC Council have influenced the development of this strategy, the priorities and delivery plan. Information regarding ethnicity, age, disability and SEN and gender will inform service development and commissioning intentions to secure homes for children that will best meet their individual needs. Based on this information our priority areas over the next period are to: • 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.

In addition to Looked After Children delivery of the Strategy may impact on other groups:

Rotherham has an existing community of Foster Carers. RMBC meet with this group regularly to ensure that their voice can inform future planning for new recruitment initiatives as well as support package that is available to Foster Carers. Becoming a Foster Carer provides an employment opportunity to Rotherham residents. All initiatives to recruit more Foster Carers should aim to increase the diversity of the Foster Carer profile across all protected characteristics; this will support children and young people to achieve positive outcomes as placements that are a good match will be available.

Rotherham currently works with a number of Independent Fostering Agencies and engages with this group via a Provider Forum.

Plans to open new residential provision within the borough may have an impact on the wider community. Robust arrangements to consult with the community will be considered as part of the commissioning process with new providers in the borough.

- **Key findings**

Looked after children are some of Rotherham's most vulnerable children. This proposal will seek to improve the health, social care and education outcomes and address inequalities for these children.

The updated LAC Sufficiency Strategy 2023 - 2027 sets out a clear need analysis that helps to support work to meet the needs of Looked After Children in the borough. The work will have a positive impact in terms of addressing the diversity of this cohort through a broader range of placement options.

Work to open new residential provision in the borough may be perceived negatively by local communities. Consultation and engagement work will need to be implemented carefully and sensitively. The Local Authority will maintain oversight of this through the commissioning process and ensure that Elected Members are included in the process.

- **Actions**

A range of approaches will be used to ensure that looked after children play a key part in delivery of the strategy. The LAC Council have been involved with the development of the strategy and influence decision making and delivery.

Frontline staff, partner agencies, foster carers and parents / carers have been and will also be consulted and be able inform the development and implementation.

In summary, these are:
- To continue engagement with the Looked After Children's Council
- To continue to engage with Rotherham Foster Carers
- To continue to engage with the Independent Foster Carer Forum
- To ensure that consultation and engagement with the public is embedded in all plans to open new residential provision in the borough.

Further Equality Impact Analysis will be completed as required as part of the delivery associated with the Strategy.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	Completed
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	November 2024
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Mark Cummins CYPS Transformation Lead

5. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Helen Sweaton	Assistant Director Commissioning and Performance	Updated and agreed 06/09/2024

6. Publishing	
This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date screening completed	August 2024
Report title and date	Looked After Children (LAC) Sufficiency Update (including the residential development progress update)
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	16/10/24
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	06/09/24

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Appendix 4 – Carbon Impact Assessment

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	**Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.**	**Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts**	**Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out**
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	N/A				
Emissions from transport?	Slight increase in emissions	Slight increase in terms of car use for staff getting to the home/ their place of work and transporting children.		Active travel/public transport will be promoted where possible.	Council officer travel is included with the Council's Net Zero 2030 greenhouse gas emissions accounting.
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	Impact unknown	Potential slight increase in domestic refuse from the Council owned children's homes.	Potential slight increase in domestic waste if bringing additional children into Rotherham; unknown at this time.	Each home will have access to recycling bins.	Not possible to monitor.
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	Impact unknown	Potential increase in emissions from housing if additional placements are provided and additional children are brought into Rotherham; unknown at this time.		For new residential homes, any replacements required (e.g. heating) will be future-proofed for triple-A rating. Fitting new energy efficient boiler systems can be considered as part of property refurbishment	Monitor through energy usage for the new homes

Emissions from construction and/or development?	Increase in emissions	Emissions associated with renovating new residential homes.	Minimal increase relative to overall emissions from construction across Rotherham.		
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	Impact unknown			Attempts will be made to maximise planting trees on any new residential homes; feasibility to be determined	
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields: N/A					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency 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.

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.

The carbon impacts from this strategy update are as follows:

- Transport: the development of residential settings is a priority within the strategy, this means there will be some low-level impact in terms of car use for staff getting to the home/ their place of work and transporting children. This is monitored through the council's greenhouse gas accounting. In order to monitor and mitigate the impact the distances travelled will be monitored and the settings will begin to have access electric vehicles with public transport and active travel promoted. Overall transport impact may be reduced due to the potential for less young people to be placed outside of Rotherham
- Waste: There will also be a potential slight increase in refuse from the individual homes as they support children and staff. All homes will have recycling bins and waste is not anticipated to be more than a regular family home.

- Domestic buildings: emissions may rise if additional placements are provided – these may be mitigated with energy efficiency measures.
- Construction and development: increase in emissions from renovating new residential homes.
- Carbon capture and storage: unknown impact – attempts will be made to maximise tree planting where possible.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: **(Name, title, and service area/directorate).**	Mark Cummins CYPS Transformation Lead
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	CIA339 Katie Rockett, Climate Change Officer

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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet - 18 November 2024

Report Title
Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)
Jane Wood, Head of Service, Children in Care and Corporate Parenting.

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027 outlines the three-year plan for Rotherham Care Leavers. The Strategy sets out priorities for care experienced young people and outlines improvements to services and practice for children who are Care Leavers or Care Experienced.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approve the Leaving Care Strategy and approve the three-year plan as set out within the Strategy.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027
Appendix 2 Part A Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 3 Part B Equality Analysis Form
Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Background Papers
None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
No

Council Approval Required
No

Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024 – 2027

1. Background

1.1 The Children and Social Work Act (2017) and statutory guidance set out the responsibilities of Local Authorities as Corporate Parents to ensure that Care Leavers are offered the same standard of care that their peers would receive from a reasonable parent. This is with the aim that all Care Leavers are provided with opportunities and support to successfully transition to adulthood (DFE, 2022; The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, volume three). Rotherham Council is a committed and supportive Corporate Parent and as such has created a bespoke Leaving Care Strategy to ensure that Care Leavers are a focus for all partners.

1.2 This report introduces the Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027. The purpose of this report is to set out six priorities to focus on over the next three years in respect of Leaving Care. The Strategy should be considered alongside the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027, which outlines the Council's ambitions for Children in Care and Care Leavers. These strategies outline the corporate parenting responsibilities of Rotherham Council and wider partners.

1.3 There are currently 357 Care Leavers, aged 16 to 21, in Rotherham. A Care Leaver is a young person aged between 16 and 25 who has previously been in the care of the Local Authority. A young person is considered to be a Care Leaver when they reach 16 years old, even though they may not yet have left the care of the Local Authority. Every Local Authority has a duty to provide leaving care services to Care Leavers, including allocation of a personal advisor until a Care Leaver reaches 21 years old and support beyond where required.

1.4 The Strategy demonstrates how partners across Rotherham will work together to ensure the needs of Care Leavers are met. The six priorities have been selected as the key areas for development in Leaving Care services and in the offer to Care Leavers. These young people have often experienced adversity and as such, are more vulnerable than their peers, who have not had care experience. As such, the Strategy must outline priorities which meet the complex needs of all Care Leavers and determine how these needs may be met over the next three years.

1.5 The priorities set out in the Leaving Care Strategy are;

- Strategic Priority One: Family and Connections.
- Strategic Priority Two: Safe and Affordable Homes.
- Strategic Priority Three: Education, Training and Employment.
- Strategic Priority Four: Health and Wellbeing.
- Strategic Priority Five: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People.
- Strategic Priority Six: Engagement and Participation.

The Strategy outlines what the Council and its partners will do and how success will be measured under each priority.

2. Key Issues

2.1 This Leaving Care Strategy as a standalone document is the first of its kind in Rotherham and was a recommendation of a Peer Review undertaken in March 2024. The consideration of Good and Outstanding Local Authorities offer to Care Leavers has confirmed that having a bespoke Care Leaver Strategy is best practice. This strategy compares well to other examples across the Care Leaver landscape. Corporate Parenting responsibilities are taken seriously by Rotherham Council and its partners, and it is recognised that there should be greater development of the Leaving Care Service over the next few years. Leaving Care strategic and operational service plans have been devised to track the progress of development work and these align with the Leaving Care Strategy priorities.

2.2 The key achievements within Leaving Care Services, over recent years, are as follows:

- Improved placement sufficiency through dedicated 16 plus Supported Accommodation and linked dispersed properties.
- Improved safe and affordable homes for Care Leavers through effective relationships with providers in Rotherham and neighbouring local authorities.
- Destination and permanence planning for all Care Leavers.
- Stability of the workforce and the experience of the Personal Advisors.

2.3 Initially, the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, alongside performance clinics, will review the progress of the Leaving Care Strategy, 2024-2027 and of the service plans which sit alongside this document. Progress reports will be provided to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board every six months. These will include metrics used to measure performance and quality, such as performance data around key areas and audit outcomes in respect of quality.

2.4 Quality assurance and performance data will be utilised to review the progress of the Strategy and the impact for young people on a monthly basis.

2.5 Activity will continue to engage partner agencies, officers, and elected members in corporate parenting responsibilities. This will include exploring a covenant for Care Leavers to determine what agencies can offer to support young people to achieve success.

2.6 The Council is committed to ensuring that all Care Leavers needs are met and that they are supported to achieve their aspirations and transition successfully to adulthood. The proposed Strategy and governance arrangements will support to achieve this.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027. Approval of this Strategy will ensure that the development of the Leaving Care service will progress. This will also ensure that the Strategy and associated service plans are carried out, which will improve the experience of and support to Care Leavers.

3.2 The alternative to this is to not approve the Strategy and retain the Corporate Parenting Strategy as the overarching plan for both Children in Care and Leaving Care

Services. This is not recommended due to the need to focus on improving services for Care Leavers.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The development of this Strategy has involved a number of partner agencies across Rotherham, including health, education, commissioning, performance, legal services, and finance. The Care Leavers Forum is offering its views about the Strategy to enable these to be built into the specific service plans. The Care Leavers Forum will be asked to support the review of this plan.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 This new Strategy will cover the period 2024 – 2027.

5.2 The progress of this Strategy will be reviewed in various forums, including monthly performance clinics and boards and the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

5.3 The Strategy will be progressed upon approval from Cabinet in November 2024.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There is no additional cost to implementing this Strategy, other than what is already set out in Children's Services budget. The hope is that implementing this Strategy will reduce the cost overall through more consistent and timely practice, which supports young people to destinations more swiftly.

6.2 There are no direct procurement implications associated with the recommendation detailed in this report. Where there is a need to engage Providers and Suppliers to support the delivery of the strategy, these must be procured in compliance with relevant procurement legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 / Procurement Act 2023) and the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The Council has a duty to provide support to Care Leavers under the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The proposals set out in this report will expand upon these duties.

7.2 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 provides that every Local Authority must publish information about services that Care Leavers will be offered to assist in preparing them for adulthood and independent living. The Leaving Care Strategy describes how the Rotherham MBC will meet its legal obligations to those young people leaving care. Therefore, there are no legal implications posed by the recommendation at 3.1.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 HR will continue to work with the Service to highlight apprenticeship opportunities that are available throughout RMBC.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implications to vulnerable children and young people are covered within the report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Equality and human rights are considered within the report.

11. Implications for CO_2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Any implications are included in Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Implications for Partners are reflected in the report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 These are referred to in the report.

14. Accountable Officers

Monica Green, Assistant Director Children's Services
Jane Wood, Head of Service Children in Care and Corporate Parenting

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	04/11/2024
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	22/10/2024
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	22/10/2024

Report Authors:
Jane Wood, Head of Service Children in Care and Corporate Parenting.
jane-e.wood@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's website.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027

'You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending'
(CS Lewis)

Caring **Honest** **Proud**

(Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Values, 2024)

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8. Strategic Priority Four: Health and Wellbeing.
9. Strategic Priority Five: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People
10. Strategic Priority Six: Engagement and Participation
11. Three Year Priorities Summary



About this document
Title: Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy
Purpose: To set out Rotherham's strategy for Care Leavers for the next 3 years
Updated by: Jane Wood, Head of Service, Children in Care and Kim Wilson, Service Manager Children in Care and Leaving Care
Approved by: Corporate Parenting Partnership Board
Date: 28.8.24
Version number: 2
Status: Draft
Implementation date: Immediate
Review frequency: Refresh every 3 years
Next review date:

Introduction

In Rotherham, we are committed to ensuring that our Care Leavers achieve their aspirations and the best possible outcomes for their future.

This strategy sits and should be read alongside Rotherham Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027, which sets out Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's vision, priorities and commitments for children in care and Care Leavers. The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines our Corporate Parenting Principles and Promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework for Children's Services and partner agencies outlining our responsibilities as Corporate Parents to Care Leavers. This Leaving Care Strategy provides more detailed strategic priorities for our Care Leavers and outlines our dedication to providing bespoke and robust support and services to all young people aged 16-25 who have been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old and were in care on or after their 16th birthday.

Rotherham Council are ambitious for our Care Leavers and want to ensure that when they leave care, they are prepared for independence and ready to achieve their ambitions. We need to recognise the unique characteristics and experiences of our Care Leavers, in order to support them to achieve their potential and to be successful in adulthood.

Care Leavers have had diverse and complex experiences and we must listen to their views, wishes and experiences, in order to understand their needs. Young people with care experience often have to grow up sooner than their peers who have not had experience of being in care, which makes them more vulnerable. As Corporate Parents we must ensure that we reduce barriers and support Care Leavers to overcome adversity, to help them to transition effectively to adulthood.

We want to ensure that Care Leavers contribute to service delivery and decision making, by hearing their voice and providing them with creative consultation opportunities. We recognise that Care Leavers are the experts in what they need and want in order to be successful.

An operational and a strategic Care Leavers Action Plan compliment this strategy, which will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are achieving our aspirations for Care Leavers and tracking progress. The Care Leavers Local Offer was also reviewed in 2024, which outlines the Local Authority's support and services for Care Leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Partnership Board is responsible for overseeing the delivery of Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy and associated service plans. The Board meets four to six times per year and is responsible for ensuring that the council fulfils its role as corporate parent. The Board will ensure that officers are held to account for the outcomes of children in care and Care Leavers and that their best interests are at the centre of decision making. Plans will also have oversight through performance meetings and boards.



Foreword – Nicola Curley, Strategic Director for Children's Services

This Care Leavers Strategy has been created to demonstrate how we will meet the needs of young people who are or have been looked after in Rotherham. We know it can be hard for young people to transition to adulthood and that young people who have been in care find this harder than their peers. For this reason, we have set out our priorities to ensure that young people are supported to become successful adults, with support both personally and professionally. We want all young people to have ambitions and we will support them to achieve their goals. We will work as a whole council to meet the needs of care leavers and provide them with high quality and accessible services. We will involve care leavers in service development and listen to their views and suggestions, to make sure services meet their needs. We will learn from their experiences and be good corporate parents and grandparents. We will support care leavers to be resilient and hardworking and will help them when they become parents themselves.

Foreword – Cllr. Victoria Cusworth, Cabinet Member for children and young people.

Leaving care is a significant milestone in the lives of young people, marking the transition from a structured environment to the broader world of independence. As Corporate Parents, we have a collective responsibility to ensure that this transition is as smooth and supportive as possible. Our care leavers deserve the same opportunities, support, and encouragement that any young person would expect from their family.

This strategy is a testament to our commitment to our young people. It outlines a comprehensive approach to addressing the unique challenges faced by care leavers, from securing stable housing and employment to accessing education and healthcare. By working collaboratively across the Council and with our partners, not forgetting the invaluable input of our care leavers themselves, we aim to create a robust support system that empowers these young people to thrive.

Our vision is clear: to provide care leavers with the tools, resources, and support they need to build fulfilling, independent lives. This strategy is not just a document; it is a promise to our care leavers that we will stand by them, advocate for them, and ensure that their voices are heard and their needs met.

Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can help our care leavers achieve their full potential.

Definition of a Care Leaver

A Care Leaver is a young person aged between 16 and 25 who has previously been in the care of the local authority. A young person is considered to be a Care Leaver when they reach 16 years old, even though they may not yet have left the care of the Local Authority.

The term 'Care Leaver' as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, refers to eligible, relevant and former relevant children:

- **Eligible** children are those young people aged 16-17 who are still in care and have been 'looked after' for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 and including their 16th birthday.
- **Relevant** children are those young people aged 16 and 17 who have already left care, and who were 'looked after' for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 and have been 'looked after' at some time while they were 16 or 17.
- **Former relevant** children are those young people aged 18, 19 or 20 who have been eligible and/or relevant.

A Care Leaver can also be considered as a **'qualifying'** care leaver.

- This applies to young people who: Left care after they had turned 16, but who are not 'eligible' or 'relevant' because they were not looked after for 13 weeks.
- Were not looked after on their 16th birthday but lived in residential education or a mental health establishment, or in private fostering or Special Guardianship.

For this category of care leaver, local authority help is discretionary, but can include advice, assistance, befriending, help with education and training costs and the provision of accommodation during college/university vacations.

National and Local Context

'In 2023 12,200 young people in England aged out of the care system on their 18th Birthday. This has increased by 2% since 2022 and increased by 7% since 2019'. Care leavers make up 25% of the adult homeless population (Home for Good, 2024).

The average age for young people leaving home is 23 years old. For Care Leavers this is much lower, with 1 out of 3 Care Leavers living independently aged 18 (Barnardo's, 2024). Young people leaving care, leave home much younger and more sudden transition to adulthood.

The Local Authority are now required to provide ongoing support to young people beyond 21 until they are 25 years old, if they require this. Local Authorities are also required to publish a Local Offer, outlining their support and services to Care Leavers. These services include health and wellbeing, education, training and employment, accommodation and financial support.

Stable Homes Built on Love Consultation (2023) outlined the need for Care Leavers to have the same level of support and care as any other young person. This addresses the need for stable and suitable accommodation for Care Leavers and to have access to appropriate networks, education, training and employment.

In Rotherham we have seen an increase in the numbers of Care Leavers by 11% in 18 months. The current number of Care Leavers aged 16-21 is 357 as at July 2024 and is expected to increase further temporarily. The service also provides ad hoc support and groups for Care Leavers aged 21-25. Forecasting predicts that numbers will start to steadily reduce after 2 years, cased on the numbers of children in care currently. Of note is the rising numbers of unaccompanied young people, who currently represent 9% of our children in care population.

The Vision



Bright Spots Indicators, Coram Voice (2024)

Our Care Leavers deserve the best opportunities in life, to be successful, independent and to transition positively to adulthood. It is important that young people have the life skills, confidence and support required to thrive in everything they do.

Meeting the needs of Care Leavers requires a multi-agency approach with Rotherham Children's Services and all partner agencies. We commit to being good Corporate Parents and to ensuring that our support and services for Care Leavers are the best they can be.

We want Care Leavers to have easy access to emotional and practical support from family, friends, networks and professionals. We expect young people to have a good understanding of their journey and life story and to have aspirations for their future.

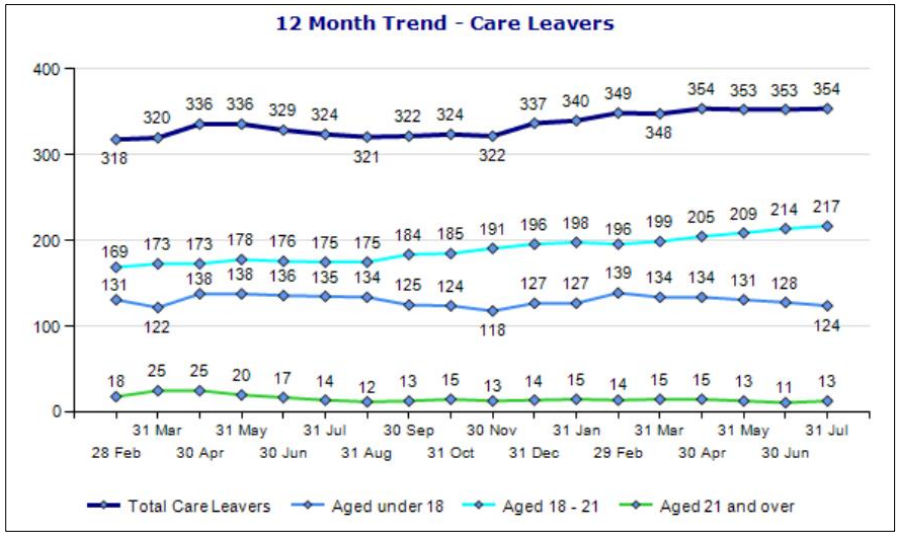
It is our vision for all Care Leavers to:

- Be healthy and have easy access to health care.
- Be safe and understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Have long lasting and supportive relationships.
- Engage in Education, Employment or Training.
- Access and sustain long term, good quality accommodation.
- Access their information and be supported to understand their history.
- Participate in society and influence services.
- Be in control of their own finances.
- Have positive emotional wellbeing and sense of self.
- Have access to ongoing support and advice.
- Be ambitious for their future.
- Make positive and safe choices.
- Be resilient.
- Be independent.

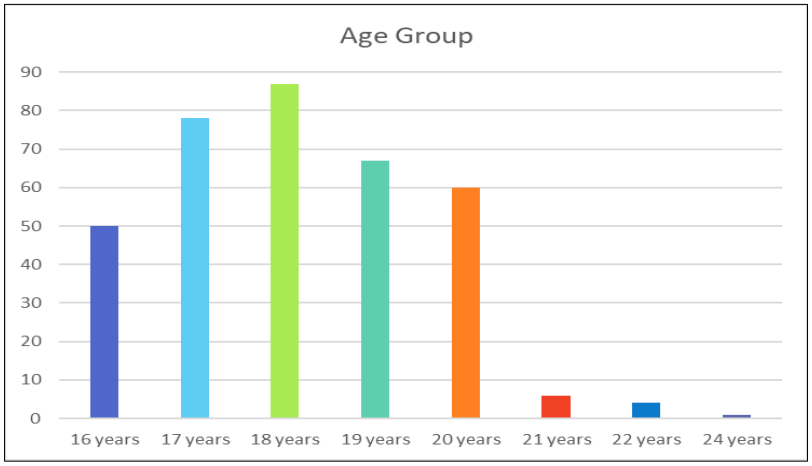
Leaving Care Data – Demographics

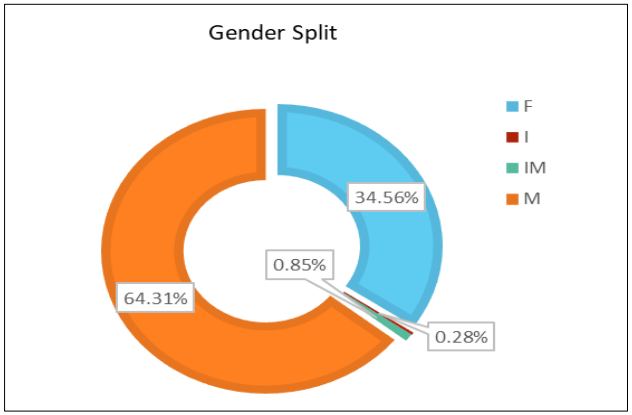
There are currently 357 Rotherham Care Leavers. This includes any young person 16 and over who have previously been or continue to be in the care of the Local Authority and who has an allocated Social Worker or Personal Advisor. This does not include those young people over 21 who no longer have an allocated Personal Advisor, though who may keep in touch with the service and access support from the leaving care team on an ad hoc basis until they are 25 years of age. The data below is set at the end of Quarter 1 on 30.6.24.

The chart below outlines how the number of Care Leavers has risen over the last 18 months and indicates a steady rise in numbers. Forecasting projects that after a further peak, over time this number will reduce, though this will be influenced by any changes in the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied young people.



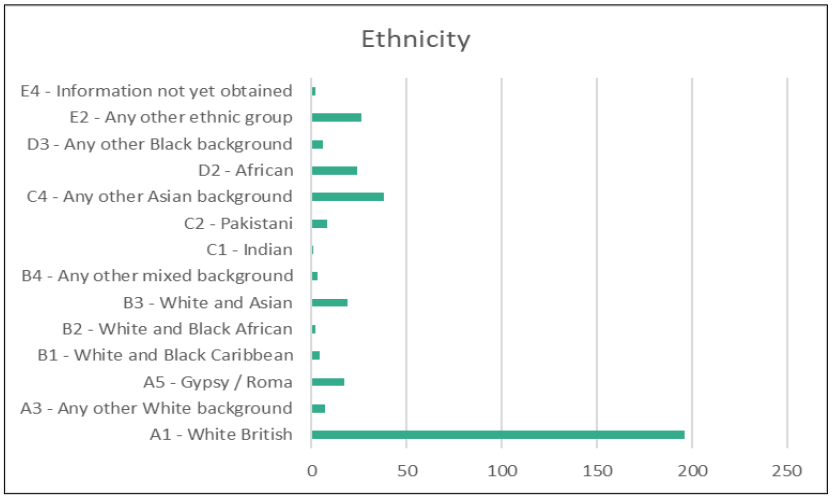
The age and gender profiles of Care Leavers is shown below. Due to the high numbers of unaccompanied young males, it is not unexpected that there is a higher proportion of males to females. The age profile of Care Leavers also identifies trends in increasing numbers of unaccompanied young people over the last 3-4 years.

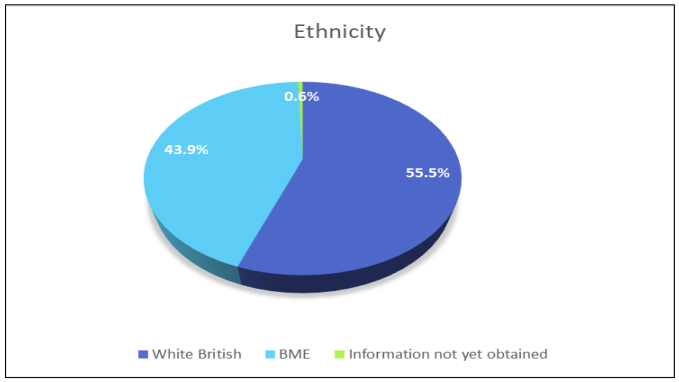




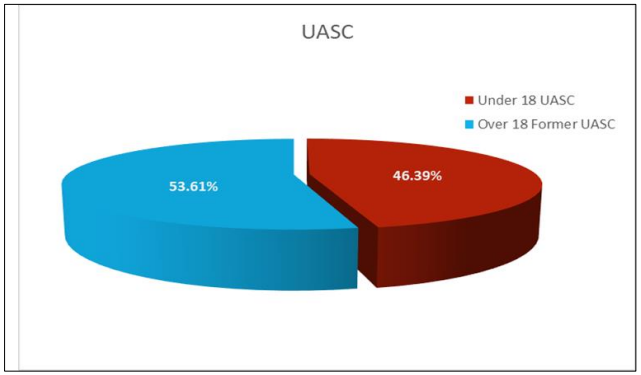
Leaving Care Data – Demographics

The charts below demonstrate the ethnicity and cultural background of the current Care Leaver population. This evidences that Rotherham's Care Leavers are a diverse group and that this does not reflect the wider population of Rotherham. As such ensuring that the cultural and identity needs of young people leaving care are met should be a priority.

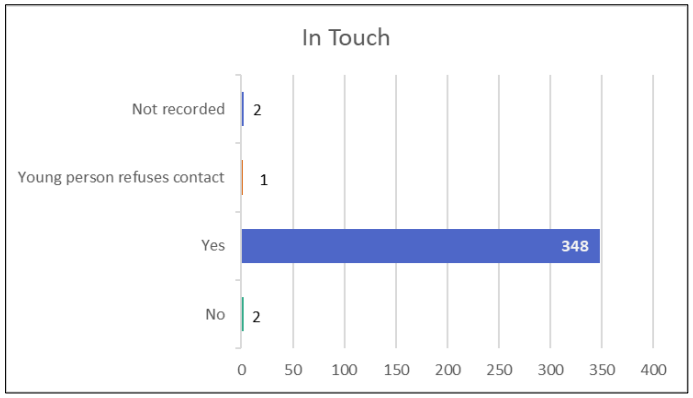




There are 95 Care Leavers aged between 16 and 21 years of age, who presented as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child on arrival. These numbers include young people open to the service and they make up 26% of the Leaving Care population. The breakdown of those over 18 and under 18 is shown below.



Almost all Care Leavers choose to continue to be in touch with the Local Authority. This is testament to the effort of Social Workers and Personal Advisors, who establish and sustain relationships with children and young people into adulthood and beyond.



Strategic Priority One: Family and Connections

Family and friends are undoubtedly the most important people for Care Leavers as they reach adulthood and start to navigate their way through adult life. Care Leavers need strong and supportive networks, who will be there for them whatever happens. It is our job to make sure that Care Leavers maintain contact with family, friends and connections and that these are not severed as they become adults.

What will we do?

- Support children in care and care leavers to maintain relationships with birth family and wider family or friend networks to ensure that they have sustainable support in adulthood.
- Utilise family network meetings and family group conferencing at specific points in a child's journey to promote lifelong links.
- Use the Caring Connections Family Group Conferencing, to work with care leavers to explore their networks and people who they want to stay in contact with from various points in their lives.
- Support Care Leavers to return to the care of their family, wherever this is possible, with the support they need to be safe and stable.
- Try not to change Personal Advisors unless this is unavoidable.
- Make sure that Care Leavers have safe and suitable accommodation in Rotherham, to ensure that they can remain, or return to Rotherham to be close to family and friends.
- Offer group activities to young people and signpost them to events, to support them to make friends and develop networks, as well as gain new hobbies.
- Encourage contact with previous foster carers or residential care workers.

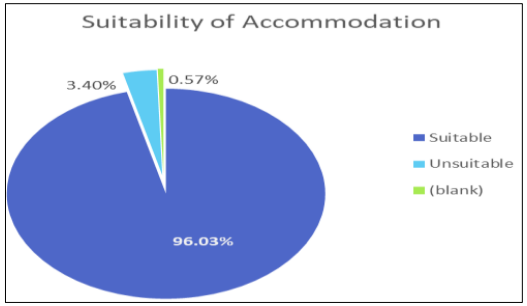
What will success look like?

- As adults, those with care experience will have sustainable family and friend support networks, who will be there in the long term to support them.
- Care leavers will have broader networks, who they can call upon for a range of support.
- Care leavers will keep in touch with services and share their experiences, seeking support and advice when they need this.
- Care leavers will be well prepared to live independently, or to gain as much independence as possible.
- Young people will not feel isolated and will feel supported to achieve their ambitions.
- Care leavers will feel safe and experience stability in their lives.



Strategic Priority Two: Safe and Affordable Homes

Currently 96% of Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation, which is a high number. We know that sourcing suitable accommodation, which meets the needs of Care Leavers is becoming more challenging. This is due to the national shortage of housing. We want to ensure that all of our Care Leavers can access suitable and affordable accommodation.



What will we do:

- Ensure there is a range of suitable, affordable accommodation options, including staying put, supported lodgings, semi supported, shared accommodation, houses of multiple occupancy and independent.
- Expand our in house supported accommodation to 20 dispersed properties, linked to dedicated 16 plus supported accommodation, which is staffed 24/7. These properties will help young people to get ready for independent living.
- Maintain close links between commissioning, children in care, leaving care, residential and 16 plus supported accommodation to forecast accommodation needs and commission appropriate services.
- Ensure that all of our commissioned accommodation is high quality, compliant, regulated and best cost value.
- Establish a 16+ Panel to track young people to appropriate destinations.
- Work with trusted providers to ensure accommodation and support is of good quality.
- Care Leavers will be supported to develop independence skills, to ensure they transition positively to independent living, including budgeting, paying bills, food shopping, cooking and prioritising.
- Pathway plans will be jointly created and will consider future living arrangements for young people, including what support will be offered to help to get them there.

What Will Success Look Like:

- All agencies will work together to secure, suitable, affordable and high-quality accommodation options for Care Leavers.
- There will be more options for young people to remain with carers, family or friends and where this is not possible to access a range of other accommodation options.
- More young people will be able to access in house supported accommodation.
- All Care Leavers will be able to articulate their destination goal and understand how they will get there.
- All Care Leavers will be better prepared for independence, without feeling rushed.
- Young people will be able to manage everyday issues and will know who to contact if they need help.



Strategic Priority Three: Education, Training and Employment

We are aspirational for Care Leavers and want them to access education, training, and employment. We know that this can sometimes be difficult for care leavers, who have sometimes experienced lots of transitions and may have lost time in education. We are committed to making sure that our young people are nurtured, supported and encouraged to reach their potential.

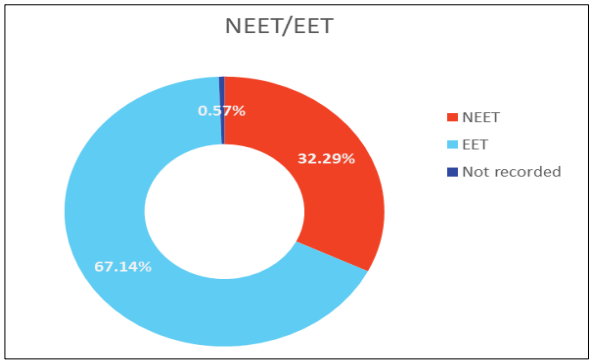
What will we do?

- Continue to ensure close links between the Virtual School and Leaving Care services by having a lead Personal Advisor for education, employment and training.
- Track young people who do not have an education, employment or training destination and offer bespoke support to them.
- Be aspirational with and for young people, helping them to identify their next steps and to reach their potential.
- Support young people who speak English as a second language to gain the skills they need to make progress in education, training or employment.
- Support our unaccompanied young people to enter education and to understand the education system in the UK.
- Support young people who have aspirations of further and higher education to reach their goals.
- Work with partner agencies to ensure that young people can access all the opportunities available to them and have priority for some services.
- Have a lead Personal Advisor for education, employment and training; working with partner agencies and developing ways to support our young people.
- Provide drop-in session at the Journey with the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Prepare a care leavers covenant, with partner agencies, to increase access to apprenticeship opportunities.
- Work with partner agencies and the private sector to encourage innovative opportunities for Care Leavers.
- Promote our entrepreneurial Care Leavers with self-employment opportunities, with local authority and external support.

What will success look like?

- More of our young people will take part in further and higher education courses.
- Pathway plans will have achievable, specific and measurable educational/work targets.
- Education, employment and training will be accessible for all care leavers, regardless of barriers.
- Care Leavers will have priority access to some apprenticeships, with Rotherham Council, the NHS and other partners, which will support them towards qualifications and careers.
- Young people aged 16 and 17 will be able to articulate aspirations and goals in personal education plan meetings.
- Schools and colleges will be instrumental in supporting students to be ambitious.
- Care Leavers will have easy access to appropriate support.

The charts below outline the numbers of Care Leavers currently in education, employment and training.



Strategic Priority Four: Health and Wellbeing

We know how important it is for our Care Leavers to have timely access to appropriate health and wellbeing services. We want all young people to be healthy, happy and to have positive mental wellbeing.

What will we do?

- We will ensure that there are effective links between designated health professionals and leaving care services, which will help to prioritise services.
- Young people can access support from their looked after nurses up to the age of 19.
- Named nurses will develop a final Review Health Assessment process for 17-year-olds, which will include a health passport and give details of local services. Young people will be asked if they would like a marker on their GP record which will tell their GP that they are care experienced.
- The specialist nursing team will work with GPs to help them to understand the experiences of Care Leavers.
- Work with adult social care and mental health services to make sure that young people transition well when they reach 18.
- Work with CAMHS colleagues to develop a trauma pathway where our young people can access intervention.
- We will ensure that services such as Support for Change, the Young Parent Service, substance misuse services and Sexual Health Services are easily accessible for Care Leavers.
- Care Leavers will be better supported to access initial health assessments, with individual intervention or longer appointment slots where needed.
- Strengthen the transition for care leavers between children's and adult's services by improving pathway assessments and joined up services.

What will success look like?

- Care Leavers will be able to quickly access services they need to support their health or wellbeing.
- Care experienced parents will be able to access specialist services to support them to be good parents.
- Health and wellbeing services will be aware of the impact of being care-experienced and will be able to offer empathic and specific support to Care Leavers.
- Young people will know where and how to access health and wellbeing and will have a health passport that can support them through adulthood.
- Unaccompanied and separated young people will have health needs identified at the earliest opportunity when they come into care.
- Care Leavers will transition successfully to adult services, without gaps in service.
- Young people who need trauma therapy will have better access to this, so that their emotional health can be supported and stabilised.
- Young people will understand their journey and will be supported to overcome adversity.



Strategic Priority Five: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People

We know that our unaccompanied and separated children and young people endure difficult and traumatic journeys to the UK and need our support to adapt to life in the UK. We hope to support young people to develop new networks whilst maintaining as many family links as we can.

What will we do?

- Ensure that children and young people are supported by workers who understand their life experiences.
- Support children and young people to maintain their important relationships with people who may not live in the same country as they do.
- We will work with health providers and voluntary organisations to identify pathways for emotional support.
- We will develop practice guidance to support social workers to do the right work, at the right time, with our children and young people.
- We will make sure that we have more social workers who are trained in age assessments to ensure that we are completing timely age assessments.
- Support children and young people to identify what makes them unique and work together to understand their cultural and identity needs and how to support these needs.
- Continue to work with other local authorities, migration organisations and partner agencies; both across the region and nationwide, to understand more about our young people's journey and the legal and political frameworks which affect our young people.
- We will have a directory of support available for children and young people, and our partners.
- With our accommodation providers, we will help our young people to understand what life in the UK is like and support them to have a successful life.
- Our Virtual School will offer additional support to our young people who speak English as a second language.
- Our health partners will ensure health needs are identified at the young person's first health appointment and will offer, as standard, additional time for the young person's appointment.

- **What will success look like?**
- Young people will have been able to talk about their life in their home country and their journey with their social worker or PA if they want to.
- Our young people will be able to sustain the relationships that are important to them and will feel a sense of connection even if they live in different countries.
- Young people will be able to access specialist support to help them make sense of their life experiences.
- Young people will be able to access support from their workers to understand how to access resources in their community, such as places of worship, social activities, and housing.
- Young people will work with their social worker or personal advisor to write a triple plan, which will help them understand their next steps, dependent on the outcome of their asylum application.
- More social workers will be able to undertake age assessments and will have the knowledge to support young people through their asylum applications.
- We will have a skilled workforce, who understand the local and regional context for our separated young people and can support our young people effectively with this knowledge.
- Young people will know which agencies can support them in specific areas of their lives.

Strategic Priority Six: Engagement and Participation

We want to hear the voice of all Care Leavers, who are the experts on what they need. We want Care Leavers to influence and shape services and contribute to decisions which are made about their future. We want to work in partnership with all children and young people, to influence and shape service delivery and review. Young people will have a forum where they can work in partnership with services to translate this collective voice into service delivery and review.

What will we do?

- Upskill the workforce to be creative about seeking the voice of young people, in a variety of forums. We will ask our Care Leavers to support with training the workforce.
- Work with the newly established care leavers forum, we will consult with the care leavers community to understand what they want from the forum moving forward and how we can best engage them to maximise their voice.
- Build on the numbers of young people attending the leaving care forum to create a group that is diverse and representative.
- Review the use of 'The Journey' which is the hub to support care leavers to develop new skills, access support and socialise. All of these services will be evaluated to source feedback from young people.
- Create a visible pledge to our children and young people setting out how we will work with them as equals to design, review, and influence services.
- Continue to involve Care Leavers in recruitment and training of Children's workforce, foster carers and residential staff.
- Continue to and expand upon Care Leavers participation in the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.
- Develop online surveys to capture the views, experience and feedback of care leavers, including around transitions.

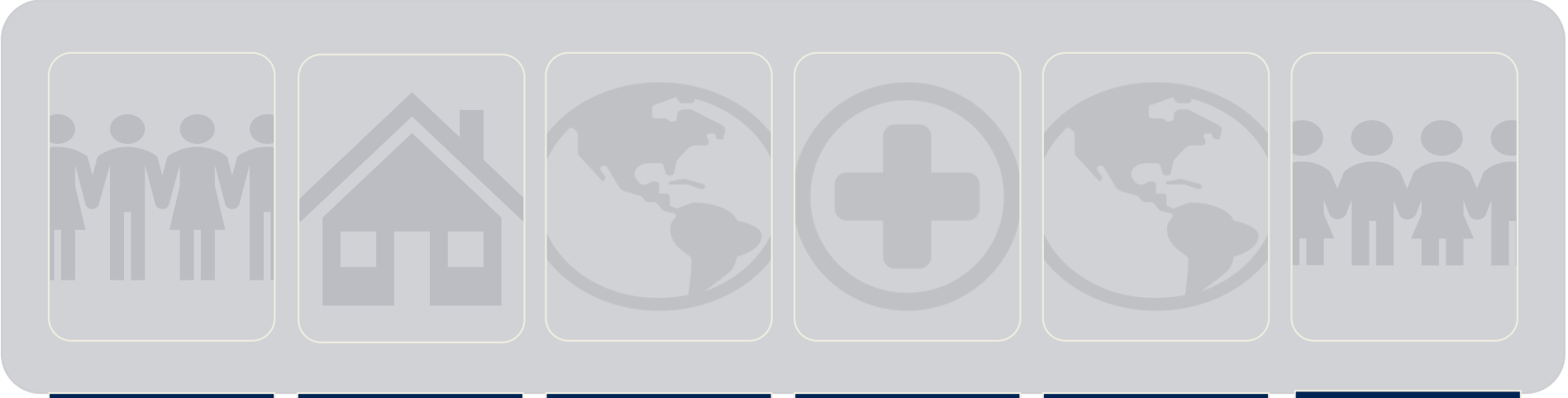
Produce six monthly reports, which evidence good practice across the service and capture the progress of voice and participation for Care Leavers. These reports will be shared with the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and the wider workforce.

What will success look like?

- The workforce and managers will feel confident about supporting young people to express their views, wishes and feelings and to participate in decisions about their plan.
- There will be an active and vibrant care leavers forum. The group will tell us that they feel represented and heard.
- Care Leavers will understand and agree with their care plan.
- Good quality feedback will be collated frequently and used to inform the wider workforce.
- The voice of care leavers will be evident in the policies and services that are delivered by agencies.
- The Council will deliver high quality services, which are led by Care Leavers
- The Corporate Parenting Partnership Board will lead on priorities which are set by Care Leavers.
- We will have links regionally and nationally to be part of the greater carer leavers voice community.



Three Year Priorities: Summary



Family and Connections

- Relationships
- Networks
- Support
- Stability
- Friendships
- Sustainable Links
- Social Activities

Safe and Affordable Homes

- Types of Accommodation and Arrangements
- Support to Develop Independence
- More In-house Provision
- Tenancy Ready

Education, Training and Employment

- Aspirational and Ambitious
- Range of Apprenticeships
- Qualifications
- Employment Options
- Drop in Clinics
- Covenant
- Accessibility

Health and Wellbeing

- Access to services
- Specialist support
- Mental Health Services
- Transition to Adults Services
- Health Passport
- Young Parents

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People

- Support
- Pathways
- Guidance
- Timely age assessments
- National and Regional Links
- Education Opportunities
- Relationships and Connections

Engagement and Participation

- Care Leaver Forum
- Consultation
- Representation
- Pledge
- Surveys
- Feedback
- Training
- Priorities



Working with Rotherham's children, young people and families to be resilient, successful and safe.

Appendix 2

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027	
Directorate: CYPS	**Service area:** Children's Social Care
Lead person: Jane Wood	**Contact:** Jane-e.wood@rotherham.gov.uk
Is this a: [x] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy provides a strategic plan about support and services for Care Leavers and proposed development in this area. This includes six key priorities over the next three years.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? *(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)*	×	
Could the proposal affect service users? *(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)*	×	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? *(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)*	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? *(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)*	x	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? *(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)*	×	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? *(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)*	x	

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6.**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4.**

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made**.**

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

Equality and diversity has been considered at all key stages for the Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024- 2027. This has included consideration of the diverse cohort of children in care and care leavers and the impact of service delivery.

There are currently 357 Care Leavers aged 16-21 in Rotherham. Children and young people are from varying backgrounds and circumstances.

- **Key findings**

The Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy sets out the Councils strategic priorities for Care Leavers, including support and services, over the next three years. This also sets out the Local Authorities corporate parenting responsibilities and the input of partners.

We intend to support and prepare Care Leavers in Rotherham to transition successfully to adulthood, with access to support and services when required.

We know that care leavers are a vulnerable group in society, and many have experienced adversity in their childhoods and beyond. We propose to ensure that all care leavers can access the right services at the right time to enable them to achieve their potential.

We intend to support all Care Leavers to develop appropriate independence, to express their views and to make positive choices.

- **Actions**

Equality and Diversity information will continue to be monitored throughout the delivery of the Leaving Care Strategy, with oversight by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

Further Equality Impact Analysis will be completed as required as part of the delivery associated with the strategy.

A range of approaches will be used to ensure that children, young people and families play a key part in the evaluation of the Leaving Care Strategy.

The development of the strategy has been undertaken with children and young people

and their families in mind, and in conjunction with frontline staff and partner agencies.	
Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	Completed
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	September 2024
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Jane Wood Head of Service for Children in Care and Corporate Parenting.

5. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Nicola Curley	Strategic Director for Childrens Services	

6. Publishing	
This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date screening completed	13/9/2024
Report title and date	Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	November 2024
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	September 2024

Appendix 3

PART B – Equality Analysis Form

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic.
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences.
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027	
Date of Equality Analysis 13/9/24	
Directorate: CYPS	**Service area:** Leaving Care
Lead Manager: Jane Wood	**Contact number:** 01709 254791
Is this a: [x] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance		
Name	**Organisation**	**Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)**
Nicola Curley	RMBC	Strategic Director of Children's Social Care
Monica Green	RMBC	Assistant Director Children's Services
Kim Wilson	RMBC	Service Manager Children in Care and Leaving Care

3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)
This may include a group/s identified by a protected characteristic, others groups or stakeholder/s e.g. service users, employees, partners, members, suppliers etc.)

This report screens the activity undertaken to progress the Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027. It is important to note that the strategy specifically relates to care leavers and as such excludes children not in this category. This strategy incorporates all care leavers and does not exclude any child or young person within that range.

What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)

Equality information is captured as part of our existing service delivery and identified priorities. This includes data for all children in care and care leavers, including, though not limited to age, gender, ethnicity and disability status.

Data was used to inform the strategy in respect of identifying gaps in provision and services.

Equality information is available through existing delivery in the following ways:

Regular monitoring and oversight through the Corporate Parenting Panel
Children in Care Council
Care Leavers Forum
Performance Practice and Learning
CYPS performance reporting – Scorecards and Dashboards
Audit and QA activity
DfE
Department for Health & Social Care
Ofsted
Staff and SW Health Check

A service plan and Covenant will sit alongside the strategy, which will include diversity and equality information. This will also incorporate the views of children in care and care leavers, which will be used to review and monitor progress of the plan.

Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of? None identified.
What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics? The Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy will be reviewed annually or when there is a change in support or service to care leavers. This will have the oversight of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board. This will consider oversight and implementation of the strategy. Performance and quality monitoring will measure the progress and impact of the strategy. Existing data and established methodology across the children's workforce will continue to be used to monitor impact on those groups with protected characteristics. As part of current practice, the voice of children and families is sought through audit activity, and a variety of voice groups. The Care Leavers Forum will contribute to the service planning and progress of this strategy

Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)	There has been ongoing engagement with partner agencies regarding the creation of the Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy. Previous consultation with children in care and care leavers has informed this strategy.
Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s)consulted and key findings)	Managers and front-line staff have been involved in the preparation of the Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy and service planning. Where appropriate this has also included involvement from wider directorates, including HR, Finance and Legal.

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)
How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance) Service delivery is regulated by a range of Legislation and Guidance, as well as oversight from the regulatory body, Ofsted. Service delivery is utilising a restorative, inclusive approach. While this strategy is specific to care leavers, the proposals do not exclude any group within this category. There is also a focus on meeting the individual needs of children and young people.

The strategy intends to outline the key priorities for Care Leavers as well as the corporate parenting responsibility for RMBC as well as all partner agencies to enable agencies to focus on the individual needs of care leavers. Children and young people with disabilities and additional needs may be signposted to other support and services or supported to access relevant benefits if required.
Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups? No, the Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy intends to equip the workforce and wider partner agencies to meet the needs of care leavers and gain a better understanding of their corporate parenting responsibilities.
Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers? Yes, the Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy proposes support and services which will improve the lives of care leavers, enable them to participate better in society and achieve their potential, transitioning successfully to adulthood. This Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy will support services and partner to remove barriers for children in care and care leavers and to support them to overcome adversity.
What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another) The Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy is deliberately focussed on care leavers and as such does not include children outside of this group. This is because we know young people with experience of care are more disadvantaged that young people who have not. This also sets out the corporate parenting responsibilities for the workforce and wider partner agencies. It is expected that this Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy will have a positive impact upon community relations, including increasing the opportunities for care leavers.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance

Title of analysis: Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027
Directorate and service area: CYPS. Children's Social Care
Lead Manager: Jane Wood
Summary of findings:

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy implementation	A, D, S, GR, RE, ROB, SO, C, O	**September 2027**
Seek to remove barriers for young people who may have protected characteristics in terms of accessing services set out in the Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy	A, D, S, GR, RE, ROB, SO, C, O	**September 2025**
Ensure that all children and young people are treated fairly and with respect throughout the implementation of this strategy	A, D, S, GR, RE, ROB, SO, C, O	**September 2025**
Complete a further equality analysis after 12 months to ensure the success of this strategy and identify any issues.	A, D, S, GR, RE, ROB, SO, C, O	**September 2025**

***A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups**

6. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Nicola Curley	Director of Children's Services	
Monica Green	Assistant Director Children's Services	
Cllr Cusworth	Lead Member Children's Services	

7. Publishing	
The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If this Equality Analysis relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date Equality Analysis completed	13.9.24
Report title and date	Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy 2024-2027
Date report sent for publication	2024
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	2024

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	No change				
Emissions from transport?	No change				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	No change				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	No change				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	No change				
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	No change				

Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:

Comments by Arthur King, Principal Climate Change Officer;

Since the Care Leavers Strategy is high-level in its vision and intended outcomes, I haven't been able to identify any additional carbon impacts.

However, I would note that safe and affordable homes (*Priority 2*) must be safe from damp and mould and affordable to heat, so there may be an opportunity to specify e.g., a minimum EPC band C for all supported accommodation, which would have additional benefits for climate change and the environment.

(For context, social housing providers have a statutory duty to ensure that all their properties are rated EPC band C or above by 2030.)

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

Supporting information:	
Completed by: **(Name, title, and service area/directorate).**	Jane Wood Head of Service for Children in Care and Corporate Parenting
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	None required
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	Not relevant
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	Tracking Reference: CIA 341 Arthur King Principal Climate Change Officer

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet - 18 November 2024

Report Title
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)
Tony Morrissey, Head of Service, Safeguarding, Quality and Learning, CYPS

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary
Protecting children from abuse, neglect and exploitation requires multi-agency join up and cooperation at all levels. Local organisations and agencies that work with children and families play a significant and often statutory role when it comes to safeguarding children.

The way in which these organisations and agencies work together is known as multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA). Robust arrangements help to ensure that information about a child and their family is shared effectively, risk of harm is correctly identified and understood, and that children and families receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way.

This report contains changes to and updated information relating to the place-based arrangements for the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP), which will now also include additional arrangements for South Yorkshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. The previous arrangements were published in 2019 and have been updated to reflect the changes within the new Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) statutory guidance.

The additional Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangement for South Yorkshire will mean that Chief Executive of the ICB, Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police and Chief Executive of the Council will meet twice a year to provide strategic oversight and agree the vision and priorities for safeguarding children in Rotherham. This will be replicated with the other South Yorkshire Local Authority Chief Executives and any safeguarding matters across the region in which collaboration would prove effective will be considered. It will also enable the sharing of good practice across the region.

As outlined in the Multi Agency Safeguarding arrangements we will continue to have our Rotherham arrangements which will be monitored locally by representatives from the ICB, South Yorkshire Police and the Chief Executive.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet endorse the South Yorkshire Multi Agency Safeguarding arrangements which include the place-based Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP) Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.

2. That Cabinet approve the Local Authority involvement in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and receives appropriate reports on progress against the RSCP priorities and the Annual Report on impact of the RSCP in safeguarding children and young people.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1	South Yorkshire Multi Agency Safeguarding arrangements 2024
Appendix 2	Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
Appendix 3	Part A Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 4	Part B Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 5	Carbon Impact Assessment

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Background Papers
No

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
No

Council Approval Required
No

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

1. Background

1.1 The Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, requires that the three safeguarding partners (Local Authorities, Integrated Care Board and Chief Officers of Police), make arrangements to work in partnership together along with relevant agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area. The safeguarding partners are:

- NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC)
- South Yorkshire Police (SYP)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), is the statutory guidance which outlines what the responsibilities of safeguarding partners are, delivered through the new safeguarding arrangements. This includes a shared accountability between the three key partners and the requirement to have independent scrutiny. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding document has been updated in 2024 to reflect the new language and changes adopted in Working Together 2023. The three key partners must publish their arrangements by December 2024. Transitional guidance has also been published to set out the change from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) to the new safeguarding children's arrangements, which includes new accountability arrangements for Child Death Reviews and the move away from Serious Case Reviews.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This means:

- There is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm, including analysis of the voice of the child and family and insights from data.
- Ensuring that organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account so that when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child.
- Senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice, and they promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice.

2.2 In Rotherham, the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership complies with the multi-agency safeguarding requirements in aligning delivery groups to the strategic priorities. These are:

- Child Exploitation Delivery Group
- Neglect Delivery Group
- Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group
- Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Group

Each of these groups is chaired by senior representatives from across the partnership and they report directly to the Executive Group of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership, as per the diagram in the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements document. This ensures that the actions and methods of each group are scrutinised and overseen, with support and guidance given from the Executive.

2.3 Working Together 2023 sets out the expectations for the strategic leadership and accountability of Safeguarding Partnerships. This is achieved via the oversight and direction of Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs). Each Local Safeguarding Partnership is responsible for discharging their own statutory and legislative duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Working Together 2023 also sets out that the Lead Safeguarding Partners should appoint one of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners, as the partnership chair for the multi-agency arrangements. Rotherham are proposing that this function is undertaken by the Independent Chair/Scrutineer given the knowledge the Independent Chair/Scrutineer already has in working with Rotherham. This has been shared with the Department for Education who were not opposed to this approach. In addition, there are a number of other safeguarding children's partnerships similar to Rotherham who are also retaining their independent chair who will also act as their independent scrutineer.

2.4 The multi-agency arrangements set out the roles and responsibilities of Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners in more detail, including the proposed role of the independent chair/scrutineer. In line with the expectations set out in Working Together 2023, the key responsibilities of the safeguarding partners are to ensure that:

- There is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm.
- When a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child.
- Organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account.
- The voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice.
- Information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children.
- Effective collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across relevant agencies.
- Senior leaders promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice.

- Senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families.

2.5 In addition, the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership will;

- Implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents.
- Achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families ensuring they receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way.

2.6 The purpose of these local arrangements is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

- Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted.
- Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share, and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children.
- Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively.
- There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats.
- Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice.
- Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families.

2.7 In order to work together effectively, the safeguarding partners with other local organisations and agencies will develop processes that:

- Facilitate and drive action beyond usual institutional and agency constraints and boundaries.
- Ensure the effective protection of children is founded on practitioners developing lasting and trusting relationships with children and their families.
- To be effective, these arrangements must link to other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. In Rotherham we have regular meetings that bring together the chairs of the children's and adults' safeguarding boards, the chair of the health and wellbeing board, the chair of the children and young people's transformation board and the chair of the safer Rotherham partnership. These meetings, supported by the business units for the various boards, ensure that priorities and business plans are shared and aligned.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including maintaining an Independent Chair/Scrutineer in Rotherham. Endorsement of the South Yorkshire and Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency safeguarding Arrangements will ensure the Council has set out its commitment in line with its duty to ensure that there are safeguarding arrangements in place for all children and young people.

3.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the Local Authority involvement in the South Yorkshire and Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

3.3 The alternative option is not to endorse the South Yorkshire and Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This is not recommended as the South Yorkshire and Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is a co-produced multi-agency document that incorporates how partners will work together to safeguard children and young people in Rotherham and the governance arrangements associated with this, including the role of the independent scrutineer.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The development of the revised multi-agency safeguarding arrangements have involved collaborative working across South Yorkshire and Rotherham, including the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership, Children and Young Peoples Services, Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), Legal Services and Finance.

4.2 The proposed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements have been discussed at Wider Partnership Meetings in the context of the changes contained in Working Together 2023.

4.3 The multi- agency safeguarding document has been circulated and agreed with the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Group.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The document will be reviewed annually or in line with relevant legislative changes and updates.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from review of the multi-agency safeguarding approach.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from the review of the multi-agency safeguarding approach.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 No direct HR implications within this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implications to vulnerable children and young people are covered within the report and in appendices.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Equality and human rights are considered within the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.

11. Implications for CO_2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 No direct CO_2 Emissions and Climate Change implications within this report.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Implications for partners are reflected in the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 These are referred to in the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.

14. Accountable Officers

Tony Morrissey, Head of Safeguarding

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	04.11.24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	22.10.24
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	23.10.24

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South Yorkshire
Safeguarding Children Partnerships

Multi-Agency Handbook for Safeguarding Children Arrangements

September 2024

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the new South Yorkshire Multi-Agency Handbook covering the arrangements for Safeguarding Children, which has been developed in accordance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

In this document we have set out the way in which partners in South Yorkshire will work together to identify the needs of children across the region and to provide children with the help and protection they require. The handbook is an essential tool for anyone involved in the partnership and will be reviewed on an annual basis for accuracy, with key sections on process and membership updated when any changes occur.

The handbook outlines how the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) across South Yorkshire will work together in ensuring children and young people are safeguarded, taking into account the different demographics and priorities across the four local authorities.

The handbook is split into two distinct sections:

- The first outlining how the LSPs will deliver and fulfil their functions on a South Yorkshire regional basis, including principles in respect to the scrutiny role of the Independent Scrutineer
- the second section on each individual handbook will outline how the individual local authority will fulfil its Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSPs) and Executive function along with its priorities and sub structure to deliver its safeguarding arrangements.

The three safeguarding partners and their wider partnerships of local agencies and organisations are committed to building on the progress already made and look to continually improve, ensuring that children and families are given help as early as possible and are protected effectively when they need to be.

We will:

- Work together collectively across the partnership to safeguard children
- Ensure the partnership demonstrates openness and transparency in all its work
- Work with children and families to make sure our services are responsive to their needs
- Maintain a strong oversight of performance and safeguarding practice
- Allocate adequate resources and expertise to fulfil our responsibilities
- Keep a continued focus on learning and improvement

2. Signatories

Gavin Boyle, Chief Executive,

NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Date: …….

Lauren Poultney, Chief Constable, South Yorkshire Police

Date: …….

Sharon Kemp, Chief Executive, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Date: …….

Kate Josephs, Chief Executive, Sheffield City Council

Date: ……

Damian Allen, Chief Executive, City of Doncaster

Sarah Norman, Chief Executive, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

3. Background

The Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, requires that the three safeguarding partners (Local Authorities, Integrated Care Board and Chief Officers of Police), make arrangements to work in partnership together along with relevant agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), is the statutory guidance which outlines what the responsibilities of safeguarding partners are, delivered through the new safeguarding arrangements. This includes a shared accountability between the three key partners, the requirement to have independent scrutiny and the transition from Serious Case Reviews to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

The three key partners must publish their arrangements by 31st December 2024. Transitional guidance has also been published to set out the change from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to the new safeguarding children arrangements, which includes new accountability arrangements for Child Death Reviews and the move away from Serious Case Reviews.

4. South Yorkshire Safeguarding Partners responsibilities

There will be two meetings of South Yorkshire LSPs to look at local place based arrangements and any safeguarding matters across the region in which collaboration would prove effective.

The safeguarding partners in South Yorkshire are:

- **NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)**
- **South Yorkshire Local Authorities Chief Executives**
- **South Yorkshire Police (SYP)**

The geographic area for which the safeguarding partners have safeguarding responsibilities is South Yorkshire. The local authorities in the area are Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield. The NHS services in the area consist of the NHS South Yorkshire ICB and the following provider services via this link South Yorkshire ICS - Home (syics.co.uk).The Police force for the area is South Yorkshire Police. As outlined below placed based arrangements will also be in place to ensure that local arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The arrangements for South Yorkshire and individual local authority footprints recognises the importance of strong leadership for the new arrangements to be effective in bringing together

the various organisations and agencies and the lead representative from each of the three safeguarding partners will play an active role at all levels of the new arrangements.

In line with the expectations set out in Working Together 2023, the key responsibilities of the safeguarding partners are to ensure that:

- There is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm
- When a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child
- Organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account
- The voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice
- Information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children
- Effective collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across relevant agencies
- Senior leaders promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- Senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families

In addition, we will:

- Implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents.
- Achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families ensuring they receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way.

The purpose of these arrangements is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

- Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted
- Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
- Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
- There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
- Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families

In order to work together effectively, the safeguarding partners with other local organisations and agencies will develop processes that:

- Facilitate and drive action beyond usual institutional and agency constraints and boundaries
- Ensure the effective protection of children is founded on practitioners developing lasting and trusting relationships with children and their families
- To be effective, these arrangements must link to other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families.

5. How the Safeguarding Children Partnership will work

The Chief Officer Group of Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) consists of:

- Chief Constable SYP – Lauren Poultney
- Chief Executives of Barnsley, Sarah Norman, Doncaster, Damian Allen, Rotherham, Sharon Kemp and Sheffield, Kate Josephs
- Chief Executive ICB – Gavin Boyle

These members will meet twice a year to provide strategic oversight and agree the vision and priorities for safeguarding children in respect to each local authority safeguarding arrangements in South Yorkshire. It will ensure that there are strategic links with other partnership boards operating across local authorities in relation to safeguarding children and

will also provide a mechanism for escalation of safeguarding risks from the respective Executive Group. The Chief Officer Group will also agree the funding and resourcing arrangements for each of the partnerships and ensure reports are published annually, on the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements in each place based area.

Working Together 2023 sets out the following responsibilities of LSPs.

1. Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.

2. Lead their organisation's individual contribution to the shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.

3. Review and sign off key partnership documents: published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report, and local threshold document.

4. Provide shared oversight of learning from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice (as set out in the yearly report).

5. Ensure multi-agency arrangements have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.

6. Ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings, are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

6. Independent scrutiny

The role of independent scrutiny in each local authority arrangements, will provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguarding and promote the welfare of all children, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases. This will be part of a wider system which includes the independent inspectorates' single assessment of the individual safeguarding partners, Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAIs) and Peer Review activity across the region. Safeguarding partners will ensure that the scrutineer is objective, acts as a constructive critical friend and promotes

reflection to drive continuous improvement. The Scrutineer will consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership.

Key responsibilities of the Independent Scrutineer:

- Agree with the safeguarding partners how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership.
- To develop strategic links, support and hold to account all LSPs in fulfilling their safeguarding duties for children.
- Ensure that local arrangements are designed to work collaboratively and effectively by encouraging and supporting the development of partnership working between the LSPs, DSPs, independent scrutiny role and MASA sub-groups.
- Offer appropriate challenge and scrutiny to ensure that the partners are accountable, and that the local arrangements operate effectively.
- Scrutinise the work of the sub-groups and the progress of the business plan.
- Deliver an Annual Report in collaboration with the safeguarding partners.
- Act objectively as a critical friend to promote reflection and drive continuous improvement.
- Lead challenge sessions in relation to organisations' safeguarding children arrangements.
- Have access to and is sighted on relevant (single and multi-agency) safeguarding performance data and quality assurance information to effectively challenge practice and across the partnership to improve outcomes for children.
- Have an influencing role within and across the partnership with regard to multi-agency practice and outcomes for children.
- Participate in reviews by Inspectorates when required, including JTAI's. Holds partners to account for Improvement Plans (including attendance at Improvement Boards) arising from Inspection and Peer Review activity.

- Be alerted to serious safeguarding cases, incidences of whistleblowing relating to safeguarding matters and act as a point of escalation when safeguarding partners are unable to find a resolution within the partnership.
- Seek assurance and scrutinises decision making in relation to Serious Child Safeguarding Cases.
- Have a line of sight to frontline practice and outcomes for children – where appropriate is able to observe practice, engage with practitioners, children and their families with regard to their experience of the safeguarding system.
- Communicate with external local/regional/national organisations and governmental departments where appropriate in relation to safeguarding matters impacting on partnership working and outcomes for children.
- Engage with community groups or community representatives in matters relating to safeguarding children.
- Meet with chairs of other Local Authority Partnership Boards (SAB, Community Safety Boards, and H&WB).

7. Independent Scrutiny Principles

The following are scrutiny principles to be applied across all Local Authorities to provide a level of consistency in application of scrutiny:

Why Scrutiny?

The decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny is made locally, and the LSPs should be assured that the system in place leads to objective and rigorous analysis of the local arrangements. Many partners and statutory agencies cover not only locally, but sub-regionally, such as SYP and SYICB. Consistency of approach is beneficial for partners, and a core minimum standard, that can have local additions when required.

Independent scrutiny can be delivered through a range of methods and structures, and local areas may choose to have an individual or an externally commissioned group delivering their scrutiny, but above all it must be independent. The core requirement expected by the LSPs is that there is independent scrutiny at a local and sub-regional level.

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny allows an overview of a partnership's activity, allows individuals in the partnership and local communities to hold decision-makers accountable, and obtains reassurance regarding services delivered. Effective scrutiny ensures the efficient delivery of services and drives improvements within the partnership and individual organisations, and at a strategic and operational level.

The key guiding principles of scrutiny that the partnership will adhere to and work towards are that the scrutineer will: -

- Provide constructive “critical friend” challenges to all areas of activity.
- Ensure the voice and concerns of the public are addressed.
- Be independent people who take responsibility for their role.
- Drive improvement in public services across the partnership.
- Be aware of the local, regional and national pressures and best practice.

The detail and rationale behind these principles are:

Critical friend challenge

Being a “critical friend” is a balancing act. Scrutiny must be challenging, whilst supportive and encouraging so as not to distance decision-makers and practitioners. Everyone has a collective responsibility to build a culture of high support and high challenge.

The voice and concerns of the public

Scrutineers must ensure that the voice of the community and stakeholders are heard in the way that decision-makers design and deliver services and that they have a role in developing and improving what is offered. They must also improve the practice of scrutiny itself by ensuring that the work that is delivered is outward-focused, looking at issues that are important to local people and communities.

Led by independent people

Scrutineers must be independent. It can be a challenging, political and emotive role, and is often resource intensive. Many organisations operating across the partnership have other

roles and responsibilities and pressures beyond that under scrutiny, and independence ensures the pressures are understood, considered and given context. Scrutineers should in conjunction with partners set an audit and scrutiny schedule and ensure everyone is engaged.

Improvement in public services

Scrutiny needs to lead to change and service improvements, building on the good and developing areas that require improvements. Organisations and partnerships can always enhance the services they deliver, and as communities change, so do their needs and expectations. Scrutiny needs to ensure this is paramount and always a focus of the role.

Local, Regional and National pressures and practice

Scrutineers need to understand the pressures locally, regionally, and nationally and be aware of what is working and what isn't. Horizon scanning and network building are essential parts of scrutiny, helping to identify best practice and gaining support to develop areas that need improvement. The more people involved, the better the discussion and the better the solutions.

Areas of responsibility

The following areas are the core requirements of scrutiny expected by LSPs:

1) Reviewing Management Information, including:
    - Performance information, supplied quarterly by all partners
    - Finance & Budget information
    - Partnership Risk Register
    - Complaints, compliments data and any identified trends.
2) Investigating cross-cutting partnership issues and locality-based issues across other partnerships to ensure a coordinated approach and avoid duplication of work.
3) Horizon scanning: looking for best practices, building networks, and ensuring partners are not working in isolation, but supporting each other.
4) Production of the relevant annual reports expected in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
5) Visibility to all partners with an ethos that the scrutineer is known throughout the partnership.

6) Work collaboratively across the sub-region, with scrutineers assisting each other and meeting regularly to develop consistency and service improvements at sub-regional level.

There may be additions to the core requirements locally, and other areas of governance and scrutiny that take place dependent on community and partnership needs and priorities. How the role is resourced and delivered is a local decision and it is accepted that there may be differences sub-regionally.

How the partnership uses the scrutineer to represent them, locally, regionally or nationally is also a local decision and needs to meet the local needs and governance structures, that will naturally vary. What is essential is that the scrutineers share best practice and assist with areas for improvement.

8. Local Authority Arrangements

Each Local Authority will agree their local arrangements in respect to their Executive, Designated Safeguarding Partner (DSPs) and any relevant agencies they feel need to be members of their Executive.

In addition, each Local Authority will agree their priorities, wider safeguarding partners, and how they will engage the wider partners in their arrangements.

Working Together 2023 sets out the following Joint functions of delegated safeguarding partners of LSPs.

1. Delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures to protect and safeguard children in the local area, in compliance with published arrangements and thresholds.

2. Close partnership working and engagement with education (at strategic and operational level) and other relevant agencies, allowing better identification of and response to harm.

3. The implementation of effective information sharing arrangements between agencies, including data sharing that facilitates joint analysis between partner agencies.

4. Delivery of high-quality and timely rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews, with the impact of learning from local and national reviews and independent scrutiny clearly evidenced in yearly reports.

5. The provision of appropriate multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training.

6. Seeking of, and responding to, feedback from children and families about their experiences of services and co-designing services to ensure children from different communities and groups can access the help and protection they need.

Each Local Authority in this section of these arrangements will confirm their Executive Group arrangements. Their Executive Group will ensure that the local safeguarding arrangements are compliant with statutory guidance and meet local need, setting out the priorities within their Business Plan. The Executive Group will receive regular reports on the progress of the Business Plan, receiving updates at each meeting from their sub-groups, providing appropriate scrutiny and challenge to each sub-group. The areas updated to the Executive should cover:

- What is working well at present and what are the success stories for the group?
- What needs to improve and are the areas of work you are concentrating on at present?
- What are the areas of concern, and is there anything you need support with?
- What is the current performance picture (Success & Concern), please include any gaps in data.

They will maintain a risk register in relation to key aspects of safeguarding, overseeing escalations and managing dispute resolution. It will ensure that the sub-groups are supported by the required partnership representation and will set and monitor the budget in accordance with the business plan. The Executive will ensure the meetings are governed correctly and managed in accordance with requirements.

The following will also provide an annual report to the Executive to provide reassurance and details of their activity over the year, due to the connection to safeguarding children:

1) Local Authority Designated Officer – LADO
2) Independent Reviewing Service
3) Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

Connectivity across partnerships

In Rotherham we have bi-annual meetings that bring together the chairs of the children's and adults' safeguarding boards, the chair of the health and wellbeing board, the chair of the children and young people's partnership board and the chair of the Safer Rotherham partnership. These meetings, supported by the business units for the various boards, ensure that priorities and business plans are shared and aligned. The chairs are signed up to a partnership protocol, which sets out how the boards will work together on safeguarding-related issues.

9. Relevant agencies

Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies locally whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. Strong, effective multi-agency arrangements are ones that are responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people. For local arrangements to be effective, they will engage organisations and agencies that can work in a collaborative way to provide targeted support to children and families as appropriate. This approach requires flexibility to enable joint identification of, and response to, existing and emerging needs, and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children. Every agency is able to participate across the local partnership safeguarding arrangements and are aware of their responsibilities within the arrangements. The relevant agencies include all Educational Establishments, NHS Trusts, and all Private and Voluntary Sector providers of services in the Local Authority.

All applications to register a children's home in the local authority area must undertake a location assessment in accordance with the Children's Homes (England) Regulation 2015. In addition, all children's homes in the area will be required, as part of the local safeguarding assurance framework, to undertake a safeguarding self-assessment once every 2 years, which will be monitored by the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

There is a comprehensive list of the identified relevant agencies at Appendix 1.

These agencies and organisations are statutorily required to act in accordance with these arrangements (Working Together 2023, Chapter 2, and Children Act 2004 section 16G).

10. Rotherham Local Safeguarding Arrangements

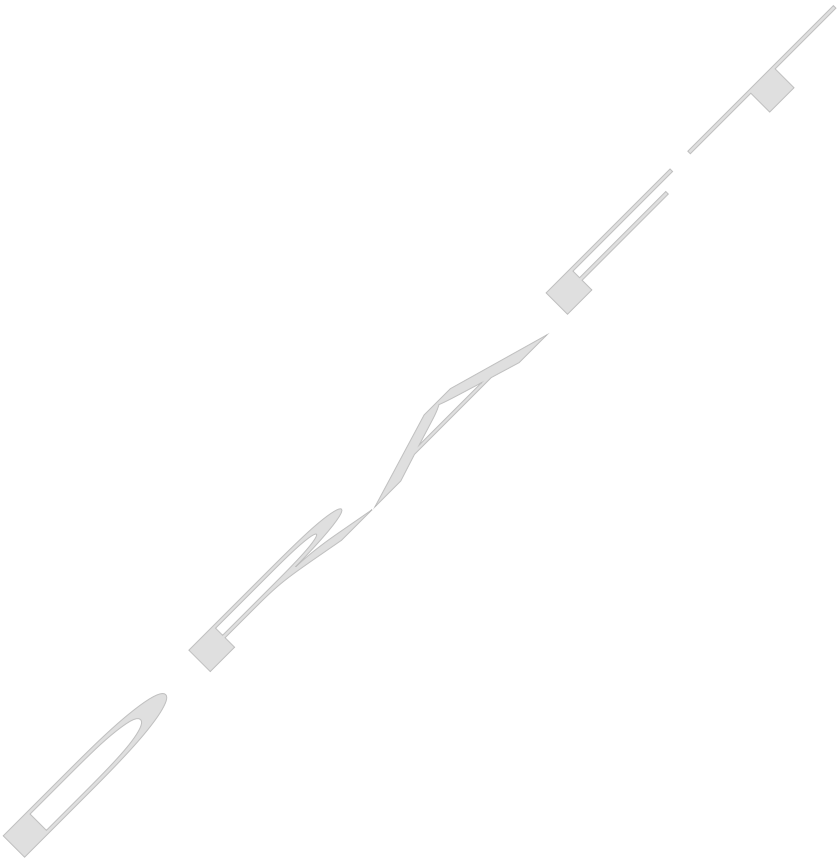
In addition to the meetings of the South Yorkshire LSPs meetings, Rotherham will also have safeguarding meetings with local safeguarding Leads These will be in addition to the local Rotherham safeguarding partners executive meetings outlined below.

The safeguarding partners in Rotherham are:

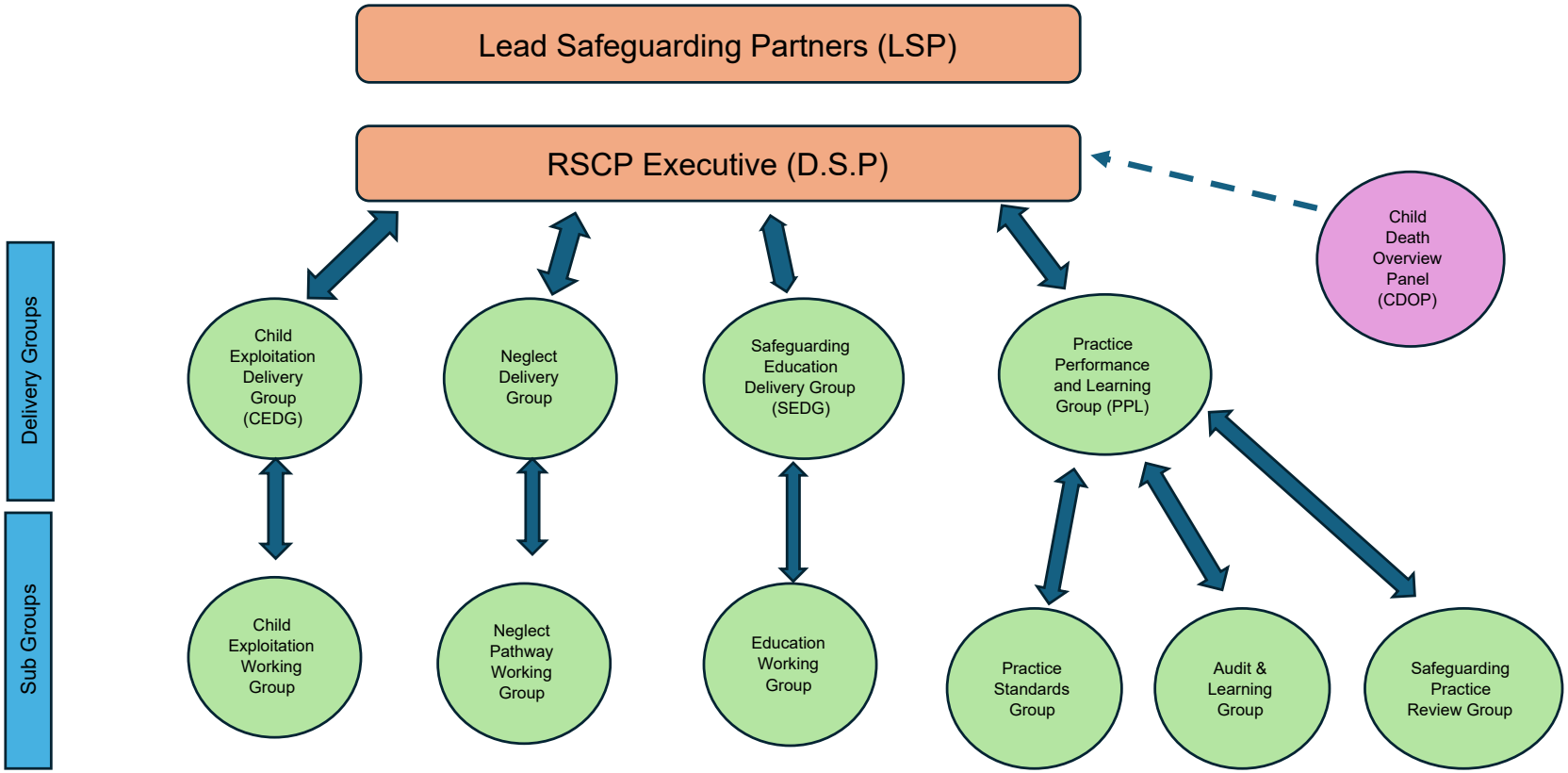
- **NHS South Yorkshire (Rotherham) Integrated Care Board (ICB), Chris Edwards**
- **Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), Sharon Kemp**
- **South Yorkshire Police (SYP), Hayley Barnett**

The geographic area for which the safeguarding partners have safeguarding responsibilities is the Rotherham Local Authority area. The NHS services in the area consist of the NHS

Rotherham ICB, the Rotherham Foundation NHS Trust, and the Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust. The Police force for the area is South Yorkshire Police



11. Rotherham Multi Agency Safeguarding Structure



12. Multi-agency threshold guidance for help and protection of children

The development of a common understanding of language across a partnership is important to enable services and practitioners to be clear and unambiguous about what the risks and needs are for children. This helps practitioners understand the differences between a child and their family needing help and what constitutes harm, ensuring that they receive the right level of support or Family Help at the right time. This is especially important for those working in universal services, particularly schools and other education settings, who have regular contact with children and their families and can offer an appropriate Early Help/Family Help response when problems arise.

It is, therefore, important that there are clear criteria amongst all organisations and agencies working with children and families in Rotherham for taking action and providing help across the full continuum of need. This will ensure that services are commissioned effectively and that the right help is on offer dependent on the individual needs of each child.

The safeguarding partners have agreed with their relevant agencies the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered. A threshold/Level of Need document and continuum of need guidance (Appendix 5), which sets out the local criteria for action, will be published as part of the online safeguarding children procedures and promoted to all partners. It will be transparent, accessible and easily understood.

This will include:

- The process for the early help/family help assessment and the type and level of early help/family help services to be provided.
- The criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services under:
    - Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need).
    - Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm).
    - Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (care and supervision orders).
    - Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (duty to accommodate a child).

- Clear procedures and processes for cases relating to:
    - The abuse, neglect and exploitation of children.
    - Children managed within the youth secure estate.
    - Children with disabilities.

13. Dispute resolution, escalation and whistleblowing

Working together effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is essential to achieving good outcomes for children and young people in Rotherham. There will on occasions, inevitably be some areas of disagreement or concern between professionals, agencies or organisations in relation to safeguarding responsibilities, whether this is in relation to the decisions or actions of a single agency or organisation or within a partnership context.

Therefore, in order to promote and maintain effective multi agency working, it is vital that these concerns and disagreements are raised and discussed in a timely, open and transparent manner and that appropriate resolution is sought; and escalated to achieve this if necessary. Wherever possible, all efforts should be made to resolve these issues at the lowest possible level between professionals, agencies and organisations, as it is at this level that the child and their family's circumstances are known best.

For individual children's circumstances refer to the multi-agency dispute resolution protocol which provides guidance and a process for escalation and resolution of concerns. Ultimately if this does not achieve a satisfactory resolution then the Executive Group and Independent Chair & Scrutineer should be notified.

Where there are issues which appear to be more systemic in nature then escalation should be made to the Safeguarding Partnership Executive Group and Independent Chair & Scrutineer. If an issue cannot be resolved at the Executive Group, the Independent Chair & Scrutineer will bring Chief Officers together in order to reach resolution.

The Independent Chair & Scrutineer will arbitrate at the Chief Officer Group if an issue cannot be resolved. A log of all escalations and their outcomes will be managed by the Executive Group and reported into the Chief Officer Group and within the Safeguarding Partners annual report.

Each individual organisation or agency must have whistleblowing procedures and guidance available and accessible to their workforce, including volunteers. Further guidance on whistleblowing for organisations within the safeguarding partnership can also be found here.

This sets out the definition, legal requirements and what to do. Whilst the guidance provides a number of pathways for whistleblowing, if it relates to the safeguarding of children in Rotherham, a whistle blower may also wish to contact the Independent Chair & Scrutineer of the Safeguarding Partnership.

14. Safeguarding Effectiveness and Assurance

The Performance, Practice and Learning (PPL) Delivery Group is the lead Delivery Group for providing oversight and challenge in relation to safeguarding effectiveness in Rotherham, and reports to the Executive.

a) Partner organisations' safeguarding self-assessment

We will continue with the regular safeguarding assurance reviews of organisations safeguarding arrangements across the partnership. This is undertaken through a self-assessment by each organisation, followed by a peer challenge drawn from across the partnership and led by the Independent Chair & Scrutineer. The safeguarding self-assessment standards are both inclusive and applicable to both safeguarding children and adults and are undertaken jointly with the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board, with the next event to take place in October 2024.

b) Performance Management Framework

The safeguarding Performance Management Framework is developed on a quarterly basis. It includes data and intelligence from across the partnership in relation to practice/family help and outcomes for children across the continuum of need, including early help/family help. It provides a holistic view of the effectiveness of partnership working, including single agency practice and findings from inspections, and a focal point for partnership challenge. Key trends, concerns or messages are communicated from the PPL Delivery Group to the Executive Group.

c) Multi-Agency Auditing

Auditing is one of the ways that the effectiveness of multi-agency practice and outcomes for children can be measured. It is a way of locating good practice in addition to areas for improvement and can provide a level of assurance to the way that partners are working together to safeguard children.

The PPL Delivery Group will develop an annual audit schedule which reflects the priorities of the safeguarding partnership and any emerging issues. Audits developed and agreed within the partnership and organisations are expected to allocate the required resource to undertake audit work within the timescales agreed in the schedule. Recommendations

are developed from the findings of audits and communicated to the Learning and Improvement subgroup for implementation of any respective learning activity. Periodically re-audits will be undertaken to establish whether the necessary improvements have been implemented.

d) Listening to the voice of children and families

Rotherham partners have made a commitment to being a child friendly borough and through our new multi-agency arrangements we will build on the engagement with children and young people that is already in place. We will ensure that children in Rotherham have a strong voice in making sure that all partners understand what it is like to be a child or young person in Rotherham and what needs to happen to make their childhood as safe as possible. Their voice will influence decisions at a strategic, operational and individual level.

Safeguarding Partners will continue to work with the following groups:

- Youth Cabinet
- LAC Council
- Different but Equal Board
- Young Inspectors
- New and emerging groups and councils

Safeguarding Partners will receive reports on the following services:

- Child Protection Advocacy Service (Barnardo's)
- Rights to Rights (LAC children's rights service)
- Rotherham Young Carers service

All the quality assurance mechanisms of the partnership, the performance framework, case audits, agency audits and practice reviews will monitor the ways in which children's views are taken into account by services. We will seek to increase the ways in which all services listen to the views of the children they are working with through routine feedback, consultation events with young people on specific safeguarding issues and through lifestyle surveys.

The aims of our work with young people will be to shape services based on their experiences, to increase their understanding of safeguarding issues and how to keep

themselves safe, but most importantly to understand how we can shape the environment and communities around children to enable them to be safe.

e) Inter-agency learning and development

There should be a culture of continuous learning and improvement across the organisations that work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, so as to identify what works and what promotes good practice; and where improvements need to be made.

In order to do this the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership will utilise a shared local learning and improvement framework across all those local organisations working with children and families. This local framework describes the way that professionals and organisations providing services to children and their families need to reflect on the quality of their services, outcomes for children and learn from their own practice and that of others. It explains the requirements for an integrated local learning and improvement framework and the principles to be used when undertaking Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, as well as other forms of reviews, audits and quality assurance activity.

The Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Group is the lead delivery group for taking learning forward from this work and where necessary commissioning inter-agency training.

On an annual basis the Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Group will develop and publish a learning and development prospectus for inter-agency safeguarding training and workforce development. This will utilise a partnership safeguarding competency framework to enable all organisations to establish what the learning needs are in relation to their workforce.

The prospectus for each year will be based on the priorities of the safeguarding partnership and is flexible and responsive to emerging issues which have been highlighted at any point during the year. Training will be commissioned and delivered collaboratively with other partnership boards, for example, the Safer Rotherham Partnership in relation to domestic abuse.

Inter-agency training is mostly delivered from safeguarding leads within the partnership, however, some specialist training will be commissioned and from external provider where a need is identified and this is a priority. Training is at no cost to any safeguarding partner organisation within Rotherham.

Every participant is required to provide feedback in relation to the training course received and then as a follow up so that all learning activity can be monitored for impact on practice and outcomes for children.

f) Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive will make the decision regarding whether the criteria for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review should be considered, with the Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Group being the lead delivery group for co-ordinating any rapid reviews and local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and reporting into the Executive group.

The purpose of reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, at both local and national level, is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving. Reviews should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. They are not conducted to hold individuals, organisations or agencies to account, as there are other processes for that purpose.

The responsibility for how the system learns the lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents lies at a national level with the Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Group (the National Panel) and at local level with the Rotherham safeguarding partners.

The National Panel is responsible for identifying and overseeing the review of serious child safeguarding cases which, in its view, raise issues that are complex or of national importance. The National Panel should also maintain oversight of the system of national and local reviews and how effectively it is operating.

Locally, the Rotherham safeguarding partners will make arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases which, in their view, raise issues of importance in relation to their area. We will commission and oversee the review of those cases, where they consider it appropriate for a review to be undertaken.

Serious child safeguarding cases are those in which:

- abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and
- the child has died or been seriously harmed

Serious harm includes (but is not limited to) serious and/or long-term impairment of a child's mental health or intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. It should also

cover impairment of physical health. This is not an exhaustive list. When making decisions, judgment should be exercised in cases where impairment is likely to be long-term, even if this is not immediately certain. Even if a child recovers, including from a one-off incident, serious harm may still have occurred.

16C (1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) states:

Where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority must notify the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel if:

(a) the child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority's area, or

(b) While normally resident in the local authority's area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England.

Rotherham local authority will notify any event that meets the above criteria to the National Panel. They should do so within five working days of becoming aware that the incident has occurred. The local authority should also report the event to the safeguarding partners in their area (and in other areas if appropriate) within five working days.

Rotherham local authority must also notify the Secretary of State and Ofsted where a looked after child has died, whether or not abuse or neglect is known or suspected.

The duty to notify events to the Panel rests with the local authority. Others who have functions relating to children should inform the safeguarding partners of any incident which they think should be considered for a child safeguarding practice review.

The criteria which the Rotherham safeguarding partners will take into account include whether the case:

- Highlights or may highlight improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including where those improvements have been previously identified

- Highlights or may highlight recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children

- Highlights or may highlight concerns regarding two or more organisations or agencies working together effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

- Is one which the child safeguarding practice review panel have considered and concluded a local review may be more appropriate

Rotherham Safeguarding partners will also have regard to the following circumstances:

- Where the safeguarding partners have cause for concern about the actions of a single agency
- Where there has been no agency involvement and this gives the safeguarding partners cause for concern
- Where more than one local authority, police area or integrated care board is involved, including in cases where families have moved around
- Where the case may raise issues relating to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children in institutional settings

The Rotherham Safeguarding Partners will take account of the findings from local reviews and from all national reviews, with a view to considering how identified improvements should be implemented locally, including the way in which organisations and agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The safeguarding partners will highlight findings from reviews with relevant parties locally and will regularly audit progress on the implementation of recommended improvements in conjunction with the other delivery groups. Improvement will be sustained through regular monitoring and follow up of actions so that the findings from these reviews make a real impact on improving outcomes for children.

When commissioning a reviewer for the report the Rotherham Safeguarding Partners will consider whether the reviewer has the following:

- Professional knowledge, understanding and practice relevant to local child safeguarding practice reviews, including the ability to engage both with practitioners and children and families
- Knowledge and understanding of research relevant to children's safeguarding issues
- Ability to recognise the complex circumstances in which practitioners work together to safeguard children

- Ability to understand practice from the viewpoint of the individuals, organisations or agencies involved at the time rather than using hindsight
- Ability to communicate findings effectively
- Whether the reviewer has any real or perceived conflict of interest

When compiling and preparing to publish the report, the safeguarding partners will consider carefully how best to manage the impact of the publication on children, family members, practitioners and others closely affected by the case. The safeguarding partners will ensure that reports are written in such a way so that what is published avoids harming the welfare of any children or vulnerable adults involved in the case. The report will submitted to the National Panel and Ofsted 7 working days prior to the publication of the report on the Rotherham Safeguarding Partners website.

g) Review of Partnership Safeguarding Arrangements

The partnership will, through the Executive Group, carry out a review of the arrangements on an annual basis and ensure the document is kept updated and processes and procedures meet the statutory requirements.

h) Reporting

In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the Rotherham safeguarding partners will publish a report annually. The report will set out what we have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

In addition the report will include:

- Evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help/family help to looked-after children and care leavers
- An analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on our agreed priorities
- A record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements

- Ways in which we have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- Evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help/family help to looked-after children and care leavers
- Any updates to the published arrangements and the proposed timescale for implementation

The report will be published on the Rotherham Safeguarding Partners website.

The report will be submitted to other key local partnerships including the Health and Well-being Board, Safer Rotherham Partnership and the Children and Young Peoples Transformation Board. The report will also be submitted to the Council's Improving Lives Select Commission for scrutiny and a copy of the published report will be sent to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care within seven days of being published.

i) Funding and resourcing

Working in partnership means that organisations and agencies should collaborate on how they will fund their arrangements. The three safeguarding partners and relevant agencies in Rotherham should make payments towards expenditure incurred in conjunction with local multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children. The funding will be transparent to children and families in Rotherham, and sufficient to cover all elements of the arrangements, including the cost of local child safeguarding practice reviews.

The safeguarding partners will agree the level of funding secured from each partner, which should be equitable and proportionate, and any contributions from each relevant agency, to support the local arrangements. The funding agreement and any decisions will be the responsibility of the LSPs. It has been agreed that funding will be delivered on a rolling three year basis to provide stability and commitment to the partnership.

Organisations and agencies will also be expected to ensure that they support the work of the delivery groups and any task and finish groups through appropriate attendance of their staff required to support the work of the safeguarding partners. In addition, partners will, from time to time, be asked to contribute to any conferences or events relevant to the safeguarding partnership and offer meeting rooms or resources to facilitate multi-agency meetings.

j) Information Sharing

Effective information sharing underpins partnership working and is a vital element of both early intervention and safeguarding. Research and experience have shown repeatedly that keeping children safe from harm requires practitioners and others to share information about:

- A child's health and development and any exposure to possible harm.
- A parent who may need help, or may not be able to care for a child adequately or safely; and
- Those who may pose a risk of harm to a child.

The Rotherham multi-agency Safeguarding Children Procedures which can be found here contain detailed guidance, which must be followed, in relation to information sharing including:

- The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018
- The Seven Golden rules for Information Sharing
- Confidentiality and Consent
- National Guidance on Information Sharing

k) Management of Data

All safeguarding arrangements and information will adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations.

The Rotherham Multi-Agency Arrangements for Safeguarding Children is a statutory body in its own right, and is not a public authority for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Appendix 1: Safeguarding Children Partnership Groups

Chief Officer Group: Frequency – Meets twice a year	
Membership	**Key Responsibilities & Priorities**
Independent Chair & Scrutineer **Darren Downs** Chief Executive (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council) **Sharon Kemp** Chief Executive Officer (South Yorkshire ICB) **Gavin Boyle** Chief Constable (South Yorkshire Police) **Lauren Poultney** Other members involved when required: Lead Member for Children's Services (Participating Observer) Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Representative from Office of South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner (for budget items) Others in attendance as required	• Approves the local safeguarding arrangements to meet statutory requirements and local need. • Approves the local vision and priorities for safeguarding children. • Is accountable for the effectiveness of the arrangements in the local area. • Approves the funding and resourcing arrangements for the safeguarding partnership. • Ensures strategic link with other partnership boards in relation to safeguarding children. • Mechanism for escalation and resolution of relevant issues from Executive Group/Independent Chair. • Approves and publishes reports, at least annually, on the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements. • The Chief Officer Group will meet twice annually. Should the lead representatives delegate their functions they remain accountable for any actions or decisions taken on behalf of their agency. If delegated, it is the responsibility of the lead representative to identify and nominate a senior officer in their agency to have responsibility and authority for ensuring full participation with these arrangements.

Heads of Partnerships and RSCP Executive Chair: Frequency 6 monthly	
Membership	**Key Responsibilities and Priorities**
Darren Downs Independent Executive Chair & Scrutineer RSCP **Councillor Alam** Chair of Safer Rotherham Partnership **Moira Wilson** Chair of Adult Safeguarding Board **Councillor Baker-Rogers** Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board	• Share information and collaborate regarding the activities of the various delivery groups and boards • Avoid unnecessary duplication across the partnerships • Discuss and plan activity in respect of cross-cutting themes e.g. transition arrangements for young people and the impact of domestic abuse • Share strategic information and planning for future board/partnership activity

Executive Group: Frequency – Every 2 months (Alternate to Delivery Groups)	
Membership	**Key Responsibilities & Priorities**
Independent Chair & Scrutineer (Chair) **Darren Downs** Director of Children's Services (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council) **Nicola Curley** Chief Nurse (Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group) **Andrew Russell** Chief Superintendent - District Commander (South Yorkshire Police) **Laura Kosciekwicz** Others will be required to attend the meeting by invite.	• Analyse emerging and current safeguarding issues to advise Chief Officers on priorities. • Ensure that the local safeguarding arrangements are compliant with statutory guidance and meet local need – sets the local vision and priorities. • Receives reports on the progress of the business plan and its impact, issues of concern and new and emerging issues • Manages a risk log in relation to key aspects of safeguarding and oversees escalation and dispute resolution • Develops and ensures the delivery of the safeguarding partnership business plan • Develops and oversees the production of a public report, at least annually • Ensures delivery groups are supported by the required partnership representation • Provides detailed monitoring and challenge of the delivery groups activity against the objectives in the business plan • Receives updates from and has a mechanism to raise issues with the local Channel Panel, MAPPA Board, Local Family Justice Board. • Sets and monitors the budget in accordance with the business plan Should the lead representatives delegate their functions they remain accountable for any actions or decisions taken on behalf of their agency. If delegated, it is the responsibility of the lead representative to identify and nominate a senior officer in their agency to have responsibility and authority for ensuring full participation with these arrangements.

Delivery Groups: Held every 2 months (Alternate to Executive)	
Membership	**Group and Key Responsibilities & Priorities**
Chair – LA Lead **Tony Morrisey**, Interim Head of service for Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Learning RMBC Lee Durrant - Service Manager, Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) Sam Davies-Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding, Rotherham Place, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Ashley Leggott-Strategic Coordinator, Children, Young People and Families Consortium (CYPF) Malcolm Ewing- MASH Health Advisor, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust (RDaSH) Head of Service, Early Help, RMBC Paula Williams - Service Manager, Early Years, CYPS, RMBC Lindsay Wootton-Ashforth, Education Safeguarding Officer, RMBC Jackie Scantlebury - Manager, Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board Dawn Peet- Safeguarding Officer, South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Victoria Finch-Named Nurse Safeguarding Children, The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT)	**Practice, Performance and Learning Delivery Group** **Standing Sub Groups** • Audit Working Group • Practice Standards Group • Learning and Improvement Group • Safeguarding Practice Review Group (as required) **Key Functions** • Consideration of Serious Safeguarding Cases (Rapid Reviews) and recommendation to Independent Chair • Assurance Group for Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews • Development of Recommendations and Action Plans arising from cases and audit • Multi-Agency Auditing of safeguarding practice. • Oversight of Assurance Readiness (JTAI) • Development of partnership Performance Management Framework and challenge within the partnership. • Oversight of safeguarding assurance for organisations via S11, S175 (schools), Voluntary & Community Sector safeguarding self-assessment. • Receive findings from cases reviewed at the Practice Standards Group. • Oversight and responsibility for the RSCP training offer • Responsibility for assuring a robust Tri-X library (Procedures) and RSCP website **<u>Priorities 2024</u>** • Develop reporting and analysis mechanism for S11 and S175 feedback • Development of a Multi-Agency Scorecard to support the sharing of key metrics and subsequent interrogation • End of year review of the RSCP training offer to ensure it is conversant with current practice and emerging themes in the safeguarding arena

Rebecca Sansom, John Bushell or Roxanne Womack - Named Nurse Safeguarding, RDaSH Laura Greatwood – Detective Inspector South Yorkshire Police (SYP) Carol Sibley – Principal Children and Families Social Worker, CYPS, RMBC Tina Bates- Quality - Learning & Development & Right 2 Rights Team Manager, RMBC Kirstie Woodhead – Service Manager Early Help, RMBC Anne Hawke – Head of Service Performance and Planning, RMBC Lee Oughton – Named GP, South Yorkshire ICB Alicia Plane – Named Midwife, TRFT Grace Davidson – Audit Consultant, RSCP Others to be invited as and when required.	• Preparation for JTAI activity in relation to Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime • Oversight and development of a new website for the partnership • Review of the Virtual College offer
Chair – Sarah Gilmour (SYP) Deputy Chair – Tony Morrisey- Interim Head of Service, Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Learning, RMBC Melissa Johnson - Detective Inspector, Rotherham PVP, SYP Alan Pogorzolec - Service Manager, Licensing, RMBC Kirsty Woodhead - Service Manager Early Help	**Child Exploitation Delivery Group** **Standing Sub Groups** • Child Exploitation Working Group **Key Functions** • Development of responses to and review the effectiveness of partnership working in relation to: Child Sexual Exploitation Missing Children Child Criminal Exploitation

James Thurston- Service Manager, First Response, CYPS, RMBC Alexia Barber - Team Manager, EVOLVE, RMBC Vicky Finch-Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children, TRFT Helen Tyrrell - Wickersley Partnership Trust (Schools) Grace Davidson – Audit and Training Officer, RSCP Lindsay Wootton-Ashforth, Education Safeguarding Lead, RMBC Roxanne Womack - Named Nurse for Safeguarding, RDaSH Peter Douglas - Virtual School Headteacher, RMBC Alex Roberts, Business Support Officer, RSCP, RMBC Lee Durrant – Service and Business Manager, RSCP Emma Ellis - Head of Service for Community Safety and Regulatory Services, RMBC Helen Banerjee - Community Safety Officer, RMBC Kath Blain - Safeguarding Lead for Operation Stovewood, NCA Paul Walsh - Head of Operational Services, Housing and Estates Services, RMBC Ashley Leggott - Strategic Coordinator, Children, Young People and Families Consortium Others will be invited as and when required	Trafficking/Modern Slavery • Ensuring that the Child/Young Person's Voice is captured and responded to • Oversight of the practice pathways for children subject to Exploitation across the partnership • Liaison with the Safer Rotherham Partnership in order to ensure information sharing and a place-based response **Priorities 2024** • Promote the Early Help assessment as a key tool to support early identification and intervention to reduce the likelihood children will be harmed via Child Exploitation • Contextual Safeguarding will guide the development of a Child Exploitation pathway for practitioners across the partnership workforce, including a review of the Child Protection Process for children who are at Risk Outside the Home • Ensuring that the partnership is trained to identify and act on early indicators around Child Exploitation and understand their role in the Safeguarding process. • Rotherham's communities will have a challenging and active role in preventing and responding to child exploitation. • Targeted education and awareness to prevent people becoming victims and suspects in priority high risk areas and within the online space. Including the use of analytical capability and capacity to identify high risk areas of vulnerability in order to target intervention/ prevention activity, including identification of emerging threats to support early intervention and longer-term problem solving. • Work to identify and engage with hard-to-reach communities to improve confidence in reporting abuse and signs of exploitation • Evidencing that children at risk of, or experiencing Child Exploitation receive interventions that reduce risk in a timely way. • Ensuring that Rotherham's CE practice is Child Centred and ensures the child is firstly seen has a victim • A renewed commitment to the collection of service user feedback from children and families, considering the impact of practice on children, young people, and their families as well as perpetrators of abuse

	• Ensure children have the knowledge and tools to protect themselves and report abuse, including abuse within the online space • A multi - agency approach to info and intelligence sharing that allows early identification and management of offenders so that the Police with support of partners will pursue all offenders, prioritising those who cause the most harm. • Having in place the right strategic and operational arrangements to ensure that investigations around large scale historic abuse in the borough connect effectively to processes for current work with children and survivors.
Chair – Health Lead **Gemma Cross,** Lead nurse for Safeguarding TRFT Lee Durrant - Service and Business Manager, Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) Tina Hohn/Pete Douglas – Headteachers, Virtual School RMBC Sam Davies-Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding, Rotherham Place, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Mohammed Faisal - Barnardos Ashley Leggott - Strategic Coordinator, Children, Young People and Families Consortium (CYPF) Malcolm Ewing- MASH Health Advisor, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust (RDaSH) Paula Williams - Service Manager, Early Years, CYPS, RMBC	**Neglect Delivery Group** **Standing Sub Groups** • Neglect Pathway/Working Group **Key Functions** • Development of responses to and review the effectiveness of partnership working in relation to: Neglect • Oversight and direction in relation to working practices and policy when working with Neglect in Rotherham • Ensuring the partners work collaboratively and share information as required in relation to children at risk of neglect • Management and analysis of multi agency data related to neglect **Priorities 2024** • Development of a Neglect pathway for practitioners across the partnership workforce • Promoting and increasing the use of targeted assessment tools in order to identify neglect and work alongside parents and carers to address the issues and improve outcomes for children

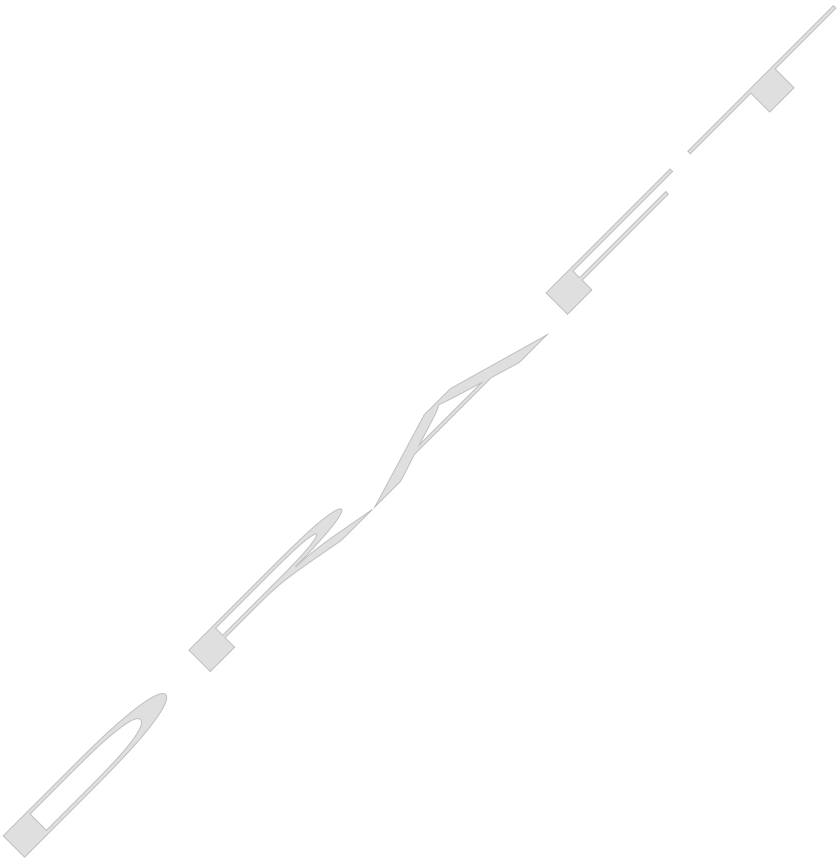
Lindsay Wootton-Ashforth, Education Safeguarding Officer, RMBC Dawn Peet- Safeguarding Officer, South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Victoria Finch-Named Nurse Safeguarding Children, The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT) Rebecca Sansom/John Bushell/Roxanne Womack - Named Nurse Safeguarding, RDaSH Laura Greatwood – Detective Inspector, South Yorkshire Police Carol Sibley – Principal Children and Families Social Worker, RMBC Alex Roberts - RSCP Business Support Officer Kirstie Woodhead – Service Manager Early Help, RMBC Alicia Plane – Named Midwife, TRFT Grace Davidson – Audit and Training Officer, RSCP James Thurston or Social Care representative - Service manager, First Response RMBC Others will be invited as and when required	• Developing communities and wider families to have an active role in recognising and responding to neglect. • The Partnership will actively seek to include the voice of children, young people and their families in shaping and delivering the services offered • A Neglect score card will be developed to give clear oversight and check and challenge to partners from the neglect delivery group
Chair – Education Lead Niall Devlin, Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion, RMBC	**Safeguarding In Education Delivery Group** **Standing Sub Groups** • **To be developed**

Lee Durrant - Service and Business Manager, Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) Tina Hohn/Pete Douglas – Headteachers, Virtual School RMBC Sam Davies-Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding, Rotherham Place, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Ashley Leggott or rep - Strategic Coordinator, Children, Young People and Families Consortium (CYPF) Susan Claydon/Kirstie Woodhead - Head of Service/Service Manager Early Help, RMBC Paula Williams - Service Manager, Early Years, CYPS, RMBC Lindsay Wootton-Ashforth, Education Safeguarding Officer, RMBC Victoria Finch-Named Nurse Safeguarding Children, The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT) Rebecca Sansom, John Bushell or Roxanne Womack - Named Nurse Safeguarding, RDaSH via RDaSH Melissa Johnson – Detective Inspector, Southy Yorkshire Police Carol Sibley – Principal Children and Families Social Worker, RMBC	**Key Functions** • Developing, implementing and Operationalising the Education safeguarding Strategy • Keeping children safe in education by ensuring that partners carry out their statutory safeguarding responsibilities • Understanding the lived experience of all Rotherham children educated in and out of the borough and to hear, and act upon, the voice of children and families as they journey through their education in Rotherham • Oversight of the safeguarding training offer to staff involved in the education of children and young people, and any thematic areas of development • Maintaining and interrogating data analysis and narrative around a scorecard • A robust level of audit activity, which informs plans and actions to safeguard children • Ensuring that partners are working most effectively collaboratively across the many systems involved • Working with the Working Together 2023 Guidance about strengthening multi-agency working including in education **<u>Priorities 2024</u>** • Safety of children in all education settings in the borough • Safety of children who are not attending school – including those subject to suspensions, exclusions and part time timetables

Grace Davidson – Audit and Training Officer, RSCP James Thurston – Service Manager, First Response RMBC Sarah Whitby – Head of Access and Inclusion, RMBC Rebecca Braithwait, Senior Officer, School Admissions, RMBC Pam Ward – Head of Service, Education School Improvement Service, RMBC Kelly Crompton – Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Alternative Provision Sarah Graham – Maltby Learning Trust, Schools Lynsey Hadfield - Executive Headteacher and Head of Centre at Rawmarsh School and Children's Centre, Schools Others will be invited as and when required	• Development of a line of sight to those children who are electively home educated and to ensure that partners address any safeguarding concerns for these children • Line of sight for those children not Rotherham residents who receive education in Borough • Early identification and implementation of support where safeguarding concerns are identified • Sharing of strategic and child specific safeguarding information – emerging themes, context and national guidance • Consistency across different schools and education phases in how safeguarding is managed operationally (Quality Mark). Set a standard of expectations for all schools across Rotherham • Working with families to further support our children. Understanding the barriers to accessing and engaging in education. In carrying out these functions, the Group will put in place, update and review a multi-agency strategic delivery plan, specifying the actions, timelines and measurable outcomes to be achieved in order to implement the strategy.

Wider Safeguarding Partnership – Minimum of twice a year	
Membership	**Key Responsibilities**
Core Membership: Independent Chair & Scrutineer Children and Young Peoples Services South Yorkshire Police Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust RDaSH NHS Foundation Trust Named Safeguarding Professionals Business Manager **Relevant Agencies:** National Probation Service Community Rehabilitation Company CAFCASS South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Colleges and Training Providers RMBC Adult Services Voluntary & Community Sector Commissioned services Children's homes in local area	• Provides wider partnership engagement, perspective and challenge on the key priorities emerging issues and the business plan • Participation in Delivery Groups as appropriate to the role of the organisation and needs of the delivery group • Ensure wide dissemination of safeguarding issues and key messages across the borough • Participation in meetings which focus on a particular theme or issue • Meetings have a workshop/conference style rather than formal board The wider safeguarding partnership will be flexible and inclusive - for example being responsive to themed meetings by inviting a wider range of organisations and extending invites to members of delivery groups.

Education Safeguarding Forum – Frequency one per school term	
All Schools and Academies Pupil Referral Units Special Schools Early Years settings Colleges	• Engagement with the Safeguarding Partnership: • Statutory Safeguarding responsibilities • Emerging themes and priorities • Dissemination of key messages and best practice • Issues and challenges fed back to Executive Group



Appendix 2: Delivery Group Meeting & Reporting Schedule 2024

10.07.2024	Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Group
15.07.2024	Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group
17.07.2024	**Executive Group**
18.07.2024	Child Death Overview Panel
14.08.2024	Neglect Delivery Group
10.09.2024	Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Group
16.09.2024	Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group
19.09.2024	Child Death Overview Panel
25.09.2024	**Executive Group**
16.10.2024	Neglect Delivery Group
11.11.2024	Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group
12.11.2024	Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Group
20.11.2024	**Executive Group**
21.11.2024	Child Death Overview Panel
11.12.2024	Neglect Delivery Group

Appendix 3: Standard Executive Meeting Templates

1) Agenda..\..\..\1. RSCP EXECUTIVE GROUP\2024\May Exec\Agenda for RSCP Executive May 2024.docx
2) Minutes..\..\..\1. RSCP EXECUTIVE GROUP\2024\March exec\Draft RSCP Executive Minutes March Blank.docx
3) Action Schedule..\..\..\1. RSCP EXECUTIVE GROUP\2024\May Exec\Final papers for RSCP Executive Group May 2024\RSCP Executive Group Action Log May 2024.docx
4) Delivery group report..\..\..\1. RSCP EXECUTIVE GROUP\RSCP Blank Report Template.doc
5) Budget report..\..\..\1. RSCP EXECUTIVE GROUP\2024\May Exec\Final papers for RSCP Executive Group May 2024\RSCP Budget Report May 2024.pdf

Appendix 4: Relevant Definitions

Education and childcare

- The proprietor of an Academy school within the meaning given by section 1A of the Academies Act 2010.
- The proprietor of a 16-19 Academy within the meaning given by section 1B of the Academies Act 2010.
- The proprietor of an alternative provision Academy within the meaning given by section 1C of the Academies Act 2010.
- The governing body of a maintained school within the meaning given by section 20(7) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
- The governing body of a maintained nursery school within the meaning given by section 22(9) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
- The governing body of a pupil referral unit within the meaning given by section 19(2) of the Education Act 1996.
- The proprietor of an independent educational institution registered under section 95(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.
- The proprietor of a school approved under section 342 of the Education Act 1996.
- The proprietor of a Special post-16 institution within the meaning given by section 83(2) of the Children and Families Act 2014.
- The governing body of an institution within the further education sector within the meaning given by section 91(3) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.
- The governing body of an English higher education provider within the meaning of section 83 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.
- Any provider of education or training—

    (a) to which Chapter 3 of Part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006(c), and

    (b) In respect of which funding is provided by, or under arrangements made by, the Secretary of State.

- A person registered under Chapter 2, 2A, 3 or 3A of Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006.
- The provider of a children's centre within the meaning given by section 5A (4) of the Childcare Act 2006.

The above includes all Schools and Academies, Pupil Referral Units, Special Schools, Early Years Settings, Colleges and Alternative Provision.

Health and Social Care

- The National Health Service Commissioning Board (known as NHS England) as established under section 1H (1) of the National Health Service Act 2006.
- An NHS trust established under section 25 of the National Health Service Act 2006: **(The Rotherham Foundation NHS Trust, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust)**
- An NHS foundation trust within the meaning given by section 30 of the National Health Service Act 2006.
- The registered provider of an adoption support agency within the meaning given by section 8(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- The registered provider of a registered adoption society within the meaning given by section 2 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- A registered provider of a fostering agency within the meaning given by section 4 of the Care Standards Act 2000.
- A registered provider of a children's home within the meaning given by section 1 of the Care Standards Act 2000. **(Independent Children's Homes named here)**
- A registered provider of residential family centre within the meaning given by section 4(2) of the Care Standards Act 2000.
- The registered provider of a residential holiday schemes for disabled children within the meaning given by regulation 2(1) of the Residential Holiday Schemes for Disabled Children (England) Regulations 2013/1394(b). (Liberty House).

Criminal Justice

- The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) as established under section 11 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.
- Providers of probation services as defined by section 3(6) of the Offender Management Act 2007.
- Youth offending teams as established under section 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

  (Rotherham does not have a Youth Offending Institute with the borough. Children placed in such organisation out of borough will be monitored by the Youth Offending Service which will also secure assurance on the safeguarding policies and procedures of the Institute.)

Police and Immigration

- The British Transport Police as established under section 18(1) the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003.
- National Crime Agency
- Any person or body for whom the Secretary of State must make arrangements for ensuring the discharge of functions under section 55 of the Borders Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009.

Other agencies or organisations

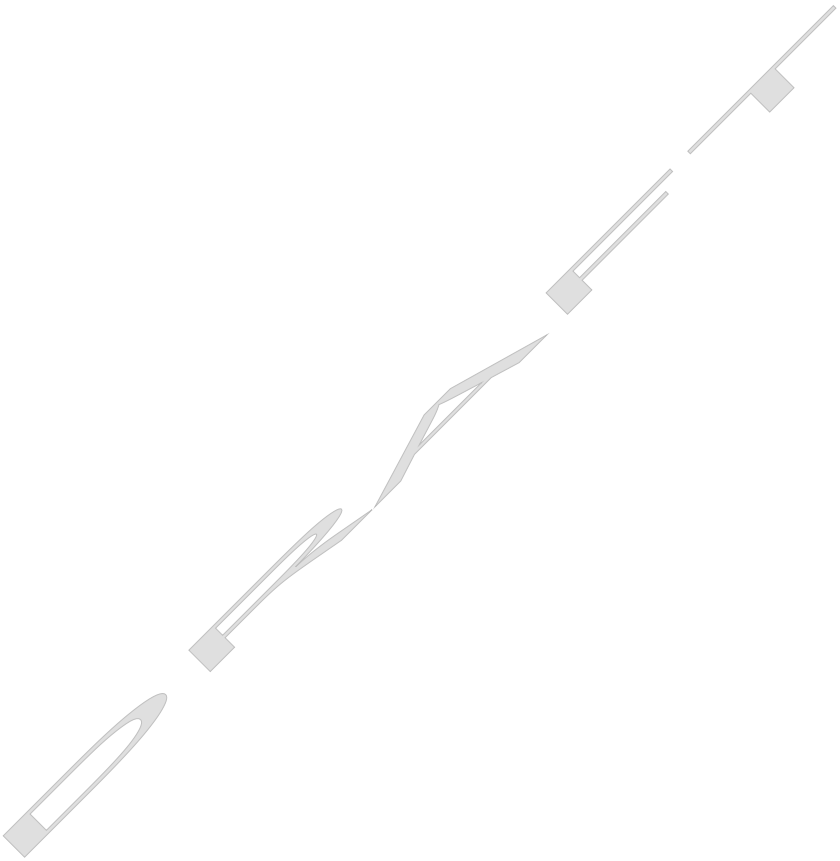
- Charities within the meaning given by section 1 of the Charities Act 2011
- Religious Organisations as set out in regulation 34 of, and Schedule 3 to, the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012
- Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012.
- Any person or body involved in the provision, supervision or oversight of sport or leisure.

The above includes all voluntary and community sector organisations, faith groups, youth groups, sports and leisure activities.

Appendix 5: Threshold Document

..\..\Miscellaneous\multiagency_threshold_descriptors.pdf

Version	Date	Author
V1	02.07.24	DD/TM/LD



HM Government

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children

December 2023

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Introduction

Nothing is more important than children's welfare. Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable, and loving home. Children who need help and protection deserve high quality and effective support. This requires individuals, agencies, and organisations to be clear about their own and each other's roles and responsibilities, and how they work together.

In this guidance, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout. The term practitioner is used in the guidance to refer to individuals who work with children and their families in any capacity, including a range of professionals, such as qualified social workers and those who work for the statutory safeguarding partners or in education settings.

Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Act 1989 [1] sets out specific duties to provide services to children in their area if they are in need and to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. The Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services in local authorities are the key points of professional and political accountability, with responsibility for the effective delivery of these functions. The Children Act 2004[2] placed a duty on the local authority to promote co-operation with partners and other agencies in order to improve the wellbeing of children in their area. It also placed duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure they too give sufficient regard to children in need of help and safeguarding.

Amendments made by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to the Children Act 2004 strengthened this already important relationship by placing new duties on the police, integrated care boards (ICBs)[3] and the local authority, as statutory safeguarding partners. Safeguarding partners are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally including education providers and childcare settings, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge

[1] Children Act 1989
[2] Children Act 2004
[3] Statutory guidance for integrated care boards on executive lead roles

- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network[4] through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework[5].

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and is defined for the purpose of this guidance as activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

Effective safeguarding means practitioners should understand and be sensitive to factors, including economic and social circumstances and ethnicity, which can impact children and families' lives.

About this guidance

1. This guidance covers:

- the legislative requirements that apply to individuals, organisations and agencies
- a framework for the three local safeguarding partners (the local authority, an ICB for an area, any part of which falls within the local authority area, and the Chief Constable for police for a police area, any part of which falls within the local authority area) to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs
- the framework for the two child death review partners (the local authority and any ICB for an area, any part of which falls within the local authority area) to make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area, and if they consider it appropriate, for those not normally resident in the area

[4] A family network can be a blood-relative, or a non-related connected person, such as a family friend or neighbour.
[5] Children's Social Care National Framework

2. This document replaces Working together to safeguard children (2018). Links to relevant supplementary guidance that practitioners should consider alongside this guidance can be found at Appendix B.

What is the status of this guidance?

3. This guidance applies to all organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children. Specifically, this guidance applies to all local authorities, ICBs, police and all other organisations and agencies as set out in chapter 4.

4. It applies, in its entirety, to all education providers, and childcare settings.

5. It applies to all children up to the age of 18 years whether living with their families, in state care, or living independently.

6. This document should be complied with unless exceptional circumstances arise.

7. The guidance is issued under:

- section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State
- section 10(8) of the Children Act 2004, which requires each person or organisation to which the section 10 duty applies to have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State
- section 11(4) of the Children Act 2004 which requires each person or organisation to which the section 11 duty applies to have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State
- section 16B(7) of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which states that the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State in connection with its functions
- section 16C(2) of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which states that local authorities must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State in connection with their functions relating to notifications
- section 16K of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which states that safeguarding partners and relevant agencies for a local authority area in England must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State in connection with their functions under sections 16E to 16J of the Act

- section 16Q of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which states that the child death review partners for a local authority area in England must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State in connection with their functions under sections 16M to 16P of the Act
- section 175(4) of the Education Act 2002, which states that governing bodies of maintained schools (including maintained nursery schools), further education institutions and management committees of pupil referral units must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State
- paragraph 7(b) of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, made under sections 94(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, which states that the arrangements to safeguard or promote the welfare of pupils made by the proprietors of independent schools (including academies or free schools) or alternative provision academies must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State
- paragraph 3 of the Schedule to the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015, made under section 342 of the Education Act 1996, which requires arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the health, safety, and welfare of pupils in non-maintained special schools to have regard to any guidance published on such issues

Who is this guidance for?

8. This statutory guidance sets out key roles for individual organisations and agencies to deliver effective arrangements for help, support, safeguarding, and protection. It should be read and followed by leaders, managers and frontline practitioners of all organisations and agencies as set out in chapter 4 of this document.

9. It is essential that these arrangements are strongly led and promoted at a local level, specifically by elected local area leaders, including Lead Members of Children's Services, Mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners and through the commitment of chief officers in all organisations and agencies, particularly those representing the three safeguarding partners. These are local authority Chief Executives, Chief Constables of police and Chief Executives of ICBs. Other senior leaders within organisations and agencies that commission and provide services for children and families, and education settings also have a key role to play in providing help, support, and safeguarding children in their local area. Members of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel should also read and follow this guidance.

Chapter 1: A shared responsibility

10. Successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them. Practitioners should take a child-centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family.

11. As set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework, the following principles apply here too:

- children's welfare is paramount
- children's wishes and feelings are sought, heard, and responded to
- children's social care works in partnership with whole families
- children are raised by their families, with their family networks or in family environments wherever possible
- local authorities work with other agencies to effectively identify and meet the needs of children, young people, and families
- local authorities consider the economic and social circumstances impacting children, young people, and families

A child-centred approach within a whole family focus

12. A child-centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. All practitioners should follow the principles of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. These Acts make clear that the welfare of children is paramount and that they are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary.

13. Children are clear about what they want from an effective safeguarding system:

Children have said that they need:

- **vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- **understanding and action**: to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- **stability:** to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- **respect**: to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- **information and engagement:** to be informed about, and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- **explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments, and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- **support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- **advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- **protection:** to be protected against all forms of abuse, exploitation, and discrimination, and the right to special protection and help if a refugee

14. Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child, listen to what they say, observe their behaviour, take their views seriously, and work with them and their families and the people who know them well when deciding how to support their needs. Practitioners should also be aware that children may find it difficult to always speak about what they need, what is happening to them or what has happened to them. Legal duties under the Equality Act 2010[6] must be complied with, including putting special provision in place to support dialogue with children who may not be able to convey their wishes and feelings as they may want to. This might include, for example, those who have communication difficulties, unaccompanied children, refugees, those children who are victims of modern slavery and/or trafficking and those who do not speak English or for whom English is not their first language.

[6] Equality Act 2010

15. This approach sits within a whole family culture in which the needs of all members of the family are explored as individuals and how their needs impact on one another is drawn out.

16. This child-centred approach is supported by:

- the Children Act 1989, which requires local authorities to give due consideration to a child's wishes when determining what services to provide under section 17 and before making decisions about action to be taken to protect individual children under section 47. These duties complement requirements relating to the wishes and feelings of children who are, or may be, looked after (section 22(4)), including those who are provided with accommodation under section 20 and children taken into police protection (section 46(3)(d)).
- the Equality Act 2010, which puts a responsibility on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. This applies to the process of identification of need and risk faced by the individual child and the process of assessment. No child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access effective services which meet their particular needs. To comply with the Equality Act 2010, safeguarding partners must assess and where appropriate put in place measures ahead of time to support all children and families to access services, overcoming any barriers they may face due to a particular protected characteristic.
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)[7] which is an international agreement that protects the rights of children and provides a child-centred framework for the development of services to children. The UK Government ratified the UNCRC in 1991 and, by doing so, recognises children's rights including to expression and receiving information.
- the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, section 3[8] recognises that a child is a victim of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse and are related to either victim or perpetrator of the abuse, or either the victim or perpetrator of the abuse has parental responsibility for that child.
- the Children's Social Care National Framework[9], published in 2023, is statutory guidance that sets out the purpose of children's social care as existing to support children and families, to protect children by intervening decisively when they are at

[7] United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
[8] Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Section 3
[9] Children's Social Care National Framework

risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it, so they grow up and thrive with safety, stability, and love

17. In addition to practitioners shaping support around the needs of individual children, local organisations and agencies should have a clear understanding of the collective needs of children locally when commissioning effective services. As part of that, ICBs are required to have executive lead roles for children, children with SEND and for safeguarding (these could be individual roles or combined as part of one role). It is expected that these executive leads will work with key partners across public health, social care, justice, and education to ensure the interests of those groups are met, including appropriate resources are allocated for the provision of services and maintaining an overview of the quality of services. As part of that process, the Director of Public Health, informed by the relevant ICB Executive Leads, should ensure that the needs of children are a key part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) developed by the Health and Wellbeing Board. Safeguarding partners should use this assessment to help them understand the prevalence and contexts of need, including specific needs relating to disabled children and those relating to abuse, neglect and exploitation, which in turn should help shape services.

Principles for working with parents and carers

18. In the context of a child-centred approach, all practitioners should work in partnership with parents and carers as far as possible. Parents and carers need to understand what is happening, what they can expect from the help and support provided, what is expected of them and be supported to say what they think. This is particularly important when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, whether the harm is from inside or outside the home including online. Working collaboratively will mean parents and carers have the best chance of making changes, and practitioners can make fair and accurate decisions about how to support children and keep them safe. While collaborative relationships between practitioners and, parents and carers are important, the wishes and feelings of the child and what is in their best interest remain central to decision-making. Practitioners need to be particularly skilled in engaging and working with parents and carers whom services have found difficult to engage. Some examples may be parents and carers of disabled children, parents, and carers whose children are at risk of, or experiencing, harm from outside the home, fathers, and male carers, and those who are neurodivergent. Practitioners also need to recognise, engage, and work with parents and carers who are unwilling or unable to engage with services. Four principles underpin work with parents and carers:

1) Effective partnership working with parents and carers happens when practitioners build strong, positive, trusting, and co-operative relationships by:

- approaching families and their wider family networks and communities with empathy, respect, compassion, and creativity
- avoiding reinforcing family shame, suffering, and blaming
- using strength-based approaches, working with parents and carers to identify what is working well and how their strengths could support them to effect positive change
- ensuring they work sensitively with parents, carers, and children, to identify and understand the impact of adversity and trauma in their lives. They seek to understand how adversity and trauma might manifest and affect children and parents' engagement and use their expertise to adapt their response with care and compassion
- adapting their responses to meet the diverse needs of parents and carers, including fathers and male carers, and the specific challenges being faced, including parents and carers of disabled children, and where harm is outside the home[10]
- ensuring they understand the families' background, ethnicity, religion, financial situation, ability, education, sex, ages and sexual orientation, and potential barriers these create in seeking and accessing help and support
- being alert and recognising where parents or carers may not be acting in the best interest of the child or where children may be experiencing abuse, neglect, and exploitation as a result of actions by parents, carers, or other individuals in their lives. Practitioners use their skills and expertise to adapt their response to secure engagement
- being mindful of negative stereotypes when making decisions which might lead to false assumptions

2) Verbal and non-verbal communication should be respectful, non-blaming, clear, inclusive, and adapted to parents and carers needs. Practitioners should ensure that all materials provided to children, parents, carers, and families are jargon free, developmentally appropriate and in a format that is easily understood. Where appropriate, material provided to children, parents, carers, and families should be made accessible and translated into their first language if necessary. Professional interpreters should be provided where needed. Practitioners should not need to rely on family members or partners for interpretation services, including British Sign Language.

[10] Multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm (researchinpractice.org.uk)

3) Practitioners empower parents and carers to participate in decision-making to help, support and protect children by:
    - creating a culture of “no surprises”, for example, making parents and carers aware of who will attend meetings and discussions, if the child will be invited to participate and the format of the meeting or discussion
    - explaining that parents and carers can bring a family member, a friend or supporter to meetings
    - giving parents and carers adequate preparation at every stage, relevant information, a safe and appropriate environment for participation and suitable access arrangements
    - signposting parents and carers to sources of help and support available locally or through the local authority
    - helping parents and carers to understand what the issues are and how these impact on the child, what decisions could be made, what changes need to be made, why and how, timescales and possible outcomes
4) Practitioners involve parents, carers, families, and local communities in designing processes that affect them, including those focused on safeguarding children. They value their contributions, expertise and knowledge reflecting them in service design and continuously seek feedback from parents, carers, family networks, children, and local communities to inform service improvements. Practitioners use feedback from parents and carers to reflect on their own practice.

Expectations for multi-agency working

19. Strong multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is vital to identifying and responding to the needs of children and families. The following expectations have been developed to underpin this multi-agency working. They apply to all agencies and practitioners involved in safeguarding and protecting children. Specifically, these include police, local authorities, health services, probation services, youth offending services, education providers and childcare settings, and voluntary and third sector organisations. The term practitioners used here refers to all those working in these services and settings.

20. The expectations are structured at three levels for strategic leaders, senior and middle managers, and direct practice.

21. Strategic leaders may include Chief Executives of local authorities, Chief Executives of ICBs, Chief Executives of NHS Trusts, Chief Constables, Police and Crime Commissioners, and Chief Executives of multi-academy trusts.

22. Senior and middle managers may include Directors of Children's services, heads of services and team managers in local authorities, designated and named professionals (GP, nurse, doctor, midwife) in health, the Chief Superintendent and Chief Inspector (and equivalents) in police, head teachers, designated safeguarding leads and nursery managers in education.

23. Those in direct practice may include frontline social workers, health visitors, police constables, teachers and those working in the voluntary and community sector.

24. The professions listed as examples for each level is not exhaustive, decision-making structures will differ by area, and local areas should consider how best to apply these standards to match their local approach.

25. Multi-agency expectations for **strategic leaders** are as follows:

- **Collaborate:** leaders develop a shared vision for how their services work together to deliver shared goals
- **Learn:** leaders use evidence from direct practice in their area so that they know and can evaluate what is and isn't working well for children and families
- **Resource:** leaders are ambitious about helping, supporting, and protecting children in their area and jointly prioritise and share resources accordingly
- **Include:** leaders create an inclusive culture where diversity is understood, and multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is celebrated
- **Mutual challenge**: leaders hold each other and their teams to account and are held to account by their teams for the quality of the partnership working

26. Multi-agency expectations for **senior and middle managers** are as follows:

- **Collaborate**: decisions are based on a shared practice approach and constructive debate and analysis of information from all services
- **Learn**: managers ensure their teams have time to engage in peer learning and knowledge exchange, peer audit, group supervision and observation
- **Resource**: managers ensure children receive the holistic support they need, drawing in expertise from a wide range of agencies
- **Include**: managers support staff to identify and challenge discrimination, disparity, and negative stereotypes
- **Mutual challenge**: constructive challenge within and across agencies and disciplines is actively encouraged, independent judgements are valued and given space alongside collective decision-making to avoid groupthink

27. Multi-agency expectations for **direct practice** are as follows:

- **Collaborate**: practitioners working with the same child and family share information to get a complete picture of what life is like for the child. Collectively, they ensure the child's voice is at the centre and the right support is provided
- **Learn**: practitioners learn together by drawing on the best available evidence from their individual fields and sharing their diverse perspectives during regular shared reflection on a child's development, experiences, and outcomes
- **Resource**: practitioners build strong relationships across agencies and disciplines to ensure they support and protect the children with whom they work
- **Include**: practitioners recognise the differences between, and are confident to respond to, circumstances where children experience adversity due to economic and social circumstances and acute family stress, and situations where children face harm due to parental abuse and neglect
- **Mutual challenge**: practitioners challenge themselves and each other, question each other's assumptions, and seek to resolve differences of opinion in a restorative and respectful way

Information sharing

28. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances so effective sharing of information between practitioners, local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of need, assessment, and service provision to keep children safe. Rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews have highlighted that missed opportunities to record, understand the significance of, and share information in a timely manner can have severe consequences for children[11].

29. Practitioners should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children. This may be when problems are first emerging (for example, persistent school absences) or where a child is already known to local authority children's social care. Sharing information about any adults with whom that child has contact, which may impact the child's safety or welfare, is also critical.

30. Information sharing is also essential for the identification of patterns of behaviour when a child is at risk of going missing or has gone missing, including being missing from education. When multiple children appear associated to the same context or locations of risk, or in relation to children in the secure estate where there may be multiple local

[11] Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel 2021: annual report

authorities involved in a child's care, it will be for local safeguarding partners to consider how they build relationships and share relevant information in a timely and proportionate way with each other, other local organisations, and other safeguarding partnerships.

31. The Data Protection Act 2018[12] and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) supports the sharing of relevant information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. To ensure effective safeguarding arrangements:

- all organisations and agencies should have arrangements in place that set out clearly the processes and the principles for sharing information. The arrangements should cover how information will be shared with their own organisation/agency and with others who may be involved in a child's life
- practitioners should not assume that someone else will pass on information that they think may be critical to keep a child safe. If a practitioner has concerns about a child's welfare or safety, then they should share the information with local authority children's social care and/or the police. All practitioners should be particularly alert to the importance of sharing information when a child moves from one local authority into another, due to the risk that knowledge pertinent to keeping a child safe could be lost
- UK GDPR provides a number of bases for sharing personal information. It is not necessary to seek consent to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided that there is a lawful basis to process any personal information required. The legal bases that may be appropriate for sharing data in these circumstances could be "legal obligation" or "public task", which includes the performance of a task in the public interest or the exercise of official authority. Each of the lawful bases under UK GDPR has different requirements[13]. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to obtain consent to share data, but it is important to note that UK GDPR sets a high standard for consent which is specific, time limited and can be withdrawn (in which case the information would have to be deleted)

32. Practitioners must have due regard to the relevant data protection principles which allow them to share personal information, as provided for in the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. To share information effectively:

- practitioners should be confident of the lawful bases and processing conditions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR that allow them to store and

[12] Data Protection Act 2018
[13] Lawful basis for processing: Information Commissioner's Office

share information, including information which is considered sensitive, such as health data, known under the data protection legislation as “special category personal data”

- where practitioners need to share special category personal data, for example, where information obtained is sensitive and needs more protection, they should consider and identify the lawful basis for doing so under Article 6 of UK GDPR, and in addition be able to meet one of the specific conditions for processing under Article 9. The Data Protection Act 2018 specifies “safeguarding of children and individuals at risk” as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information, including without consent (where in the circumstances consent cannot be given, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner obtains consent or if to gain consent would place a child at risk). However, practitioners should be aware of the risks of processing special category data and be mindful that a data protection impact assessment must be completed for any type of processing which is likely to be high risk[14]

33. Practitioners should aim to be as transparent as possible by telling families what information they are sharing and with whom, provided that it is safe to do so.

[14] Data protection impact assessments | ICO

Common myths that hinder effective information sharing

Data protection legislation is a barrier to sharing information

No. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prohibit the collection and sharing of personal information, but rather provide a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately. In particular, the Data Protection Act 2018 balances the rights of the information subject (the individual whom the information is about) and the possible need to share information about them.

Consent is needed to share personal information

No, you do not need consent to share personal information. It is one way to comply with the data protection legislation but not the only way. UK GDPR provides a number of bases for sharing personal information. It is not necessary to seek consent to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided that there is a lawful basis to process any personal information required. The legal bases that may be appropriate for sharing data in these circumstances could be 'legal obligation', or 'public task' which includes the performance of a task in the public interest or the exercise of official authority. Each of the lawful bases under UK GDPR has different requirements. It is good practice to be transparent and inform parents/carers that you are sharing information for these purposes and seek to work cooperatively with them, where it is safe to do so.

Personal information collected by one organisation/agency cannot be disclosed to another

No, this is not the case unless the information is to be used for a purpose incompatible with the purpose for which it was originally collected. In the case of children in need, or children at risk of significant harm, it is difficult to foresee circumstances where information law would be a barrier to sharing personal information with other practitioners[15].

[15] Practitioners looking to share information should consider which processing condition in the Data Protection Act 2018 is most appropriate for use in the particular circumstances of the case. This may be the safeguarding processing condition or another relevant provision.

The common law duty of confidence and the Human Rights Act 1998 prevent the sharing of personal information

No, this is not the case. In addition to the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR, practitioners need to balance the common law duty of confidence and the Human Rights Act 1998 against the effect on individuals or others of not sharing the information

IT systems are often a barrier to effective information sharing

There are many IT systems that support the sharing of information, such as the Child Protection Information Sharing project (CP-IS). It is important that the sector continues to work with IT suppliers to ensure that their user needs around information sharing are factored into priorities for system enhancement.

Chapter 2: Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

34. Protecting children from abuse, neglect and exploitation requires multi-agency join up and cooperation at all levels. Local organisations and agencies that work with children and families play a significant and often statutory role when it comes to safeguarding children.

35. Many of these organisations and agencies have a duty[16] to ensure their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

36. The way in which these organisations and agencies work together is known as multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs). Robust arrangements help to ensure that information about a child and their family is shared effectively, risk of harm is correctly identified and understood, and that children and families receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way.

37. Strong, collaborative leadership and timely decision-making are crucial to the effectiveness of multi-agency working and to identify and address system issues. The three safeguarding partners are responsible and accountable for this in their local areas.

Safeguarding partners are defined in legislation as follows:

Safeguarding partners

A statutory safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) as:

(a) the local authority

(b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

(c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

38. These three partners have a joint and equal duty[17] to make arrangements to:

[16] Children Act 2004 Section 11
[17] Children Act 2004 Section 16E

- work together as a team to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area
- include and develop the role of wider local organisations and agencies (see chapter 2, paragraphs 65-75 on Relevant agencies) in the process.

39. Every local authority, ICB and constabulary in England must be covered by a multi-agency safeguarding arrangement[18].

40. The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This means:

- there is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm
- when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child
- organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account
- the voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice
- information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children
- effective collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across relevant agencies
- senior leaders promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families

[18] Children Act 2004 Section 16E

Geography

41. Although the geographical boundaries for the three safeguarding partners may differ in size, multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be based on local authority areas. Arrangements can cover two or more local authority boundaries by agreement and where this is in place local authorities can agree to delegate their safeguarding duties to a single authority[19].

42. The geographical area of a local multi-agency safeguarding arrangement can be changed over time. Where changes are proposed, these should be agreed by all safeguarding partners, communicated clearly to relevant agencies and staff, and reflected in published arrangements (chapter 2, paragraphs 103-105 on Publication of arrangements).

43. As police and health boundaries often cover multiple local authorities, they are usually part of more than one multi-agency safeguarding arrangement. Reflecting this, engagement and collaboration through multi-agency safeguarding arrangements can extend beyond the geographical borders of their local area (for example, regionally or across different strategic arrangements and boards). There is an expectation that lead safeguarding partners should decide how best to contribute to the local arrangements they are responsible for.

44. There are interdependencies between local arrangements and other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include but not be limited to other public boards, including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Boards, local drug partnerships, domestic abuse partnership boards, Corporate Parenting Board, Youth Offending Management Board and, where relevant, Violence Reduction Units. It is for local areas to decide how best to coordinate these boards and partnerships to reflect local need.

45. Local safeguarding arrangements will need to reflect health and care infrastructure such as ICBs, Integrated Care Systems, local maternity and neonatal systems, provider collaboratives, primary care networks and NHS specialised commissioning arrangements.

46. It is particularly important that all partners collaborate to ensure that children are placed as close to home as possible and are able to continue to access services in their local area which support their safety and wellbeing.

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[19] Children Act 2004 Section 16J

Strategic leadership and accountability

47. Strong, joined-up leadership and clear accountability is critical to effective multi-agency safeguarding, bringing together the various organisations and agencies. It is therefore important that the head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency plays an active role in these arrangements. They (hereafter 'lead safeguarding partner' or 'LSP') have been named because they are able to:

- speak with authority for the safeguarding partner they represent
- take decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing, and practice matters
- hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate and implement the local arrangements

48. In relation to the police, the LSP is already defined as the Chief Officer of Police[20]. For local authorities, the LSP should be the Head of Paid Service, also known as the Chief Executive[21], and for ICBs the LSP should be the Chief Executive.

49. Each LSP is responsible for discharging their own statutory and legislative duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As leaders of their organisations and the statutory safeguarding partners, it is for LSPs to assure themselves that their local arrangements are effective and keep children safe. This includes systems of assurance and accountability within each of their organisations, including inspection findings.

50. LSPs are jointly responsible for ensuring the proper involvement of and oversight of all relevant agencies, and should act as a team, as opposed to a voice for their agency alone. They should meet sufficiently regularly to undertake the following core functions: Through what mechanism and how often is for local decision.

[20] A chief police officer is the most senior police officer in a police force as defined in the Police Act 1996 Section 101
[21] Head of paid service: Local Government and Housing Act 1989 Section 4

Joint functions of lead safeguarding partners

1. Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.

2. Lead their organisation's individual contribution to the shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.

3. Review and sign off key partnership documents: published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report, and local threshold document.

4. Provide shared oversight of learning from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice (as set out in the yearly report).

5. Ensure multi-agency arrangements have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.

6. Ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings, are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

51. LSPs should be clearly named in published arrangements (see chapter 2, paragraphs 103-105 on Publication of arrangements) and are accountable for the effectiveness and outcomes of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in their area.

52. In cases where the boundaries of the police and ICB extend over multiple local authority areas, LSPs may decide to meet at a more regional level so they can discuss all arrangements within their remit and ensure consistency of funding and resources.

53. LSPs should demonstrate how the experiences of children and families shape the delivery of local arrangements. They should consider in particular how those with protected characteristics[22] engage in service design.

54. The LSP holds responsibility for the implementation of recommendations and learning from serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews whether or not they originate within their local area, although elements of monitoring these can be delegated.

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[22] Equality Act 2010

55. Delivery of multi-agency safeguarding functions and processes should be delegated to enable the LSPs to focus on their joint functions and maintain strategic oversight.

Delivering multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

56. Each LSP should appoint a delegated safeguarding partner (DSP) for its agency who should be named in arrangements.

57. DSPs[23] should be sufficiently senior to be able to speak with authority, take decisions on behalf of the LSP and hold their sectors to account. The DSPs should have the authority to carry out these functions, while ultimate accountability remains with the LSP as the individual responsible for the delivery of the statutory duties of the safeguarding partners.

58. The DSP should have oversight of the quality and compliance of the delivery of agreed shared priorities. They should have processes in place to provide assurance that multi-agency practice is reviewed and operating well. Where this is not evident, they should have the capacity and resource from their own agencies to engage, respond and improve operational systems and practice.

59. DSPs and LSPs should have regular interaction and communication to ensure that the LSP has sufficient oversight and detail on key topics and issues to maintain their statutory responsibilities. Where a key decision needs to be made that will impact arrangements and/or services, this should involve the LSP. DSPs should escalate risks and issues they cannot resolve between them to the LSPs for resolution. This will ensure that accountability is clear, that strategic decisions are achievable and deliverable, and that progress is driven at all levels.

60. DSPs should meet sufficiently frequently to undertake the following joint functions:

[23] For the DSP role, we expect that, for the police, there might need to be delegation based on local context. The responsibilities of the delegate should be no lower than that of Area Commander, Head of Public Protection or equivalent.

Joint functions of delegated safeguarding partners

1. Delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures to protect and safeguard children in the local area, in compliance with published arrangements and thresholds.
2. Close partnership working and engagement with education (at strategic and operational level) and other relevant agencies, allowing better identification of and response to harm.
3. The implementation of effective information sharing arrangements between agencies, including data sharing that facilitates joint analysis between partner agencies.
4. Delivery of high-quality and timely rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews, with the impact of learning from local and national reviews and independent scrutiny clearly evidenced in yearly reports.
5. The provision of appropriate multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training.
6. Seeking of, and responding to, feedback from children and families about their experiences of services and co-designing services to ensure children from different communities and groups can access the help and protection they need.

61. To support delivery of these functions, LSPs should appoint one of the DSPs as the partnership chair for the multi-agency arrangements. This role needs to be jointly agreed by the LSPs and in doing so given the full backing of all three partners. The role should be regularly reviewed, and any changes updated in published arrangements. The role can be rotated between the DSPs if deemed appropriate by LSPs. This is intended to mirror the joint and equal responsibility for the arrangements and increase shared understanding of the system. The function should facilitate partner discussions, working in conjunction with independent scrutiny which provides rigour and challenge.

62. The purpose of the partnership chair will be to provide greater continuity across local areas and act as the conduit between the DSPs and LSPs, providing feedback and escalating collective risk and issues to LSPs as necessary. It will allow for a single point of contact for the partnership but should not cut across existing formal complaints procedures. The functions of the partnership chair are separate and distinct from the functions of independent scrutiny. This arrangement removes any need for a local area to maintain another chair or independent chair.

Functions of Partnership Chair role

- To develop strategic links, support and hold to account all LSPs in fulfilling their safeguarding duties for children.
- Ensure that local arrangements are designed to work collaboratively and effectively by encouraging and supporting the development of partnership working between the LSPs, DSPs, independent scrutiny role and MASA sub-groups.
- Chair the meetings of the DSPs, including any additional meetings convened as a response to specific and exceptional circumstances, with the help of the business manager and independent scrutiny role.
- Offer appropriate challenge to ensure that the partners are accountable, and that the local arrangements operate effectively.

63. Strong leadership and clear accountability are crucial for effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. To strengthen accountability, local safeguarding arrangements should separate the roles of partnership chair and independent scrutiny and be clear about the three distinct functions within effective local safeguarding arrangements:

- the partnership chair has authority, is decisive and enables resource allocation, with risk escalation to lead safeguarding partners at the executive
- a business management function with adequate resources and capacity to support the partnership chair
- a rigorous and effective independent scrutiny function providing challenge to the safeguarding partners (see chapter 2, paragraphs 89-97 on Independent scrutiny)

64. The DSPs should ensure that, with the support of, the business management and independent scrutiny function (see chapter 2, paragraphs 89-97 on Independent scrutiny) the following activities and assurance will be delivered:

- oversee and be responsible for the analysis, intelligence, and timely collection of data to support functions, such as:
    - getting an accurate local picture of how effectively services are being delivered through regular communication across relevant agencies
    - advising the statutory safeguarding partners of the key challenges and emerging priorities

  - coordinating the joint multi-agency strategic plan, ensuring that statutory safeguarding partners and their delegates feed into and own the plan in the local area
  - overseeing the quality of practice and local outcomes for children and families
- review and promote consistent understanding and application of referral and intervention thresholds across agencies so that the right children receive the right support at the right time
- coordinate the views of children, and families about the services they receive and feed key learning, issues, and good practice to the LSPs
- support effective engagement with relevant agencies in their local area so that they understand their roles and responsibilities, which includes strengthening the input from education providers at operational and strategic level decision-making
- use learning from local practice and serious incident notifications to prompt reflection and analysis of where improvements need to be secured and action taken
- strengthen system conditions for effective multi-agency child protection work
- chair, attend or be reported to on regular multi-agency operational meetings and subgroups, to ensure common threads across the arrangements. Partnerships should decide the regularity of meetings at both a LSP and DSP level

Relevant agencies

65. Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. A list of organisations that meet the criteria to be included as a relevant agency is set out in regulations[24].

66. Strong, effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people in a collaborative way. This approach requires flexibility from all relevant agencies, to enable joint identification and response to existing and emerging needs, and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children.

67. The LSPs should set out in their published arrangements which organisations and agencies they require to work with them as relevant agencies. It is expected all local education and childcare providers working with children up to the age of 18, including

[24] The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018

alternative provision, pupil referral units and further education will be included because of the pivotal role they play in children's daily lives and amount of time they spend with them.

68. Early years provision within schools and maintained nurseries are relevant agencies and help to safeguard some of the most vulnerable children. There are also other providers such as nurseries and childminders whose role within local arrangements should be considered. All early years providers should have regard to this guidance and the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework[25]. School-aged children may also attend a childcare setting or an out-of-school activity, and where children are home educated these settings are particularly significant. Therefore, LSPs should also consider including voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, childcare settings, and sports clubs in their published arrangements.

69. Local arrangements are expected to change over time to ensure they continue to work effectively for children and families, to keep pace with changing demographics and evolving social and economic challenges. Any changes should be reflected in updated published arrangements.

70. When identified by the LSPs as a relevant agency, an organisation must act in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements[26]. As part of this, the organisation should:

- have a clear understanding of its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children locally, and how it will discharge them
- co-operate with safeguarding partners to improve, implement, and monitor effectiveness of the local safeguarding arrangements
- share information and data about safeguarding issues and concerns affecting the children involved in their organisation to contribute to local priorities
- ensure local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are fully understood, and rigorously applied within their organisation

71. LSPs should consult with relevant agencies when developing safeguarding arrangements. This will ensure relevant agencies are aware of the expectations placed on them. Relevant agencies should actively promote and enforce the arrangements they have contributed to shaping.

72. Where a relevant agency has a national remit, such as the British Transport Police and Cafcass, LSPs should be clear on how these agencies should collaborate, what any

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[25] Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage
[26] Children's Act 2004 Section16G (4)

agency's individual responsibilities are, and how they might contribute towards local safeguarding arrangements. Where a body or organisation is not named in Relevant Agency regulations, such as a territorial or special police force, LSPs may still wish to consider inviting them to contribute to local safeguarding arrangements by agreement.

73. The published arrangements should set out clearly any contributions agreed with relevant agencies, including funding and budget contributions, accommodation, services, and any resources connected with the arrangements.

74. In setting out how they will work with relevant agencies, the LSPs should be clear how they will assure themselves that relevant agencies have appropriate, robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place and how information will be shared amongst all relevant agencies and the safeguarding partners.

75. DSPs and relevant agencies should be in regular communication about local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and their effectiveness. It is for the LSPs to determine when their list of relevant agencies should be reviewed. Local safeguarding arrangements should be shared with and be easily accessible to all partners and relevant agencies. Relevant agencies should be provided with information about how to escalate concerns and how any disputes will be resolved. This should include details of the independent scrutiny and whistleblowing procedures.

Working with schools, colleges, early years, and other education providers

76. Schools, colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) all have a pivotal role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Their insight and co-operation are vital to the successful delivery of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. People working in education settings play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns and providing direct support to children. They may be the first trusted adult to whom children report safeguarding concerns. LSPs should give careful consideration to naming all local schools, colleges and education providers set out in the 2018 Regulations[27] as relevant agencies. The statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' and 'Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework' set out the safeguarding duties and expectations on schools, colleges and other education providers and should be read alongside this guidance.

[27] The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018

77. LSPs should create an environment which enables all schools[28] (including independent schools and academy trusts), colleges, early years, and other education and childcare providers in the local area to be fully engaged, involved and included in local safeguarding arrangements. This means making sure that the views and contributions of education and childcare providers are articulated at the highest level of decision-making. Although it may be challenging for a single education or childcare leader to speak on behalf of all local providers, LSPs should have an education representative at strategic discussions representing the education sector. These local leaders will bring insights on the experiences of children locally, and on how arrangements impact on the education and childcare system.

78. Most local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements include systems to ensure engagement and collaboration at the operational level, such as through education sub-groups and networks, practitioner forums involving designated safeguarding leads[29], and nominated education representatives. Some safeguarding partners already recognise the need to ensure education providers have a voice at the strategic decision-making level and reflect this in their structures. Published arrangements and yearly reports should outline how education providers are engaged and consulted with at both the operational and strategic levels, how this then impacts on decision-making, what it means to be a relevant agency in their local area, and how they can escalate an issue.

79. Education providers, including multi-academy trusts, have a responsibility to play their full part in local safeguarding arrangements, including where their footprint extends across several local authority areas. This includes, but should not be limited to, responding to safeguarding audits of quality and compliance[30], as requested by the local authority and/or local safeguarding partners. This is to ensure that policies are consistent with the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and relevant legislation and/or regulations. They should also provide staff and governor training that meets local and national safeguarding requirements[31]. Education providers where required should report their audits to their governing bodies and proprietors to be shared as requested by the LSPs. Training for designated safeguarding leads and designated teachers should include shared understanding about different levels of need and how these need to be responded to. Education providers also play a vital role in sharing and contributing to key information about children, including attendance data, exclusions, concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, and wider social and environmental factors including extra-familial contexts, which are a key aspect of keeping children safe.

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[28] Statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education defines “all schools” as “maintained, non-maintained or independent schools (including academies, free schools, and alternative provision academies), maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units”

[29] Named child protection or safeguarding lead: NSPCC Learning

[30] Children Act 2004 Section 11, Education Act 2002 Section 157, Education Act 2002 Section 175, Children and Social Work Act 2017 Section 16H

[31] Keeping children safe in education

80. Where the LSPs have concerns about the safeguarding arrangements in a school, independent school or an academy, 'Schools causing concern' guidance[32] should be followed.

81. Ofsted registered education and childcare providers' culture and their approach to safeguarding will be considered as part of all Ofsted inspections. While safeguarding is not graded separately, Ofsted will always make a written judgement in reports about whether the arrangements for safeguarding children are effective.

Working with voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs

82. Many voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs (see chapter 4 paragraphs 310-315) provide education and activities for children as part of their work. Similar to staff in schools and colleges, the staff and volunteers working with children in these settings will often play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns, and providing direct support to children; they can often be the first trusted adult to whom a child reports abuse. Therefore, many of these organisations will have a crucial role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

83. LSPs should consider the value of including VCSEs in their local arrangements, regardless of whether they are named in the 2018 Regulations. Where LSPs choose to name these organisations as a relevant agency in published local arrangements, it is important that they are engaged in developing these safeguarding arrangements and, where applicable, made aware of their statutory duty to co-operate with them. Beyond these local arrangements, non-statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings'[33] sets out the safeguarding arrangements that these providers should have in place, including expectations on how to manage safeguarding concerns, and the importance of familiarising themselves with local arrangements and referral routes.

Information requests

84. Sharing of information between organisations and agencies within a multi-agency system is essential to improve outcomes for children and their families.

85. Safeguarding partners may require any person, organisation, or agency to provide them, any relevant agency for the area, a reviewer or another person, organisation or agency, with specified information[34]. This should be information which enables and

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[32] Schools causing concern.
[33] Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings (Using after-school clubs, community activities and tuition: guidance for providers)
[34] Children Act 2004 Section 16H

assists the LSPs to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area, including local and national child safeguarding practice reviews.

86. The person or organisation to whom a request is made must comply with such a request[35]. If they do not, safeguarding partners may take legal action against them.

87. As public authorities, safeguarding partners should be aware of their own responsibilities under the relevant information law and have regard to guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office[36] when issuing and responding to requests for information.

88. Safeguarding partners should have an agreement in place which outlines how information is shared safely and effectively between themselves and other relevant agencies.

Independent scrutiny

89. Safeguarding partners must ensure that there are arrangements for effective independent scrutiny in place for their local area.

[35] Children Act 2004 Section 16H (2)
[36] For organisations: Information Commissioner's Office

Functions of independent scrutiny role

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.
- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership.
- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

90. Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports. The independent scrutineer or scrutiny group should be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in the area being scrutinised and consequently add value to the work of local agencies.

91. Scrutiny should be evidence-based, and feedback should be considered and acted upon by safeguarding partners. Scrutineers should consider the impact that the LSP and DSP make through their strategic oversight, if they are providing strong leadership, and the functioning of local arrangements.

92. Independent scrutiny contributes to the wider system of accountability which includes the independent inspectorates' single agency inspections, including Inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS), and Police Forces assessment of their effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy (PEEL), as well as Joint Targeted Area

Inspections, National Child Protection Inspections and annual reporting arrangements (see chapter 2, paragraphs 101-102 on Reporting).

93. The decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny is to be made locally, and LSPs should be assured that the system in place leads to objective and rigorous analysis of local arrangements.

94. Statutory partners and relevant agencies should review progress against agreed priorities and identify areas for scrutiny, with a focus on achieving outcomes for children.

95. Scrutiny should be based on sharing and analysis of local and national data, intelligence, and information. This could include the development of multi-agency dashboards, joint needs assessments, multi-agency audits, reviews, and mapping of what is already being scrutinised by the statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, identifying the gaps and aligning with agreed priorities.

96. Independent scrutiny can be delivered through a range of methods and structures. Local areas may choose to have an individual or an externally commissioned group delivering their scrutiny. Furthermore, scrutiny may be embedded within the structure of the arrangement or set apart from it. Scrutiny work can be undertaken through interviews, focus groups, data analysis, observations, and peer review. Scrutiny should take account of the voice and experience of children and their families.

97. The approach to independent scrutiny should be clearly set out and accessible. The published arrangements should state how independent scrutiny is delivered locally and by whom, how the arrangements are reviewed and how regularly, which areas will be scrutinised, and how any recommendations will be taken forward. This might include the process and timescales for ongoing review of the arrangements, and the effectiveness of learning following serious incidents. In the yearly report, the LSPs should review the impact and learning from scrutiny and how they are responding to the findings to improve the effectiveness of arrangements (see chapter 2, paragraphs 101-102 on Reporting).

Funding

98. The LSP should agree on the level of funding needed to deliver the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This includes consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions including local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training and learning events. It is the responsibility of the LSP to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities.

99. Funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable and agreed by the LSP. Funding for the arrangements should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements.

100. The funding should be transparent to children and families in the area, and the individual contributions of safeguarding partners and relevant agencies should be clearly set out in reporting (see chapter 2, paragraphs 101-102 on Reporting).

Reporting

101. Safeguarding partners should be transparent in how they co-ordinate, deliver and fund services for children and families locally. In order that others can hold the safeguarding partners to account there are two mechanisms for reporting on service delivery and leadership:

- publication of arrangements
- a yearly report

102. Both documents should:

- be contributed to and signed off by all LSPs
- clearly demonstrate the links between them
- be easily accessible

Publication of arrangements

103. Once agreed, local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements must[37] be published and must include:

- arrangements for the safeguarding partners to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area
- arrangements for commissioning and publishing local child safeguarding practice reviews (see chapter 5, paragraphs 356-359)
- arrangements for independent scrutiny of the effectiveness of the arrangements

104. They should also include:

- who the three safeguarding partners, their delegates and partnership chair are
- geographical boundaries, including if the arrangements operate across more than one local authority area
- the relevant agencies the safeguarding partners will work with, why these organisations and agencies have been chosen, and how they will collaborate and work together to improve outcomes for children and families

[37] Children Act 2004 Section 16G

- how all, schools (including independent schools, academies, and free schools), colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) will be included in the safeguarding arrangements
- how any youth custody and residential homes for children will be included in the safeguarding arrangements
- how the safeguarding partners will share information and data safely and effectively, using arrangements that clearly set out the processes and the principles for sharing
- how the safeguarding partners will use data and intelligence to assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help
- how multi-agency training will be commissioned, delivered, and monitored for impact, and how they will undertake any multi-agency and inter-agency audits
- how the arrangements will be funded
- the process for undertaking local child safeguarding practice reviews, setting out the arrangements for embedding learning across organisations and agencies
- how the arrangements will include the voice of children and families, including how to escalate concerns and how any disputes will be resolved, including whistleblowing procedures
- how the local threshold document in place aligns with the arrangements

105. The published arrangements should be easily available and updated when there are key changes, such as changes to the LSPs, to the yearly priorities or the list of relevant agencies. Any updates to the published arrangements should be sent to the Department for Education (safeguarding.reform@education.gov.uk).

Yearly report

106. Safeguarding partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in a 12-month period[38]. That reporting should be transparent and easily accessible to families and professionals. The focus of these reports should be on multi-agency priorities, learning, impact, evidence, and improvement. Reports must include:

- what partnerships have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews

[38] Children Act 2004 Section 16G

- how effective these arrangements have been in practice

107. In addition, the report should also include:

- the contribution of each safeguarding partner to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- any themes emanating from aggregated methods of scrutiny, for example, reviews and scrutineer activity and multi-agency audits
- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- an analysis of learning from serious incidents
- a record of key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle, including in relation to implementing the recommendations from any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and the impact this has had
- ways in which the safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- the breakdown of costs in delivering the arrangements for that period, including the financial contributions of individual partners, any changes to funding and an assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding
- evidence of how safeguarding partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements
- an overview of how data is being used to encourage learning within the arrangements and evidence of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes
- a review of the impact and learning from independent scrutiny arrangements to ensure the leadership is strong and the arrangements are leading to the desired and necessary impact
- any updates to the published arrangement with the proposed timescale for implementation
- evidence that national reforms have been implemented, taking into account key decisions and actions taken by safeguarding partners in response to reforms, and any issues or concerns encountered within the yearly cycle

108. Where there is a secure establishment in a local area, safeguarding partners should include a review of the use of restraint within that establishment in their report, and

the findings of the review should be reported to the Youth Justice Board, the Youth Custody Service, and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

109. Safeguarding partners should make sure the report is widely available. A copy should be sent to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (nationalreviewpanel@education.gov.uk) who will review it to identify any issues that may need escalation to a national level and Foundations (What Works Centre for Children and Families) (policy@foundations.org.uk), given its focus on learning within 7 days of publication. To allow for consistency across local areas, these should be submitted and published by the end of September every year, starting from 2024, and should be reflective of work undertaken the previous financial year (April to March). If partners fail to submit the yearly report this may be escalated to the Secretary of State.

Dispute resolution process

110. Safeguarding partners and relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements for their area and will be expected to understand each other's differences of views and resolve such differences locally[39]. LSPs should therefore agree a system to resolve disputes and issues between partners within multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

111. This may be applied to isolated issues or incidents as well as any intractable recurring ones.

112. At all stages LSPs and their delegates should make use of key stakeholders in their local systems, that might include Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayors, lead members, and/or independent persons, who can be brought to the table to assist them to settle on a solution.

113. If the issue remains unresolved between the three safeguarding partners and their local networks the next stage of escalation is to the Secretary of State.

[39] Children and Social Work Act 2017 Section 16G (4)

Chapter 3: Providing help, support and protection

114. All families can face challenges that make parenting difficult. Often families are able to overcome challenges themselves or with the help of relatives, friends and services, such as schools, youth services, health visiting and mental health services. However, sometimes families will have more significant needs that require more intensive help and support.

115. This chapter outlines how agencies, organisations and individuals work together to provide help, support, and protection in early help[40], through statutory services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989[41] and through section 47 of the Children Act 1989[42] (child protection enquires and processes).

Local criteria for providing help, support, and protection

116. Safeguarding partners should agree with their relevant agencies the criteria for different levels of assessment to inform which services are commissioned and delivered in their local area and ensure that the right help is given to children at the right time. This should include services for children who have suffered or are likely to suffer abuse, neglect, and exploitation whether from within or outside the home. This should also include a range of appropriate services for disabled children and be aligned with the short breaks services statement[43].

117. The safeguarding partners should publish a threshold document, which sets out the local criteria for action in a way that is transparent, evidence-based, accessible, and easily understood. This should include:

- the process for early help assessments, and the type and level of early help and targeted early help services to be provided under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004[44]

[40] Early help is a system of support which aims to support children and families as soon as problems emerge. Some early help support is described as 'targeted early help' and is provided to children and families who are identified by practitioners to have multiple or complex needs requiring a specialist and/or multi-agency response but where statutory intervention is not needed.

[41] Child in need refers to the statutory support provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 for a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children's social care services, or the child is disabled. The duty to provide support is on the local authority.

[42] Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a child is the subject of an emergency protection order or is in police protection or there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority must make or cause to be made enquiries to decide if any action must be taken to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

[43] Required under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011

[44] The Children Act 2004 Section 10 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate. Section 11 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to give regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- the criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services under:
  - section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need, including how this applies for disabled children)
  - section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm)
  - section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (care and supervision orders)
  - section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (duty to accommodate a child)
- clear procedures and processes for cases relating to:
  - the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children
  - children managed within the youth secure estate
  - disabled children

Section 1: Early help

118. Early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area. Some early help is provided through "universal services"[45], such as education and health services. They are universal services because they are available to all families, regardless of their needs. Other early help services are coordinated by a local authority and/or their partners to address specific concerns within a family and can be described as targeted early help. Examples of these include parenting support, mental health support, youth services, youth offending teams and housing and employment services. Early help may be appropriate for children and families who have several needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable. It is a voluntary approach, requiring the family's consent to receive support and services offered. These may be provided before and/or after statutory intervention.

119. The Early Help System Guide[46] provides a toolkit to assist local strategic partnerships responsible for their early help system in their area. Effective provision relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help

[45] Universal services are available to all children and families. They are provided by a range of agencies such as health and education. GPs, health visitors and school nurses are some examples of this type of service provision.
[46] Early Help System Guide

- undertake an assessment of the need for early help which considers the needs of all members of the family
- ensure good ongoing communication, for example, through regular meetings between practitioners who are working with the family
- co-ordinate and/or provide support as part of a plan to improve outcomes. This plan will be designed together with the child and family, and updated as and when the child and family needs change
- engage effectively with families and their family network, making use of family group decision-making, such as family group conferences,[47] to help meet the needs of the child[48]

120. A lead practitioner should co-ordinate the activity around the family, ensure the assessment and the family plan responds to all needs identified, and lead on ensuring the family co-produce the plan. The plan might include the family network. The time commitment to deliver this role will vary family by family depending on the complexity of their needs. Where appropriate, local authorities should engage families, including children, to have a say in who their lead practitioner is, and have a process in place to collate feedback on their relationship with them.

121. The lead practitioner role could be held by a range of people. More details about which practitioners may act as a lead practitioner, their roles and responsibilities along with additional guidance, are provided in the Early Help System Guide[49].

Identifying children and families who would benefit from help

122. Local organisations and agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families. Local authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services, which can be delivered through a Family Hub model where they exist, based on a clear understanding of local needs. Local authorities should use the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)[50] to inform their early help offer.

123. Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary training will be important in supporting this collective understanding of the demographics and needs of the local community, the local practice framework, and the services available to support children. All practitioners

[47] Family group decision-making is the umbrella term for a family-led forum where a family network makes a plan in response to concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. These can take different forms; family group conferences are one model of family group decision-making. The Department for Education does not prescribe a specific model. There is further information in the glossary.
[48] The statutory guidance on court orders and pre-proceedings for local authorities (2014) highlights that family group conferences are an important means of involving the family early to avoid the creation of barriers between the local authority and the family.
[49] Early Help System Guide
[50] Joint strategic needs assessment and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained

working with children and families, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, need to understand their role in identifying emerging problems. They need appropriate training so that they:

- know when to share information with other practitioners and what action to take to support early identification and assessment
- are able to identify and recognise all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- have an understanding of domestic and sexual abuse[51], including controlling and coercive behaviour as well as parental conflict that is frequent, intense, and unresolved
- are aware of new and emerging threats, including online harm, grooming, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, radicalisation, and the role of technology and social media in presenting harm
- are aware that a child and their family may be experiencing multiple needs at the same time

124. Practitioners should be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health and care (EHC) plan)
- is a young carer
- is bereaved
- is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including being affected by gangs and county lines and organised crime groups and/or serious violence, including knife crime
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home[52]
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised[53]
- is viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence), or developing inappropriate relationships online

[51] See Appendix A: Glossary for the statutory definition of domestic abuse set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
[52] Children who run away or go missing from home or care (2014)
[53] Managing risk of radicalisation in your education setting

- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse[54]
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- is suffering from mental ill health
- has returned home to their family from care
- is a privately fostered child[55]
- has a parent or carer in custody[56]
- is missing education[57], or persistently absent from school, or not in receipt of full-time education
- has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded

The role of education and childcare settings

125. All children aged 5 to 16 are legally entitled to a full-time education, suitable to any special educational need. Education is essential for children's progress, wellbeing and wider development and being in school is a protective factor against wider harms, including exploitation. Where children are not receiving education, either because they persistently missing school, or are not registered at a school and not receiving a suitable education otherwise, this could be a possible indicator of neglect, abuse or exploitation or could in itself constitute neglect in severe and sustained cases.

126. Young people aged 16 and 17, including those with special and educational needs and disabilities, are required to participate in education or training until they reach their 18th birthday. They are entitled to an offer of a suitable place in education or training under the September guarantee[58]. Local authorities are therefore expected to identify and pay particular attention to young people who are not in education, employment or training or whose current activity is not known.

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[54] The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Section 3 recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right when they see, hear or experience domestic abuse perpetrated by a parent, those with parental responsibility, or a relative.

[55] Private fostering occurs when a child under the age of 16 (or under 18, if disabled) is provided with care and accommodation by a person who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility for them or a relative in their own home. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodating them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer. This term is also used in Championing Kinship Care: The National Kinship Care Strategy, capturing private fostering arrangements as a type of kinship care. It holds the same meaning, but applies only to individuals, excluding organisations or bodies.

[56] Farmer review for women (2019) found that children impacted by maternal imprisonment are more likely to leave their family home and be separated from their primary carer, resulting in significant disruption to their lives.

[57] Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities

[58] September guarantee: education and training for young people

127. Local authorities also have a statutory duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people aged 16 to 19 and for those up to age 25 with a learning difficulty assessment or, EHC plan, in their area[59]. They should make available to young people aged 13 to 19 and to those up to the age of 25 with a learning difficulty assessment or EHC plan, support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training[60].

128. As education and childcare settings have daily contact with most children and families, they are uniquely placed to identify concerns and, with partners as appropriate, address them early. Safeguarding professionals, including safeguarding partners and their delegates, should work closely with education and childcare settings to ensure information about children is shared effectively, risks of harm are correctly identified and understood, and children and families receive the services they need. This includes, but is not limited to, information, such as increased absence or mental health problems, which may be indicators that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering neglect, abuse, and exploitation.

129. Those working in education and childcare settings need to be aware of how children's experiences can impact on their mental health, behaviour, attendance and progress at nursery, school, or college. Where children have suffered abuse, neglect and exploitation, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood[61].

130. It is important that relevant information where children are home educated is shared between local authorities, schools, colleges, and other relevant partners. Parents have a right to educate their children at home providing the education is suitable[62]. When a child of school age is not a registered pupil at a school and is not receiving suitable education at home, this could be an indicator of neglect, abuse, or exploitation. Schools must notify the local authority of a child's removal from the school roll[63] at a non-standard

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[59] Education Act 1996 Sections 15ZA and 18A as inserted by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, and amended by the Children and Families Act 2014

[60] Education and Skills Act (ESA) 2008 Section 68

[61] An example of where schools and local police forces work together successfully to better support and safeguard children after experiencing domestic abuse, is through the Operation Encompass notification scheme. Operation Encompass works by directly connecting the police with schools. When officers have attended a domestic abuse incident, police share the information with a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) before the start of the next school day, so that school staff can provide appropriate emotional and practical support at the earliest opportunity to children affected by domestic abuse

[62] The Education Act 1996 Section 436A (3) defines "suitable education" as efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs

[63] The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

transition point[64], and they should also share information on a child's circumstances, especially if already known to children's social care or if they have an EHC plan[65].

Effective assessment of the need for early help

131. Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency (for example, education, health, housing) there should be a multi-agency assessment. These assessments should:

- be undertaken with the agreement of the child and their parents or carers, involving the child and family as well as all the practitioners who are working with them
- take account of the child's wishes and feelings wherever possible which could include providing advocacy support where this is needed to enable a child to share their views, for example, if the child has communication difficulties due to a disability
- take account of the child's age, family circumstances and extra-familial contexts[66] and whether these factors are contributing to or preventing good outcomes
- take account of the needs of all members of the family as individuals and consider how their needs impact on one another which includes considering needs relating to education, early years development, mental health and physical health, substance misuse, financial stability, housing, family relationships, domestic abuse and crime as described in the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework[67]. Practitioners should be aware of situations where there has been a breakdown in relationship between the child and their family and engaging the whole family may not be appropriate
- cover both presenting needs and any underlying issues with the understanding that a family's needs can change overtime, for example, when a child moves up to secondary school
- be based on facts, and explore and build on strengths
- be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided
- identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating

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[64] Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Regulation 12

[65] Education, health and care (EHC) plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs. Further guidance on EHC plans can be found at https://www.GOV.UK/children-with-special-educational-needs

[66] See Appendix A: glossary

[67] Supporting families programme guidance, 2022 to 2025: chapter 3, Supporting families outcomes framework

- provide the basis for any future assessments if they are needed, for example, under sections 17 and 47 of the Children Act 1989

132. Practitioners should have consideration for specific needs, including, but not exclusive to, family members who may have learning difficulties/disabilities or those whose first language is not English, are care experienced, young parents[68], fathers or male carers, and parents who identify as LGBT.

133. If a family does not consent to an early help assessment, practitioners should seek to understand why this is the case, so that they can provide reassurance to the family about their concerns. They should ensure the family has understood the consensual nature of support, and range of services available to meet their needs. The practitioner should consider how the needs of the child could otherwise be met, for example, through provision by universal services that the family already engages with. Practitioners should still inform individuals that their data will be recorded and shared, and the purpose of this explained to them. If a family has chosen not to engage with support in the past, this should not act as a barrier to them accessing support in the future. If at any time it is considered that the child may be a child in need, as defined in the Children Act 1989, a referral should be made to children's social care. Practitioners should ensure that the family has understood that the support and services provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 are consensual. If there are concerns that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, a referral should be made immediately to local authority children's social care.

Provision of effective services to help families

134. Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective services. They should reflect any local assessment of need, including the JSNA and the latest evidence of the effectiveness of early help programmes[69]. Good practice should also ensure effective join-up between specific local early help services and universal services to ensure families can seamlessly transition from universal to more specialist support should a specific need be identified. There should be an explicit link to the local area's offer of short breaks for disabled children, as well as suitably adjusted services to support parents. Evidence should be collated to show their impact, including on those with a particular protected characteristic.

135. Specific local early help services typically include family and parenting programmes, assistance with school attendance, assistance with health issues including

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[68] Our young parents project - The Lullaby Trust describes a young parent as someone under the age of 25

[69] What Works Centre for Children & Families) (Foundations). See Home | EIF Guidebook and Interventions with established evidence of preventing, stopping or reducing the impact of child abuse and neglect and related risks

mental health, enabling financial stability, supporting secure housing, responses to emerging concerns in extra-familial contexts, responding to a parent in custody, and help for emerging problems relating to domestic abuse, drug or alcohol misuse. Local approaches to delivering these services will vary but could include using a family hub model. Family hubs are a place-based way of joining-up in the planning and delivery of family support services, offering a universal access point for children and families.

136. Early help services may also focus on improving family functioning and building the family's own capability to establish positive routines and solve problems. This should be done within a structured, evidence-based practice framework, which is shared across the early help partnership and involves regular review to ensure that real progress is being made. Where family networks are supporting the child and parents, it might be appropriate to use family group decision-making to support work with the family. Some of these services may be delivered directly to parents but should always be evaluated to demonstrate the impact they are having on the outcomes for the child.

137. The Early Help System Guide provides operational guidance on the delivery of whole family working in the early help system. Local areas should have agreed a set of measures at family, cohort, demand, and population level to evidence the effectiveness of early help, looking particularly at whether whole family need has been addressed and how family voice has informed services. This enables shared responsibility for improved outcomes, recognising that no one organisation delivers a specific outcome on their own.

Section 2: Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

138. Local authorities have statutory duties to support certain groups of children in their area. Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities are under a general duty to provide support for children who are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services, or the child is disabled. Where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, local authorities must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

139. Where requested to do so by local authority children's social care, health organisations, other local authorities and other parts of the local authority, such as housing, have a duty to co-operate under section 27 of the Children Act 1989[70] by assisting the local authority in carrying out its children's social care functions, provided that this is compatible with their own duties and obligations and does not interfere with the

[70] Children Act 1989 Section 27 (2): an authority whose help is so requested shall comply with the request if it is compatible with their own statutory or other duties and obligations and does not unduly prejudice the discharge of any of their functions.

performance of their own functions. Any cooperation from health bodies should be in line with their professional regulations and standards on competence. Local authorities can also ask other agencies to assist in the delivery of support and services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but those agencies are under no obligation to do so.

140. Whilst the duty to deliver support and services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 is with the local authority, other safeguarding partners may play a critical role in the delivery of services for children and their families. Local safeguarding partners are responsible for setting the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities, and the resources required to deliver services effectively. More information can be found under ‘Strategic leadership and accountability’ and ‘Delivering multi-agency safeguarding arrangements’ in chapter 2.

Statutory requirements for children in need

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are under a general duty to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. A child in need is defined under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired without the provision of services, or a child who is disabled.

To fulfil this duty, practitioners undertake assessments of the needs of individual children, giving due regard to a child's age and understanding when determining what, if any, services to provide.

Every assessment must be informed by the views of the child as well as the family, and a child's wishes and feelings must be sought regarding the provision of services to be delivered. Where possible, children should be seen alone. Where a child requests to be seen with a trusted adult, this should be supported. A child's communication needs should be taken into account. When assessing children in need and providing services, specialist assessments may be required and, where possible, should be co-ordinated so that the child and family experience a coherent process and a single plan of action.

Some children in need may require accommodation because there is no one who has parental responsibility for them, they are lost or abandoned, or the person who has been caring for them is prevented from providing them with suitable accommodation or care. Under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to accommodate such children in need in their area.

Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives or is found in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make such enquiries as it considers necessary to decide whether to take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Such enquiries, supported by other organisations and agencies, as appropriate, should be initiated where there are concerns about all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation whether this is taking place in person or online, inside or outside of the child's home.

There may be a need for immediate protection whilst an assessment or enquiries are carried out. Further information about immediate protection can be found in this guidance on page 85.

Local protocols for assessment and support

141. Local authorities, with their safeguarding partners and any relevant agencies, should develop, agree, and publish local protocols for assessments and support. This

protocol should reflect the local practice framework for work with children and their families. The local authority is publicly accountable for this protocol and all organisations and agencies have a responsibility to understand it. A local protocol should:

- be consistent with the requirements of this statutory guidance
- set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children's social care
- set out who can act as a lead practitioner in supporting children and their families under section 17, and reflect that the decision about who will act as lead practitioner will be made in line with practitioner knowledge and skills, resources, commissioned service requirements, relevant professional standards as appropriate[71] and accountabilities
- set out the skills, knowledge, experience, and competence required for the lead practitioner role and how this will be monitored locally
- set out clearly the governance arrangements to support effective decision-making, including roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities, and how these take account of high-level risk, risks that are dynamic and/or complex.
- set out the process for case audits and accountability including allocation of lead practitioners and decision-making. Information should be included in the yearly report (see chapter 2, paragraphs 106-109) on the evidence of impact on outcomes for children and families, to show progress and learning that has occurred following audits.
- clarify how organisations, agencies and practitioners undertaking assessments and providing services can work in partnership including when sharing and seeking information
- set out how and when organisations and agencies should communicate with children and families
- set out the process for challenge by children and families by publishing the complaints procedures[72]

142. Local protocols should also reflect the specific needs of certain groups, including but not limited to young carers, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (including to inform and be informed by EHC plans), unborn children where there are concerns, children in hospital, children in mental health inpatient settings, children with

[71] For example, the Social Work England Professional Standards - Professional standards - Social Work England or the Nursing and Midwifery Council's Code - Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates

[72] Including as specified under the Children Act 1989 Section 26 (3) and the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006

specific communication needs, asylum seeking children, children considered at risk of exploitation and harm outside the home (including serious violence and association with organised crime groups), children at risk of female genital mutilation, children who are in the youth justice system, children with a parent in custody, children in kinship care, and children returning home from care.

143. Where a child needs other assessments and support, it is important that these are co-ordinated so that the child does not become lost between different organisational procedures. Where a child has had previous assessments and support, information from these should help practitioners build a complete picture of the child and their family, including any support and services that have been provided.

144. Within the local authority, practice leaders are qualified social workers with day-to-day operational responsibility across the whole system for child and family social work practice, ensuring it operates effectively and overseeing child and family frontline social work practitioners and leaders. This is often the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care or equivalent. Child and family principal social workers support social work teams, provide quality assurance, and contribute to strategic leadership. Practice supervisors are experienced social workers whose primary responsibility is to supervise the practice and decision-making of child and family social work practitioners, and to develop the skills of individuals and teams.

145. Principal Social Workers, practice supervisors and practice leaders should support practitioners, the local authority, and partners in further developing their assessment practice and decision-making skills, and the practice methodology that underpins this.

Purpose of assessment

146. The purpose of children's social care assessments is to:

- gather important information about a child and family
- analyse their needs and/or the nature and level of any risk and harm being suffered by the child, including where harm or risk of harm is from outside the home[73]
- decide whether the child is a child in need (section 17) or is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm (section 47)
- provide support to address those needs to improve the child's outcomes and welfare and where necessary to make them safe

[73] See chapter 3, section 2, paragraph 196 on what a good assessment should consider when supporting children at risk of, or experiencing, harm outside the home

- identify support from within the family network

147. Action to meet a child's needs can begin even before assessment has concluded.

Assessment framework

148. Research has shown that taking a systematic approach to enquiries using a conceptual model is the best way to deliver a comprehensive assessment for all children. An example of such a model is set out in the diagram below. It investigates three domains:

- the child's developmental needs
- the capacity of parents or carers (resident and non-resident) and any other adults living in the household to respond to those needs [74] [75]
- the impact and influence of the family network and any other adults living in the household as well as community and environmental circumstances

[74] An assessment of the support needs of parent carers of disabled children may be required
[75] See chapter 4, paragraph 253 on adults with parental responsibility for disabled children

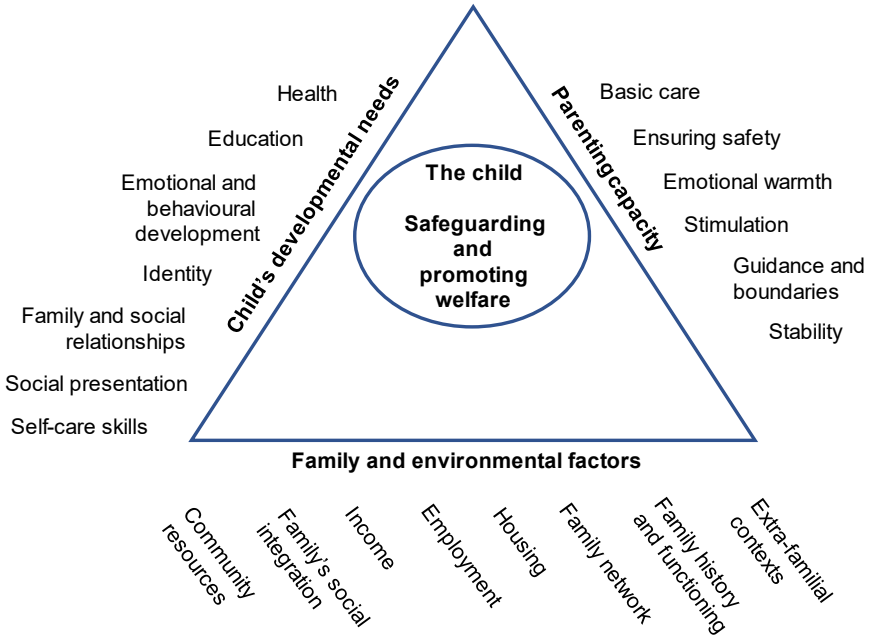


Figure 1: Assessment framework

Referral

149. Local authority children's social care has the responsibility for clarifying the process for referrals in their area. This includes specific arrangements for referrals in areas where there are secure youth establishments. As well as protocols for practitioners working with children and families, contact details should be signposted clearly so that children, parents, other family members and community partners[76] are aware of who they can contact if they wish to make a referral, require advice or support.

150. Anyone who has concerns about a child's welfare should consider whether a referral needs to be made to local authority children's social care and should do so immediately if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so. Where a child is admitted to a mental health facility, practitioners should make a referral to local authority children's social care. When practitioners refer a child, they should include any information they have on the child's developmental needs, the capacity of the child's parents, carers, or family network to meet those needs and any external factors that may be undermining their capacity to parent. This information may be included in any assessment, including an early help assessment, which may have been

[76] Community partners include those working in voluntary, private, and statutory organisations who may come into contact with or be aware of the presence of children as they carry out their day-to-day roles in the community, for example, business owners, youth workers, faith and community leaders, park wardens.

carried out prior to a referral into local authority children's social care. An early help assessment is not a prerequisite for a referral but where one has been undertaken, it should be used to support the referral.

151. Feedback should be given by local authority children's social care to the referrer on the decisions taken. Where appropriate, this feedback should include the reasons why a case may not meet the statutory threshold and offer suggestions for other sources of more suitable support. Practitioners should always follow up their concerns if they are not satisfied with the local authority children's social care response and should escalate their concerns in line with local procedures if they remain dissatisfied.

Timeliness

152. The speed with which an assessment is carried out after a child's case has been referred into local authority children's social care should be determined by the needs of the individual child and the nature and level of any risk of harm they face. This will require judgements to be made by a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager on each individual case. Adult assessments, for example, parent carer or non-parent carer assessments, should also be carried out in a timely manner.

153. Within one working day of a referral being received, local authority children's social care should acknowledge receipt to the referrer and a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should decide next steps and the type of response required. This will include determining whether:

- the child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required
- the child is in need and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989
- there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made, and the child assessed under section 47 of the Children Act 1989
- any immediate services are required urgently by the child and family and what type of services
- further specialist assessments are required to help the local authority to decide what further action to take
- to see the child as soon as possible if the decision is taken that the referral requires further assessment

154. For children in need of immediate protection, action must be taken by the local authority, the police (including British Transport Police) or the NSPCC[77] if removal is required. This should happen as soon as possible after the referral has been made to local authority children's social care[78] [79].

155. The maximum timeframe for the assessment to conclude, such that it is possible to reach a decision on next steps, should be no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral. If, in discussion with a child and their family and other practitioners, an assessment exceeds 45 working days, the lead practitioner should record the reasons for exceeding the time limit. In some cases, the needs of the child will mean that a quick assessment will be required. In all cases, as practitioners identify needs during the assessment, they do not need to wait until the assessment concludes before providing support or commissioning services to support the child and their family.

Provision of support and services for a child in need

156. Once the referral has been accepted by local authority children's social care, a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should decide, with partners where appropriate, who the most appropriate lead practitioner will be and with the lead practitioner's agreement, allocate them in line with the local protocol.

157. The lead practitioner role can be held by a range of people, including social workers. When allocating the lead practitioner, local authorities and their partners should consider the needs of the child and their family to ensure the lead practitioner has the time required to undertake the role. The lead practitioner should have the skills, knowledge, competence, and experience to work effectively with the child and their family. The lead practitioner should always be a social worker for child protection enquiries.

158. Lead practitioners should have access to high quality supervision. Effective supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare and support practitioners to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family. All lead practitioners should also continue to receive appropriate supervision and support for continuing professional development and to maintain professional registration, where appropriate, within their existing line management arrangements.

159. The responsibility for providing support and services remains with the local authority. Decision-making responsibilities, including the lead practitioner and social work

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[77] National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.
[78] Children Act 1989 Section 44
[79] Children Act 1989 Section 46

qualified practice supervisor or manager should be set out in the local protocols (see chapter 3, section 2, paragraph 141)

160. In response to the referral, the lead practitioner should:

- clarify with the referrer, when known, the nature of the concerns and how and why they have arisen
- make clear to children and families how the assessment will be carried out and when they can expect a decision on next steps
- inform the child and family of the action to be taken, unless a decision is taken on the basis that this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child at risk of significant harm

Focusing on the needs of the child and their family

161. Assessments should be child-centred and responsive to the voice of the child. This means decisions should be made in the child's best interests, rooted in child development, age-appropriate, sensitive to the impact of adversity and trauma and informed by evidence. Observation can be an important way to get the perspective of babies, infants, and non-verbal children. In the case of disabled children, practitioners should consider whether any specialist communication support is required and consider how advocacy services can support the child to communicate their views.

162. In addition, assessments should:

- be focused on action and outcomes for children
- be multi-agency and multi-disciplinary, based on information gathered from relevant practitioners and agencies[80], and drawing in the relevant expertise
- be discussed with the child and their parents or carers, as appropriate
- build a full picture of all aspects of a child's and their family's life, including their strengths and interests as well as any previous referrals and interventions
- be holistic in approach and address presenting and underlying issues and each of the child's needs, giving sufficient recognition and priority to the specific needs of disabled children and young carers[81] and to any risks the child faces within or outside the home, including online

[80] For example, teachers, early years workers, health practitioners, youth justice practitioners, the police and adult social care.
[81] Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the carers strategy (2010).

- explore the needs of all members of the family[82] as individuals and consider how their needs impact on one another as well as how the family network could support and help de-escalate issues[83]
- be a dynamic process, not an event, analysing and responding to the changing nature and level of need and/or risk faced by the child from within and outside their family
- recognise and respect the individual and protected characteristics of families, including the ways in which these can overlap and intersect, ensuring support reflects their diversity of needs and experiences
- lead to action, including the provision of services, the impact of which is reviewed on an ongoing basis
- recognise a child's entitlement to a full-time education and the positive impact attendance at school has on personal development and attainment

163. Where there are concerns that a child may be at risk of, or experiencing harm outside the home, assessments should include work with the child, parents, carers, family networks and partners[84] to determine:

- the nature and duration of the harm
- where risk is located and understand the context in which harm is or may be happening, including online
- the level of risk associated with each concern and context identified

164. Assessments should consider how a child's experience within their family and networks, including their friends and peer groups, and extra-familial contexts, such as the places and spaces where they spend their time, interplay with the risk of harm outside of the home.[85]

165. Where the child has links to a foreign country[86], the lead practitioner may also need to work with embassies and colleagues abroad[87].

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[82] An assessment of the support needs of parent carers, or non-parent carers, of disabled children may be required

[83] Family and friends care: statutory guidance for local authorities (2010), paragraph 4.37

[84] This can include safeguarding partners and community partners (such as those working in voluntary, private and statutory organisations who may come into contact with or be aware of the presence of children as they carry out their day-to-day roles in the community – for example, business owners, youth workers, faith and community leaders, park wardens).

[85] See chapter 3, section 2, paragraphs 194-199 on supporting children at risk of, or experiencing, harm outside the home

[86] A child with links to a foreign country may be a foreign national child, a child with dual nationality or a British child of foreign parents/national origin

[87] Further guidance can be found in Working with foreign authorities: child protection and care orders (2014)

166. The lead practitioner should meet families and go on home visits as needed, when undertaking assessments. The social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should undertake joint visits where this is appropriate.

167. Where a child becomes looked after, the assessment will be the baseline for work with the family. Assessment by a social worker is also required before a looked after child under a care order returns home[88]. This will provide evidence of whether the necessary improvements have been made to ensure the child's safety when they return home. Following an assessment, appropriate support should be provided for children returning home, including where that return home is unplanned, to ensure that children continue to be adequately safeguarded.

Analysis and decision-making

168. The analysis and decision-making should be a collaborative process between the lead practitioner and the multi-agency team working with the family, including the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager.

169. No system can fully eliminate harm. Understanding harm involves judgement and balance. These are central to effective analysis of the relevant information gathered as part of the assessment. Analysis should build upon the history of every child, taking account of family history and the child's experience of cumulative abuse, neglect, and exploitation as well as the impact of any previous services. Where a child has been looked after and has returned home, information from previous assessments and case records should also be reviewed.

170. This information should be used by practitioners to get as comprehensive an understanding as possible of the level of need, and actual or likely significant harm being faced by a child, taking into account the child's perspective of the protective and risk factors they are facing. This should include factors both inside and outside the home.

171. Practitioners' analysis should be supplemented and challenged by others working in the multi-agency team, including the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager, with the family and/or in their teams and management chain. Critical reflection through supervision should further strengthen the analysis.

172. Practitioners should also be alert to a desire to think the best of adults and to hope they can overcome their difficulties. This should not subvert the need to protect children from chaotic, abusive, and neglectful homes. Practitioners should always reflect the latest research on the impact of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and relevant findings from

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[88] The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

serious case and practice reviews when analysing the level of need and risk faced by the child. This should be reflected in the case recording.

173. Decisions on the nature and level of the child's needs, and the level of actual or likely significant harm, if any, should be reviewed by a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager.

174. Decisions over what support to provide a child and family should be multi-agency, taken with the best interests of the child in mind, informed by the evidence available, and underpinned by knowledge of child development. Regular decision and review points should be held, involving the child and family and relevant practitioners to ensure that help is given in a timely and appropriate way, and that the impact of this help on the child's outcomes and welfare is evaluated and changed as needed. Decisions should be agreed by the lead practitioner and the multi-agency team working with the family, including the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager.

175. Judgements may need to be revised as a case progresses and further information comes to light. It is a characteristic of skilled practice that practitioners revisit their assumptions in the light of new evidence and take action to revise their decisions in the best interests of the individual child.

176. Decisions about whether looked after children can return home will rest on whether the needs that were previously identified have been addressed. This may include instances where harm from outside the home means the child has been placed out of area to ensure their immediate safety. In these cases, the lead practitioner will be a social worker who should work with partners to take the decision about how to keep the child safe following the return to their family. Local authorities should set out what support and services will be provided following reunification and ensure the child and parents understand who to contact for support. Local authorities may also consider whether family group decision-making would support the child's transition home from care, and the role the family network could play in supporting this.

Focusing on outcomes

177. Where local authority children's social care involvement is continued, the lead practitioner develops a plan of action with the child and family, and in partnership with the multi-agency team which includes the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager, in line with local protocols. The plan should set out which services are to be

delivered, and what actions are to be undertaken, by whom and for what purpose. A child's engagement with education should be reflected in the plan[89].

178. Many services provided will be for parents or carers (and may include services identified in a parent carer's or non-parent carer's needs assessment)[90]. Where this is the case, the plan should reflect this and set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents, with measurable, reviewable actions for them.

179. Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities may provide financial support to family networks to support the plan. Any financial support provided will be subject to review in terms of supporting agreed improved outcomes for the child.

180. In cases where there are concerns of harm outside of the home, the plan should ensure the parents and carers are supported to understand what is happening to the child. This should take a strengths-based approach to support parents to meet the child's needs. Practitioners should be aware that parents may feel blamed or criticised in these circumstances and will need to work thoughtfully with parents to build effective partnerships.

181. The plan should be reviewed regularly to analyse whether sufficient progress has been made to meet the child's needs. This will be important for neglect cases where parents and carers can make small improvements. In such cases, the test should be whether any improvements in adult behaviour are sufficient and sustained. Practitioners should consider the need for further action and record their decisions. The review points should be agreed with other practitioners supporting the child, including the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager, and focus on any change to their welfare.

182. The social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should continue to meet families and go on joint home visits as needed to review the plan for the child. They should work in partnership to ensure help given is leading to a significant positive change for the child and consider whether the pace of that change is appropriate for the child. Practitioners working with children should always have access to appropriate colleagues to talk through their concerns and judgements affecting the welfare of the child.

183. This review should also consider how the family network is supporting the parent or carers to sustain improvements and whether any further support could be offered.

184. Practitioners should consider if a family group decision-making forum is appropriate to determine the help and support the family network can provide for the child. Local

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[89] Attendance below 90% is classed as persistent absence and requires targeted support by schools and local authority school attendance teams, where appropriate. Further details are available in Working together to improve school attendance

[90] Children Act 1989 Section 17ZD and Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 Section 1

authorities should consider referring the family to a family group decision-making service if they believe there is a possibility the child may not be able to remain with their parents or carers, or in any event before a child becomes looked after, unless this would be a risk to the child. If family group decision-making cannot be conducted at this point, the local authority should still consider this as an option later, including as a route to reunification with the birth parents or family network where appropriate.

185. Family group decision-making, including the family group conference model, promotes the involvement of the family network in decision-making about a child's safety or wellbeing. Family group decision-making forums offer a way of ensuring that all resources within the family's wider networks have been engaged for the benefit of the child and empower family networks to come to a decision on how this can be done. Family group decision-making is an entirely voluntary process for the family and requires informed consent. This should be a family-led forum, where a family network has all the resources, adequate preparation, relevant information, a safe and appropriate environment, and "private family time" to make a plan to respond to concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. At pre-proceedings stage, a successful family group decision-making forum, such as a family group conference, also include having an independent coordinator[91].

186. Known transition points for the child should be planned for in advance. This includes where children are likely to transition between child and adult services, where they move from one local authority to another and where they move between schools.

Supporting disabled children and their carers

187. A crucial role of children's social care is to provide help and support to disabled children and their families. When undertaking an assessment of a disabled child, practitioners should recognise the additional pressures on the family, and the distinct challenges they may have had to negotiate as a result of their child's disability.

188. The assessment process should focus on the needs of the child and family, be strengths-based, and gather information to inform decisions on the help needed to:

- ensure the child achieves the best possible outcomes
- enable the child's family to continue in their caring role where that is right for the child
- safeguard children in cases where there is abuse, neglect, and exploitation

[91] Court Orders and Pre-proceedings guidance 2014

- ensure that appropriate practical support is in place to enable disabled children and their families to thrive

189. The local authority must also consider whether it is necessary to provide support under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970[92]. Where a local authority is satisfied that the identified services and assistance can be provided under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, and it is necessary in order to meet a disabled child's needs, it must arrange to provide that support. Where a local authority is assessing the needs of a disabled child, a carer of that child may also require the local authority to undertake an assessment of their ability to provide, or to continue to provide, care for the child, under section 1 of the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995. The local authority must take account of the results of any such assessment when deciding whether to provide services to the disabled child.

190. If a local authority considers that a parent carer of a disabled child may have support needs, it must carry out an assessment under section 17ZD of the Children Act 1989. The local authority must also carry out such an assessment if a parent carer requests one. Such an assessment must consider whether it is appropriate for the parent carer to provide, or continue to provide, care for the disabled child. The assessment should also take account of parent carer's needs and wishes, and the specific needs and circumstances of the child resulting from their disability. Parent carers have the right to request an assessment under section 17ZD of the Children Act 1989[93], including where a child is not otherwise known to children's social care. Local authorities must ensure they have a process to facilitate these assessments if requested.

191. In line with the commitments made in the Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan[94], local authorities are encouraged to implement the role of Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) in each local area. The DSCO will provide the capacity and expertise to improve the links between social care services and the SEND system. Similar to the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) or Designated Medical Officer (DMO) role in health, the DSCO role will support both operational input (such as the contributions from care to education, health and care assessments) and more strategic planning functions (such as the commissioning of care services such as short breaks) for disabled children and those with SEN.

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92 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 Section 2
93 Children Act 1989 Section 17ZD
94 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan

Supporting young carers

192. If a local authority considers that a young carer (see glossary) may have support needs, it must carry out an assessment under section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989[95] to establish how best they can support the young carer and their family. The local authority must also carry out such an assessment if a young carer, or the parent of a young carer, requests one. Such an assessment must consider whether it is appropriate or excessive for the young carer to provide care for the person in question, (which may be a sibling, parent, or other member of the family), in light of the young carer's needs and wishes. The Young Carers (Needs Assessment) Regulations 2015[96] require local authorities to look at the needs of the whole family when carrying out a young carer's needs assessment. Local authorities must consider whether to combine a young carer's needs assessment with any other assessment of the needs for support of the young carer, the person cared for, or a member of the young carer's family.

193. Information on whether a child has been identified as a young carer will be collected annually through the school census from January 2023. Schools do not need to obtain parental or pupil consent to provide this information for the purposes of the census but should respect the wishes and feelings of both children and their parents.

Supporting children at risk of, or experiencing, harm outside the home

194. Some children experience abuse and exploitation outside the home. This is often referred to as "extra-familial harm"[97]. Harm can occur in a range of extra-familial contexts, including school and other educational settings, peer groups, or within community/public spaces, and/or online. Children may experience this type of harm from other children and/or from adults. Forms of extra-familial harm include exploitation by criminal and organised crime groups and individuals (such as county lines and financial exploitation), serious violence, modern slavery and trafficking, online harm, sexual exploitation, teenage relationship abuse, and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation[98] [99]. Children of all ages can experience extra-familial harm.

195. Where there are concerns that a child is experiencing extra-familial harm, practitioners should consider all the needs and vulnerabilities of the child. Some children

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[95] Children Act 1989 Section 17ZA

[96] The Young Carers (Needs Assessment) Regulations 2015

[97] See Appendix A: glossary

[98] Extremist groups may make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Any potential harmful effects to individuals identified as vulnerable to extremist ideologies or being drawn into terrorism should also be considered. For further information see Prevent duty guidance

[99] Links to further guidance on forms of extra-familial harm, including child criminal exploitation (such as county lines), child sexual exploitation and radicalisation are available in Appendix B

will have vulnerabilities that can be exploited by others and will require support appropriate to their needs to minimise the potential for exploitation. All children, including those who may be causing harm to others, should receive a safeguarding response first and practitioners should work with them to understand their experiences and what will reduce the likelihood of harm to themselves and others.

196. Where children may be experiencing extra-familial harm, children's social care assessments should determine whether a child is in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or whether to make enquires under section 47 of the same Act, following concerns that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm[100]. A good assessment should:

- build an understanding of the child's strengths, interests, identity, and culture
- respond to each of the vulnerabilities and/or challenges that the child may be facing, including any within the home
- gather information on past experiences of trauma and how this may impact on the child's current experience of harm and on how they interact with practitioners
- explore how the child's experiences within their families and networks, including their friends and peer groups, interplay with the risk of harm outside of the home and identify what needs to change[101]
- support parents, carers, and family networks to understand what is happening to the child, working with them to ensure they can best meet the child's needs and play an active part in the solutions and processes to help create safety for the child
- understand the risk of extra-familial harm for siblings, for example, where older children are exploited, younger siblings may also be at risk of being targeted

197. Where there are concerns that more than one child may be experiencing harm in an extra-familial context, practitioners should consider the individual needs of each child as well as work with the group. The children in the group may or may not already be known to local authority children's social care. Working with the whole group enables practitioners to build an understanding of the dynamics between those within the group and the extra-familial context.

198. Practitioners will need to build an understanding of the context in which the harm is occurring and draw on relevant knowledge and information from the children and wider

[100] See chapter 3, section 2, paragraph 146 on Purpose of assessment

[101] For some children, a safe and loving family environment is not enough to protect them from these risks. For others, problems which exist within the home, such as abuse and neglect, could mean they are more vulnerable to exploitation and extra-familial harm

partners[102] in order to decide on the most appropriate interventions. Practitioners should consider the influence of groups or individuals perpetrating harm, including where this takes place online, and identify patterns of harm, risk and protective factors in these contexts. This may include working across safeguarding and community safety partnerships[103] to agree a plan for keeping children safe[104].

199. Key decisions should be recorded and communicated to both the child and their parents or carers, so that everyone understands the action that has, or will be, taken to safeguard and promote their welfare. It is important that all partners are clear how actions contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child[105].

The National Referral Mechanism

200. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK's system for identifying victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. If a first responder[106] has concerns that a child may be a potential victim of modern slavery or human trafficking (including through county lines) then a referral should be made to the NRM, as soon as possible. A child's consent is not needed for a referral to be made[107].

201. Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTG) are an independent source of advice for children who have been trafficked and somebody who can speak up on their behalf. Where the ICTG service has been implemented[108], if the first responder considers a child to be a potential victim of modern slavery or human trafficking, they should refer them to the ICTG service. This is in addition to following usual safeguarding routes and NRM referrals. The NRM referral and ICTG referral should be made in parallel.

Supporting children in secure youth establishments

202. Any assessment of children in secure youth establishments should take account of their specific needs. In all cases, the local authority in which a secure youth establishment is located is responsible for the safety and welfare of the children in that establishment.

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[102] This can include safeguarding partners and community partners (such as those working in voluntary, private and statutory organisations who may come into contact with or be aware of the presence of children as they carry out their day-to-day roles in the community, for example, business owners, youth workers, faith and community leaders, park wardens

[103] Community safety partnerships: Local Government Association

[104] Working across safeguarding and community safety partnerships may also provide opportunity to identify and seek to disrupt those that are causing harm to the child to prevent further abuse and/or exploitation

[105] Further guidance and supportive resources on suggested approaches to create safe spaces and places for children in response to extra-familial harm is available at Appendix B: Multi-agency practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm (non-statutory guidance for local areas)

[106] First responders work for designated organisations and help identify and support potential victims of modern slavery.

[107] Further information on the National Referral Mechanism, including a list of first responder organisations can be found at National Referral Mechanism guidance: adult (England and Wales)

[108] First responders should consult the: Interim guidance for Independent Child-Trafficking Guardians for further guidance and for a list of sites with current ICTG coverage. Public authorities should give due regard to all ICTG functions, as would be required by regulations made under section 48 (6) (e)(i) and section 48 (6) (e) (ii) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015,noting that section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act has not yet been commenced.

The host local authority should work with the governor, director, manager or principal of the secure youth establishment and the child's home local authority, their relevant youth offending team and, where appropriate, the Youth Custody Service[109] to ensure that the child has a single, comprehensive support plan.

203. Where a child becomes looked after, as a result of being remanded to youth detention accommodation (YDA), the local authority should visit the child and assess the child's needs before taking a decision on how they should be supported[110]. This information should be used to prepare the care plan, which should set out how the YDA and other practitioners will meet the child's needs whilst the child remains remanded, and at any point of transition they will experience (either returning to the community or upon receiving a custodial sentence). The care plan[111] must be reviewed in the same way as a care plan for any other looked after child[112].

Supporting children in mother and baby units

204. When a woman applies for a place on a mother and baby unit (MBU) (see chapter 4), a referral for assessment must be requested by the prison from children's social care in the mother's home authority[113]. Any assessment should set out the needs of the child in relation to the mother's application to be placed on an MBU. The assessment should consider:

- suitability of the placement in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child, including the needs of the child and any risk
- impact of the placement on the child's development, health, and wellbeing
- contact arrangements with the family and family network
- suitability and arrangements for the child's care if the placement is not granted, including within the family network through a kinship care arrangement

205. The lead practitioner responsible for the assessment should attend the MBU Admissions Board to represent the best interests of the child. When placed in an MBU, the mother retains full parental responsibility for the day-to-day care of the child and the local authority in which the prison is located is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child.

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[109] As the placing authority

[110] Promoting the health and well-being of looked-after children

[111] The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 Regulation 4

[112] Following the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 all children remanded by a court in criminal proceedings will be looked after.

[113] Pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units (MBUs), and Maternal Separation from Children up to the Age of Two in Women's Prisons

Supporting children at risk from people in prison and people supervised by the Probation Service

206. The Prison Service undertakes a child safeguarding enquiry[114] with children's social care for all newly sentenced prisoners and will identify prisoners who present an ongoing risk to children from within custody. Prisons will also decide on the level of contact, if any, they will allow between a prisoner and a child based on a child contact risk assessment[115] and will prohibit or restrict a prisoner's contact with a child where necessary.

207. In response to a child safeguarding enquiry, children's social care should:

- review information provided by the Prison Service and record it as required
- respond to a child safeguarding enquiry and share with the Prison Service any concerns about the prisoner and any contact with a child
- contribute to the prisons' child contact risk assessment where a child is known to children's social care, or has previously been known, by providing a report on the child's best interests and verifying the child's identity. Where the child is not known to children's social care, they should still provide a view on child contact and should advise the prison to complete a child safeguarding referral if one is required

208. The Probation Service will share information with children's social care about supervised individuals who have contact with children or who pose a known risk and will also request information by making child safeguarding enquiries. Information exchange between probation and children's social care help both agencies develop a better understanding of the children and families they work with and ensures risk assessments are accurate and well informed.

209. Under the UKGDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 sharing of personal information of an offender must be lawful and fair and must comply with Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and in particular the data protection principles. Sharing of information for the purposes of law enforcement and keeping children and young people safe meets one of the requirements for lawful processing under the Data Protection Act 2018 as the data sharing is authorised by law (under section 325(3) and (4) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003) (or section 14 of the Offender Management Act 2007). It is therefore not necessary for Prison and Probation Service staff to obtain consent from the offender under the Data Protection Act 2018.

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[114] The HMPPS Child Safeguarding Policy Framework sets out that a child safeguarding enquiry (sometimes referred to as a safeguarding check) is an official enquiry that HMPPS staff send to local authority children's social care to request information on an individual, child or family.

[115] The child contact risk assessment process is explained in Chapter 5b of the Public Protection Manual (PPM) PSI 18/2016.

210. For information exchange to be effective, children's social care should:

- explore arrangements with their local Probation Delivery Unit who have resources to support the timely provision of information in response to child safeguarding enquiries, including same day responses, where delay may negatively impact on a child. This may involve sharing information relating to a child, family, or offender who children's social care may currently or historically know
- reflect the voice of the child in information shared with the Probation Service, where appropriate
- be prepared to offer the Probation Service a view on decisions in the child's best interest

211. The following descriptors and flow charts set out the steps that practitioners should take when working together to assess and provide services for children who may be in need and when children are returning home to their families.

Assessment, support and planning for children under the Children Act 1989

Following acceptance of a referral by local authority children's social care, a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should initiate a multi-agency assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The assessment should be led by a lead practitioner and approved by a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager. Local authorities have a duty to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings and take account of them when planning the provision of services. Assessments should be carried out in a timely manner reflecting the needs of the individual child, as set out in this chapter.

Where the local authority children's social care decides to provide services, a multi-agency child in need plan should be developed which sets out which organisations and agencies will provide which services to the child and family. The plan should set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents. The plan should reflect the positive aspects of the family situation as well as the weaknesses, acknowledging any factors beyond the family that may be undermining their capacity to parent or keep their child safe.

Where a child in need has moved permanently to another local authority area, the original local authority should ensure that all relevant information (including the child in need plan) is shared with the receiving local authority as soon as possible. The receiving local authority should consider whether support services are still required and discuss with the child and family what might be needed, based on a timely re-assessment of the child's needs, as set out in this chapter. Support should continue to be provided by the original local authority in the intervening period. The receiving local authority should work with the original local authority to ensure that any changes to the services and support provided are managed carefully.

Where a child in need is approaching 18 years of age, this transition point should be planned for in advance. This includes where children are likely to transition between child and adult services.

Where information gathered during an assessment result in the lead practitioner and social work qualified practice supervisor or manager suspecting that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the local authority should hold a strategy discussion to enable it to decide, with other agencies, whether it must initiate enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Purpose:

Assessments should determine whether the child is in need, the nature of any services required and whether any specialist assessments should be undertaken to assist the local authority in its decision-making.

A social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should:

- agree with partners who the most appropriate lead practitioner should be and allocate them
- approve the lead practitioner's assessment
- review and approve the plan for the child
- meet families and attend home visits where that is appropriate

The lead practitioner should:

- lead on an assessment and complete it in line with the locally agreed protocol according to the child's needs and within 45 working days from the point of referral into local authority children's social care
- see the child within a timescale that is appropriate to the nature of the concerns expressed at referral, according to an agreed plan
- conduct interviews with the child and family members, separately and together as appropriate. Initial discussions with the child should be conducted in a way that minimises distress to them and maximises the likelihood that they will provide accurate and complete information, avoiding leading or suggestive questions
- record the assessment findings and decisions and next steps following the assessment
- inform, in writing, all the relevant agencies and the family of their decisions and, if the child is a child in need, of the plan for providing support
- inform the referrer of what action has been or will be taken

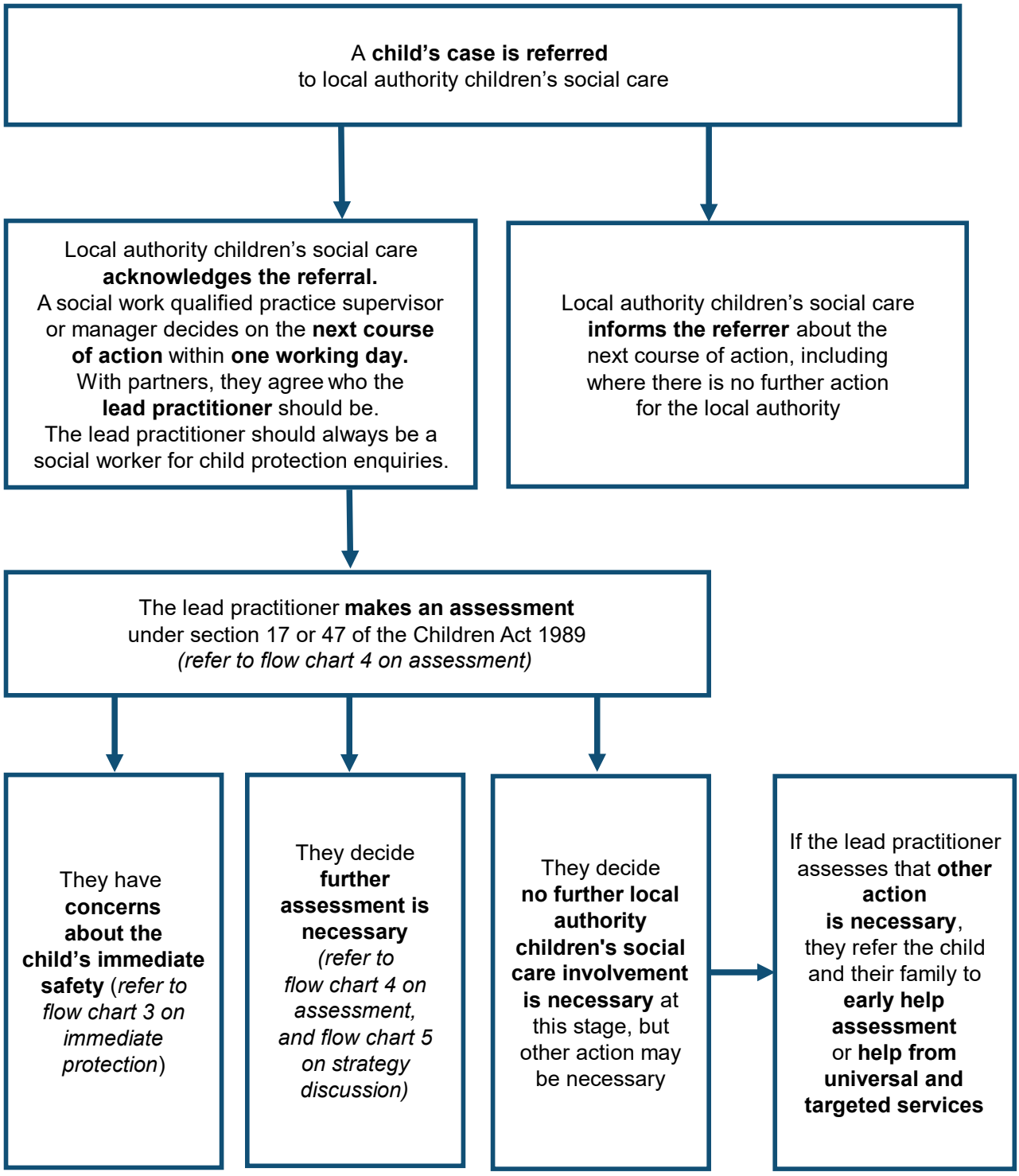
The police should:

- assist other organisations and agencies to carry out their responsibilities where there are concerns about the child's welfare, providing information about the child and family drawing on individual and organisational knowledge and expertise to strengthen any plan to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child
- be involved in assessments where crimes have been committed, where their expertise is required to identify whether a crime has been committed and where crimes may be committed in the future. These investigations might be reactive (where there is evidence to suggest a crime has been committed) or proactive (where further activity is required to establish if a crime has occurred)

All involved practitioners should:

- be involved in the assessment and provide further information about the child and family
- agree further action, including what services would help the child and family, and inform local authority children's social care if any immediate action is required
- seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance

Flow chart 1: Action taken when a child is referred to local authority children's social care



Looked after children returning home to their families

Where the decision to return a child to the care of their family is planned, the local authority should undertake an assessment while the child is looked after as part of the care planning process (under regulation 39 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010). This assessment should consider what services and support the child and their family might need. Family group decision-making, such as family group conferences, could also be used to establish how the family network will support the child to return home. The outcome of this assessment should be included in the child's care plan. The decision to cease to look after a child will, in most cases, require approval under regulation 39 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010. Practitioners must carry out an assessment of need for eligible children[116] to consider their eligibility for independence and transition into adulthood.

Where a child who is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 returns home in an unplanned way, (for example, the decision is not made as part of the care planning process, but the parent removes the child, or the child decides to leave), the local authority should work with partners to consider whether there are any immediate concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the child. This could include harm from outside the home. The local authority should take appropriate action, including making enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, if there is concern that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

There should be a clear plan for all children who return home that reflects current and previous assessments, focuses on outcomes, and includes details of services and support required. Following reunification:

- practitioners should make the timeline and decision-making process for providing ongoing services and support clear to the child and family
- when reviewing outcomes, children should, wherever possible, be seen alone. Practitioners have a duty to ascertain their wishes and feelings regarding the provision of services being delivered

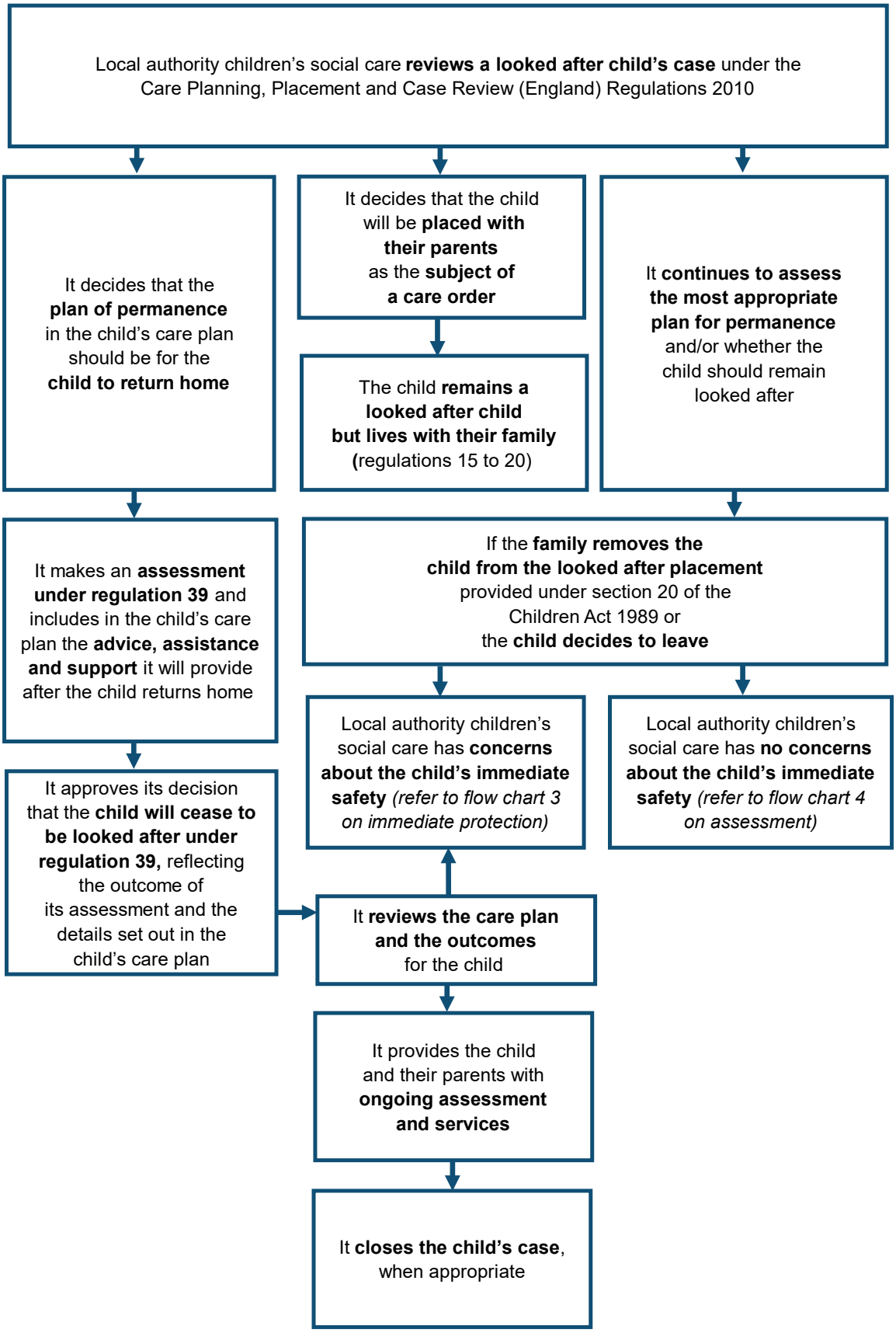
The impact of services and support should be monitored and recorded, and where a child is remanded to local authority or youth detention accommodation, consideration must be given to what ongoing support and accommodation the child may need after their period of remand[117]. This should be included in their care plan.

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[116] Where the child is an eligible child, regulation 42 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 applies.

[117] The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care, planning, placement and case review paragraph 8.20

Flow chart 2: Looked after children returning home to their families



Section 3: Child protection

212. Alongside the offer of help and support, there must be strong and effective multi-agency child protection arrangements[118]. Children who need protecting may include those who experience harm in their own family and those who are harmed or exploited by others, including their peers, in their community and/or online. Suffering or being likely to suffer significant harm is the threshold for child protection enquiries and can take different forms, including sexual, physical or emotional abuse, neglect or domestic abuse (including controlling or coercive behaviour[119]), exploitation by criminal gangs or organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation, and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation.

213. Child protection is the set of multi-agency activities and processes that follow a concern that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to make enquiries when this is the case and to take decisive action when needed to protect a child from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Practitioners responsible for child protection decision-making should be skilled, experienced and have the right expertise to collate, analyse and distil complex information in a changing context. Where child protection enquiries are necessary, the lead practitioner should always be a social worker.

214. Whatever the form of abuse, neglect and exploitation, practitioners should:

- put the needs of children first when determining what action to take
- speak to the child at the earliest opportunity to understand what is happening in their daily life, recognising that the child may express this through their actions and behaviours
- work with the family to build trusting and co-operative relationships with parents and carers, in line with the principles for working with parents and carers set out in chapter 1 of this guidance
- use their skills and experience to recognise circumstances where the parent is reluctant to engage and seek to understand the factors that might underly this, including types of domestic abuse that are resulting in coercive or controlling behaviour which limits the parent's capacity to engage

[118] Children Act 2004

[119] Serious Crime Act 2015 Section 76 provides information regarding circumstances when a child cannot be considered a victim of coercive or controlling behaviour.

- speak to and gather detailed information about the child and, where appropriate, their siblings, through engaging with the family network and those who know the child well, such as those working in the child's school or nursery
- consider a wide range of evidence from many sources, including other practitioners and agencies working with the family
- create as full a picture as possible of what is happening for the child, understanding what the child's daily life is like will be critical to making effective decisions about their safety
- build on existing assessments, including those under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or assessments for early or targeted help, where the child is already known to services

215. Where the decision is taken not to proceed with a child protection plan or to discharge the plan, the lead practitioner should consider the support that the child requires, which might include multi-agency support and/or continued support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

National multi-agency practice standards for child protection

216. Expectations for practice for senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners in local authorities are set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework. This includes practice to help keep children safe inside and outside of their homes (Outcome 3).

217. The following national multi-agency practice standards for child protection are for all practitioners working in services and settings who come into contact with children who may be suffering or have suffered significant harm within or outside the home. The term practitioner is used throughout the guidance to refer to individuals who work with children and their families in any capacity, including a range of professionals, such as qualified social workers and those who work for the statutory safeguarding partners or in education settings. Section B is specifically targeted at those directly involved in child protection work. These standards should be used within the wider context of paragraphs 212-215.

218. Local safeguarding partners need to ensure all practitioners are supported to be able to achieve these child protection standards, including through:

- an unrelenting focus on protection and the best outcomes for children
- creating learning cultures in which practitioners stay up to date as new evidence of best practice emerges
- creating an environment in which it is safe to challenge, including assumptions that relate to ethnicity, sex, disability, and sexuality

- supporting practitioners with effective supervision as determined by their regulatory body in which they can critically reflect on their findings and strengthen their analysis
- helping practitioners to understand the impact of their decisions on the child and family

A: Recognising actual or likely significant harm for all practitioners

- Practitioners are alert to potential indicators of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and listen carefully to what a child says, how they behave, and observes how they communicate if non-verbal (due to age, special needs and/or disabilities, or if unwilling to communicate). Practitioners will try to understand the child's personal experiences and observe and record any concerns.
- Practitioners communicate in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding and use evidence-based practice tools for engaging with children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- When practitioners have concerns or information about a child that may indicate a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, they share them with relevant practitioners and escalate them if necessary, using the referral or escalation procedure in place within their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. They update colleagues when they receive relevant new information.
- Practitioners never assume that information has already been shared by another professional or family member and always remain open to changing their views about the likelihood of significant harm.

B: Section 47 enquiries, child protection conferences and child protection plans

- Practitioners are aware of the limits and strengths of their personal expertise and agency remit. They work collaboratively and proactively with multi-agency practitioners to build an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the daily life of a child and their family to establish the likelihood of significant harm and any ongoing risks. Practitioners respect the opinions, knowledge and skills of multi-agency colleagues and engage constructively in their challenge.
- Practitioners have an applied understanding of what constitutes a child suffering actual or likely significant harm. They consider the severity, duration and frequency of any abuse, degree of threat, coercion, or cruelty, the significance of others in the child's world, including all adults and children in contact with the child (this can include those within the immediate and wider family and those in contexts beyond the family, including online), and the cumulative impact of adverse events.

- Practitioners take care to ensure that children know what is being discussed about them and their family where this is appropriate. They ask children what they would like to happen and what they think would help them and their family to reduce the likelihood of significant harm, including where harm is taking place in contexts beyond the family home. Practitioners listen to what children tell them.
- Practitioners engage parents and the family network, as appropriate, in the discussions, recognising previous involvement with agencies and services may influence how they engage. Practitioners encourage parents and families to express what support would help them to reduce significant harm.
- Practitioners thoroughly explore the significance of the adults in contact with the child and their family or individual histories. They should pay particular attention to any serious criminal convictions, previous allegations of child abuse, domestic abuse or impulsive violent behaviour, restrictions on contact with children or involvement with children subject to child protection plans or care proceedings.
- Practitioners satisfy themselves that conclusions about the likelihood of significant harm give sufficient weight to the views, experiences, and concerns of those who know the child and/or parents well, including relatives who are protective of the child, and other relevant practitioners.
- Practitioners share their thinking and proposed recommendations with other practitioners who hold relevant information and insight into the child and adults involved with the child. Practitioners comment, challenge, and jointly deliberate, before making a final decision about the likelihood of significant harm.
- Together with other agencies, practitioners clarify what family help from multi-agency partners is necessary to reduce the likelihood of significant harm and maintain reasonable care for the children. They seek assurance that this resource is available and of sufficient skill and intensity.
- Practitioners explain clearly to parents and the family network the implications of the threshold that has been reached for section 47 enquiries, the initial child protection conference, and any ongoing child protection plan (including that this threshold may lead to pre-proceedings, should the likelihood of significant harm not reduce). Practitioners do everything they can to ensure that parents and the family network understand and can engage purposefully with the enquiries and any protection plan.

- Practitioners remain alert to changes in circumstances for the child and family and respond as new information comes to light that needs to be reflected in the child protection plan.
- Practitioners reflect on the proposed protection plan and consider adjustments to strengthen the protection plan. The protection plan is specific, achievable, and relevant to the likelihood of significant harm and the context in which it is occurring.

C: Discharging the child protection plan

- Practitioners work as part of a multi-agency team to create lasting change for families and ensure the child, parents and family network know that further help and support is available if needed or further concerns arise.
- Following a decision to discharge a child protection plan, practitioners ensure that appropriate support is in place for the child and family and respond to changing circumstances and new information.
- Where a child becomes looked after, practitioners ensure that this is well planned and that the child, parents and family network are appropriately supported. Ongoing need is monitored as part of care planning.

219. The following descriptors and flow charts set out the steps that practitioners should take when working together to protect a child who is or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Immediate protection

Where there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm, whether from inside or outside the home, the local authority, the police (including British Transport Police) or NSPCC should use their statutory child protection powers to **act immediately to secure the safety of the child,** as set out in Section 46 of Children Act 1989.

If it is necessary to remove a child from their home, a local authority must, wherever possible and unless a child's safety is otherwise at immediate risk, apply for an **Emergency Protection Order (EPO)**. Police powers to remove a child in an emergency should be used only in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient time to seek an EPO or for reasons relating to the immediate safety of the child.

An EPO, made by the court, gives authority to remove a child, or prevent a child being removed from a hospital or other place the child is being accommodated, and places them under the protection of the applicant.

When considering whether emergency action is necessary, the local authority or the police should always consider the needs of other children in the same household or in the household of an alleged perpetrator.

The local authority in whose area a child is found in circumstances that require emergency action (the first authority) is responsible for taking emergency action. If the child is looked after by, or the subject of a child protection plan in another authority, the first authority must consult the authority responsible for the child. Only when the second local authority explicitly accepts responsibility (to be followed up in writing) is the first authority relieved of its responsibility to take emergency action.

Multi-agency working

Planned emergency action will normally take place following an immediate strategy discussion. Social workers, the police or NSPCC should:

- initiate a strategy discussion to discuss planned emergency action. Where a single agency has to act immediately, a strategy discussion should take place as soon as possible after action has been taken
- see the child (this should be done by a practitioner from the agency taking the emergency action) to decide how best to protect them and whether to seek an EPO
- wherever possible, obtain legal advice before initiating legal action, in particular when an EPO is being sought

Related information: For further guidance on EPOs see Chapter 4 of the statutory guidance document for local authorities, Court orders and pre-proceedings (DfE, April 2014).

Strategy discussion

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked after), the police, health, and other bodies such as the referring agency, education, early help, or other practitioners involved in supporting the child. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting and more than one discussion may be necessary. A strategy discussion can take place following a referral or at any other time, including during the assessment process and when new information is received on an already open case.

Purpose

The purpose of a strategy discussion is to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Attendees

A local authority social worker, health practitioners and a police representative should, as a minimum, be involved in the strategy discussion. Other relevant practitioners will depend on the nature of the individual case but may include those who have concerns about the child and/or those involved in the child's life, for example:

- the practitioner or agency which made the referral
- the child's school or nursery
- any health or care services the child or family members are receiving
- youth justice practitioner and/or youth worker
- adult mental health, substance misuse and/or domestic abuse specialist
- British Transport Police representative

All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organisation and agencies. They should be sufficiently skilled and experienced to prepare for and engage with the strategy discussion and be able to critically assess and challenge their own and others' input.

Tasks

The discussion should be used to:

- share, seek and analyse available information
- agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- consider whether enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 should be undertaken.

It is for the local authority to decide whether to make enquiries and the strategy discussion should inform this decision.

Where there are grounds to initiate an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, decisions should be made as to:

- what further information is needed if an assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded
- what immediate and short-term action is required to support the child, and who will do what by when
- whether legal action is required

The timescale for the assessment to reach a decision on next steps should be based upon the needs of the individual child, consistent with the local protocol and no longer than **45 working days** from the point of referral into local authority children's social care.

The assessment framework set out earlier on in this chapter should be followed for assessments undertaken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. The lead practitioner for section 47 enquiries should be a social worker.

Lead practitioners should convene the strategy discussion and make sure they:

- consider the child's welfare and safety, including through speaking to the child, and identifying whether the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm
- decide what information should be shared with the child and family (on the basis that information is not shared if this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child at risk of harm)
- agree what further action is required, and who will do what by when, where an EPO is in place, or the child is the subject of police powers of protection
- record agreed decisions in accordance with local recording procedures
- follow up actions to make sure what was agreed gets done

Health practitioners should:

- advise about the appropriateness or otherwise of medical assessments, and explain the benefits that arise from assessing previously unmanaged health matters that may be further evidence of neglect or maltreatment
- provide and co-ordinate any specific information from relevant practitioners regarding family health, maternity health, school health mental health, domestic abuse and violence, and substance misuse to assist strategy and decision making
- secure additional expert advice and support from named and/or designated professionals for more complex cases following preliminary strategy discussions
- undertake appropriate examinations or observations, and further investigations or tests, to determine how the child's health or development may be impaired

The Police should:

- discuss the basis for any criminal investigation, including both reactive (where there is evidence to suggest a crime has been committed) and proactive (where further activity is required to establish if a crime has occurred), and any relevant processes that other organisations and agencies might need to know about, including the timing and methods of evidence-gathering
- lead the criminal investigation where joint enquiries take place with the local authority children's social care leading for the section 47 enquires and assessment of the child's welfare

Initiating section 47 enquiries

A section 47 enquiry is carried out by undertaking or continuing with an assessment in accordance with the guidance set out in this chapter.

Local authority social workers should lead assessments under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. The police, health practitioners, teachers and school staff and other relevant practitioners should help the local authority in undertaking its enquiries.

Purpose

A section 47 enquiry is initiated to decide whether, and what type of action is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child who is suspected to be suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Lead practitioners should:

- lead the assessment in accordance with this guidance
- carry out enquiries in a way that minimises distress for the child and family
- see the child who is the subject of concern to ascertain their wishes and feelings, assess their understanding of their situation, assess their relationships and circumstances more broadly, and understand the child's experiences and interactions with others, especially where there are concerns of extra-familial harm
- explain to parents or carers the purpose, process and potential outcome of the enquiries and be prepared to answer questions openly, unless to do so would affect the safety and welfare of the child
- interview parents or carers and determine the wider social and environmental factors that might impact on them and their child, including extra-familial contexts
- systematically gather information about the child's and family's history
- analyse the findings of the assessment and evidence about what interventions are likely to be most effective with other relevant practitioners
- determine the child's needs and the level of risk of harm faced by the child to inform what help should be provided and act to provide that help
- follow the guidance set out in "Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special

measures", where a decision has been made to undertake a joint interview of the child as part of any criminal investigation[120]

Health practitioners should:

- provide appropriate specialist assessments, for example, paediatric or forensic medical assessments, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and/or child psychologists may be involved in specific assessments relating to the child's developmental progress. The lead health practitioner (probably a consultant paediatrician, or possibly the child's GP) may need to request and co-ordinate these assessments
- ensure appropriate treatment and follow up health concerns, such as administering missing vaccines

The Police should:

- help other organisations and agencies understand the reasons for concerns about the child's safety and welfare by sharing information and analysis
- decide whether or not police investigations reveal grounds for instigating criminal proceedings
- make available to other practitioners any other relevant information gathered or known to inform discussions about the child's welfare
- follow the guidance set out in "Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: guidance" on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures, where a decision has been made to undertake a joint interview of the child as part of the criminal investigation

All involved practitioners should:

- contribute to the assessment as required, providing information and analysis about the child and family
- consider whether a joint enquiry or investigation team may need to speak to a child victim without the knowledge of the parent or carers
- approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles in chapter 1
- seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice

[120] Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures (2011).

Outcome of section 47 enquiries

The lead practitioner (social worker) is responsible for deciding what action to take and how to proceed following section 47 enquiries. They should make these decisions based on multi-agency discussions informed by the voice of the child.

If local authority children's social care decides not to proceed with a child protection conference, then other practitioners involved with the child and family have the right to request that local authority children's social care convene a conference if they have serious concerns that a child's welfare may not be adequately safeguarded. As a last resort, the safeguarding partners should have in place a quick and straightforward means of resolving differences of opinion.

Where concerns of significant harm are not substantiated

Lead practitioners should:

- discuss the case with the child, parents and other practitioners and be prepared to answer questions openly and be clear on next steps
- discuss whether support from any services may be helpful and help secure it
- consider whether the child's health and development should be re-assessed regularly against specific objectives and decide who has responsibility for doing this
- discuss with the family whether they wish to be referred to a family group decision-making forum, such as a family group conference, to determine ongoing support for the child and family

All involved practitioners should:

- participate in further discussions as necessary
- contribute to the development of any plan as appropriate
- provide services as specified in the plan for the child
- review the impact of services delivered as agreed in the plan
- approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1 of this guidance
- seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance
- consider the plans for ongoing assessment and reviewing the child's circumstances

Where concerns of significant harm are substantiated, and the child is judged to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm:

Lead practitioners should:

- convene an initial child protection conference (see next section for details). The timing of this conference should depend on the urgency of the case and respond to the needs of the child and the nature and severity of the harm they may be facing. The initial child protection conference should take place within 15 working days of a strategy discussion, or the strategy discussion at which section 47 enquiries were initiated if more than one has been held
- consider which practitioners with specialist knowledge or relevant professional disciplines should be invited to participate so that the plan will meet the child's needs
- seek to communicate the outcome and rationale to the referring practitioner or agency, and give particular consideration to whether they should be included in the child protection conference
- ensure that the child and their parents understand the purpose and who will attend, parents should be given appropriate information to support their participation in the conference
- help prepare the child if they are attending or making representations through a third party to the conference
- give information about advocacy agencies and explain that the family may bring an advocate, friend, or supporter

All involved practitioners should:

- be sufficiently skilled and experienced to prepare for and engage with the child protection conference, and able to critically assess and challenge their own and others' input
- contribute to the information their agency provides ahead of the conference, setting out the nature of the organisations or agency's involvement with the child and family
- offer clear analysis based on their perspective
- consider, in conjunction with the police and the appointed conference chair, whether the report can and should be shared with the parents and if so when
- approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1 of this guidance
- attend the conference when invited and participate in decision-making
- seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance

Initial child protection conferences

Following section 47 enquiries, an initial child protection conference brings together family members (and the child where appropriate), with the supporters, advocates, and practitioners most involved with the child and family, to make decisions about the child's future safety, health and development. If concerns relate to an unborn child, consideration should be given as to whether to hold a child protection conference prior to the child's birth.

Purpose

To bring together and analyse, in a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary meeting, all relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child and protect them from harm. It is the responsibility of the conference to make recommendations on how organisations and agencies work together to safeguard the child in future.

Practitioners and parents should be provided with clear and accurate information about the conference process to support effective planning. All practitioners should approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1 of this guidance.

Conference tasks include:

- appointing a lead statutory body (either local authority children's social care or NSPCC) and a lead social worker, who should be experienced and an employee of the lead statutory body
- identifying membership of the core group of practitioners and family members who will develop and implement the child protection plan
- establishing timescales for meetings of the core group, production of a child protection plan and for child protection review meetings
- agreeing an outline child protection plan, with clear actions and timescales, including a clear sense of how much improvement is needed, by when, so that success can be judged clearly

The conference chair:

- is accountable to the Director of Children's Services, where possible the same person should chair subsequent child protection reviews
- should be a practitioner, independent of operational and/or line management responsibilities for the case
- should meet the child and parents in advance to ensure they understand the issues, the purpose, the process, and possible outcomes of the conference
- should be prepared to answer questions openly
- should approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1 of this guidance
- should consider whether members of the family network should attend and participate in the conference
- should ensure all participants are encouraged to contribute views independently

Lead practitioners should:

- convene, attend, and present information about the reason for the conference, their understanding of the child's needs, parental capacity, family and environmental context (including extra-familial contexts), and evidence of how the child has been abused, neglected, or exploited and its impact on their health and development
- analyse the information to enable informed decisions about what action is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child who is the subject of the conference
- share the conference information with the child and family beforehand (where appropriate)
- prepare a report for the conference on the child and family which sets out and analyses what is known about the child and family and the local authority's recommendation
- record conference decisions and recommendations and ensure action follows

All involved practitioners should:

- work together to safeguard the child from harm in the future, taking timely, effective action according to the plan agreed
- attend and present information about their understanding or the child's needs, parental capacity, family, and environmental factors (including extra-familial contexts) and evidence of how the child has been abused, neglected, or exploited and its impact on their health and development
- bring their agency perspective, expertise and challenge and contribute to decisions about actual or likely significant harm and actions to address by contributing to the plan to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child who is the subject of the conference

Safeguarding partners should:

- monitor the effectiveness of child protection conference arrangements

The child protection plan

Actions and responsibilities following the initial child protection conference

Purpose:

The aim of the child protection plan is to:

- ensure the child is safe from harm (including inside and outside of the home, and online) and prevent them from suffering further harm
- promote the child's health and development
- support the parents, family, and the family network to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child
- set out the support and resources to be provided by each agency to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child

Local authority children's social care should:

- designate a social worker to be the lead practitioner as they carry statutory responsibility for the child's welfare
- consider the evidence and decide what legal action to take if any, where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm
- define the local protocol for timeliness of circulating plans after the child protection conference

Lead practitioners should:

- be the lead for multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work with the child and family, co-ordinating the contribution of family members, including through family group decision-making such as family group conferences, and practitioners into putting the child protection plan into effect
- support multi-agency and multi-disciplinary practitioners to contribute to the development of the outline child protection plan into a more detailed multi-agency plan and circulate to all relevant practitioners (and family where appropriate)
- ensure the child protection plan is aligned and integrated with any associated offender risk management plan
- undertake direct work with the child and family in accordance with the child protection plan, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and the views of the parents in so far as they are consistent with the child's welfare

- approach work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1
- complete the child's and family's in-depth assessment, securing contributions from core group members and other practitioners as necessary
- undertake direct work with the family network, for example, through family group decision-making such as family group conferences, to consider how the family network can support the plan and update the plan accordingly
- explain the plan to the child in a manner which is in accordance with their age and understanding and agree the plan with the child
- if needed, inform the relevant embassy if the child has links to a foreign country
- co-ordinate progress reviews against the planned outcomes set out in the plan, updating as required. The first review should be held within three months of the initial conference and further reviews at intervals of no more than six months for as long as the child remains subject of a child protection plan
- record decisions and actions agreed at core group meetings as well as the written views of those who were not able to attend and follow up those actions to ensure they take place. The child protection plan should be updated as necessary
- lead core group activity

The core group should:

- meet within 10 working days from the initial child protection conference if the child is the subject of a child protection plan
- further develop the outline child protection plan, based on assessment findings, and set out what needs to change, by how much, and by when in order for the child to be safe and have their needs met
- decide what steps need to be taken, and by whom, to complete the in-depth assessment to inform decisions about the child's safety and welfare
- share information about relevant multi-agency and multi-disciplinary resources and services available, agree what should be provided to the child and parents as part of the plan and how this will be funded. Practitioners should agree how impact will be assessed
- implement the child protection plan and take joint responsibility for carrying out the agreed tasks, monitoring progress and outcomes, and refining the plan as needed

Child protection review conference

The review conference procedures for preparation, decision-making and other procedures should be the same as those for an initial child protection conference.

Purpose:

To review whether the child is continuing to suffer or is likely to suffer significant harm and review developmental progress against child protection plan outcomes.

To consider whether the child protection plan should continue or should be changed.

Lead practitioners should:

- attend and lead the organisation of the conference
- determine when the review conference should be held within three months of the initial conference, and thereafter at maximum intervals of six months
- provide information to enable informed decisions about what action is necessary to continue to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, and the effectiveness and impact of action taken so far
- share the conference information with the child and family beforehand, where appropriate, and ensure that they understand the information provided
- approach work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1
- engage the family network where this is appropriate to support the child. If there is family group decision-making, such as a family group conference, parents and family networks should have the opportunity to prepare for it in advance
- record conference outcomes
- decide whether to initiate family court proceedings (all the children in the household should be considered, even if concerns are only expressed about one child) if the child is considered to be suffering significant harm

All involved practitioners should:

- attend, when invited, and provide details of their involvement with the child and family
- produce reports for the child protection review. This information will provide an overview of work undertaken by family members and practitioners and evaluate the impact on the child's welfare against the planned outcomes set out in the child protection plan
- approach work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1
- be sufficiently skilled and experienced to prepare for and engage with the review, and able to critically assess and challenge their own and other's input

Discontinuing the child protection plan

A child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan if:

- it is judged that the child is no longer continuing to, or is likely to, suffer significant harm and therefore no longer requires safeguarding by means of a child protection plan
- the child and family have moved permanently to another local authority area. In such cases, the receiving local authority should convene a child protection conference within 15 working days of being notified of the move. Only after this event may the original local authority discontinue its child protection
- the child has reached the age of 18 years (to end the child protection plan, the local authority should have a review around the child's birthday, and this should be planned in advance), has died, or has permanently left the United Kingdom

Lead practitioners should:

- notify, as a minimum, all agency representatives who were invited to attend the initial child protection conference that led to the plan
- seek input on the decision to discontinue from other core group members and ensure that all practitioners who are involved in supporting the child and parents are notified
- consider whether support services are still required and discuss with the child, parents, family, and family network as appropriate what might be needed, based on a re-assessment of the child's needs, including where this may involve transition between child and adult services

Initiating pre-proceedings

Once the child protection process has been carried out, it may be deemed by the local authority that there is still not sufficient protection of the child by the parents and that the 'threshold'[121] for care proceedings has been met in principle. In this instance, the local authority should determine whether to initiate pre-proceedings and follow the 'Court orders and pre-proceedings guidance for local authorities'[122]. This decision should be informed by engagement with other relevant agencies. During this period, the local authority should offer family group decision-making, such as family group conferences, to continue to explore potential placements within the family network and to clarify the realistic options available for the child. At pre-proceedings, records of key discussions with the family can be used as evidence of decision-making[123].

The pre-proceedings process acts as the final opportunity for parents to avoid care proceedings. Whilst pre-proceedings may be initiated at this final stage as per flow chart 6, where the local authority considers the "threshold" for care proceedings to be met, proceedings can be initiated at any stage.

The local authority should work in partnership with families and, where possible, any extra support or services needed to support the family should be identified and put in place. There should be clear expectations set with parents about the changes they are required to make.

Link to the full statutory guidance on court orders and pre-proceedings can be found in Appendix B of this document, titled "Children Act 1989: court orders and pre-proceedings".

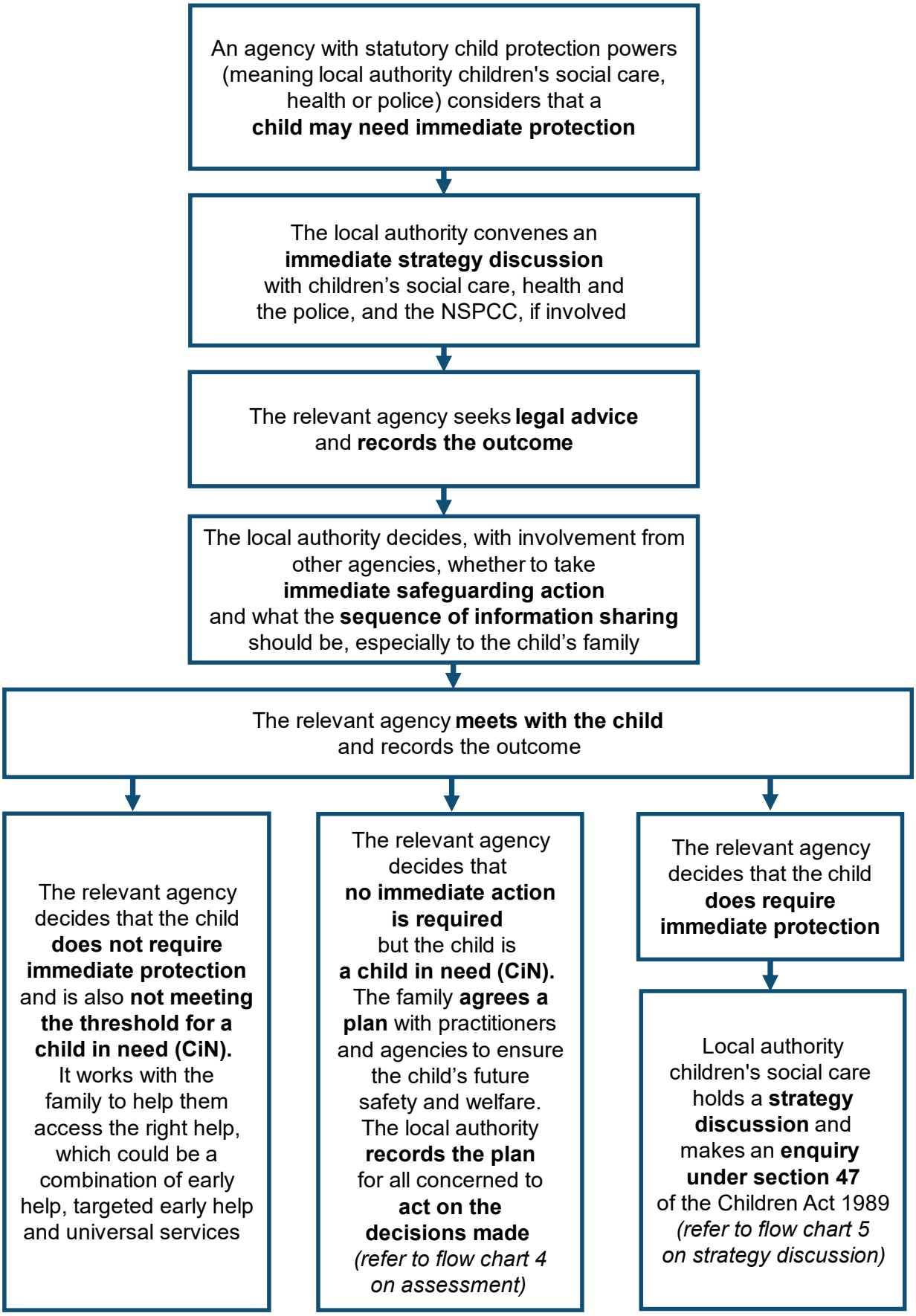
When initiating pre-proceedings, practitioners should review Practice Direction 12A, the link can also be found in Appendix B. The pre-proceedings checklist in this Practice Direction outlines the documentation that must be prepared in pre-proceedings or before and submitted as part of the local authority application for a court order.

Practitioners and strategic leads can also refer to the family justice hub for access to resources and tools to support the delivery of best practice in pre-proceedings. A link to these resources can be found in Appendix B, titled "Pre-proceedings and family justice hub".

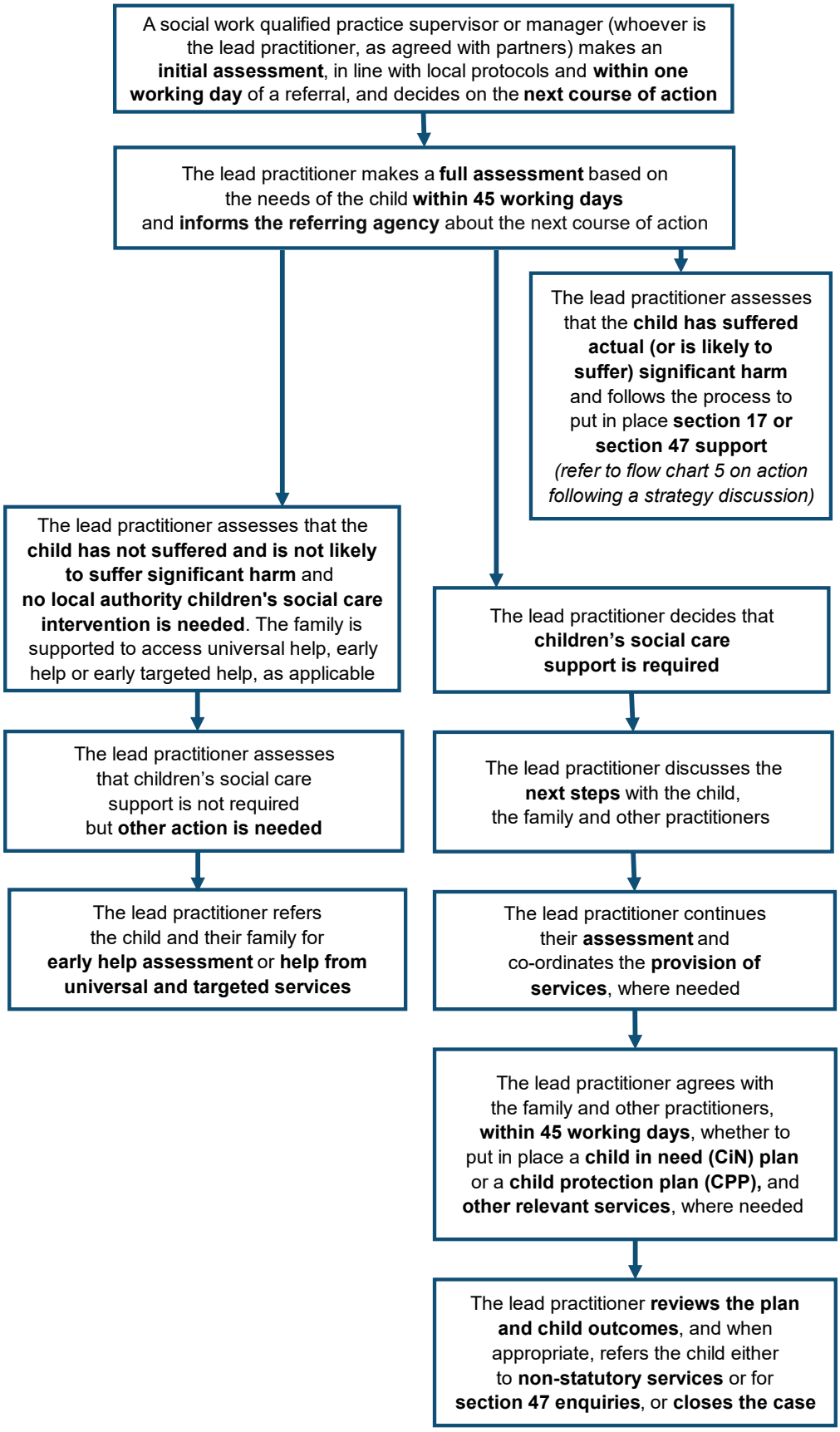
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[121] The Children Act 1989 Section 31 (2)
[122] Court Orders and Pre-proceedings for Local Authorities (2014)
[123] Practice direction 12A – Care supervision and other part 4 proceedings: guide to case management.

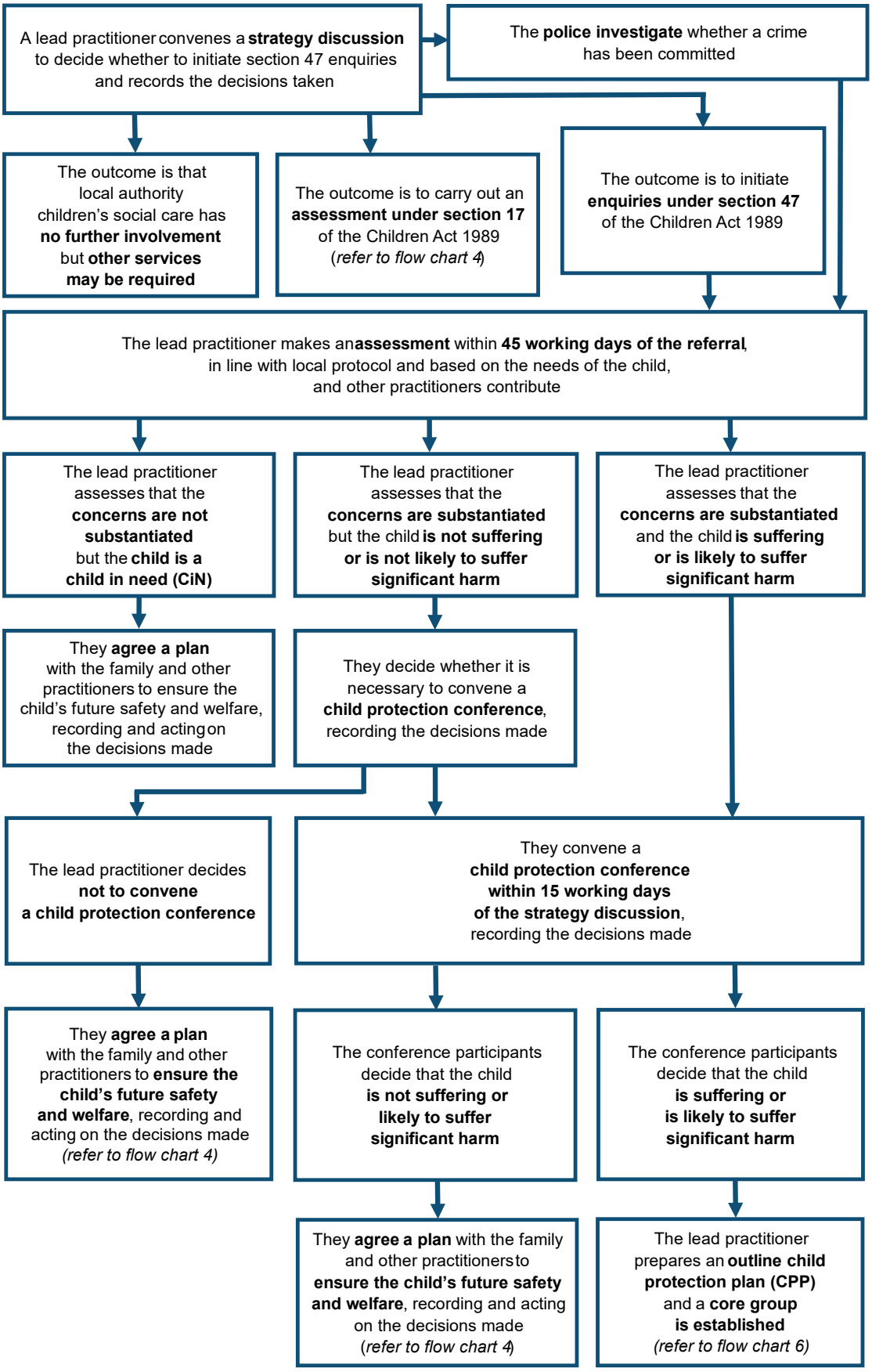
Flow chart 3: Immediate protection



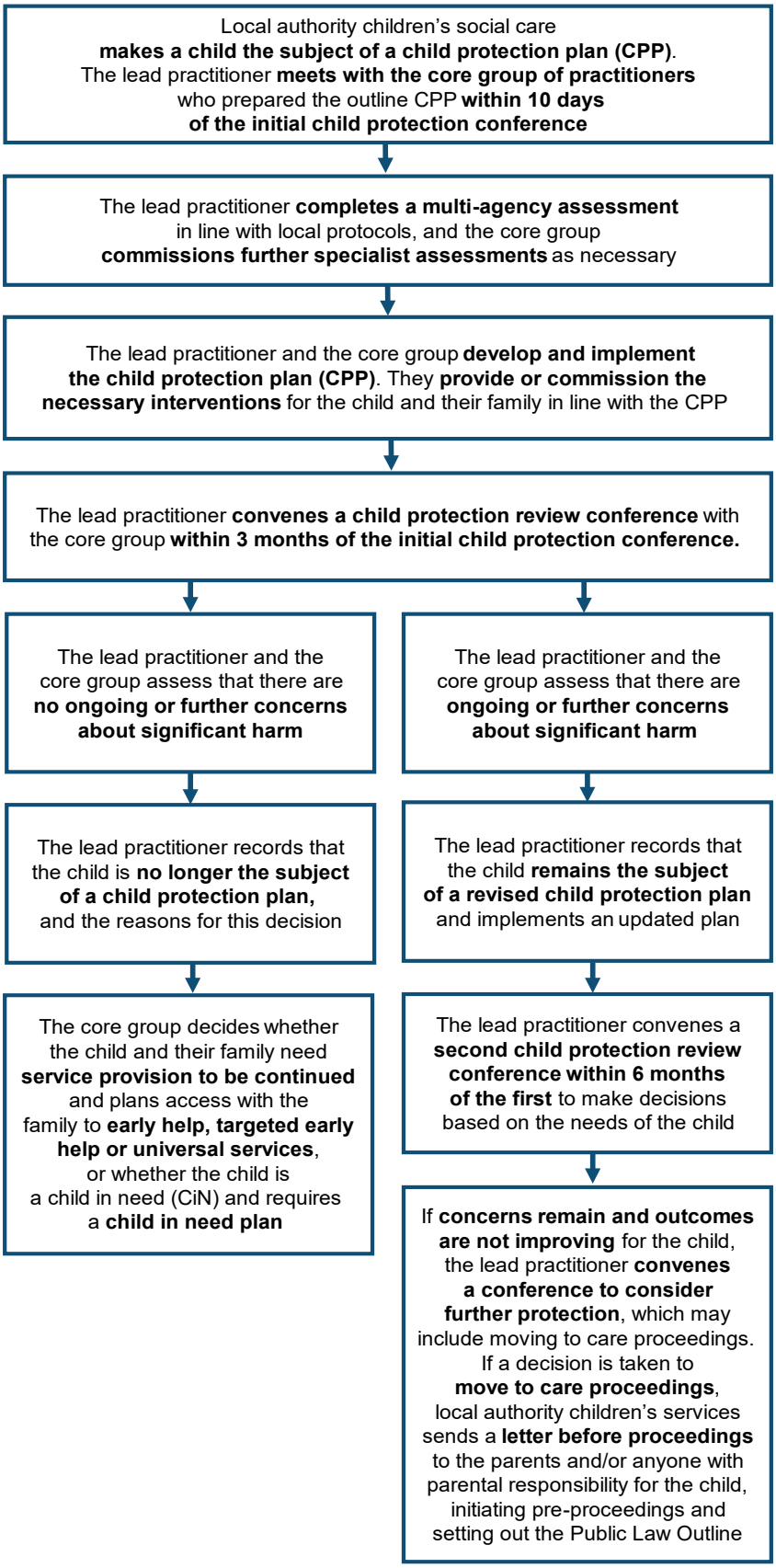
Flow chart 4: Action taken for an assessment of a child under the Children Act 1989



Flow chart 5: Action following a strategy meeting



Flow chart 6: What happens after the child protection conference, including review?



Chapter 4: Organisational responsibilities

220. A range of individual organisations and agencies working with children and families have specific statutory duties to promote the welfare of children and ensure they are protected from harm. These duties, as applied to individual organisations and agencies, are set out in this chapter.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004

Places duties on a range of organisations, agencies, and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

221. Section 11 places a duty on:

- local authorities and district councils that provide children's and other types of services, including children's and adult social care, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licensing authorities and youth services
- NHS organisations and agencies and the independent sector, including NHS England, ICBs, NHS Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts and general practitioners
- the police, including Police and Crime Commissioners and the chief officer of each police force in England and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime where they exist
- the British Transport Police
- the Probation Service
- governors or directors of prisons and young offender institutions (YOIs)
- directors of secure training centres (STCs)
- youth offending teams (YOTs)

222. These organisations and agencies should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:

- a clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- a senior board level lead with the required knowledge, skills, and expertise or sufficiently qualified and experienced to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's or agency's safeguarding arrangements
- a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services

- clear whistleblowing procedures, which reflect the principles in Sir Robert Francis' 'Freedom to Speak Up Review' and are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed[124]
- clear escalation policies for staff to follow when their child safeguarding concerns are not being addressed within their organisation or by other agencies
- arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with other practitioners and with safeguarding partners
- a designated practitioner (or, for health provider organisations/agencies, named practitioners). Please see Health Practitioners with Specific Duties for more detail) for child safeguarding. Their role is to support other practitioners in their organisations and agencies to recognise the needs of children, including protection from possible abuse or neglect. Designated practitioner roles should always be explicitly defined in job descriptions. Practitioners should be given sufficient time, funding, supervision, and support to fulfil their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities effectively
- safe recruitment practices and ongoing safe working practices for individuals whom the organisation or agency permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record check
- appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training
- creating a culture of safety, equality, and protection within the services they provide

In addition:

- employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and creating an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role
- staff should be given a mandatory induction, which includes familiarisation with child protection responsibilities and the procedures to be followed if anyone has any concerns about a child's safety or welfare
- all practitioners should have regular reviews of their own practice to ensure they have knowledge, skills and expertise that improve over time

[124] Sir Robert Francis' freedom to speak up review

People in positions of trust

223. Organisations and agencies working with children and families should have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice, or a complaint. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

224. County level and unitary local authorities should ensure that allegations against people who work with children are not dealt with in isolation. Any action necessary to address corresponding welfare concerns in relation to the child or children involved should be taken without delay and in a co-ordinated manner. Local authorities should, in addition, have designated a particular officer, or team of officers known as local authority designated officers (LADO), (either as part of local multi-agency arrangements or otherwise), to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children. Any such officer, or team of officers, should be sufficiently qualified and experienced to be able to fulfil this role effectively, for example, qualified social workers. Any new appointments to such a role, other than current or former designated officers moving between local authorities, should be qualified social workers. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that any allegations about those who work with children are passed to the designated officer, or team of officers, without delay.

225. Local authorities should put in place arrangements to provide advice and guidance to employers, and voluntary organisations and agencies on how to deal with allegations against people who work with children. Local authorities should also ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to liaise effectively with the police and other organisations and agencies to monitor the progress of cases and ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process.

226. Employers, school governors, trustees and voluntary organisations should ensure that they have clear policies in place setting out the process, including timescales for investigation and what support and advice will be available to individuals against whom allegations have been made. Any allegation against people who work with children should be reported immediately to a senior manager within the organisation or agency. The

designated officer, or team of officers, should also be informed within one working day of all allegations that come to an employer's attention or that are made directly to the police. If the person is subject to registration or regulation by a professional body or regulator, for example by the Care Quality Commission or Ofsted, the designated officer should advise on whether a referral to that body is appropriate.

227. If an organisation or agency removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work in regulated activity[125] with children (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, the organisation or agency should make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service to consider whether to add the individual to the barred list. In some circumstances, organisations and agencies will be under a legal duty to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service[126].

228. This applies irrespective of whether a referral has been made to local authority children's social care and/or the designated officer, or team of officers. It is an offence to fail to make a referral without good reason[127].

Individual organisational responsibilities

229. In addition to these section 11 duties, which apply to a number of named organisations and agencies, further safeguarding duties are also placed on individual organisations and agencies through other statutes. The key duties that fall on each individual organisation are set out below.

Schools, colleges and other educational providers

230. The following have duties in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children:

- governing bodies of maintained schools (including maintained nursery schools), and colleges which includes providers of post 16 Education as set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009: 16-19 Academies, Special Post-16 institutions and Independent Training Providers[128]
- proprietors of independent schools, (including academies, free schools, and alternative provision academies) and non-maintained special schools. In the case of academies, free schools and alternative provision academies, the proprietor will be the academy trust

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[125] Regulated activity in relation to children: scope
[126] Making barring referrals to the DBS
[127] Further guidance on referrals to the DBS is available at Appendix B
[128] Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009

- management committees of pupil referral units (PRUs)[129]
- senior leadership teams

231. This guidance applies in its entirety to all schools

232. Schools, colleges, and other educational settings must also have regard to statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education', which provides further guidance as to how they should fulfil their duties in respect of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their care[130].

Early years and childcare

233. Early years providers have a duty under section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006[131] to comply with the welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS)[132]. Early years providers must ensure that:

- they are alert to any issues of concern in the child's life
- they implement policies and procedures to safeguard children. This must include an explanation of the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. The policy must also cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting, that staff complete safeguarding training that enables them to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures, have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, and recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect
- they have a practitioner who is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within each early years setting and who must liaise with local statutory children's services as appropriate. This lead must also complete child protection training

Health

234. ICBs are one of the three statutory safeguarding partners as set out in chapter 2. NHS organisations and agencies are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Health practitioners are in a strong position to identify welfare needs or safeguarding concerns regarding individual children and, where appropriate, provide support. This includes understanding risk factors, communicating and sharing information effectively with children and families, liaising with other organisations and agencies,

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[129] Education Act 2002 Section 175 for management committees of pupil referral units, by virtue of regulation 3 and paragraph 19A of Schedule 1 to the Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) Regulations 2007
[130] Keeping children safe in education
[131] Childcare Act 2006 Section 40
[132] Section 3 – safeguarding and welfare requirements in the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage

assessing needs and capacity, responding to those needs, and contributing to multi-agency assessments and reviews.

235. A wide range of health practitioners have a critical role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including: GPs, primary care practitioners, paediatricians, nurses, health visitors, midwives, public health school nurses, allied health practitioners, those working in maternity, children and young people's mental health, youth custody establishments, adult mental health, sexual, alcohol and drug services for both adults and children, unscheduled and emergency care settings, highly specialised services, and secondary and tertiary care.

236. All staff working in healthcare settings, including those who predominantly treat adults, should receive training to ensure they attain the competences appropriate to their role and follow the relevant professional guidance[133,134,135].

237. Within the NHS[136]:

- NHS England is responsible for ensuring that the health commissioning system as a whole is working effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It is accountable for the services it directly commissions or delegates, including healthcare services in the under 18 secure estate (for police custody settings see below in the policing section). NHS England also leads and defines improvement in safeguarding practice and outcomes and should also ensure that there are effective mechanisms for safeguarding partners to raise concerns about the engagement and leadership of the local NHS. Each NHSE region should have a safeguarding lead to ensure regional collaboration and assurance through convening safeguarding forums.
- ICBs are one of the statutory safeguarding partners and the major commissioners of local health services. They are responsible for the provision of effective clinical, professional, and strategic leadership to child safeguarding, including the quality assurance of safeguarding through their contractual arrangements with all provider organisations and agencies, including from independent providers.

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[133] Safeguarding Children and Young People: roles and competencies for health care staff (RCN, 2019)

[134] Looked after children: Roles and competences of health care staff (RCN, 2020)

[135] For example, Protecting children and young people: the responsibilities of all doctors (GMC, 2018) and Safeguarding children and young people: the RCGP/NSPCC's safeguarding children toolkit for general practice (RCGP, 2018)

[136] Further guidance on accountabilities for safeguarding children in the NHS is available in Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in the NHS: safeguarding accountability and assurance framework (2022)

Health practitioners with specific duties

238. Detailed descriptions of roles and competencies for health practitioners with specific duties are set out in the relevant Intercollegiate Documents.

Designated health practitioners

239. ICBs should employ, or have in place, a contractual agreement to secure the expertise of designated practitioners, such as dedicated designated doctors and nurses for safeguarding children, and dedicated designated doctors and nurses for looked after children (and designated doctor or paediatrician for unexpected deaths in childhood).

240. In some areas, where the ICB has more than one local authority in its footprint, they may consider 'lead' or 'hosting' arrangements for their designated health professionals, or a clinical network arrangement with the number of designated doctors and nurses for child safeguarding equating to the size and complexity of the child population. Designated doctors and nurses, as senior professionals, clinical experts, and strategic leaders, are a vital source of safeguarding advice and expertise for all relevant organisations and agencies but particularly the ICB, NHS England, and the local authority, and for advice and support to other health practitioners across the health economy. The NHS commissioners and providers should ensure that designated professionals are given sufficient time to be fully engaged, involved, and included in the new safeguarding arrangements.

Named health practitioners

241. All providers of NHS funded health services, including NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts, should identify a dedicated named doctor and a named nurse (and a named midwife if the organisation or agency provides maternity services) for safeguarding children. In the case of ambulance trusts and independent providers, this should be a named practitioner. Named practitioners have a key role in promoting good professional practice within their organisation and agency, providing advice and expertise for fellow practitioners, and ensuring safeguarding training is in place. They should work closely with their organisation's or agency's safeguarding lead on the executive board, designated health professionals for the health economy and other statutory safeguarding partners.

242. ICBs should employ named GPs for safeguarding children to advise and support GP practice safeguarding leads. GP practices should have a lead and deputy lead for safeguarding, who should work closely with the named GP[137].

Other organisations providing NHS services

243. Other public, voluntary, and independent sector organisations, agencies and social enterprises providing NHS services to children and families should ensure that they follow this guidance.

Police

244. The police are one of the three statutory safeguarding partners as set out in chapter 2 and are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Under section 1(8)(h) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011[138], the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) must hold the Chief Constable to account for the exercise of the latter's duties in relation to safeguarding children under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.

245. All police officers and other police employees, such as Police Community Support Officers, are well placed to identify early when a child's welfare is at risk and when a child may need protection from harm. Children have the right to the full protection offered by criminal law. In addition to identifying when a child may be a victim of a crime, police officers should be aware of the effect of other incidents which might pose safeguarding risks to children and where officers should pay particular attention. Harm may be indirect and non-physical as, for example, in the case of some domestic abuse which may involve controlling or coercive behaviour, or economic abuse. An officer attending a domestic abuse incident should be aware of the effect of such behaviour on any children in the household and recognise that children who see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse are victims in their own right[139].

246. Children who are encountered as offenders, or alleged offenders, are entitled to the same safeguards and protection as any other child and due regard should be given to their safety and welfare at all times. These children are often victims of harm, for example, children who are apprehended in possession of Class A drugs may be victims of exploitation through county lines drug dealing. Consideration should be given to the potential impact an arrest or seizure of items may have upon a child's immediate and ongoing safety and whether there is actual or likely significant harm. This might include

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[137] Child safeguarding toolkit: Introduction | Home (rcgp.org.uk)
[138] Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 1 (8) (h)
[139] Domestic Abuse Act 2021, section 3

self-harm, threats, or violence from criminal gangs to the child and their family following loss of money and/or drugs and a "debt" can be created which is also known as debt bondage[140].

247. The police will hold important information about children who may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, as well as those who cause such harm. They should always share this information with other organisations and agencies where this is necessary to protect children. Similarly, they can expect other organisations and agencies to share information to enable the police to carry out their duties. All police forces should have officers trained in child abuse investigation and safeguarding responsibilities. Officers making decisions about whether children are referred into children's social care should be confident in understanding and applying the local threshold document (see chapter 2).

248. The police have a power to remove a child to suitable accommodation under section 46 of the Children Act 1989, if they have reasonable cause to believe that the child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm. Statutory powers to enter premises can be used with this section 46 power, and in circumstances to ensure the child's immediate protection[141]. Police powers can help in emergency situations, but should be used only when necessary and, wherever possible, the decision to remove a child from a parent or carer should be made by a court. This can include circumstances where the significant harm is from outside the home[142] [143].

249. Restrictions and safeguards exist in relation to the circumstances and periods for which children may be taken to or held in police stations. PCCs are responsible for health commissioning in police custody settings and should always ensure that this meets the needs of individual children.

250. Using Civil Orders powers available to police and partners can be an effective tool to disrupt those who are targeting children for criminal purposes. The Child Exploitation

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[140] Further information on "debt bondage" can be found at County lines offending: the Crown Prosecution Service

[141] Potential powers of entry include those under:

- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) section 17(1)(b), a constable may enter and search any premises for the purpose of arresting a person for an indictable offence
- PACE section 17(1)(e), a constable may also enter and search premises for the purpose of saving life or limb or preventing serious damage to property – in the exercise of police protection powers, if entry to premises is refused, this section may give adequate powers
- common law, where a constable has the power to enter premises to prevent or deal with a breach of the peace (which is preserved under PACE section 17(6))
- Children Act 1989 section 48, a warrant may be obtained to search for children who may be in need of emergency protection

[142] A child under police protection should not be brought to a police station except in exceptional circumstances, such as a lack of immediately available local authority accommodation, and then only for a short period. College of Policing: Police response to concern for a child College of Policing (www.college.police.uk)

[143] College of Policing: Arrest and other positive approaches; College of Policing: Protective measures and civil orders

Disruption Toolkit[144] lists a range of useful tools available to frontline professionals in disrupting child criminal exploitation activity. For example, Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders, and Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders can place prohibitions on the offender in order to disrupt child criminal exploitation activity.

Adult social care services

251. Local authorities provide services to adults who are themselves responsible for children who may be in need. These services are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. When staff are providing services to adults, they should ask whether there are children in the family and take actions to respond if the children need help or protection from harm. Additional parenting support could be particularly needed where the adults have mental health problems, misuse drugs or alcohol, are in a violent relationship, have complex needs or have learning difficulties.

252. Local authority services to adults must consider whether any children are providing care to the adult and whether the young carers are in need of support[145]. In such cases, or when requested by a parent or the young carer, the authority is under a duty to conduct a young carers' needs assessment under section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989 (see chapter 3, paragraphs 192-193).

253. Adults with parental responsibilities for disabled children have a right to a separate parent carer's needs assessment under section 17ZD of the Children Act 1989. Adults who do not have parental responsibility, but are caring for a disabled child, are entitled to an assessment on their ability to provide, or to continue to provide, care for that disabled child under the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995[146]. That assessment must also consider whether the carer works or wishes to work, or whether they wish to engage in any education, training, or recreation activities.

254. Adult social care services should liaise with children's social care services to ensure that there is a joined-up approach when both carrying out such assessments and in the provision of support to families where there are young carers or parent carers.

Housing services

255. Housing and homelessness services in local authorities and others, such as environmental health organisations, are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Practitioners working in these services may become aware of conditions that

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[144] The government's child exploitation disruption toolkit was updated in July 2022 to set out tools and tactics to support the use of statutory powers such as civil orders that are available to frontline safeguarding agencies.
[145] The Care and Support (Assessment) Regulations 2014 Regulation 4
[146] Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995

could have or are having an adverse impact on children. Under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004[147], authorities must take account of the impact of health and safety hazards in housing on vulnerable occupants, including children, when deciding on the action to be taken by landlords to improve conditions. Housing authorities also have an important role to play in safeguarding vulnerable young people, including young people who are pregnant, leaving care or a secure establishment.

Homelessness duty

256. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas.

257. It added section 213B into the Housing Act 1996[148], which is a duty on certain public authorities to refer to a housing authority service users they consider are or may be homeless or threatened with homelessness (meaning it is likely they will become homeless within 56 days).

258. The duty to refer applies to all social services functions, including early help, leaving care and child protection, and is intended to increase early identification and intervention, which is critical for safeguarding against homelessness. Earlier intervention can help prevent children becoming homeless, and the possibility of them being considered 'intentionally homeless' and so not owed a long-term housing duty.

259. Before making a referral, a public authority must:

- have the individual's consent to the referral (although referrals without consent may be made in order to safeguard children or vulnerable adults, in accordance with local procedures)
- allow the individual to identify the housing authority in England which they would like the notification to be made to
- have consent from the individual that their contact details can be supplied so the housing authority can contact them regarding the referral

260. The referral to a housing authority must include the individual's name, contact details, and the agreed reason for referral (for example, that the individual is homeless or at risk of homelessness). Further referral information may include:

[147] Housing Act 2004 Part 1
[148] Housing Act 1996 Section 213B

- whether an individual is already homeless, and if not when they are likely to become homeless
- whether the individual is at risk of rough sleeping on the date the referral is made and if so whether this is imminent
- risk assessment information, considering risks to the individual and to others
- key medical information where relevant

261. Full guidance can be found in the Homelessness Code of Guidance[149]. Further guidance on how social care and housing authorities should work together to prevent those aged 16 and 17 from becoming homeless, and how the duty to refer should operate in this context, can be found in the 'Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation guidance'[150].

British Transport Police

262. The British Transport Police (BTP) is subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. In its role as the national police for the railways, the BTP can provide a useful insight beyond the geographical footprint of local authority areas. They also play an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, especially in identifying and supporting children who have run away, who are missing, at risk of suicide, sexual abuse or who are being exploited by criminal gangs, such as the movement of drugs through county lines drug dealing.

263. The BTP should carry out its duties in accordance with its legislative powers, working closely with safeguarding partners. This includes investigating offences perpetrated against children, such as through the Modern Slavery Act 2015 where children have been exploited, removing a child to a suitable place using their police protection powers under the Children Act 1989[151], and the protection of children who are truanting from school using powers under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998[152].

The Prison Service

264. The Prison Service, including privately managed prisons, is subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Prison staff have a responsibility to initiate or follow up a

149 Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities
150 Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation
151 Children Act 1989 Section 46
152 Crime and Disorder Act 1998

child safeguarding enquiry[153] with children's services at the earliest opportunity for all newly sentenced prisoners. If circumstances for the prisoner have changed, prison staff must make a new child safeguarding enquiry.

265. The Prison Service have a responsibility to identify prisoners who present an ongoing risk to children from within custody and are assessed as a potential or confirmed 'person posing a risk to children' (PPRC)[154,155]. Where an individual has been identified as a PPRC, the relevant prison establishment should:

- inform the local authority children's social care service (in the prisoner's home area and the home area of any identified child at risk where this is different) of the prisoner's reception to prison, subsequent transfers, release on temporary licence, and release date and address of the offender
- consult with children's social care about any significant change in circumstances, including if the PPRC initiates a request to change their name
- notify the relevant Probation Service or youth offending team of the offender's PPRC status. Alert the police to the release date and address[156,157]
- decide on the level of contact, if any, to be allowed between the PPRC and children based on the prison's child contact risk assessment and prevent or restrict a prisoner's contact with children where necessary. The prison's decision should take into account any risk information provided by other relevant agencies, this may include the police, probation, health, and children's social care
- make referrals to the relevant children's social care department[158] where the child is not known and there are concerns about prisoner contact
- record information children's social care have shared as required in assessments and case notes

266. The primary carer of a child may contact the prison to request a restriction on contact between the prisoner and child. Requests can be made to the HMPPS Unwanted Prisoner Contact Team, contact details are:

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[153] HMPPS child safeguarding policy framework sets out that a child safeguarding enquiry (sometimes referred to as a safeguarding check) is an official enquiry that HMPPS staff send to local authority's children's services to request information on an individual, child or family.

[154] This applies not just to adult prisons but also to all types of establishments within the secure estate for children, with the same process applying to children who pose a risk to other children.

[155] HMP public protection manual

[156] If the PPRC have been released under probation supervision, the prison no longer has responsibility for them, and it falls to the relevant Probation Delivery Unit to address and manage the risk in the community.

[157] The management of an individual who presents a risk of harm to children will often be through the prisons multidisciplinary interdepartmental risk management team meetings.

[158] The referral will be sent to the local authority in which the child lives

- email – unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk
- telephone – 0300 060 6699, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm
- website – GOV.UK/stop-prisoner-contact

267. A prison can monitor a prisoner's communication (including letters and telephone calls) to protect children where it is proportionate and necessary to the risk presented.

268. Prison governors should ensure there is a clear process for children's social care practitioners to engage prisoners who are involved in safeguarding or child protection procedures. This may be via face-to-face visits or virtual conferencing. All prisons have an Offender Management Unit (OMU) with a telephone or functional mailbox which can be found at Prisons in England and Wales - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk), this should be the first point of contact for agencies who need to contact a prisoner or OMU. Agencies or organisations who need to find a prisoner should follow the instructions outlined at Find a prisoner - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

269. Each prison should have arrangements in place that take account of the needs of children who have parents in prison. During a prisoner's first night induction, they will be supported to make suitable care arrangements for any dependent children. Prisons can work with children's social care services and other agencies to contribute to improved outcomes for children who are impacted by parental imprisonment. The Prison Service should:

- provide facilities for children to play whilst visiting a prisoner
- ensure the visitors' area caters for the needs of children and promotes a positive and safe experience
- ask all prisoners during their initial custody screening process whether they have caring responsibilities for any children under the age of 18
- review who is looking after the dependent children of prisoners, and inform children's social care services if they have concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing

270. Prison staff may also use the National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) website[159] to find local services who can support children who are impacted by parental imprisonment. Further support for families can be found at Support for families and friends of prisoners.

[159] National information centre on children of offenders (NICCO) is delivered by Barnardo's in partnership with HM Prison and Probation Service

271. Prisons should encourage and assist prisoners to maintain relationships with their families, including children, to support their social rehabilitation wherever it is appropriate and safe to do so[160][161].

Mother and baby units in prisons

272. Mother and baby units (MBUs) are discrete specialist accommodation, within some prisons, for female prisoners with children up to age of 18 months or above, where appropriate. Governors or Directors of prisons which have MBUs have a duty of care to the child. When a woman applies for a place on a MBU, the referral for assessment must be sent to children's social care in the mother's home area at the earliest opportunity and must include information on MBU provision and policy[162].

273. The prison should actively engage children's social care to ensure the relevant input into processes and individual cases. Practitioners should be provided with information on the purpose, facilities and support available on the MBU. Opportunities for practitioners to visit the MBU should be offered and encouraged.

274. Prisons must consult children's social care on all MBU Board decisions, including decisions relating to a change in placement, and any other matters relevant to promoting the welfare and safeguarding a child[163][164].

The Probation Service

275. The Probation Service is a statutory criminal justice agency that supervises adult offenders serving community sentences, or who are subject to licensed supervision following release from custody. Probation staff also deliver resettlement work in prisons, undertake pre-sentence assessments, provide advice to courts, deliver targeted interventions and work with victims. The purpose of the Probation Service is to protect the public by reducing reoffending and improve offender rehabilitation. During the course of their duties, probation practitioners will come into contact with individuals who:

- have offended against a child
- pose a risk of harm to children even though they have not been convicted of an offence against a child

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[160] This reflects the requirements of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR): respect for family life and private life. Under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998, a public authority is obliged to act compatibly with ECHR rights, including article 8. Both the Secretary of State for Justice and governors are bound by section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998. Prison governors must ensure that the local prison approach to the family-ties strategy is sufficient to ensure compliance with article 8 and section 6.

[161] Strengthening Prisoners Family Ties Policy Framework

[162] Pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units (MBUs), and Maternal Separation from Children up to the Age of Two in Women's Prisons

[163] Pregnancy, MBUs and maternal separation in women's prisons Policy Framework

[164] Pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units (MBUs), and Maternal Separation from Children up to the Age of Two in Women's Prisons

- are parents or carers of children
- have regular contact with a child for whom they do not have caring responsibility

276. The timely communication of safeguarding concerns between the Probation Service, children's social care and other agencies is an important part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child. On the day an offender is being sentenced, the courts may ask the Probation Service to provide sentencing advice and an assessment of the offender's risk. Probation staff will make child safeguarding enquiries[165] with children's social care about whether they have information about children which may impact on the safety of different sentencing options (for example, the use of an electronically monitored curfew at the home address). They may request a response on the same day. Probation staff should incorporate considerations about the potential impact on children of any proposal they make to the court so that they are safe and appropriate. Probation staff working in prisons and in community teams may also undertake child safeguarding enquiries and should request a quick response if there are concerns about an offender having contact with a child.

277. Probation staff should make child safeguarding enquiries and share information with children's social care to inform sentencing advice and ongoing management of offenders, including the impact any offender may have on the safety or wellbeing of a child. Probation will send child safeguarding enquiries to the local authority in which the child and offender live. Each Probation Delivery Unit (PDU)[166] should have arrangements in place with children's social care for exchanging information. This includes responding to information sharing requests from local authorities regarding prospective foster carers and adoptive parents. If an offender who poses a risk to an identified child moves to another address which is in a different local authority, the probation practitioner should ensure the local authority where the offender lives is made aware. Probation should share the details of the offender and the identified child at risk.

278. The Probation Service ensures every offender undergoes a thorough risk assessment[167] to understand the risk they pose, and the factors related to their offending. Where appropriate this assessment will be informed by a range of agencies, which may include children's social care, police, healthcare services, housing, and other voluntary organisations. Probation practitioners will develop a sentence plan and where necessary

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[165] The HMPPS child safeguarding policy framework sets out that a child safeguarding enquiry (sometimes referred to as a safeguarding check) is an official enquiry that HMPPS staff send to local authority children's social care to request information on an individual, child or family.

[166] Including the National Security Division (NSD). The NSD is part of the Probation Service. It is a specialist division that works across England and Wales in 5 geographical units (Midlands, London/Kent/Surrey/Sussex, Wales, North, East of England/South Central). It manages those offenders who pose the highest risk of harm, including those convicted of terrorism offences or those who pose a national security terrorist risk. Other cohorts managed include some serious organised crime and critical public protection cases.

[167] HMPPS risk of serious harm assessments and guidance provides information regarding the specialist tools HMPPS practitioners use to assess the risk posed by an offender

a risk management plan (RMP) which contains any specific measures required to manage and reduce the risk of harm to children. When appropriate, the Probation Service should share risk assessments and RMPs with other organisations and agencies involved in the management of the offender's risk. Probation practitioners will also work with children's social care to ensure that RMPs align with child protection and child in need plans.

279. The sentence plan includes specific child safeguarding objectives for those offenders who pose a risk of serious harm to children or where there are child safeguarding concerns. Probation practitioners will also consider how a planned intervention might affect the offender's caring or parental responsibilities or contribute to improved outcomes for children known to be in an existing relationship with the offender.

280. Probation practitioners are experienced in working with offenders and assessing risk. Suitably qualified probation practitioners will attend child protection conferences, core group meetings and other child safeguarding meetings where required. They will provide an assessment of the offender's risk and will assess how the offender's behaviour might impact the wellbeing of children. Probation practitioners should prepare and submit reports in a timely way[168].

281. The Probation Service may hold valuable information on the parents of a child who is known to children's social care and other agencies. The probation caseload is predominantly male and includes men who pose a risk to children, and men who may play a nurturing role, and have a positive impact on a child's wellbeing. These men can often go unseen[169] by agencies who do not ordinarily come into contact with men in the criminal justice system. This puts the Prison and Probation Service in a unique position to contribute to safeguarding work other agencies undertake with children and families.

Multi-agency public protection arrangements

282. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) is the set of arrangements through which the Police, Probation and Prison Services (known as the Responsible Authority) work together with other agencies to manage the risks posed by violent, sexual and terrorism offenders living in the community to protect the public.

283. MAPPA is not a statutory body but is a mechanism through which agencies can better discharge their statutory responsibilities and protect the public in a co-ordinated manner. Agencies retain their full statutory responsibilities and obligations.

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[168] The HMPPS child safeguarding policy framework sets out how probation practitioners are expected to participate in formal meetings with children's social care

[169] Unseen men: learning from case reviews: NSPCC Learning

284. Section 325(3) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003[170] requires the Responsible Authority (RA) to co-operate with certain agencies, such as local authorities, including Children's Social Care. They are known as Duty to Co-operate Agencies (DTC agencies). This is a reciprocal duty, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 obliges DTC agencies to co-operate with the RA in establishing arrangements and includes co-operating with other DTC agencies. DTC agencies are required to co-operate as far as they can, consistent with the exercise of their statutory functions.

285. Representatives from other agencies or individuals that do not have a statutory Duty to Cooperate under MAPPA (Associate Agencies) may be included in MAPPA on a case-by-case basis where that agency or individual can contribute to the risk assessment and management of a MAPPA offender. Potential Associate Agencies covered by Working Together include:

- independent schools, academies, and free and maintained schools
- early years and childcare
- private sector healthcare
- designated health professionals
- the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
- voluntary, charity, social enterprise, faith-based organisations, and private sectors.
- sports clubs/organisations
- youth services and youth work organisations

286. Whenever a child is discussed at a MAPPA meeting, the meeting must ensure that it considers its responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of that child and how their life may be impacted by the behaviour of an offender. Where a child is managed under MAPPA the risk of harm the child presents to others must be addressed but children convicted of an offence or who are alleged to have engaged in offending behaviour are entitled to the same safeguards and protection as any other child and due regard should be given to their welfare at all times.

287. The purpose of sharing information about individuals (data subjects) under MAPPA is to enable the relevant agencies to work together more effectively in assessing risks and considering how to manage them in order to protect the public. Agencies should share all relevant information, so that public protection is not compromised, while respecting the rights of data subjects, which may limit what can be shared. These rights are set out in Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 8 of the European Convention on

[170] Criminal Justice Act 2003 Section 325 (3)

Human Rights. In summary, the principles derived require that information sharing is lawful, necessary, and proportionate.

288. Section 325(4) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 provides a lawful basis for sharing information between RA and DTC agencies[171]. It also states that all DTC agencies qualify as competent authorities when fulfilling their obligations under MAPPA. This means that all information sharing under MAPPA is governed by Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018, rather than UK GDPR[172].

Serious violence duty

289. The Serious Violence Duty was introduced as part of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022[173] and requires specified authorities namely police, Justice (Probation and YOTs), Fire and Rescue Service, Health (ICBs) in England, and Local Health Boards in Wales, and local authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. This includes identifying the kinds of serious violence[174] that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area.

290. The Duty also requires the specified authorities to consult relevant authorities, namely educational, prison and youth custody authorities for the area in the preparation of their strategy. The Duty takes a multi-agency approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focusing on prevention and early intervention, and informed by evidence. It does not require new multi-agency structures and encourages the use of existing local structures and partnerships to prevent and reduce serious violence and ultimately improve community safety and safeguarding.

291. The Duty provisions commenced on 31 January 2023 and local partners will then have to publish their first serious violence strategy by 31 January 2024 and then review it as appropriate. Statutory guidance to support authorities in meeting the Duty requirements was published in December 2022[175].

Children's homes

292. The registered person of a children's home, including Secure Children's Homes must have regard to the Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations[176], including the

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171 Criminal Justice Act 2003 Section 325 (4)

172 Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA): guidance

173 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

174 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 Section 13 makes clear that violence is not limited to physical violence against the person. It provides that, for the purposes of the duty, violence includes domestic abuse, sexual offences, violence against property and threats of violence but does not include terrorism.

175 Serious Violence Duty statutory guidance

176 Children's homes regulations, including quality standards: guide

quality standards (April 2015)[177], in interpreting and meeting the Regulations. The Guide covers the quality standards for children's homes, which set out the aspirational and positive outcomes that we expect homes to achieve, including the standard for the protection of children. The registered person is responsible for ensuring that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis.

293. In addition to the requirements of this standard, the registered person has specific responsibilities under regulation 34 of the Children's Homes Regulations [178] to prepare and implement policies setting out:

- arrangements for the safeguarding of children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- clear procedures for referring child protection concerns to the placing authority or local authority where the home is situated if appropriate
- specific procedures to prevent children going missing and take action if they do

294. Each home should work with their local safeguarding partners to agree how they will work together, and with the placing authority, to make sure that the needs of the individual children are met.

The secure estate for children

295. Governors, managers, directors and principals of the following secure establishments are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter:

- secure training centres
- young offender institutions

296. Each centre holding those aged under 18 should have in place an annually reviewed safeguarding children policy. The policy is designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and should cover all relevant operational areas as well as key supporting processes, which would include issues such as child protection, risk of harm, restraint, separation, staff recruitment and information sharing. A manager should be appointed and will be responsible for implementation of this policy[179].

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[177] The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015

[178] The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 Regulation 34

[179] Detailed guidance on the safeguarding children policy, the roles of the safeguarding children manager and the safeguarding children committee, and the role of the establishment in relation to the LSCP can be found in Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 08/2012 Care and Management of Young People.

297. Each centre should work with their local safeguarding partners to agree how they will work together, and with the relevant YOT and placing authority (the Youth Custody Service), to make sure that the needs of individual children are met.

Youth offending teams

298. Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. YOTs are multi-agency teams responsible for the supervision of children subject to pre-court interventions and statutory court disposals[180]. They are therefore well placed to identify children known to relevant organisations and agencies as being most at risk of offending and the contexts in which they may be vulnerable to abuse, and to undertake work to prevent them offending or protect them from harm. YOTs should have a lead officer responsible for ensuring safeguarding is embedded in their practice.

299. Under section 38 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998[181], local authorities must, within the delivery of youth justice services, ensure the "provision of persons to act as appropriate adults to safeguard the interests of children detained or questioned by police officers".

UK Visas and Immigration, Immigration Enforcement and the Border Force

300. Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 places upon the Secretary of State a duty to make arrangements to take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in discharging functions relating to immigration, asylum, nationality and customs. These functions are discharged on behalf of the Secretary of State by UK Visas and Immigration, Immigration Enforcement and the Border Force, which are part of the Home Office. The statutory guidance 'Every Child Matters: arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' and other guidance relevant to the discharge of specific immigration functions set out these arrangements[182].

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

301. The responsibility of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), as set out in the Children Act 1989, is to safeguard and promote the welfare of individual children who are the subject of family court proceedings. This is through the provision of independent social work advice to the court.

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[180] The statutory membership of YOTs is set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 39 (5)

[181] Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 38

[182] Every Child Matters: statutory guidance to the UK Border Agency on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Issued under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009

302. A Cafcass officer has a statutory right in public law cases to access local authority records relating to the child concerned and any application under the Children Act 1989. That power also extends to other records that relate to the child and the wider functions of the local authority, or records held by an authorised organisation that relate to that child.

303. Where a Cafcass officer has been appointed by the court as a child's guardian and the matter before the court relates to specified proceedings, they should be invited to all formal planning meetings convened by the local authority in respect of the child. This includes statutory reviews of children who are accommodated or looked after, child protection conferences and relevant adoption panel meetings.

The armed services

304. Local authorities have the statutory responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children of service families in the UK[183], in discharging these responsibilities:

- where a local authority requires input from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in relation to safeguarding reviews or have been informed of an allegation against a serving person of a safeguarding nature that requires Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or equivalent involvement, they should notify the MoD[184] to promote timely information sharing
- local authorities should ensure that the MoD is made aware of any service child who is the subject of a child in need or child protection plan and whose family is about to move overseas
- each local authority with a United States (US) base in its area should establish liaison arrangements with the base commander and relevant staff. The requirements of English child welfare legislation should be explained clearly to the US authorities, so that the local authority can fulfil its statutory duties

Channel panels

305. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on specified authorities in England, Wales, and Scotland to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

[183] The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is responsible for providing safeguarding support and promoting the welfare of the children of armed forces personnel and the children of civilians working with the armed forces when those groups are based overseas. The MOD contact is through the armed forces families safeguarding policy team at People-AFFS-Safeguarding-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk
[184] The MOD contact is through the armed forces families safeguarding policy team at People-AFFS-Safeguarding-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk

306. Children can be vulnerable to the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation. Channel panels, established under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, arrange for support for individuals who have been assessed as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism[185] [186].

307. The Children Act 1989 promotes the view that all children and their parents should be considered as individuals and that family structures, culture, religion, ethnic origins, and other characteristics should be respected.

308. When providing support to an individual on the Channel programme, local authorities and their partners should consider how best to align assessments under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

309. Links should be established between Channel panels and other statutory partners, including safeguarding partners and YOTs.

Voluntary, charity, social enterprise, faith-based organisations, and private sectors

310. Voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) and private sector organisations and agencies play an important role in safeguarding children through the services they deliver. Some of these will work with particular communities, with different races and faith communities, and deliver via health, adult social care, housing, and Prison and Probation Services. They may, as part of their work, provide a wide range of activities for children and have an important role in safeguarding children and supporting families and communities.

311. Like other organisations and agencies who work with children, they should have appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children from harm. Many of these organisations and agencies as well as many schools, children's centres, early years, and childcare organisations, will be subject to charity law and regulated either by the Charity Commission and/or other "principal" regulators. Charity trustees are responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from, or working with, their charity, are not harmed in any way through contact with it. The Charity Commission for England and Wales provides guidance on charity compliance which should be followed[187].

312. Some of these organisations and agencies are large national charities whilst others will have a much smaller local reach. Some will be delivering statutory services and may

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[185] Channel duty guidance: protecting people susceptible to radicalisation
[186] Prevent duty guidance
[187] Strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities

be run by volunteers, such as library services. This important group of organisations includes youth services not delivered by local authorities or district councils.

313. All practitioners working in these organisations and agencies who are working with children and their families are subject to the same safeguarding responsibilities, whether paid or a volunteer.

314. Every VCSE, faith-based organisation and private sector organisation or agency should have policies in place to safeguard and protect children from harm. These should be followed, and systems should be in place to ensure compliance in this. Individual practitioners, whether paid or volunteer, should be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children from harm, how they should respond to child protection concerns and how to make a referral to local authority children's social care or the police, if necessary.

315. Every VCSE, faith-based organisation and private sector organisation or agency should have in place the arrangements described in this chapter. They should be aware of how they need to work with the safeguarding partners in a local area. Charities (within the meaning of section 1 Charities Act 2011), religious organisations (regulation 34 and schedule 3 to School Admissions) and any person involved in the provision, supervision or oversight of sport or leisure are included within the Relevant Agency Regulations[188]. This means if the safeguarding partners name them as a relevant partner they must cooperate. Other VCSE, faith-based and private sector organisations not on the list of relevant agencies can also be asked to co-operate as part of the local arrangements and should do so.

Sports clubs/organisations

316. There are many sports clubs and organisations, including voluntary and private sector providers that deliver a wide range of sporting activities to children. Some of these will be community amateur sports clubs, some will be charities. All should have the arrangements described in this chapter in place and should collaborate to work effectively with the safeguarding partners as required by any local safeguarding arrangements. Paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, how they should respond to child protection concerns and how to make a referral to local authority children's social care or the police if necessary.

188 The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018

317. All National Governing Bodies of Sport that receive funding from either Sport England[189] or UK Sport[190] should aim to meet the Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport[191].

[189] Sport England
[190] UK Sport
[191] Standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport

Chapter 5: Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents

318. Child protection in England is a complex multi-agency system with many different organisations and individuals playing their part. Reflecting on how well that system is working is critical in improving our response to children and their families.

319. Sometimes a child suffers a serious injury or death as a result of abuse or neglect. Understanding not only what happened but also why it happened can help improve our response in the future. Appreciating the impact that organisations and agencies had on the child's life, and on the lives of their family members, and whether or not different approaches or those actions could have resulted in a different outcome, is essential. It is in this way that we can make good judgements about what might need to change at a local or national level.

Purpose of child safeguarding practice reviews

320. The purpose of serious child safeguarding case reviews, at local and national level, is to identify improvements that can be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally but has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.

321. Reviews should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. They are not conducted to hold individuals, organisations, or agencies to account, as there are other processes for that purpose, including employment law and disciplinary procedures, professional regulation and, in exceptional cases, criminal proceedings. These processes may be carried out alongside a review or at a later stage. Employers should consider whether any disciplinary action should be taken against practitioners whose conduct and/or practice falls below acceptable standards and should refer to their regulatory body as appropriate.

Responsibilities for reviews

322. The responsibility for how the system learns the lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents lies at a national level with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the panel) and at a local level with the safeguarding partners.

323. The panel is responsible for identifying and overseeing the review of serious child safeguarding cases which, in its opinion, raise issues that are complex or of national importance. It should also oversee the system of national and local reviews and how effectively it is operating.

324. As outlined in chapter 2, the safeguarding partners play an integral role in establishing a system of learning and reflection locally. Safeguarding partners must:

- identify and review serious child safeguarding cases which, in their opinion, raise issues of importance in relation to their area
- commission and oversee the review of those cases if they consider it appropriate

325. The way in which this responsibility is divided between the lead safeguarding partners (LSPs) and their delegates is for local decision. Accountability for ensuring learning from serious incidents is implemented is the responsibility of the LSPs and the impact of local and national reviews should be evidenced in yearly reports and subjected to independent scrutiny.

326. The panel and safeguarding partners have a shared aim to identify improvements to practice for protecting children from harm and should maintain an open and ongoing dialogue. This will enable them to raise concerns, highlight commonly recurring areas needing further investigation (whether leading to a local or national review), and share learning, including from success, that could lead to improvements elsewhere.

327. As such, safeguarding partners should have regard to any guidance the panel publishes. Guidance will include the timescales for a rapid review (see chapter 5, paragraphs 343-344) and for the panel's response.

328. Serious child safeguarding cases are those in which:

- abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected
- the child has died or been seriously harmed

329. Serious harm includes (but is not limited to) serious and/or long-term impairment of a child's mental health or intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development. This is not an exhaustive list. When making decisions, judgement should be exercised in cases where impairment is likely to be long-term, even if this is not immediately certain. Even if a child recovers, including from a one-off incident, serious harm may still have occurred. Local authorities and safeguarding partners should refer to the panel's guidance[192] for further clarity on issues relating to the criteria for serious child safeguarding cases.

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[192] Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance for safeguarding partners

Duty on local authorities to notify incidents to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

16C (1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) states:

Where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority must notify the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel if:

(a) the child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority's area

(b) while normally resident in the local authority's area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England

330. The local authority should notify the panel of any incident that meets the above criteria via the Child Safeguarding Online Notification System. It should do so within five working days of becoming aware it has occurred. Though the responsibility to notify rests on the local authority, it is for all three safeguarding partners to agree which incidents should be notified in their local area. Where there is disagreement, the safeguarding partners should follow local dispute resolution processes.

331. The local authority must notify the Secretary of State for Education, and Ofsted of the death of a looked after child.

332. The local authority should also notify the Secretary of State for Education and Ofsted of the death of a care leaver up to and including the age of 24[193]. This should be notified via the Child Safeguarding Online Notification System. The death of a care leaver does not require a rapid review or local child safeguarding practice review. However, safeguarding partners must consider whether the criteria for a serious incident has been met and respond accordingly, in the event the deceased care leaver was under the age of 18. If local partners think that learning can be gained from the death of a looked after child or care leaver in circumstances where those criteria do not apply, they may wish to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review.

333. The local authority, on behalf of the safeguarding partners, has a duty to notify the panel about all serious incidents that meet the criteria. The number of serious incidents notified is not a reflection of local area performance. Making a notification, will ensure that

[193] Care leavers are entitled to support from their Personal Adviser up to their 25th birthday. Local authorities are required to keep in touch with all care leavers up the point they reach age 21, and to make their best efforts to contact all care leavers aged 21 to 24 annually to remind them that they remain eligible for support. If a young person chooses not to take up support between 21 to 24 years of age the local authority may no longer be aware of a care leaver's whereabouts or circumstances (and therefore their death).

learning is identified and fed back into the system to prevent future harm or death. The link to the Child Safeguarding Online Notification form for local authorities to notify incidents to the panel is available on the Report a serious child safeguarding incident[194] page on GOV.UK.

334. The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for publishing annual serious incident data. This data is extracted from the notifications submitted by local authorities, so accuracy when completing the online notification form is key. All incidents meeting the criteria should be notified as “serious harm” or “death”, except where there is a clear reason to notify as “other”, for example, in cases where the notification relates to a perpetrator. A notification regarding the suicide of a child should be made where abuse or neglect is a factor.

335. Others who have functions relating to children[195] should inform the safeguarding partners of any incident they think should be considered for a child safeguarding practice review.

Decisions on local and national reviews

336. Safeguarding partners must:

- identify serious child safeguarding cases that raise issues of importance in relation to their area
- commission and oversee the review of those cases if they consider review appropriate

337. When a serious incident becomes known to safeguarding partners, they must consider whether the case meets the criteria and guidance for a local review[196]. If safeguarding partners determine that the criteria is met to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review, then a serious incident notification and rapid review must take place.

338. In some cases, a ‘serious child safeguarding case’ may not meet the criteria for a serious incident notification but may nevertheless raise issues of importance to the local area. That might, for example, include where there has been good practice, poor practice or where there have been ‘near-miss’ incidents. Safeguarding partners may choose to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review in these or other circumstances, in

[194] Report a serious child safeguarding incident
[195] This means any person or organisation with statutory or official duties or responsibilities relating to children
[196] Children Act 2004 Section 16F

which case they should be clear about their rationale for undertaking such a review and what its focus will be.

339. It is for safeguarding partners to determine whether a review is appropriate, given that the purpose of a review is to identify improvements to practice. Meeting the criteria does not mean that safeguarding partners must automatically carry out a local child safeguarding practice review.

340. All incidents should be considered on a case-by-case basis using all information that is available to local safeguarding arrangements. Issues might appear to be the same in some cases, but reasons for actions and behaviours may differ resulting in useful learning for the local area.

341. Decisions on whether to undertake reviews should be made transparently and collaboratively between safeguarding partners, and the rationale recorded and communicated appropriately, including to families. Where there are disagreements, local dispute resolution processes should be followed.

342. Learning from local reviews should be reflected in the annual reports published yearly by the safeguarding partners.

The criteria safeguarding partners must take into account include whether the case[197]:

- highlights or may highlight improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including where those improvements have been previously identified
- highlights or may highlight recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children
- highlights or may highlight concerns regarding two or more organisations or agencies working together effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- is one the panel has considered and has concluded a local review may be more appropriate

[197] The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018

Safeguarding partners should also have regard to circumstances where:

- they have cause for concern about the actions of a single agency
- there has been no agency involvement, and this gives them cause for concern
- more than one local authority, police area or ICB is involved, including in cases where a family has moved around
- the case may raise issues related to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children in institutional settings[198]

The rapid review

343. The safeguarding partners should promptly undertake a rapid review of the case, in line with any guidance published by the panel. The aim of this review is to enable them to:

- gather the facts about the case, as far as they can be readily established
- discuss whether any immediate action is needed to ensure children's safety and share any learning appropriately
- consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- decide what steps they should take next, including whether to undertake a child safeguarding practice review

344. As soon as the rapid review is complete, the safeguarding partners should send a copy of their findings to the panel[199]. They should also share with the panel their decision about whether a local child safeguarding practice review is appropriate, or whether they think the case may raise issues that are complex or of national importance such that a national review may be appropriate. They may also do this if, during a local child safeguarding practice review, new information comes to light suggesting that a national review may be appropriate. As soon as they have determined that a local review will be carried out, they should inform the panel, Ofsted and DfE, providing the name of the reviewer they have commissioned.

[198] Includes children's homes (including secure children's homes) and other settings with residential provision for children, custodial settings where a child is held (including police custody, young offender institutions and secure training centres), and all settings where detention of a child takes place, including under the Mental Health Act 1983 or the Mental Capacity Act 2005

[199] The panel may share this with the DfE, if requested, to enable DfE to carry out its functions.

Guidance for the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

345. On receipt of the information from the rapid review, the panel must decide whether it is appropriate to commission a national review of a case or cases. They must consider the criteria and guidance that follows:

The criteria the panel must take into account include whether the case[200]:

- highlights or may highlight improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including where those improvements have been previously identified
- raises or may raise issues requiring legislative change or changes to guidance issued under or further to any enactment
- highlights or may highlight recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children

The panel should also have regard to:

- circumstances where significant harm or death to a child educated otherwise than at school
- circumstances where a child is seriously harmed or dies while in the care of a local authority, or while on (or recently removed from) a child protection plan
- circumstances where the case may raise issues relating to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children in institutional settings[201]
- cases which involve a range of types of abuse[202]

346. As well as considering a notification from a local authority, information from a rapid review and local child safeguarding practice reviews, the panel should consider a range of other evidence, including inspection and other reports and research. The panel may also consider any other criteria it considers appropriate to identify whether a serious child safeguarding case raises issues that are complex or of national importance.

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[200] The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018

[201] Includes children's homes (including secure children's homes) and other settings with residential provision for children, custodial settings where a child is held (including police custody, young offender institutions and secure training centres), and all settings where detention of a child takes place, including under the Mental Health Act 1983 or the Mental Capacity Act 2005

[202] For example, trafficking for the purposes of child sexual exploitation

347. In many cases there will need to be dialogue between the safeguarding partners and the panel to support the decision-making process. The safeguarding partners must share further information with the panel if requested.

348. The panel should inform the relevant safeguarding partners promptly following receipt of the rapid review, if it considers that:

- a national review is appropriate, setting out the rationale for its decision and the next steps
- further information is required to support its decision-making, including whether the safeguarding partners have decided to commission a local review

349. The panel should decide on whether to undertake a national review and communicate its rationale appropriately, including to families. The panel should notify the Secretary of State if it decides to carry out a national review.

350. On receipt of the information from a rapid review or following its appraisal of a number of rapid reviews that highlight a particular theme, the panel must decide whether it is appropriate to commission a national review of a case, or cases, or to undertake a thematic review. For the criteria and guidance that the panel considers in its decision-making, refer to its guidance[203]

351. If the panel decides to undertake a national review, it should discuss with the safeguarding partners its potential scope and methodology and how they it will engage with them and those involved in the case.

352. There will be instances where a local review has been carried out which could then form part of a thematic review that the panel undertakes at a later date. There may be other instances where a local review has not been carried out but where the panel considers that the case could be helpful to a future national review. In such circumstances, the panel should engage with safeguarding partners to agree how the review should be conducted.

353. Alongside any national or local reviews, there could be a criminal investigation, a coroner's investigation and/or professional body disciplinary procedures. The panel and the safeguarding partners should have in place clear processes for how they contribute to with other investigations (including a domestic homicide review, multi-agency public protection arrangements, or safeguarding adult's reviews), and collaborate with those

[203] Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

responsible for carrying them out. This will reduce the burdens on, and anxiety for, the children and families concerned as well as uncertainty and duplication of effort.

Commissioning a reviewer(s) for a local child safeguarding practice review

354. The safeguarding partners are responsible for commissioning and supervising reviewers for local reviews[204].

355. In all cases they should consider whether the reviewer has:

- professional knowledge, understanding and practice relevant to local child safeguarding practice reviews, including the ability to engage with practitioners, children, and families
- knowledge and understanding of research relevant to children's safeguarding issues
- ability to recognise the complex circumstances in which practitioners work together to safeguard children
- the ability to understand practice from the viewpoint of the individuals, organisations or agencies involved at the time rather than using hindsight
- the ability to communicate findings effectively
- any real or perceived conflict of interest

Local child safeguarding practice reviews

356. The safeguarding partners should agree with the reviewer the method by which the review should be conducted, taking into account this guidance and the principles of the systems methodology recommended by the Munro review[205]. It should provide a way of looking at and analysing frontline practice as well as organisational structures and learning, and allow those involved in the review to reach recommendations that will improve outcomes for children. All reviews should reflect both the child's perspective and the family context.

[204] Safeguarding partners may also consider appointing reviewers from the panels pool of reviewers, where available
[205] The Munro review of child protection final report: a child-centred system (2011)

357. The review should be proportionate to the circumstances of the case, focus on potential learning, and establish and explain the reasons the incidents occurred as they did.

358. As part of their duty to ensure the review is of satisfactory quality, the safeguarding partners should ensure that:

- practitioners are fully involved and invited to contribute their perspectives without fear of being blamed for actions they took in good faith
- families, including surviving children (in order that the child is at the centre of the process) are invited to contribute
- families understand how they are going to be involved and have their expectations appropriately and sensitively managed

359. The safeguarding partners must supervise the review to ensure the reviewer is making satisfactory progress and the review is of satisfactory quality[206]. They may request information from the reviewer to enable them to assess this and any such requests must be made in writing. The President of the Family Division's guidance covering the role of the judiciary in serious case reviews[207] should also be noted in the context of child safeguarding practice reviews.

Safeguarding partners – expectations of the final report

360. The safeguarding partners must ensure the final report includes:

- a summary of any recommended improvements to be made by individuals or organisations in the area to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- an analysis of any systemic or underlying reasons actions were taken or not taken in respect of matters covered by the report

361. Any recommendations should make clear what is required of relevant agencies and others both collectively and individually, and by when, and focussed on improving outcomes for children.

362. Reviews are about promoting and sharing information about improvements, both within the area and potentially beyond, so the safeguarding partners must publish the report, unless they consider it inappropriate to do so[208]. In such a circumstance, they must

[206] Children Act 2004 Section 16F (1) and The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018 Regulation 15
[207] President of the Family Division's guidance covering the role of the judiciary in serious case reviews
[208] Children Act 2004 Section 16F (1) and The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018 Regulation 15

publish any information about the improvements that should be made following the review they consider appropriate to publish. The name of the reviewers should be included. Published reports or information must be publicly available for at least one year.

363. When compiling and preparing to publish the report, the delegated safeguarding partners should consider carefully how best to manage the impact of the publication on children, family members, practitioners and others closely affected by the case. The safeguarding partners should ensure that reports are written in such a way so that what is published avoids harming the welfare of any children or vulnerable adults involved in the case.

364. Safeguarding partners must send a copy of the full report to the panel and to the Secretary of State no later than seven working days[209] before the date of publication. Where the safeguarding partners decide only to publish information relating to the improvements to be made following the review, they must also provide a copy of that information to the panel and the Secretary of State within the same timescale. They should also provide the report, or information about improvements, to Ofsted within the same timescale.

365. Depending on the nature and complexity of the case, the report should be completed and published as soon as possible and no later than six months from the date of the decision to initiate a review. Where other proceedings may have an impact on or delay publication, (for example, an ongoing criminal investigation, inquest or future prosecution), the safeguarding partners should inform the panel and the Secretary of State of the reasons for the delay. Safeguarding partners should also set out for the panel and the Secretary of State the justification for any decision not to publish either the full report or information relating to improvements. Safeguarding partners should have regard to any comments that the panel or the Secretary of State may make in respect of publication.

366. Every effort should also be made, both before the review and while it is in progress, to:

- capture points from the case about improvements needed
- take corrective action and disseminate learning

[209] "Working day" means any day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or bank holiday.

Actions in response to local and national reviews

367. The safeguarding partners should take account of the findings from their own local reviews and from all national reviews, with a view to considering how identified improvements should be implemented locally, including the way in which organisations and agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The safeguarding partners should highlight findings from reviews with relevant parties locally and should regularly audit progress on the implementation of recommended improvements[210]. Improvement should be sustained through regular monitoring and follow up of actions so that the findings from these reviews make a real impact on improving outcomes for children.

Guidance for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel – reviewers

368. The panel must set up a pool of potential reviewers who can undertake national reviews, a list of whom must be publicly available. If they consider that there are no potential reviewers in the pool with availability or suitable experience to undertake the review, they may select a person who is not in the pool. When selecting a reviewer, the panel should consider whether they have any conflict of interest which could restrict their ability, or perceived ability, to identify improvements impartially.

369. For national child safeguarding practice reviews, the panel should follow the same guidance on procedure and supervision as for local child safeguarding practice reviews (see chapter 5, paragraphs 356-359).

The panel – expectations for the final report

370. The panel must ensure that the final report includes:

- a summary of any improvements being recommended to the safeguarding partners and/or others to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- an analysis of any systemic or underlying reasons why actions were taken or not taken in respect of matters covered by the report

371. The panel must publish the report, unless they consider it inappropriate to do so. In such a circumstance they must publish any information about the improvements that

[210] See also Reporting section in chapter 2 (safeguarding partners' report).

should be made following the review that they consider it appropriate to publish. The name of the reviewer should be included.

372. The panel should work with safeguarding partners to identify and manage the impact of the publication on children, family members, practitioners and others closely affected by the case.

373. The panel must ensure that reports or information published are publicly available for at least three years. The panel must send a copy of the full report to the Secretary of State no later than seven working days before the date of publication. Where the panel decides only to publish information relating to the improvements to be made following the review, they must also provide a copy of that information to the Secretary of State within the same timescale. The panel should also send a copy of the report or improvements to the relevant safeguarding partners, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

374. Reports should be completed and published within six months of the date of the decision to initiate a review. Where other proceedings may have an impact on or delay publication, for example, an ongoing criminal investigation, inquest or future prosecution, the panel should advise the Secretary of State of the reasons for the delay. The panel should also set out for the Secretary of State the explanation for any decision not to publish either the full report or information relating to improvements. During the review, the panel should share any points that arise about improvements needed with the safeguarding partners in any local authority areas covered by the review and others as applicable.

375. The panel should send copies of published reports of national and local child safeguarding practice reviews or published information relating to improvements that should be made following those reviews, to Foundations (What Works Centre for Children and Families) and relevant inspectorates, bodies, or individuals as they see fit. Where a local review results in findings which are of national importance, or in recommendations for national government, the panel should consider the potential of those recommendations to improve systems to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and how best to disseminate and embed such learning.

How to notify a serious incident, rapid review, and local child safeguarding practice review

Serious incident notification

All serious child safeguarding incidents must be notified to the panel.

Notifications should be sent within five working days of the local authority becoming aware of the incident.

Notifications are made through the online notification system, which is accessible 24 hours a day.

The rapid review

Rapid reviews should be submitted to the panel within 15 working days of the incident. This is a non-statutory requirement and more details can be found in the panel's practice guidance[211].

Rapid reviews should be submitted to the panel secretariat, at Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk.

Local child safeguarding practice review

Full reports must be sent to the panel and the Secretary of State for Education[212] no later than seven working days before the date of publication.

Final reports, information relating to improvements to be made following a review, and reasons for any delay, should be notified to Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk and Mailbox.CPOD@education.gov.uk

In addition, final reports and information about improvements should also be sent to Ofsted SCR.SIN@ofsted.gov.uk

[211] Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance for safeguarding partners

[212] By sending to Mailbox.CPOD@education.gov.uk

Chapter 6: Child death reviews

376. The death of a child is a devastating loss that profoundly affects all those involved. The process of systematically reviewing the deaths of children is grounded in respect for the rights of both children and their families[213], with the intention of learning what happened and why, and preventing future child deaths.

377. The majority of child deaths in England arise from medical causes. Enquiries should keep an appropriate balance between forensic and medical requirements and supporting the family at a difficult time. This chapter provides guidance to child death review partners on their statutory responsibilities.

378. Child death review partners are local authorities and any ICBs for the local area as set out in the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017[214]. The statutory responsibilities for child death review partners are set out below, and the agency and organisational boundaries should be decided locally as described in paragraph 384 of this chapter.

379. In the immediate aftermath of a child's death, a copy of 'When a child dies – a guide for parents and carers'[215] should be offered to all bereaved families or carers through the child death review process. In addition to supporting families and carers, staff involved in the care of the child should also be considered and offered appropriate support.

[213] United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
[214] Children Act 2004, Section 16Q
[215] When a child dies: a guide for parents and carers

Statutory requirements[216]

When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learnt.

The responsibility for ensuring child death reviews are carried out is held by 'child death review partners', who, in relation to a local authority area in England, are defined as the local authority for that area and any ICBs operating in the local authority area.

Child death review partners must make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area[217] and, as indicated, of any non-resident children who have died in their area. This should be done via a Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).

Child death review partners for two or more local authority areas may combine and agree that their areas be treated as a single area for the purpose of undertaking child death reviews.

Child death review partners must make arrangements for the analysis of information from all deaths reviewed by the National Child Mortality Database (NCMD).

The purpose of a review and/or analysis is to identify any matters relating to the death, or deaths, that are relevant to the welfare of children in the area, or to public health and safety, and to consider whether action should be taken in relation to any matters identified. If child death review partners find action should be taken by a person or organisation, they must inform them. In addition, child death review partners:

- must, at such times as they consider appropriate, prepare, and publish reports on:
    - what they have done as a result of the child death review arrangements in their area
    - how effective the arrangements have been in practice
- may request information from a person or organisation to enable or assist the review and/or analysis process. The person or organisation must comply with the request, and if they do not, the child death review partners may take legal action to seek enforcement
- may make payments directly towards expenditure incurred in connection with arrangements made for child death reviews or analysis of information about deaths reviewed, or by contributing to a fund out of which payments may be made. They may provide staff, goods, services, accommodation, or other resources to any person for purposes connected with the child death review or analysis process

Responsibilities of child death review partners

380. The child death review process covers children[218], regardless of the cause of death[219].

381. In making arrangements to review child deaths, child death review partners should establish a structure and process to review all deaths of children normally resident in their area and, as indicated and agreed between child death review partners, the deaths of children not normally resident in their area but who have died there. Child death review partners should model their child death review structures and processes as laid out in the 'Child Death Review Statutory and Operational Guidance (2018)'[220].

382. Child death review partners should consider the core representation of any panel or structure they set up to conduct reviews, and this would ideally include:

- public health
- the designated[221] doctor for child deaths for the local area
- social services
- police
- the designated doctor or nurse for safeguarding
- primary care (GP or health visitor)
- nursing and/or midwifery
- lay representation
- other professionals that child death review partners consider should be involved

It is for child death review partners to determine what representation they have in any structure reviewing child deaths.

383. Child death review partners should agree locally how the child death review process will be funded in their area.

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[216] The guidance in this chapter is issued under the Children Act 2004 Section 16Q

[217] For the purposes of child death reviews, a local area is the area within the remit of a local authority (referred to in the Children Act 2004 as a "local authority area").

[218] Children Act 2004 Section 65 - a child is defined as a person under 18 years of age

[219] This will include the death of any liveborn baby, where a death certificate has been issued, or where the birth was unattended, but does not include those (of any gestation) who are stillborn where there was medical attendance or planned terminations of pregnancy carried out within the law.

[220] Child Death Review: Statutory and Operational Guidance (England)

[221] Within that part of the health system that supports child safeguarding and protection services, the word "designated" means a dedicated professional with specific roles and responsibilities that are centred on the provision of clinical expertise and strategic advice.

384. The geographical and population “footprint” of child death review partners should be locally agreed but must extend to at least one local authority area. It should take into account networks of NHS care, and agency and organisational boundaries in order to reflect the integrated care and social networks of the local area. These may overlap with more than one local authority area or ICB. They should cover a child population such that they typically review at least 60 child deaths per year. Child death review partners should come together to develop clear plans outlining the administrative and logistical processes for their review arrangements.

385. Child death review partners should ensure that a designated doctor for child deaths is appointed to any multi-agency panel (or structure in place to review deaths). The designated doctor for child deaths should be a senior paediatrician who can take a lead role in the review process. Child death review partners should ensure a process is in place whereby the designated doctor for child deaths is notified of each child death and is sent relevant information.

386. Child death review partners may request that a person or organisation provide information to enable or assist the reviewing or analysing of a child's death. The person or organisation must comply with such a request. If they do not comply, the child death review partners may instigate legal action to enforce.

387. Child death review partners for the local authority area where a child who has died was normally resident are responsible for ensuring the death is reviewed. However, they may also choose to review the death of a child, including a looked after child, that occurred in their local area even if the child in question was not normally resident there. In such circumstances, the designated doctor for child death in each area should discuss and agree who will be responsible for collecting information and reviewing the death, to ensure there is no duplication of review. The review process should seek to involve child death review partners for another local authority area who had an interest in the child or any other person or agencies, as appropriate.

388. Child death review partners should publicise on their website, information on the arrangements for child death reviews in their area. This should include who the accountable officials are (the local authority chief executive, and the accountable officer of the ICB), which local authority and ICB partners are involved, what geographical area is covered and who the designated doctor for child deaths is.

Responsibilities of other organisations and agencies

389. All local organisations or individual practitioners that have had involvement in the case should co-operate, as appropriate, in the child death review process carried out by child death review partners. All local organisations or individual practitioners should also have regard to any guidance on child death reviews issued by the government.

Specific responsibilities of relevant bodies in relation to child deaths

Registrars of Births and Deaths (Section 31 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008): Requirement on registrars of births and deaths to supply child death review partners with the particulars of the death entered in the register in relation to any person who was or may have been under the age of 18 at the time of death. A similar requirement exists where the registrar corrects an entry in the register.

The registrar must also notify child death review partners if they issue a Certificate of No Liability to Register (where a death is not required by law to be registered in England or Wales) where it appears that the deceased was or may have been under the age of 18 at the time of death.

The information must be provided to the appropriate child death review partners (which cover the sub-district in which the register is kept) no later than seven days from the date the death was registered, the date the correction was made or the date the certificate was issued.

Coroners and Justice Act 2009 & Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013: Duty to investigate and hold an inquest. Powers to request a post-mortem and for evidence to be given or produced.

Coroner's duty to notify the child death review partners for the area in which the child died or where the child's body was found within three working days of deciding to investigate a death or commission a post-mortem.

Coroner's duty to share information, including post-mortem reports with the relevant child death review partners.

Responding to the death of a child: the child death review process

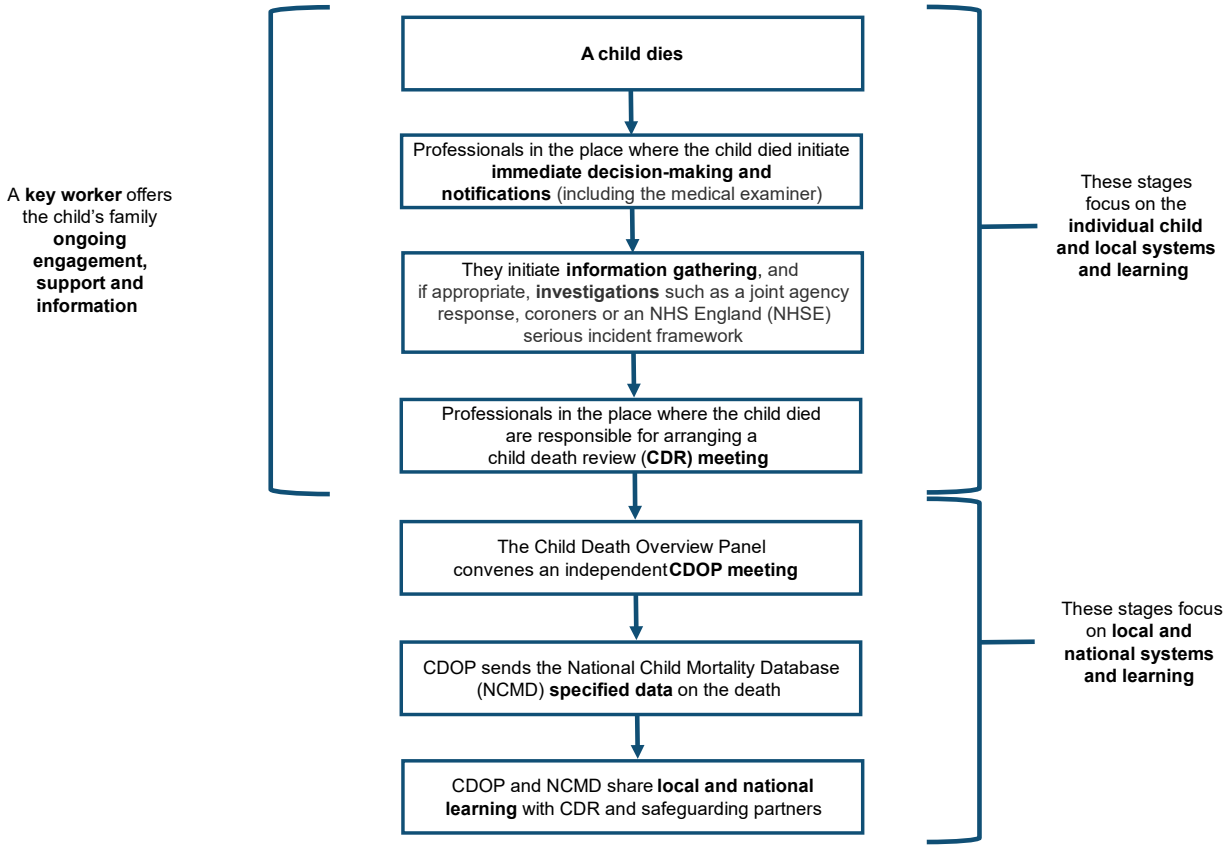


Figure 2: Process to follow when a child dies

390. The steps that precede the child death review partners' independent review commence in the immediate aftermath of a child's death. These include the immediate decisions, notifications and parallel investigations, and the child death review by those directly involved in the care of the child or the investigation after their death, at the child death review meeting. The information gathered throughout this process should be fed into the child death overview panel review.

391. The learning from all child death reviews should be shared with the National Child Mortality Database which may in addition consider information from other reviews in order to identify any trends in or similarities between deaths. Information from the database will be used to inform local or national changes to prevent future deaths.

392. The processes that should be followed by all those involved when responding to, investigating, and reviewing child deaths is set out in the Child Death Review Statutory and Operational guidance[222] on child death reviews issued by the government.

393. All practitioners participating in the child death review process should notify, report, and scrutinise child deaths using the standardised templates[223]. These should be forwarded to the relevant CDOP.

The child death review process

A child dies

394. Practitioners in all agencies should notify the child death review partners, via the local CDOP administrator (or equivalent) of the death of any child of which they become aware by using the child death notification form[224].

Immediate decision-making and notifications, and investigation and information gathering

395. Whenever a child dies, practitioners should work together in responding to that death in a thorough, sensitive, and supportive manner. The aims of this response are to:

- establish, as far as is possible, the cause of the child's death
- identify any modifiable or contributory factors[225]
- provide ongoing support to the family
- learn lessons in order to reduce the risk of future child deaths and promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of other children
- ensure that all statutory obligations are met

396. Where a joint agency response is required, practitioners should follow the process set out in ‘Sudden unexpected death in infancy and childhood: multi-agency guidelines for care and investigation (2016)’[226]. A joint agency response is required if a child’s death:

- is or could be due to external causes
- is sudden and there is no immediately apparent cause (including sudden

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[222] Child Death Review Statutory and Operational guidance
[223] Child death reviews: forms for reporting child deaths
[224] Child death notification form
[225] These are defined as factors that may have contributed to the death of the child and that might, by means of a locally or nationally achievable intervention, be modified to reduce the risk of future deaths
[226] Sudden unexpected death in infancy and childhood: multi-agency guidelines for care and investigation – RCPCH Child Protection Portal

unexpected death in infancy or childhood)

- occurs in custody, or where the child was detained under the Mental Health Act
- occurs where the initial circumstances raise any suspicions that the death may not have been natural
- occurs in the case of a stillbirth where no healthcare professional was in attendance

397. If there is an unexplained death of a child at home or in the community, the child should normally be taken to a hospital emergency department rather than a mortuary. In some cases when a child dies at home or in the community, the police may decide that it is not appropriate to move the child's body immediately, for example, because a forensic examination is needed.

398. In a criminal investigation, the police are responsible for collecting and collating all relevant information pertaining to a child's death. Practitioners should consult the lead police investigator and the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that their enquiries do not prejudice any criminal proceedings.

399. If the results of any investigations suggest evidence of abuse or neglect as a possible cause of death whether at home or in the community, all practitioners should inform relevant safeguarding partners and the panel immediately.

Child death review meeting

400. This is the multi-agency meeting that takes place prior to the CDOP review. At the meeting, all matters relating to an individual child's death are discussed by professionals involved with the case. It should be attended by professionals who were directly involved in the care of that child during their life and in the investigation into their death and should not be limited to medical staff. A draft analysis form[227] of each individual case should be sent after the meeting to the local CDOP to inform their review.

Review of death by CDOP

401. The review by CDOP is intended to be the final, independent scrutiny of a child's death by professionals with no responsibility for the child during their life. The information gathered using all the standardised templates may help CDOP to identify modifiable factors that could be altered to prevent future deaths.

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[227] Child death reviews: forms for reporting child deaths

402. In addition to the statutory responsibilities set out above, the review should also provide data to the National Child Mortality Database.

403. Child death review partners for a local authority area in England must prepare and publish a report as set out in the statutory responsibilities above[228] [229]. They may therefore wish to ask their CDOP to produce an annual report on local patterns and trends in child deaths, any lessons learnt and actions taken, and the effectiveness of the wider child death review process in order to assist child death review partners to prepare their report.

[228] Children Act 2004 Section 16M
[229] Child Death Review: Statutory and Operational Guidance (England)

Appendix A: Glossary

Abuse - A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear, or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or extra-familial contexts by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Child criminal exploitation - As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy[230], published by the Home Office, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child death review partners - A child death review partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as (a) the local authority, and (b) any integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area. The 2 partners must make arrangements for the review of each death of a child normally resident in the area and may also, if they consider it appropriate, make arrangements for the review of a death in their area of a child not normally resident there. They must also make arrangements for the analysis of information about deaths reviewed under this section. The purposes of a review or analysis are (a) to identify any matters relating to the death or deaths that are relevant to the welfare of children in the area or to public health and safety, and (b) to consider whether it would be appropriate for anyone to take action in relation to any matters identified.

Child protection - Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Child sexual exploitation - Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a)

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[230] Serious Violence Strategy

in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Children - Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

Controlling or coercive behaviour - Also known as coercive control, controlling or coercive behaviour is a form of domestic abuse. In 2015, the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour was introduced under Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act as a criminal offence. Controlling or coercive behaviour is included in the definition of domestic abuse in section 1(3)(c) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Controlling or coercive behaviour is a pattern of abuse (on two or more occasions) that involves multiple behaviours and tactics used by a perpetrator to (but not limited to) hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate, and dominate the victim. It is an intentional pattern of behaviour used to exert power, control, or coercion over another person. Controlling or coercive behaviour is often committed in conjunction with other forms of abuse and is often part of a wider pattern of abuse, including violent, sexual, or economic abuse. Children can be used to control or coerce the victim, for example, by frustrating child contact and/or child arrangements, telling the children to call the victim derogatory names or to hit the victim, or by threatening to abduct the children.

This pattern of abuse causes fear, serious alarm and/or distress which can lead to a substantial adverse effect on a victim's day-to-day life. This can have a significant impact on children and young people[231].

Section 68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on 5 April 2023 and removed the 'living together' requirement for the controlling or coercive behaviour offence, which means that the offence applies to partners, ex-partners or family members, regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator live together. More information about controlling or coercive behaviour, including the impact on children can be found in the Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance[232] and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance[233].

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[231] As set out in the Serious Crime Act 2015 Section 76, a child cannot be considered a victim of coercive or controlling behaviour if (see sub-section 3) "A" has parental responsibility for "B" (the child) and if "B" is under the age of 16. To note, children aged 16 to 17 can be considered victims of coercive or controlling behaviour in their own personal relationships.

[232] Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance

[233] Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance

County lines - As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy[234] published by the Home Office, a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK; no specified distance of travel is required. For further information see 'Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines' guidance[235].

Domestic abuse - The Domestic Abuse Act 2021[236] introduced the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse (section 1 of the Act). The statutory definition is clear that domestic abuse may be a single incident or a course of conduct which can encompass a wide range of abusive behaviours, including a) physical or sexual abuse; b) violent or threatening behaviour; c) controlling or coercive behaviour; d) economic abuse; and e) psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

Under the statutory definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be "personally connected" (as defined in section 2 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021). The definition ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members.

All children can experience and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members, including where those being abusive do not live with the child. Experiencing domestic abuse can have a significant impact on children. Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children (0 to 18), as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse.

Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as teenage relationship abuse. Depending on the age of the young people, this may not be recognised in law under the statutory definition of domestic abuse (if one or both parties are under 16). However, as with any child under 18, where there are concerns about safety or welfare, child safeguarding procedures should be followed and both young victims and young perpetrators should be offered support.

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[234] Serious Violence Strategy
[235] Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance (Home Office)
[236] Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The ‘Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance’[237] provides further advice for frontline professionals who have responsibility for safeguarding and supporting victims of domestic abuse, including children. This guidance provides further information about the different forms of domestic abuse (including teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse) and the impact of domestic abuse on children.

Education, health and care (EHC) plan - An education, health and care (EHC) plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has SEN. See the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 (2015).

Emotional abuse - The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making fun of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Extra-familial harm - Children may be at risk of or experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and exploitation in contexts outside their families (see glossary definition of extra-familial contexts).

While there is no legal definition for the term extra-familial harm, it is widely used to describe different forms of harm that occur outside the home.

Children can be vulnerable to multiple forms of extra-familial harm from both adults and/or other children. Examples of extra-familial harm may include (but are not limited to): criminal exploitation (such as county lines and financial exploitation), serious violence, modern slavery and trafficking, online harm, sexual exploitation, child-on-child (non-familial) sexual abuse and other forms of harmful sexual behaviour displayed by children towards their peers, abuse, and/or coercive control, children may experience in their own intimate relationships (sometimes called teenage relationship abuse), and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation.

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[237] Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance

Extra-familial contexts - Extra-familial contexts include a range of environments outside the family home in which harm can occur. These can include peer groups, school, and community/public spaces, including known places in the community where there are concerns about risks to children (for example, parks, housing estates, shopping centres, takeaway restaurants, or transport hubs), as well as online, including social media or gaming platforms.

Extremism - Extremism is defined in the Prevent strategy as the vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces.

Family group decision making - this is the umbrella term for family-led decision-making forums, where a family network has all the resources, adequate preparation, relevant information, a safe and appropriate environment, and private family time to make a plan to response to concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. At pre-proceedings stage, successful family group decision-making also includes having an independent coordinator. Family group decision-making can take different forms. The Department for Education does not prescribe a specific model, but a process which follows the steps set out above.

Family group conference - this is one model of family group decision-making.

Family network - A group of people close to a child made up of relatives and non-related connected people (where connected people has the same definition used in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010[238] in addition to close family friends who have a connection with the child)

A family network could include step-parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, godparents, or close family friends.

Financial exploitation - Financial exploitation can take many forms. In this context, we use the term to describe exploitation which takes place for the purpose of money laundering. This is when criminals target children and adults and take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive them into facilitating the movement of illicit funds. This can include physical cash and/or payments through financial products, such as bank and cryptocurrency accounts.

Kinship care - Kinship care is any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term.

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[238] The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 24

The following are all types of kinship care arrangements however this list is not exhaustive:

a. Informal kinship care arrangements (not approved foster care) including:
   i. A private family arrangement in which a close family member who does not hold parental responsibility, raises the child and
      - the local authority has had no major role in making the arrangement for the child
      - where a Family Court has not made an order in respect to the care of the child.
   ii. Where a child under the age of 16 is being provided with accommodation for less than 28 days by an individual in their own home who is not a close relative
   iii. Where a 16 or 17 year old is being provided with accommodation by an individual who is not a close relative in their own home
b. A private fostering arrangement in which someone who is not a close relative[239] of the child looks after the child for 28 days or more[240] (as per section 66(1)(a) and (b) of the Children Act 1989)[241]
c. Where a 'lives with' child arrangements order[242] has been granted in respect of the child, in favour of someone who is a friend or family member but is not the child's parent.
d. Where a special guardianship order has been granted appointing a friend or family member as the child's special guardian.
e. Where a child is a 'looked after child' by virtue of either an interim or final care order or being accommodated by the local authority (usually under section 20 of the Children Act 1989) and each of the following apply (this may be described as 'kinship foster care' or 'family and friends foster care'):
   i. The child is being cared for by a friend or family member who is not their parent, and
   ii. The friend or family member is approved as a local authority foster carer on a temporary basis or following full assessment.

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[239] In relation to private fostering, "relative" has the meaning given in section 105 of the Children Act 1989. It includes only the following: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership), and stepparent (a married stepparent, including a civil partner).

[240] For the purposes of this kinship definition, the term private fostering arrangement includes only individuals accommodating a child. It does not apply to organisations or bodies

[241] 16- and 17-year olds who are disabled will be deemed to be in a private fostering arrangement.

[242] Pursuant to section 8 of the Children Act 1989

f. Where an adoption order has been granted in respect of the child and, prior to the making of the order, the adopter was a friend or family member.

Local authority designated officer (LADO) - County level and unitary local authorities should ensure that allegations against people who work with children are not dealt with in isolation. Any action necessary to address corresponding welfare concerns in relation to the child or children involved should be taken without delay and in a coordinated manner. Local authorities should, in addition, have designated a particular officer, or team of officers (either as part of multi-agency arrangements or otherwise), to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children. Any such officer, or team of officers, should be sufficiently qualified and experienced to be able to fulfil this role effectively, for example, qualified social workers. Any new appointments to such a role, other than current or former designated officers moving between local authorities, should be qualified social workers. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that any allegations about those who work with children are passed to the designated officer, or team of officers, without delay.

Maltreatment - All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Neglect - The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- provide suitable education

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

Parent carer - A person aged 18 or over who provides or intends to provide care for a disabled child for whom the person has parental responsibility

Physical abuse - A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Relative - The Children Act 1989 (section 105)[243] defines a relative as in relation to a child, meaning a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent. This guidance uses this definition and includes cousins when referring to relatives.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children - Defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment, whether the risk of harm comes from within the child's family and/or outside (from the wider community), including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Safeguarding partners - A safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as: (a) the local authority, (b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area, and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area. The three safeguarding partners should agree on ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services, act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others, and implement local and national learning, including from serious child safeguarding incidents. To fulfil this role, the 3 safeguarding partners must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies as well as arrangements for conducting local reviews.

Serious violence - Serious violence covers specific types of crime, such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing. It also includes crime threats faced in some areas of the country such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon.

For the purposes of the Serious Violence Duty, as per section 13 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, Serious Violence in the local area is violence that is serious in that area, taking account of: the maximum penalty which could be imposed for the offence (if any) involved in the violence, the impact of the violence on any victim, the prevalence of the violence in the area and the impact of the violence on the community in the area.

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[243] Children Act 1989 Section 105

Sexual abuse - Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts, such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Young carer - A young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except generally where that care is provided for payment, pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work). Young adult carers are aged 16 to 25 and may have different support needs as they transition to adulthood.

Appendix B: Further sources of information

Guidance issued by the Department for Education

- Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery
- Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners
- Children Act 1989: court orders and pre-proceedings
- Children Act 1989 guidance and regulation volume 2: care planning, placement, and case review
- Children Act 1989: private fostering
- Keeping children safe in education: for schools and colleges
- Listening to and involving children and young people
- Managing risk of radicalisation in your education setting
- Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation: procedural information
- Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation
- National action plan to tackle child abuse linked to faith or belief
- National minimum standards for private fostering
- Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015
- Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of serious case reviews, 2011 to 2014
- Preventing and tackling bullying
- Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation
- Safeguarding and social care for children
- Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked practice guidance
- Safeguarding strategy: unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children
- Social work post-qualifying standards: Knowledge and skills statements
- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (EYFS)
- Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care
- Statutory visits to children with special educational needs and disabilities or health conditions in long-term residential settings

- The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018
- The Prevent duty: support for those working in education with safeguarding responsibilities
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: how legislation underpins implementation in England
- Use of reasonable force in schools
- Visiting children in residential special schools and colleges statutory guidance
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners

Guidance issued by other government departments and agencies

- Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures Ministry of Justice
- Apply for a forced marriage protection order Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Asset plus: assessment and planning in the youth justice system Youth Justice Board
- Carers strategy: second national action plan 2014-2016 Department of Health and Social Care
- Channel and Prevent Multi-Agency Panel guidance: protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism Home Office
- Child exploitation disruption toolkit Home Office
- Commissioning framework for child sexual abuse support Home Office
- Counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) Home Office
- County lines offending: the Crown Prosecution Service legal guidance Crown Prosecution Service
- Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance framework Home Office
- Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines Home Office
- Cyber aware National Cyber Security Centre
- DBS barring referral guidance Disclosure and Barring Service
- Developing local substance misuse safeguarding protocols Public Health England
- Disclosure and Barring Service

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance Home Office
- Every child matters: statutory guidance (arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children UK Visas and Immigration
- Female genital mutilation protection orders: factsheet Home Office
- Female genital mutilation resource pack Home Office
- Forced marriage Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and Home Office
- Forced marriage protection orders (application) HM Courts and Tribunals Service
- Forced marriage resource pack Home Office
- Forced marriage: statutory guidance for heads of safeguarding organisations, and non-statutory guidance for front-line professionals Home Office, and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Guidance for health professionals on domestic violence Department of Health and Social Care
- Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- Mental Health Act 1983: Code of Practice Department of Health and Social Care
- Missing children and adults: a cross-government strategy Home Office
- Modern Slavery Act: statutory guidance Home Office
- Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA): Guidance Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service
- National service framework: children, young people, and maternity services Department of Health and Social Care
- Practice direction 12A – care, supervision, and other part 4 proceedings: guide to case Management Ministry of Justice
- Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales Home Office
- Prison, probation, and rehabilitation: public protection manual HM Prison and Probation Service
- Probation Service Serious further offence procedures policy framework Ministry of Justice
- Protocol for liaison and information exchange when criminal proceedings coincide with child safeguarding practice reviews in England Crown Prosecution Service
- Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the carers strategy 2010 Department of Health and Social Care

- Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in the NHS: Safeguarding accountability and assurance framework NHS England
- Serious and organised crime toolkit: an interactive toolkit for practitioners working with young people Home Office
- Statutory guidance for integrated care boards on executive lead roles NHS England
- Supporting children to stay safe online National Crime Agency/CEOP Education
- Understanding the female genital mutilation enhanced dataset: updated guidance and clarification to support implementation Department of Health and Social Care
- Violence against women and girls Home Office

Guidance issued by external organisations

- Child maltreatment: when to suspect maltreatment in under 18s NICE
- Child protection and the dental team British Dental Association
- Child Protection Companion Royal college of Paediatrics and Child Health
- Children's Commissioner
- Children's rights and the law guide Children's Rights Alliance for England
- Communicating with children: a guide for those working with children who have or may have been sexually abused Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- Cyberbullying: understand, prevent, respond – guidance for schools Childnet International
- Guide to UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) Information Commissioner's Office
- Helping education settings identify and respond to concerns Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- How we protect children's rights Unicef
- Independent Scrutiny and Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme
- Inter-parental relationships Early Intervention Foundation
- Multi-agency practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm Non-statutory guidance for local areas, developed by the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme, funded by the Department for Education and supported by the Home Office, the Department for Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Justice

- NICE guideline on child abuse and neglect NICE
- Police response to concern for a child College of Policing
- Pre-proceedings and family justice hub Research in Practice and Essex County Council
- Prison and Probation Ombudsman's fatal incidents reports
- Private fostering CoramBAAF
- Protecting children and young people: doctors' responsibilities General Medical Council
- Protective measures and civil orders College of Policing
- Safeguarding children: toolkit for general practice Royal College of General Practitioners
- Safer young lives research centre University of Bedfordshire
- Signs and Indicators: a template for identifying and recording signs of child sexual abuse Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- Standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport NSPCC
- Sudden unexpected death in infancy and childhood: multi-agency guidelines for care and investigation Royal College of Pathologists
- Supporting parents and carers: a guide for those working with families affected by child sexual abuse Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- UK Safer Internet Centre: Online safety advice and resources UK Safer Internet Centre
- Whistleblowing advice line NSPCC
- Working Together with Parents Network: update of the DoH/DfES good practice guidance on working with parents with a learning disability (2007) University of Bristol

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Appendix 3
PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements	
Directorate: Children and Young People's Services	**Service area: Safeguarding**
Lead person: Tony Morrissey	**Contact number:** 01709 289898
Is this a: [x] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, requires that the three safeguarding partners (Local Authorities, Integrated Care Board and Chief Officers of Police), make arrangements to work in partnership together along with relevant agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area. The safeguarding partners in Rotherham are: • NHS South Yorkshire (Rotherham) Integrated Care Board (ICB) • Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) • South Yorkshire Police (SYP)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), is the statutory guidance which outlines what the responsibilities of safeguarding partners are, delivered through the new safeguarding arrangements. This includes a shared accountability between the three key partners and the requirement to have independent scrutiny. The MASA document has been updated in 2024 to reflect the new language and changes adopted in Working Together 2023.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? *(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)*	x	
Could the proposal affect service users? *(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)*	x	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? *(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)*		x
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? *(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)*		x
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? *(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)*	x	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? *(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)*	x	

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6.**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4.**

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity
If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made**.** Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation. Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).
• **How have you considered equality and diversity?** There are approximately 4,700 children open to children's service, from Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection, looked after children and leaving care (as of 31st March 2024). Of the children open to the Evolve service at the end of March 2024, 22% are from BME backgrounds, 78% white British and 12% not recorded. 35% are female and 65% male. To support the update of the MASA consultation and engagement with Executive partners was undertaken. • It has been presented to the RSCP Executive Group • It has been presented to the Council SLT The MASA is a high level document setting out the key responsibilities of statutory partners as laid out in Working Together 2023. Whilst it should be sensitive and consistent with the needs of individuals and communities within Rotherham. It is reflective of national guidance and is supported by RSCP multi agency procedures which deal with children in specific circumstances.
• **Key findings** The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This means: • There is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm, including analysis of the voice of the child and family and insights from data. • Ensuring that organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately,

effectively holding one another to account so that when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child
- Senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and they promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice

- **Actions**

An Equality Impact Analysis has been completed and is also an appendix to the Cabinet report.
The needs of service users are considered within the Working Together guidance which is supplied alongside this appendix.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	Completed
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	July 2024
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Tony Morrissey, Head of Service, Safeguarding, Quality and Learning

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Nicola Curley	Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service	

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	September 2024
Report title and date	Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements 2024
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	30/09/2024

Appendix 4
PART B – Equality Analysis Form

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) 2024	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 10 July 2024	
Directorate: **CYPS**	**Service area:** **Safeguarding**
Lead Manager: **Tony Morrissey**	**Contact number:** 01709 289898
Is this a: [x] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance		
Name	**Organisation**	**Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)**
Lee Durrant	LA CYPS	Service and business Manager RSCP
Nicola Curley	LA CYPS	Strategic Director CYPS
Helen Sweaton	LA CYPS	Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Quality and Performance

3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)
This may include a group/s identified by a protected characteristic, other groups or stakeholder/s e.g., service users, employees, partners, members, suppliers etc.)

The MASA is a high level document setting out the key responsibilities of statutory partners as laid out in Working Together 2023. Whilst it should be sensitive and consistent with the needs of individuals and communities within Rotherham. It is reflective of national guidance and is supported by RSCP multi agency procedures which deal with children in specific circumstances.

Furthermore, as part of the Section 11 challenge panel in 2022, equality and diversity was reported on, and evidence provided. This panel will complete similar activity in September 2024.

What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)

There is quality information that is already used to shape priorities and deliver existing services across the Local Authority, health and education sectors.

Each delivery group within the RSCP has a detailed work plan which sits alongside the relevant strategy (CE strategy due to cabinet September 2024 and Safeguarding In Education Strategy in development) and includes the capturing of data, including diversity, and feedback from different children and groups. These views will continue to be used to monitor, scrutinise and inform the plan).

The data and analysis of this information is overseen by the Practice, Performance and Learning Delivery group reporting to Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Executive.

Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?

Not that we are currently aware of, we have rich cross organisational data and the delivery group scorecards in development (existing for CEDG) will add value to existing data sets and analysis already held in Rotherham.

What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics? The RSCP Executive provides oversight of the MASA implementation and impact. This is driven by Working Together 2023 statutory guidance which was subject to national consultation in summer 2023. The RSCP also undertake audits in respect to practice based on thematic areas linked to its priorities. This provides evidence of the impact of the MASA and multi-agency practice. Existing data and well-established methodology across the children's workforce will continue to be used to monitor impact on those groups with protected characteristics. The RSCP ongoing training includes working with vulnerable children and young people and those with protected characteristics.	
Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)	Feedback and consultation are part of our business, through the activities described in this document. We will undertake further consultation in addition as required to ensure meaningful engagement.
Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s)consulted and key findings)	To support the update of the MASA consultation and engagement with Executive partners was undertaken. • It has been presented to the RSCP Executive Group • It has been presented to the Council SLT Consultation regarding Working Together has taken place at RSCP Wider Partnership Events in May 2024 and at Designated safeguarding Lead Events in June 2024.

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)
How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance) The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This means: • There is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally **across all levels of need** and all types of harm, including analysis of the voice of the child and family and insights from data.

The MASA guides Safeguarding partnerships to ensure that: • The voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice • Information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children
Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups? No barriers identified, the MASA focuses on ensuring agencies work together and share information in order to safeguard all children and young people. Through intelligence reporting systems we can track and identify emerging themes.
Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers? Yes. The MASA is derived from statutory national guidance which provides clarity and direction to safeguarding partners across the children's workforce.
What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another) The MASA is relevant to all children and young people and does not differentiate between different groups.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance

Title of analysis: Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) 2024
Directorate and service area: CYPS
Lead Manager: Tony Morrissey
Summary of findings:
The Equality Impact Analysis assures that there is no change to existing provision for children and families in Rotherham and is supported by and compliant with national statutory guidance.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Complete and submit MASA	A, D, S, RE, RoB, PM C, O Youth	07/24
Cabinet Paper	As above	07/24

***A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups**

6. Governance, ownership and approval
Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.

Name	Job title	Date
Tony Morrissey	Head of Service Safeguarding	July 2024
Nicola Curley	Director of Children's Services	July 2024
Cllr Cusworth	Lead Member Children's Services	July 2024

7. Publishing

The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this Equality Analysis relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date Equality Analysis completed	September 2024
Report title and date	MASA 2024
Date report sent for publication	
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			
Emissions from transport?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	N/A	No impact on emissions.		.	
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			
Emissions from construction and/or development?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	N/A	Not planned.			

Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:

N/A

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

The Multi Agency Safeguarding arrangements (MASA) 2024 is a high level document setting out the key responsibilities of statutory partners as laid out in Working Together 2023. Implementation of the MASA is overseen by the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) Executive. These arrangements have no impact on emissions.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Tony Morrissey, Head of Service, Safeguarding, Quality and Learning.
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	N/A
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	N/A
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	Tracking Reference: CIA 317 Arthur King, Principal Climate Change Officer

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 18 November 2024

Report Title
September 2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
Judith Badger, Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services

Report Author(s)
Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services
01709 254518 or rob.mahon@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary
The report sets out the financial position as at the end of September 2024 and forecast for the remainder of the financial year, based on actual costs and income for the first half of 2024/25. Financial performance is a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance framework and is essential to achievement of the objectives within the Council's policy agenda. To that end, this is the third financial monitoring report of a series of reports for the current financial year which will continue to be brought forward to Cabinet on a regular basis.

As at September 2024, the Council currently estimates an overspend of £5.3m for the financial year 2024/25. This is largely due to demand led pressures on children's residential placements, adults social care packages, home to school transport and the expected impact of the Local Government Pay Award. In addition, the Council is still impacted by the inflationary pressures in the economy. Even though inflation has fallen to 1.7%, the Council's base costs have significantly increased across the recent high inflation period by well in excess of 20%. Increased costs across this period are also being felt by the social care market in particular, leading to market prices increasing at above inflation levels and placing further pressures on the Council's Budget.

Whilst the Directorate overspend, which stands at £16.2m, is concerning, elements of this overspend were forecast and two key Budget contingencies were created as part of setting the Council's Budget and MTFS for 2024/25. The Council set a Social Care Contingency of £3.4m and a Corporate Budget Provision of £3.5m to support anticipated pressures across Social Care and Home to School Transport, whilst

detailed review work of these services is undertaken and operational improvements are delivered to reduce cost pressures and create cost avoidance.

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy continues to perform well with the Council's approach to borrowing adapted to minimise the level of borrowing and borrow short term to ultimately minimise interest costs. It is estimated that this should see the Council generate savings of at least £4m for 2024/25, though again market conditions are out of the Council's control.

As a result of these corporate provisions and savings, an underspend of £10.9m is forecast within Central Services bringing the Councils net overspend down to £5.3m. Although the £16.2m Directorate overspend is significantly mitigated, the residual pressure will need to be addressed in year by the Council to prevent further use of reserves. As such Directorates have been required to develop in year budget recovery plans to identify actions and opportunities to reduce the current overspend position. This work is underway and some savings have been factored into the current position.

There remains funding uncertainty for the local government sector beyond 2024/25 as the Local Government financial settlement was only a one-year allocation and the national Government elections created further uncertainty. The new Government have indicated that they will provide a further one year settlement for 2025/26 with the aim of bringing in 3 year financial settlements thereafter. Indications on what that one-year settlement might look like are expected in the October 30th Budget announcement, however, it won't be specific until the provisional financial settlement in late December 2024.

The challenges faced by the Council are mirrored across the UK as Councils continue to face significant challenges regarding the funding of social care and meeting the costs of rising demand.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £5.3m.

2. Note that actions will continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it is possible that the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2024/25 financial position.

3. Note the updated position of the Capital Programme, including proposed capital programme variations to expenditure profiles and funding.

4. Approve the adoption of the Department for Education's procedure to help local authorities financially assess Special Guardians as part of the process for setting up Special Guardianship Orders.

5. Approve the proposed debt write off detailed at 2.44

List of Appendices Included
Appendix 1 Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers
Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 Report to Council on 28th February 2024
Finance Update 2023/24 to Cabinet on 10th June 2024
May Budget Monitoring Report 2024/25 to Cabinet on 29th July 2024
September Budget Monitoring Report 2024/25 to Cabinet on 16th September 2024

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
No

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

September Financial Monitoring 2024/25

1. Background

1.1 As part of its performance and control framework the Council is required to produce regular and timely reports for the Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet to keep them informed of financial performance so that, where necessary, actions can be agreed and implemented to bring expenditure in line with the approved budget for the financial year.

1.2 Delivery of the Council's Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital Programme within the parameters agreed by Council is essential if the Council's objectives are to be achieved. Financial performance is a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance framework.

1.3 This report is the third in a series of financial monitoring reports to Cabinet for 2024/25, setting out the projected year end revenue budget financial position in light of actual costs and income for the first half of the financial year.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Table 1 below shows, by directorate, the summary forecast revenue outturn position.

Table 1: Forecast Revenue Outturn 2024/25 as at September 2024

Directorate	**Budget 2024/25**	**Forecast Outturn 2024/25**	**Forecast Variance over/under (-)**
	£m	**£m**	**£m**
Children and Young People's Services	69.3	74.9	5.6
Adult Care, Housing & Public Health	130.9	136.5	5.6
Regeneration and Environment Services	45.1	50.2	5.1
Finance and Customer Services	34.0	34.0	0.0
Assistant Chief Executive	7.7	7.6	-0.1
Central Services	39.0	28.1	-10.9
Directorate Forecast Outturn	**326.0**	**331.3**	**5.3**
Dedicated Schools Grant			1.0
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)			-1.7

As at September 2024, the Council currently estimates a directorate overspend of £16.2m for the financial year 2024/25.

2.2 The Council's overspend position at this point is largely due to the following overall issues:

- Placement pressures within Children and Young People's Services (£5.3m) and Adults Social Care (£6.2m).
- Home to School Transport pressures within Regeneration and Environment (£3.3m) and Children and Young People's Services (£1.1m).
- Provider inflation impacting Children and Young People's Services. Fostering allowances and skills payments that have been uplifted based on the national minimum allowance and the estimated impact that these uplifts may have on provider payments for Independent Fostering Agencies and external residential placements.
- Increased costs of homelessness due to increased demand.
- Pressure across waste management on staffing, vehicle costs, disposal costs and related income.
- Impact of the Local Government Association (LGA) Pay Award. The Council's current forecast assumes an increase in pay award based on the LGA pay offer above that assumed in the Budget.

2.3 Whilst the Directorate overspend is concerning, elements of this overspend were forecast and two key Budget contingencies were created as part of setting the Council's Budget and MTFS for 2024/25. The Council set a Social Care Contingency of £3.4m and a Corporate Budget Provision of £3.5m to support anticipated pressures across Social Care and Home to School Transport. In addition, the Council's Treasury Management Strategy continues to generate savings to support the Council's budget, £4m estimated for 2024/25. As a result of these corporate provisions and savings, an underspend of £10.9m is forecast within Central Services bringing the Councils net overspend down to £5.3m.

2.4 Although inflation has fallen considerably since its peak in 2023/24, the impact has been an increase in the base cost of services that remains high, and it is this cost on which future inflation is applied. As such, the Council will continue to face financial pressures that will need to be managed and mitigated through the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's reserves.

2.5 Given the current forecast overspend, Directorates have been required to develop in year budget recovery plans to identify actions and opportunities to reduce costs and create cost avoidance moving forwards to mitigate the pressures faced. This work is underway and some savings have already been factored into the current position. The overall position has improved from a £6.1m overspend forecast in July, to £5.3m, the new position also includes further costs of £0.8m for Home to School Transport following the September 2024 intake. The forecast position will continue to be monitored closely and even with mitigations it is likely that the Council will need to call on reserves to achieve a balanced outturn. To support this, deep dive budget review sessions have taken place across the key pressure areas identified at 2.2 of this report.

2.6 The Council will continue to ensure that savings plans are delivered as quickly as possible to mitigate any further impact on future years Medium Term Financial Planning. The Council has shown in recent years an ability to pull back significant overspends in year, for example the Council's reserve balances at the end of

2024/25 are projected to be significantly more than they were when setting the 2023/24 budget. Though the position is of course challenging in the current financial climate.

2.7 The Council's Budget and Council Tax report 2024/25 included the delivery of £9.904m savings, to be delivered across the Directorates. At present, £4.013m of delivery has been secured. The biggest challenges at present on delivery relate to CYPS Placements, which is forecast as a significant cost pressure again in 2024/25 indicating that the Council hasn't fully delivered the savings programme.

The table below shows the total amount of all savings to be delivered during 2024/25, and the amount that has been delivered to date.

Table 2: Delivery of Agreed Savings

Directorate	2024/25 Saving to be delivered	Secured as at 30th September 2024	Still to be delivered
Finance and Customer Services	238	238	0
Assistant Chief Executive	407	407	0
Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	1,998	1,434	564
Children's and Young Peoples Services	5,850	1,059	4,791
Regeneration and Environment	1,411	875	536
Total	**9,904**	**4,013**	**5,891**

2.8 The following sections provide further information regarding the Council's forecast outturn of £5.3m, the key reasons for forecast under or overspends within directorates and the progress of savings delivery.

Children and Young People Services Directorate (£5.6m) forecast overspend)

2.9 Children & Young People Services has a forecast budget pressure of £5.6m at the end of September 2024 primarily driven by pressures in Children's Social Care and Education. In the main the overall pressure is due to increasing demands on children in care placements and home to school transport.

2.10 The September forecast position includes the impact of £1.4m in-year budget recovery actions agreed by CYPS management to mitigate cost pressures in the year. The recovery plan actions that are reflected in the forecast position include delay in recruitment, limits and caps on discretionary spend and maximising or redirecting the use of grant funding (where there is scope / flexibility to do so).

The following section summarises the key budget variances across the CYPS directorate for the year.

2.11 Children in care (CiC) placement is currently forecasting an overspend of £5.3m. Actual performance against the CiC placement plan and targets has fallen short in the year to date. In addition, the position has been exacerbated by a couple of high-cost placements made in the year.

2.12 The overall children in care population number is 503 for September (504 in August). The number of external residential placements in September (43) is higher than budget profile (37), due to actual step-downs to date being less than planned and increased placements from fostering breakdowns. This issue is the key driver of the overall overspend as these placements are the most expensive. The number of children placed in-house foster care placements to date (103) is significantly lower than budget profile (131) and a contributory factor to the increased cost pressure for the year. Work is progressing to accelerate the in-house residential programme (to open more in house children's homes this year), to refocus / intensify efforts to achieve the planned number of step-downs for the year and to source more dispersed properties and accommodation options for 16+ and 18+ care leavers cohorts. These actions should help alleviate the placement cost pressures over the medium term.

2.13 The Leaving Care service is forecasting an overspend of £0.1m due to increased leaving care allowances and insufficient Government funding to cover the cost of supporting the rising number of 18+ UASC cohort.

2.14 A forecast overspend of £1.1m is currently anticipated against the CYPS home to school transport budget, which is consistent with the position previously reported. The pressure reflects demands on transporting children in care (£0.3m) and several Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) learners (£0.8m) to their school of choice. Work is ongoing in CYPS to embed the review of transport as part of care planning, to ensure that children's journeys are appropriate and cost effective.

2.15 A net underspend of £0.9m is currently forecast across a few service areas within the directorate, in Early Help, Commissioning, Performance & Quality and Safeguarding. It relates to the impact of the budget recovery actions being implemented across the directorate (e.g. redirection of grant funding, reduced spending, recruitment delays, etc), although this has been offset by staffing pressures in children social care and Inclusion services.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

2.16 The following outlines the forecast position on the delegated and central Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budgets. A surplus budget balance of £0.9m is currently forecast for all 25 maintained schools in Rotherham for 2024/25 based on submitted budget plans. This is a reduction of £1.4m compared to the 2023/24 outturn schools' budget position and reflects increased cost pressures schools are facing in the current year. There are 3 schools with forecast budget deficits for 2024/25 totalling £149k. A budget recovery plan has been agreed with these schools to bring the budget back into a surplus position within an agreed period.

2.17 A cost pressure of £1.9m is currently forecast for central DSG budgets and relates to the SEND / High Needs budget. This is an increase in the position previously reported; and it represents an increase of £0.7m compared to the deficit position agreed in the Safety Valve agreement. The increased deficit reflects rising pressures in the SEND system, namely; inflationary costs; increase in EHCP pupils in mainstream schools and specialist provision; and continuing placements with independent specialist settings outside the Borough. Work is ongoing through the SEND sufficiency programme to create more local SEND places and provision aimed at reducing out of authority specialist placements.

2.18 The latest DSG reserve account (inclusive of the safety valve funding support payments from DfE) shows an overall forecast deficit of £2.1m in 2024/25 and £1.2m in 2025/26 (final year of the Safety Valve programme). The forecast deficit in 2025/26 presents a financial risk to the Council, as the statutory override protection of DSG deficits is to be removed from the end of 2025. Mitigating options are currently being explored to alleviate the demand and financial challenges in the SEND and high needs budget and therefore the deficit in 2025/26.

Adult Care, Housing and Public Health (£5.6m forecast overspend)

2.19 The overall directorate forecast is an overspend of £5.6m, made up of pressures in Adult Social Care (£5.5m) and homelessness (£0.9m), offset by underspends from management actions to reduce the pressure and Public Health.

2.20 The cost of care packages is forecast to be £6.2m overspent. The two main areas of pressure are older people and mental health support, due to increased numbers of people in older people's residential and nursing care, homecare and in mental health provision. The biggest increase has been in domiciliary care where numbers of clients has increased by 10% in the last year and almost 20% since 2022. The forecast assumes all current placements remain for the rest of the year although they may reduce. Overall movements in numbers will be closely monitored as the year progresses, additional income from Continuing Healthcare (CHC) has offset some of these costs. A high number of vacancies across the Directorate has led to forecast underspend of £700k on staffing budgets.

2.21 A focus on preventative enablement work will look at reducing the numbers of people who go on to need long term support as part of a full review of services. A series of recovery plans that aim to help reduce the cost pressures across the Directorate are being developed, more detailed work is required to assess the viability of these options, the pace at which they could be implemented and the impact they might have. These include maximising the capacity of services ensuring best value provision of care.

2.22 Neighbourhood Services (Housing) is forecast to underspend by £0.1m. Homelessness is expected to overspend by £0.9m after accounting for grant income. This is a reduction since July as numbers have come down and the price per room has also reduced. At the end of September 2024 there were 39 households in hotels, down from a high of 87 in April and 74 in May. Work is on-going to identify and source alternative temporary accommodation and 11 new properties are due to come on-line in the autumn. Furnished homes income has exceeded budget by a forecast £0.7m which is offsetting the costs of hotels.

2.23 Public Health is forecast to underspend by £0.2m caused by slippage on investments.

Regeneration and Environment Directorate (£5.1m forecast overspend)

2.24 The latest projection for the directorate indicates a forecast pressure of £5.1m for this financial year. This represents an increase of £0.4m from the July monitoring position, the forecast in the main reflects the impact of ongoing demographic pressures in Home to School Transport and cost pressures within waste services. There has been an increase in the forecast overspend for Home to School Transport, resulting from an increase in passenger numbers following the September new school year. However, following detailed work within the directorate, the forecast outturn position also includes the incorporation of identified savings, that it is expected will be delivered by the end of the financial year. These savings have mitigated to a degree the impact of the £0.8m increase in the Home to School Transport forecast. Information on the forecast outturn projection and the actions taken to date are included below.

2.25 Community Safety and Street Scene (CSS) is forecasting an overall pressure of £4.9m. The most significant pressure continues to be in respect of Home to School Transport which is now reporting an overspend of £3.3m, due to ongoing demographic pressures leading to an increase in the number of new eligible passengers and fewer contractors in the market leading to increased prices. To address the increased costs and demand a range of solutions are being explored to influence demand and maximise savings opportunities, using improved cost data analysis to support plans to implement lower cost routes. The revised forecast reflects the incorporation of data from the new cohort of passengers in September 2024. Actions taken by the Service have reduced the cost per passenger, but the Service continues to see an increase in demand.

2.26 Parking Services is forecasting a pressure of £195k, a small improvement of £18k from the last reported position. The ongoing economic impact on Rotherham town centre footfall continues to see a reduction in income from parking charges. The forecast will be reviewed throughout the year to assess the impact from the Forge Island development.

2.27 Waste Management continues to forecast an overspend of £1.5m. There is pressure on vehicle costs due to hire and repair costs of an ageing fleet, an increase in staff costs to cover sickness absence, increase in waste disposal costs based on tonnage estimates and a forecast shortfall in income from the sale of recycling materials due to lower market prices. These pressures were mitigated in 2023/24 by the £1m overachievement of budgeted income on pellet sales driven by the increased energy prices. Pressures in the service are being partly mitigated by a forecast overachievement of income budgets and vacancies across the service. As part of the recent review of the budget position, an additional £300k income has been forecast in Highways, resulting from an increase in highway adoptions, and an additional £50k income has been forecast in Landscape delivery, resulting from additional project work fees.

2.28 Culture Sport and Tourism (CST) is forecasting an overall pressure of £276k, an improvement of £43k from July's reported position. There is a forecast overspend of £154k at Waleswood Caravan Park, largely resulting from a shortfall in income against budget. There are also forecast shortfalls in income at Rother Valley Country Park of £88k and Thrybergh Country Park of £62k. In addition, there is a £126k pressure on the Music Service, resulting from pressures on income and staffing costs. These pressures are partly offset by an anticipated saving on the Leisure PFI of £171k following a contractual benchmarking exercise.

2.29 Planning, Regeneration and Transport (PRT) is forecasting an overall underspend of £75k, an improvement of £401k from July's reported position. The improvement is due the proposed capitalisation of salaries in the Regeneration and Transportation teams. This is in addition to the use of grant income within these services to improve the budget position. There remains a pressure in the Markets service, as result of an ongoing forecast shortfall in income, arising from void stalls amid ongoing difficult trading conditions and an anticipated overspend on building control, driven by a shortfall in budgeted income and the forecast cost of agency staffing to cover sickness and vacancies.

Finance and Customer Services (balanced forecast)

2.30 The overall directorate is reporting a balanced position. Although there is an overspend of £65k arising from Property and Facilities Services which has transferred from Regeneration & Environment Directorate, this has been reduced from a £1.4m overspend position for 2023/24. The remaining services within the Directorate are forecasting a net balanced outturn position. Whilst there are some financial challenges within the wider directorate, projected savings on Legal disbursements and Bereavement Services income along with robust budget management are expected to offset those pressures.

2.31 The forecast position for Property & Facilities Services is an overspend of £65k, an improvement from the last report of £379k. Property Services is forecasting a pressure of £730k, an improvement of £400k, following successful work to secure a number of business rates refunds. The Service continue to face pressures on income across estates and the commercial portfolio, increased costs on cleaning, maintenance and fixtures and fittings. There is a pressure in school catering of £381k due to the continuing impact of food price inflation, this is an improved position from 2023/24 due to the forecast increase in income from increased fees and charges. This is offset by a forecast underspend on building cleaning of £1.1m due to additional contract income.

2.32 Within Customer, Information and Digital Services, increased costs on postage and print are under review. Ongoing recruitment challenges are creating a temporary cost reduction, which is offset by over-recruitment within Customer Services contact centre to help manage the difficulties caused by high staff turnover in this area, that impacts on call waiting times.

2.33 Legal Services faces continued demand for legal support with child protection hearings and court case costs relating to Looked After Children. Ongoing difficulties in recruiting to key posts are currently resulting in the extended use of locum solicitors and external suppliers. However, the number of cases remains volatile and will continue to be monitored closely.

Assistant Chief Executive (underspend of £102k)

2.34 This is an improvement from the July forecast due to identification and delivery of in-year savings to support the Council position. Projected income of £85k for the services of the Chief Executive (CEX) to Nottingham City Council (2 days per week for the full year), along with £35k of additional income from salary sacrifice schemes are mitigating cost pressures across the Directorate. There are pressures relating to the Occupational Health contract (£34k) and HR & Payroll system (£51k). There are other minor variances across the directorate primarily relating to staffing and vacancy control, all of which are contained within the overall budget.

Central Services (£10.9m underspend)

2.35 Central Services has a £10.9m forecast underspend, made up of budget provisions set aside when the Budget was approved. A Social Care Contingency of £3.4m and a Corporate Budget Provision of £3.5m to support anticipated pressures across Social Care and Home to School Transport are being used to support the wider Directorates forecast position, along with a £4m forecast underspend from Treasury Management.

2.36 There continues to be significant financial challenges as a result of increased costs, energy prices and the potential impact of the 2024/25 Local Government Pay Award. The impact on base costs of high inflation in recent years continues to impact the renewal of Council contracts and payments to key service providers, as such it continues to present a financial challenge to the Council's approved Budget and MTFS. However, the Council was able to build into the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2024/25 greater levels of funding to manage the impact of inflation, energy and pay. As such it is currently anticipated that these impacts can be controlled within the existing budgetary provision.

2.37 The current economic climate remains turbulent, with challenges in projecting where inflation will move and the pace at which it moves. Though the recent trajectory has seen inflation fall to 1.7% (September 2024), this is not negative inflation and as such the Council's costs are still significantly higher than they were when inflation first started to spike above the Bank of England's 2% target. September is the first month where CPI had been below this 2% target since May 2021, and although inflation has fallen considerably since its peak in 2023/24, the impact was that the resulting increased base cost of services remains high, and it is this cost on which future inflation is applied. As such, the Council will continue to face financial pressures that will need to be managed and mitigated through the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's reserves.

2.38 However, energy prices have reduced which will help support the Council's Budget position for 2024/25, though it is too early in the financial year to be clear on its full benefit.

2.39 The Council's Treasury Management functions are expected to continue to perform well for the bulk of 2024/25. The Council still holds cash balances and is able to invest them for a greater return given current high interest rates, additional slippage on the Capital programme in 2023/24 means that the level of financing costs for 2024/25 will be less than anticipated. The benefits from the Treasury

Management function can be used to support wider inflationary pressures that the Council will face during 2024/25, however it should be noted that as the Capital programme progresses, these short-term opportunities will diminish.

2.40 The Central Services budgets are made up of a number of corporate budgets for levies and charges such as the Integrated Transport Levy (ITA), PFI Financing, and Treasury Management. A list of the main budget areas within Central Services was provided as part of the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2024/25, approved at Council 28th February 2024. The costs within this area are largely fixed costs, set out prior to the start of a financial year, not specific to a particular Directorate and are therefore not controllable by the directorates and thus held centrally.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

2.41 The Housing Revenue Account is a statutory ring-fenced account that the Council has to maintain in respect of the income and expenditure incurred in relation to its council dwellings and associated assets. The HRA is currently forecast to underspend by £1.7m. The underspend largely relates to a gainshare on the repairs and maintenance contract.

Adoption of Department for Education's model for calculating kinship allowances for Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's)

2.42 The Council decided several years ago to calculate SGO payments according to a bespoke RMBC payment model, using a locally devised formula for the calculation of kinship allowances. The DfE has since produced a calculation form to help local authorities financially assess Special Guardians. It is known as the standardised means test model and when issued was not a statutory requirement for local authorities, though was to be used as a guide. Most Local Authorities have adopted this model, though the Council has continued to use its own model. However, recent legal challenges and best practice suggested that the means test should be undertaken using the Government's recommended allowance calculator for SGOs, Child Adoption Orders (CAOs) and Adoption. This would result in the payment of higher levels of allowance.

2.43 The adoption of the DfE calculator is likely to have a positive outcome for most special guardians and kinship carers, particularly those on a lower income. Adopting the Government calculator for all kinship allowances reflects the Government advice that the model should apply to special guardianship and adoption allowances and also helps to avoid potentially much more costly legal challenges. The estimated financial impact of the Council adopting this approach is £560k per annum, the impact of which for 2024/25 (£140k) is already factored into the CYPS forecast position. It is proposed that the Council adopts this approach from January 2025.

Debtor Write Off - Iliad

2.44 The Council proposes to write off a debtor balance in relation to Iliad (Rotherham) Ltd, to the value of £466,360.22, dating back from 27.03.2013. The debt stems from an old regeneration scheme where RMBC entered into a Development Agreement with the developer Iliad to deliver the Westgate Demonstrator Project. Under the terms of the Development Agreement just prior to commencement of

construction on site Iliad and the Council would enter into a long term lease. As the buildings were completed Iliad would then pay to the Council a Lease Premium. However, Iliad got into significant financial difficulty and were unable to meet the lease premium and ultimately fell into liquidation. The invoice/debt relates to the invoice for the lease premium. The Council has pursued this debt through a variety of channels over a significant period of time, however, it is now believed that all avenues have been exhausted and the debt should be written off. The Council has used the normal debt collection routes to no avail and has sought external legal support through its contract with Greenhalgh Kerr, who lodged a case with the liquidator but have informed us that the Council is unlikely to ever see any return from this process. The Council will continue to monitor the case with the liquidator but given the unlikely ability to recover the debt it is proposed to write off the debt.

2.45 Provision has previously been made in the Council's accounts for the potential that this would need to be written off and hence there is no impact on the Council's reported financial position of the write off.

Capital Programme Update

2.46 The revised Capital Programme for 2024/25 is £202.052m split between the General Fund £145.929m and HRA £56.123m. This is an increase of £2.967m from the position as at the end of July reported to Cabinet on 16th September 2024. The movement is based on the latest profiles of expenditure against schemes, including slippage and re-profiles of £1.971m and new grant funding added to the programme of £0.996m.

Table 3: Variations to the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28

	Total Impact £m	2024/25 Impact £m	Post 2024/25 Impact £m
Revised Grant and Funding Estimates	-2.004	0.996	-3.000
Slippage / reprofiling	0.000	1.971	-1.971
Borrowing adjustment HRA	-6.447	0.000	-6.447
Total	-8.451	2.967	-11.418

The main items contributing to the reprofiling of the Capital Programme are:

- **Waverley Medical Centre** £3.721m. The budget has been brought forward into 2024/25 to match the revised accelerated spend profile.
- **Thrybergh Country Park** -£0.758m, slippage. This is due to a change in the design of the scheme from a new build to a refurbishment of the current building. The programme delivery is now expected to commence in Q4 2024/25 and complete Q1 2025/26.
- **HRA Boswell Street** £0.150m. The budget has been brought forward for delivery of the scheme in 2024/25.

- **Renewable Energy Proof of Concept** -£0.970m, slippage. The previously identified site is no longer suitable so discussions are taking place to identify a new site. A decision on the next steps of the project is expected Q3 2024/25.
- **Electrical Vehicle Charge Infrastructure** -£0.540m, slippage. The procurement is being done by Barnsley Council and the contract required a variation with regards to pricing. This has now been resolved and the works are being arranged.
- **Rowan Childrens Home** £0.117m. Budget brought forward to meet cost pressure identified in tender, the additional costs for these homes can be contained within the overall programme.
- **Upgrade to HR Payroll system** £0.105m. Budget brought forward as the scheme has been completed in 2024/25.
- **Computer Refresh** £0.126m. Budget brought forward to facilitate the roll out of Windows 11 in 2024/25.

2.47 New grant funded schemes are added to the Capital Programme on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules. Grant schemes added or reduced since the September Cabinet report are listed below:

Table 4: New Grant/HRA Funded Schemes added to the programme

Directorate/Scheme	**2024/25 £m**	**Post 2024/25 £m**
Regeneration & Environment		
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) Maintenance Block. Funding removed to match the grant allocation for Roads Programme	-1.000	-3.000
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA)funding provided by Department for Transport (DFT) for road resurfacing.	1.162	0.000
Police & Crime Commissioner funding towards purchasing CCTV in high risk areas of the borough.	0.023	0.000
CRSTS Maintenance Block and DFT funding. New funding for traffic signals	0.594	0.000
Assistant Chief Executive		
Ward CIL allocation for Keppel	0.104	0.000
Ward CIL allocation for Hoober	0.011	0.000
Finance & Customer Services		
Contribution from Doncaster Council to HR system Upgrade	0.102	0.000
Total	**0.996**	**-3.000**

Corporate Borrowing

2.48 There has been a reduction of £6.447m on HRA borrowing to align budgets to the HRA business plan. In addition there is a proposed change to the use of corporate borrowing on the Fleet Replacement Programme, funding can be released from this program as 3 Jet Vac Gulley tankers with an estimated cost of £300k each have come back with an actual price of £225.14k, a saving £74.86k per vehicle. It is proposed to use this saving to support estimated overspends on the Plant Refresh Programme of £111k due to having to pull forward replacements planned for phase 3 into phase 2 due to continual breakdowns affecting service delivery i.e. tractors and ride on mowers. It is also proposed that £86k will be used to support an estimated overspend on the acquisition of Narrow Access Vehicles, delays in the scoping of the vehicle specification, material cost increases, supplier identification and requirement to increase the warranty period given the complexity of the vehicle have lead to the additional costs. The residual saving will remain within the Fleet Replacement Programme budget.

MCA Approvals

2.49 The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) acts as accountable body for a number of different Government funding streams and as the accountable body for Gainshare. New funding received through SYMCA is £1.162m from the DFT for the Network North Fund. £0.5m from the DFT and £0.092m from CRSTS Maintenance for traffic signals. £4m has been removed from the CRSTS maintenance block to match the grant allocation for the roads programme across 2024/25 to 2027/28.

The proposed updated Capital Programme to 2027/28 is shown by directorate in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Proposed Updated Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28

Directorate	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
General Fund Capital					
Children and Young People's Services	12.615	16.764	6.360	7.070	42.809
Regeneration and Environment	99.054	95.896	26.546	10.196	231.692
Adult Care & Housing	11.205	12.705	4.827	8.969	37.706
Assistant Chief Executive	0.341	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.971
Finance and Customer Services	22.713	24.887	5.644	5.648	58.892
Capitalisation Direction					

Total General Fund Capital	**145.929**	**150.464**	**43.586**	**32.093**	**372.072**
Total HRA Capital	**56.123**	**57.907**	**83.008**	**33.539**	**230.577**
Total RMBC Capital Programme	**202.052**	**208.371**	**126.594**	**65.632**	**602.649**

2.50 The Capital Programme for 2024/25 remains ambitious even with a significant level of re-profiling of schemes into 2025/26. The Council will therefore need to keep close control of project spend profiles and delivery milestones to keep these projects on track. The Council will also need to review the deliverability of this significantly increased capital programme and potentially, re-profile some schemes into future financial years.

Funding Position of capital programme 2024/25

2.51 The £202.052m of capital expenditure is funded as shown in Table 6 below

Table 6: Funding of the Approved Capital Programme

Funding Stream	**2024/25 Budget**
	£m
Grants and Contributions	77.911
Unsupported Borrowing	67.884
HRA Contribution	0.134
Total Funding - General Fund	**145.929**
Grants and Contributions	1.366
Unsupported Borrowing	8.586
Housing Major Repairs Allowance	25.796
Capital Receipts	14.555
Revenue Contribution	5.820
Total Funding - HRA	**56.123**
Total	**202.052**

Capital Receipts

2.52 The Council is continuing to undertake a comprehensive review of its assets and buildings portfolio with the aim of rationalising both its operational and non operational asset holdings. This may contribute future capital receipts which are

earmarked to support the revenue budget, in accordance with the Council's approved flexible use of capital receipts strategy.

2.53 To date General Fund useable capital receipts of £0.326m have been generated. Although loan repayments will be received during the financial year, these cannot be used to support the revenue budget as only those receipts by the disposal of property, plant and equipment can be used in that way.

Description	**Total as at 30th September 2024 £m**
Falding Street Chapel Masbrough	-0.131
Covenant release	-0.045
Woodlands Farm Land	-0.089
241 Canklow Road	-0.055
Miscellaneous	-0.006
Total Capital Receipts (Excluding loan repayments)	**-0.326**
Repayment of Loans	-0.015
Total Capital Receipts	**-0.341**

2.54 The detailed disposal programme is currently being updated. At this stage the forecast for useable capital receipts is between £0.75m and £1.25m but this may change when the detailed assessment has been completed. These receipts are made up of a small number of disposals and therefore any changes to these could impact on these forecasts significantly. It should be noted that there is no corporate requirement to disposal of General Fund assets and each individual decision should be taken as appropriate.

Capital Achievements

2.55 The following outputs have been achieved since the end of July 2024.

- Three additional parking machines have been installed at Rother Valley Country Park.
- An online bookings system has been procured and is in the process of being implemented, which will offer self-service booking for services, activities, facilities, and events.
- Works to Eldon Rd Playing field have been completed.
- Works to Rother Valley Country Park have started on site.
- Works to the river wall have started on site.

- Arc Cinema has opened to the public.
- Infirmary Road – Council's first Small Sites Homebuilder scheme, has now completed with the seven new homes handed over to the Council mid-September, awaiting some final costs but forecasting actual spend at 85% of budget.
- East Herringthorpe – 10 new homes for Council rent, reported as complete last period, subsequent cost assessment confirms costs came in at c. 93% of budget.
- Market Acquisitions Housing – 23 properties acquired to date at an average cost per property of less than £140k compared to a budgeted cost of £180k per property.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 With regard to the current forecast net revenue budget the directorates are forecasting an overspend of £16.2m, further management actions continue to be identified with the clear aim of ensuring a balanced budget position can be achieved. It is currently assumed that to achieve a balanced outturn position there will be a need to utilise an element of the Council's reserves given the significant pressures that are being faced.

3.2 This is in recognition that there are still financial implications that need to be fully understood and that may not be fully known until later in the financial year.
It is nationally recognised best practice to monitor the performance against the agreed revenue budgets and the Capital Programme throughout the year.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The Council consulted on the proposed budget for 2024/25, as part of producing the Budget and Council Tax Report 2024/25. Details of the consultation are set out in the Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 report approved by Council on 28th February 2024.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Strategic Directors, Managers and Budget Holders will ensure ongoing tight management and close scrutiny of spend this financial year.

5.2 Financial Monitoring reports are taken to Cabinet meetings during the year. The Financial Outturn report for 2024/25 will be taken to Cabinet in July 2025.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The Council's overspend position is detailed within the report along with the estimated impact of current financial pressures from inflation and increases in demand. This position continues to be monitored closely. Control over spending remains critical to both maintaining the robust Reserves Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

6.2 An update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy will be provided to Cabinet later in 2024. This will provide a more detailed update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning factoring in the impact of the current year financial pressures and the longer term impacts on the MTFS and reserves strategy.

6.3 Provision has previously been made in the Council's accounts for the write off referred to in paragraph 2.44 and hence there is no impact on the Council's reported financial position of formally writing off this debt. Also, this decision does not prevent the Council recovering monies should the position change in relation to the liquidation process.

6.4 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. Project specific implications have been addressed in the Key Issues section.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The standardised mean test model in respect of financially assessing Special Guardians is now considered best practice and will help to avoid legal challenge, therefore it would be appropriate to adopt this model as recommended in Recommendation 4. Other than this there are no direct legal implications.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 No direct implications.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The report includes reference to the cost pressures on both Children's and Adult Social care budget.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 This is a finance update report, providing a review of current progress to date on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, any equalities and human rights impacts from service delivery have been or will be detailed as service budgets, capital projects are pulled together for inclusion within the Council's revenue budget or capital programme.

11 Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 No direct implications.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 At a time of economic difficulty and tight financial constraints, managing spend in line with the Council's budget is paramount. Careful scrutiny of expenditure and income across all services and close budget monitoring therefore remain a top

priority if the Council is to deliver both its annual and medium term financial plans while sustaining its overall financial resilience.

13. Accountable Officers

Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	04/11/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	29/10/24
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	30/10/24

Report Author: *Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services*

This report is published on the Council's website.

Appendix 1 – Initial Equality Screening Assessment

Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A)

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an equality analysis.

Directorate: Finance and Customer Services	**Service area: Finance**
Lead person: Rob Mahon	**Contact number: 01709 254518**

1. Title:

Is this a:

☐	**Strategy / Policy**	X	**Service / Function**	☐	**Other**

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The Council has a framework of budgetary monitoring and reporting that ensures budget management is exercised within annual cash limits.

Each month the Budget Manager receives timely information on income and expenditure to enable them to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities. Following the review of the budget information, each budget manager provides a forecast of their projected outturn position on each service. The Strategic Director subsequently provides a consolidated forecast for their directorate to the Chief Finance Officer and relevant Cabinet Member.

A budget monitoring report, which includes an up-to-date outturn forecast, information about significant variances from approved budgets and proposals for dealing with them, is submitted to Cabinet at least 6 times a year, culminating with

the Councils Financial Outturn report.

Whilst the framework described above relates to revenue budgets, the capital programme is also similarly monitored and reported alongside the Council's revenue position.

The financial monitoring position report summarises the key variances for each directorate and considers the key financial pressures and risks.

This report is the third financial report in the financial year, it sets out the Councils latest revenue forecast position. The report also covers off any other key items to be noted at this time.

Given that the revenue and capital budgets have been approved by Council in February each year, when equality assessments would have been considered at that time in respect of the budget proposals, there are no further issues in respect of equality and diversity.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?		x
Could the proposal affect service users?		x
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?		x
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?		x
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		x
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		x

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6.**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4.**

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals prior to carrying out an **Equality Analysis.**

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below and use the prompts for guidance.

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

N/A

- **Key findings**

N/A

- **Actions**

N/A

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	n/a
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	n/a
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	n/a

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Rob Mahon	Assistant Director Financial Services	22/10/2024

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Appendix 1 – Initial Equality Screening Assessment

Date screening completed	22/10/2024
If relates to a Key Delegated Decision, **Executive Board**, **Council** or a **Significant Operational Decision** – **report date and date sent for publication**	
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	22/10/2024

Appendix 2 – Carbon Impact Assessment

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	*no impact on emissions*				
Emissions from transport?	*no impact on emissions*				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	*no impact on emissions*				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	*no impact on emissions*				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	*no impact on emissions*				

Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	*no impact*				
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:
As this report is a financial update on previous events, updates on levels of funding moving forwards and doesn't approve anything directly to happen, it does not have any carbon implications.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Nikki Kelly, Finance Manager (Corporate), Finance and Customer Services.
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	CIA354

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 18 November 2024

Report Title
Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policies

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)
Wendy G Foster, Improvement Manager, Housing Property Services
01709 255047 or wendy-regen.foster@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Council is committed to the delivery of a high quality, value for money repairs and maintenance service, which is customer focused, efficient, and accessible. The revised Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy sets out the Council's approach to delivering a responsive repairs and maintenance service which meets the needs of tenants and leaseholders, and enables the Council to meet its statutory, regulatory, and contractual obligations.

The Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy and the Gas and Carbon Monoxide (CO) Policy set out the Council's approach to managing its responsibilities for gas safety, electrical safety, smoke alarms and CO alarms in housing assets in line with legislation and best practice.

A delegation is sought to enable the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make further changes to key housing compliance policies in line with service needs and the evolving regulatory and legislative context.

This report also provides an update on the work which has begun to consider the future of the repairs and maintenance service in the context of new consumer regulations and a break clause in the Council's existing contracts.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy (Appendix 1).

2. Approve the increase in decoration allowance from £25 to £50 per room, up to a maximum of £350 per property, as proposed in the Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy (Appendix 1).

3. Note the ongoing work to scope the future repairs and maintenance delivery model for Rotherham and agrees to receive a further update on this work in 2025.

4. Approve the Housing Services Gas and Carbon Monoxide Safety Policy (Appendix 2).

5. Approve the Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy (Appendix 3).

6. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make amendments to the following housing policies in line with operational, regulatory and legislative demands:

    - Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy
    - Housing Services Gas and Carbon Monoxide Safety Policy
    - Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy
    - Housing Services Fire Safety Policy
    - Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy as it relates to housing assets.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy
Appendix 2 Housing Services Gas and Carbon Monoxide Policy
Appendix 3 Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy
Appendix 4 Equalities Analysis Part A
Appendix 5 Equalities Analysis Part B
Appendix 6 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards
The Social Housing (Regulation) Act, 2023
Tenant Satisfaction Measures
Awaab's Law Consultation
Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy
Housing Fire Safety Policy

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Improving Places Select Commission – 22 October 2024

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policies

1. Background

1.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), in the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, specifies the outcomes landlords must deliver in relation to being open with tenants and treating them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account. The Safety and Quality Standard specifies that all landlords must deliver an effective and value for money repairs and maintenance service and comply with all relevant health and safety legislation.

1.2 To comply with these standards, landlords need to have clear and accessible policies in place for key areas of housing service delivery which set out the approach to service delivery and enable tenants to hold the Council as 'landlord' to account.

1.3 The repair and maintenance of Council homes is a key area where a policy is required to outline how the Council meets its legal and regulatory responsibilities as a landlord and deliver the repairs service to tenants.

1.4 Policies are also required on each area of health and safety compliance. Currently, there are policies in place for Damp, Mould and Condensation, and Fire Safety. The Corporate Property Service is developing policies on Lifts and Water Safety which will incorporate responsibilities within Council owned housing assets. Policies have been developed for the remaining areas of compliance which set out the Council's approach to managing Electrical, Gas and Carbon Monoxide compliance in housing assets.

1.5 The introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, 2023, prompted the Council, and social housing landlords nationally, to examine all aspects of housing service activity. This self-assessment enabled the Council to gauge how well it is meeting the expectations of the Regulator's consumer standards, to identify gaps in delivery, and focus on areas for improvement. Increasing the number of published policies was identified as an area of improvement.

1.6 The Council is separately considering the future delivery of its repairs and maintenance activities, considering increased demands on the service, new regulatory requirements, and an upcoming break clause in the current contracts. The contracts commenced on 1 April 2020 and have recently been extended until 31 March 2027, with an option to extend up to a further three financial years.

2. Key Issues

<u>Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy</u>

2.1 The Housing Property Service is responsible for the repairs, maintenance, and investment in the Council's housing revenue account assets. This includes:

- 19,879 residential properties
- 3,254 garages on 404 purpose-built garage sites
- 144 garage plot sites
- 37 boiler houses
- 45 neighbourhood centres
- 1 residential tower block over 18 metres

2.2 The Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy sets out the Council's overall approach to delivering repairs and maintenance and how it meets its obligations, including the relevant consumer standards. The Policy applies to the repair of Council owned housing properties, including the assets listed above, as well as communal areas.

2.3 The current service delivery model, encapsulated within the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy, is subject to the terms of the existing contracts with the Council's current contract partners and allocated budgets, therefore there is limited scope for significant change at this stage.

2.4 The Policy includes:

- How repairs can be reported, appointment slots for work to be undertaken and the timescales for completion dependent upon level of urgency.
- The types of repairs the Council is responsible for and the responsibilities of tenants.
- How reports are dealt with including prioritisation based upon the type of the repair and the impact upon the tenants' personal circumstances.

2.5 The Council carries out over 6,000 responsive repairs each month, or around 200 repairs each day.

2.6 The table below shows the minimum numbers of repairs which the Council carries out annually. It excludes contracted capital works, lift repairs and servicing, damp and mould works, and cyclical compliance works, but gives an idea of the overall scale of the service.

2.7

YEAR	NUMBER OF REPAIRS
2023/2024	73,312
2022/2023	70,621
2021/2022	71,989
2020/2021	62,831
2019/2020	75,797

2.8 Repairs are prioritised based upon the urgency and if a tenant has a health condition which is being adversely impacted by the repair. There are three responsive repair categories. Non-urgent work is categorised as maintenance for completion within a future work programme.

2.9
- Emergency repairs are defined as repairs that require immediate and urgent action to prevent risk to people or property, as such, the Council

operates 24-hours a day, 365 days of the year to attend emergency repairs within a four-hour period. These repairs usually involve carrying out work to make the home safe and secure while further works are arranged for a later date.

- Urgent repairs include a total loss of heating and hot water. Urgent repairs are attended by 8pm on the day after a repair is reported.
- Standard, non-urgent repairs are allocated on a 28-day priority, and appointments are chosen by tenants or agreed at a mutually convenient time.

2.10 The Service is continuing its focus on strengthening data collection to assist the triaging of repairs in future.

2.11 It is important that tenants provide access to allow repairs, cyclical servicing and maintenance to be undertaken. The Policy sets out the approach to 'no access' where the tenant does not engage with the Council to allow access to their property.

2.12 The Council's approach to investment and stock improvement will be detailed in a future Housing Asset Management Strategy.

Decoration Allowance

2.13 The Council has a legal duty under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, to make good or compensate for damaged decorations as a result of works carried out to their homes. Examples of such repair work may include:

- Electrical re-wiring following an electrical fault,
- Broken bathroom fittings and associated re-tiling,
- Insecure external windows/doors,
- Loose or detached banister/handrail,
- Leaking roof,
- Repairing a defective damp proof course.

2.14 The Council has no legal responsibility to provide decoration allowance following an improvement to a home. As a responsible landlord, the Council feels that it should help customers where decorations have been disturbed following programmed/improvement works. Not all improvement works will cause damage or require the full decoration of a room. Examples of programmed works can include:

- Kitchen replacement (if the Council does not redecorate following fitting).
- Bathroom replacement (if the Council does not redecorate following fitting).
- Damp proof course renewal.
- Installing a damp proof course for the first time.
- Plastering (see paragraph 2.13).

2.15 Most damage to plasterwork is discovered during routine redecoration by a customer. In such circumstances, compensation for damage to decoration is

not appropriate. If the Council must make good plasterwork as a result of damage caused during repair work, then the customer should be compensated by way of a decoration allowance.

2.16 The Council currently awards £25 per room to tenants following damage to tenants' décor. The Council has not revised its approach to Decoration Allowance, and the sums awarded to tenants, since 2005.

2.17 The Policy retains the allocation of decorating allowance 'by rooms damaged' and proposes the allocation of a fixed sum per room. This should apply to all rooms within the home, not just habitable rooms – the hall(s), stairs and landing should be viewed as one room.

2.18 Inflation since 2005 means the decoration allowance should be increased. Cabinet is asked to approve a new allocation of £50 per room, which compares favourably with neighbouring social housing landlords. A limit of £350 per property is also proposed. The sums awarded will be reviewed every three years under the delegations proposed in Recommendation 6.

2.19 It is proposed that there should be more than one method by which tenants can receive decoration allowance: payment to rent account, BACS payment or cheque issued in the tenant's name.

Housing Services Gas and Carbon Monoxide Safety Policy

2.20 The Gas and Carbon Monoxide Safety Policy sets out the legal and regulatory framework for managing gas safety, carbon monoxide and smoke detectors.

2.21 It covers assets within the responsibility of the Council's housing service, including residential properties, neighbourhood centres, garages and boiler houses but does not apply to managing gas and carbon monoxide safety within non-council owned dwellings or other council assets such as schools, care homes, offices, or commercial properties.

2.22 The Council has a range of measures in place to manage gas and carbon monoxide safety within its properties. The compliance management matrix details all compliance activity, frequency of testing, and how the Council meets its statutory and regulatory obligations. This includes:

- Domestic Landlord Gas Safety Record.
- Non- Domestic Landlord Gas Safety Record.
- Solid Fuel Annual Service and Sweep.
- Carbon Monoxide Detection.
- Liquid Petroleum Gas Landlord Gas Safety Record.
- Heating Pressure Vessels.

2.23 Unsafe gas appliances present risk to life from fire and carbon monoxide poisoning. A robust 'no access' process is in place for gas servicing which includes repeated attempts to contact the tenant. The Council will apply to court for a warrant for access if the tenant does not engage. Access is gained

to the property to undertake the gas safety check and, if necessary, to cap the meter.

2.24 The current performance for gas servicing is 99.93% as it is not possible to apply for the warrant until the gas servicing is overdue. It is therefore extremely difficult to achieve 100% compliance as access issues are encountered every month. Performance is monitored monthly, and data is published quarterly.

2.25 A pro-active installation programme of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms has been undertaken. Currently, 99.28% of properties have a carbon monoxide alarm and 99.72% have a smoke alarm. Performance is monitored quarterly.

Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy

2.26 The Electrical Safety Policy sets out the regulatory framework for managing electrical assets within the Council's housing assets.

2.27 The Council has a range of measures in place to manage electrical safety within its properties as detailed in the compliance matrix. This includes:

- Domestic electrical installation condition report
- Non-domestic electrical installation condition report
- Smoke detectors
- Automatic doors
- Automatic gates and barriers
- Emergency lighting
- Portable appliance testing
- Lightning protection

2.28 Unsafe electrical appliances present risk to life from fire and electric shock. It is therefore imperative that tenants provide access to their properties to undertake frequent inspections and servicing. Currently electrical servicing is subject to contact from the Council's contract partner followed by letters and telephone calls from the Council to obtain access to undertake the servicing. The Legal Service will be trialling an electrical installation condition report to Court within the forthcoming months to gauge whether the court will provide a warrant for this work to be undertaken.

2.29 Current performance on properties with an Electrical Installation Condition Report is 96.2% Performance is monitored monthly, and data is published quarterly.

Delegation to amend housing services compliance policies

2.30 The legislation and regulatory framework associated with social housing is evolving with further imminent changes following the introduction of Awaab's Law. These are also largely operational matters, and the Council requires flexibility to amend some service standards in light of operational demands

and availability of staff and contractors. Therefore, Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to enable the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make further changes to key housing compliance policies in line with service needs and the evolving regulatory and legislative context. This would apply to the Housing Services' Gas and Carbon Monoxide, Electrical Safety, Fire Safety (agreed April 2024), and Damp, Mould and Condensation (agreed September 2023) policies.

Future of Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service Delivery

2.31 Demand on the repairs services is expected to continue to increase, and greater agility may be needed when responding to reports of damp and mould. In the future, other Category One hazards in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, may also have to be prioritised, depending on the outcome of the Government's consultation on Awaab's Law.

2.32 The regulatory context for the delivery of repairs and maintenance services is undergoing a period of change, including new consumer standards, Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), Awaab's Law, the professionalisation of the sector, and a review of the Decent Homes Standard. The Council needs to evaluate and review the current service model against this changing regulatory environment.

2.33 Currently most of the work is included within two large repairs and maintenance contracts which are split geographically and by work category. Specialist work, such as damp and mould, and lift servicing, is separately managed within smaller contracts.

2.34 A programme of engagement is underway which seeks to provide the Council with a better understanding of the views and priorities of tenants, elected members, officers and other stakeholders and to specify the outcomes the Council should prioritise in any future service delivery model.

2.35 An industry specialist will be engaged to overlay the Council's identified requirements against the service delivery options available to the Council.

2.36 The outcome of this exercise will support the development of informed recommendations regarding the future delivery of the Council's repairs and maintenance service, with decisions to be taken in 2025. Depending on the decision taken, the Repairs and Maintenance Policy may need to be reviewed.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The three policies have been identified as key documents needed by social housing landlords to ensure tenants understand the Council's service delivery commitments and to be compliant with the Regulator of Social Housing's new consumer standards.

3.2 The Regulator of Social Housing will carry out in depth assessments of providers at least every four years. Not having these policies updated,

agreed and available to tenants would reflect negatively on the Council's Housing Service and the lack of policies would be reflected in the Regulator's grading.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The current service delivery model is subject to the terms of the existing contracts with the Council's current delivery partners and the current allocated budgets therefore there is limited scope for significant change.

4.2 The Draft Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy was shared with Tenant Scrutiny Panel on Monday 15 July 2024 where constructive feedback was shared and included in the draft. The draft policy was also shared with Improving Places Select Commission on 22 October 2024 for feedback and discussion.

4.3 The main point of discussion with Tenant Scrutiny related to the section titled 'Tenants' Personal Circumstances'. This section addresses the requirement to consider residents' needs when assessing the urgency of a repair. It was originally titled 'Tenant Vulnerabilities', but tenants did not agree with characterising personal circumstances as vulnerabilities.

4.4 It is proposed that the future delivery of the repairs and maintenance service is subject to engagement with tenants prior to any proposals being put to Cabinet for agreement. Any significant change in service would be subject to consultation with tenants and residents.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Implementation of the policies would follow Cabinet decision.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 For the financial year 2024/2025, there is a revenue budget of £24.5m and a capital budget of £29.2m in place to deliver the Council's housing repairs, maintenance and investment services across various contracts.

6.2 Any changes to how the service delivers and operates may change the cost profiles. The budgets are reviewed during the HRA Business Planning and budget setting process. Future requirements will be considered, and appropriate budgets set in place based on priority and affordability.

6.3 The current repairs and maintenance contracts have been extended until March 2027 with an option to extend for a further three years in one-year increments.

6.4 In the financial year 2023/2024, the Council awarded £11,931 Decoration Allowance.

6.5

Financial Year	Spend	Increase
2024/2025	£15,750	24%
2023/2024	£11,931	20%
2022/2023	£9,907	69%
2021/2022	£5,850	100%
2020/2021	£2,918	

6.6 Increasing the level of Decoration Allowance and broadening the range of works activity after which decoration allowance will be offered, will impact the overall budget the Council has for repairing and maintaining its homes. It is difficult to accurately calculate but it is estimated that the current budget of £15,750 would need to be increased to £50,000.

6.7 There are no direct procurement implications associated with the approval of the policies that form the basis of this report. It must however be noted that the engagement of an industry specialist to inform the future of housing repairs and maintenance service delivery must be procured in compliance with the Council's Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are legal requirements for maintaining social housing, keeping it free from hazards and in a reasonable state of repair. The Regulator of Social Housing also provides for Consumer Standards which require social landlords to have an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes. The Regulators' Tenant Satisfaction Measures are a core set of performance measures against which all social providers of housing must publish their performance.

7.2 The Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy incorporates the legal and regulatory requirements to ensure compliance with and understanding of the repair and maintenance obligations.

7.3 In addition to regulatory compliance that places duties on employers to ensure that all electrical installations and appliances within the workplace are safe, the Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy provides for recommended best practice measures that ensure *'A programme of electrical installation inspection and testing is carried out to all domestic, communal areas and neighbourhood centres at least once every 5 years (unless the competent person recommends the next test must be done sooner than this), upon commencement of a new tenancy or following planed component replacement works.'*

7.4 The Housing Services Gas and Carbon Monoxide Safety Policy, prepared in compliance with 'The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998' and the 'Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022', ensures the safe installation and maintenance of gas appliances and smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in Council properties.

7.5 In implementing the policies, the Council will be able to demonstrate adherence to the new Consumer Standards, whilst also minimising the risk of customer complaint and/or legal challenge and/or enforcement action by the Regulator. The Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance policy will likely require amendment to reflect specific timeframes for repairs to be carried out in the social rented sector once determined.

7.6 In due course the government will introduce Awaab's law which will require landlords to fix reported health hazards within specified timescales. The Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy may require amendment to reflect the criteria within the law.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no HR implications associated with the Policies. However, any changes to future service delivery may impact on staff within the Housing Service and contract partners.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The Council will take into account whether a resident has any particular needs that give a specific repair more urgency than the designated timescales.

9.2 Depending on tenants' needs, and in particular circumstances, the Council will adjust the urgency of a repair if the risk to health, safety and security is increased due to tenants' personal circumstances.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The Council supports equality of access for all its tenants, especially those who are at most risk due to their/their household members' needs, those who have difficulties managing their property, and those who struggle to sustain a tenancy. The Council recognises that some groups with protected characteristics are more likely to fall into one of these categories.

10.2 Where appropriate the Council will adapt working practices to ensure tenants do not face additional barriers when accessing services. This includes providing information to tenants in Braille, large print, audio, or alternative languages.

10.3 The Council will record and monitor data to gain insight on satisfaction levels and service outcomes for tenants with protected characteristics and use this information to help improve services.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Refurbishment works undertaken by the service improve the thermal efficiency of properties which positively contributes to the reduction of CO_2 emissions and climate change agenda.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Should the delivery model change in the future, there will be an impact on the contract partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The attached policies reflect the current arrangements which have been in place since 2020.

13.2 Social housing landlords are awaiting the outcome of the Government consultation on Awaab's Law and are keen to understand the range of hazards against which tenant's personal circumstances need to be taken into consideration when prioritising repair.

13.3 The Council has already put in place processes to deal with reports of damp and mould and is working to the timescales laid out in the Government consultation. This has resulted in an increase in reports of damp and mould, to which the Council must respond within 10 days.

14. Accountable Officers

James Clark, Assistant Director of Housing

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	04/11/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	29/10/24
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	30/10/24

Report Author: *Wendy G Foster, Improvement Manager*
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This report is published on the Council's website.

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Appendix 1

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING SERVICES REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY

NOVEMBER 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Council is committed to delivering a high quality, value for money repairs service which is customer focused, efficient, and accessible to everyone. This policy sets out how the Council delivers a responsive repairs and maintenance service which meets the needs of tenants and leaseholders, and enables the Council to meet its statutory, regulatory, and contractual obligations.

2 PURPOSE

This policy sets out the Council's overall approach to repairs and maintenance and how it meets its obligations.

3 SCOPE

The policy applies to the responsive repair and maintenance of Council owned housing properties, including garages, district heating boiler houses, communal areas, neighbourhood centres, and some equipment such as lifts.

The policy includes the Council's and tenants' responsibility for the completion of repairs in the following areas:

- Emergency repairs
- Non-urgent repairs
- Non-standard (batched) repairs
- Cyclical maintenance
- Out of hours repairs
- Repairs which are the responsibility of tenants, and
- Rechargeable repairs.

It also sets out the approach to:

- Decoration allowance
- Right to compensation
- Right to repair
- Tenant recharges.

Separate policies exist for certain aspects of the Council's repairs and maintenance obligations. These are referred to in this policy. The key ones are:

- Housing Services Gas and Carbon Monoxide Policy
- Housing Services Electrical Safety Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Lift Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy
- Asbestos Management Plan

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4 LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

The Council has an obligation to keep its homes in a reasonable state of repair and to keep its tenants, their families, and visitors safe.

In April 2024, a new suite of consumer standards was introduced to bring greater transparency, and to monitor and improve, the quality of services delivered by social housing landlords. The repairs and maintenance of properties is covered by the Safety and Quality Consumer Standard.

In addition to repairs, the Council has compliance responsibilities relating to:

- Gas safety
- Electrical safety
- Legionella checks
- Servicing passenger lifts, medical lifts, and hoists
- Asbestos inspection
- Fire safety, and
- Maintenance of communal areas.

For more information, please refer to the separate policies which set out how the Council meets the obligations.

5 TREATING TENANTS WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT

The Council is committed to providing a high-quality customer service that is accessible to everyone, right first time, and keeps customers informed of progress.

The Council's responsive repairs and maintenance service aims to put tenants at the centre of its delivery. It is committed to being accessible to every tenant, and values tenant feedback – both complaints and compliments.

When attending tenants' homes to carry out repairs, the Council and its contractors must:

- Be respectful of tenants' homes, environment, and cultural factors,
- Aim to carry out the repair during the first visit,
- Minimise noise and disruption,
- Park works vehicles properly and not damage grass verges,
- Always wear their identification badge,
- Protect tenants' floorings by wearing shoe coverings when entering a tenant's home,
- Not use tenants' facilities without tenants' permission.

To support operatives carrying out repairs, the Council asks tenants to:

- Not use abusive or threatening language or act in a violent, aggressive or abusive manner towards the Council staff and contractors,
- Keep their pets in a room away from operatives carrying out the repair, and
- Not smoke/vape inside the property when Council staff or contractors are present.

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6 DELIVERING RESPONSIVE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

6.1 Right First Time

The Council aims to complete a responsive repair on the first visit; this is called 'Right First Time'. The repair is 'Right First Time' if the operative attended the property, identified, diagnosed, and fixed the fault during the first visit/during the same day. If this is not possible, as additional materials or trades are needed, a second visit will be scheduled within a reasonable timescale.

6.2 Reporting repairs

Tenants can report repairs for their own properties. If nominated by the tenant, household members, carers, and friends, can also report repairs on behalf of the tenant.

Tenants, or their nominated advocates, can report most day-to-day repairs on the website, using 'Housing Online', or by telephoning the Council's customer contact centre on 01709 336009. Some repairs, such as damp and mould, can currently only be reported via the telephone, but the Council aims to implement online reporting functionality as soon as possible.

When reporting repairs, tenants, or their nominated representatives, need to tell the Service:

- Their name, full address, and daytime telephone number,
- As much as they can about the repair –where the problem is and what is wrong,
- Whether there are any particular circumstances, such as health conditions or other vulnerabilities, that need to be taken into account, and
- Convenient times when operatives will be able to access the property.

If a gas leak is suspected, tenants should contact the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

Day to day repairs do not include large installation work, such as new roofs or upgrade works, such as kitchen replacement. These works are completed on larger planned work schemes.

6.3 Appointments for responsive repairs

When repairs are requested, and the work is ordered, a mutually convenient appointment will be agreed. The appointment will be for either a morning, afternoon, midday, or weekend, on a mutually convenient date.

Appointments are available all-day, Monday to Friday for day-to-day repairs, and seven days a week for plumbing, joinery, and electrical repairs. Tenants can book the following time slots:

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	Appointment slot	Monday to Friday	Saturday*	Sunday*	Bank holidays
Morning	08:00 to 12:00	✓	✓	✓	Emergencies only
Afternoon	12:00 to 16:00	✓	✓	✓	
Evening	16:00 to 20:00	✓	[redacted]		
Midday	10:00 to 14:00	✓			
All day	08:00 to 20:00	✓			

*Plumbing, joinery and electrical work only.

For reports of damp and mould, the Council's Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy sets out the Council's timescales for responding and addressing damp and mould.

For medical lifts and hoists, and for passenger lifts, operatives attend within four hours. More details are contained in the Lift Safety Policy.

There may be circumstances beyond the Council's control when operatives will not be able to attend the scheduled appointment. On these rare occasions, the tenant will be contacted in advance of the appointment to reschedule.

6.4 Timescales for responsive repairs

The Council allocates responsive repairs into categories and each category has set timescales for completion.

When a repair request is received, the Council will work with the tenant to determine the urgency of the repair, and:

- Complete emergency repairs within four hours (where there is risk to life or property)
- Complete some gas repairs before the end of the next working day (such as no heat and no hot water)
- Arrange a mutually convenient appointment with the tenant to complete non-urgent repairs within 28 days.

The Council has procured an external organisation to carry out stock condition surveys for all its HRA properties, over the next three years. Sample surveys will start in November 2024 with the surveyors working to capacity from January 2025.

A more detailed scope of repairs, and the quantity of repairs, will be developed from the stock condition surveys. As such, no decisions have yet been agreed regarding who will carry out the resulting repairs. Should the Council opt for its external contracting partners to carry out the work, there may be an impact on the 28-day timescale for carrying out non-urgent repairs.

Emergency repairs are defined as repairs that require immediate and urgent action to prevent risk to people or property, as such, the Council operates 24-hours a day, 365 days of the year to attend emergency repairs. These repairs usually involve carrying out work to make the home safe and secure while further works are arranged for a later date.

All reported emergencies are attended within a four-hour period. This includes emergencies that are reported after 16:00 which are passed to the emergency call out team. The call out team works between 16:00 and 08:00.
When reporting emergency repairs, tenants may be asked additional questions to understand the extent or severity of the repair. Depending on the specific details and the tenant's circumstances, some repairs may fall out of the four-hour priority and be allocated as non-urgent.

Please see Appendix A for the full list of emergency repairs.

Where an emergency repair has been completed, such as boarding broken glazing in a window, the Council will arrange a follow-up appointment for further works to be carried out, such as measuring-up and re-glazing the window. When there is a delay between the emergency repair and the follow-up works, the Council will:

- Write to the tenant to inform them that further works have been arranged, and
- Contact the tenant again to let them know when operatives will attend.

Unless materials or skills needed to carry out the repair are non-standard, in most cases follow-up repairs will be completed within four months.

Urgent repairs include a total loss of heating and hot water. Urgent repairs are attended by 20:00 on the day after a repair is reported. For example, if an urgent repair is reported on a Monday morning, an operative will attend either before 20:00 on Monday or between 08:00 and 20:00 on Tuesday, dependent upon availability.

Routine Repairs are standard, non-urgent repairs which are allocated within a 28-day priority, and appointments are chosen by tenants or agreed at a mutually convenient time (see 6.3).

Examples of non-urgent repairs include:

- A light not working,
- A dripping tap,
- A radiator not working,
- Leaking guttering,
- A repair to a roof tile.

The 'Tenants Personal Circumstances' section sets out how the Council may on occasion prioritise the delivery non-urgent repairs.

Planned maintenance works are repairs which do not require urgent attention and can be included in a future works programme. This includes replacing an external door, kitchen, roof or bathroom which cannot be repaired. Tenants receive confirmation that the work has been placed on a programme and they will be notified when the work will take place.

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Cyclical maintenance covers the regular servicing of gas appliances, electrical wiring, and carbon monoxide/fire detectors, as well as the maintenance of communal water tanks, medical lifts and hoists, including stair lifts, and passenger lifts.

6.5 Repairs to medical lifts and hoists, and passenger lifts

Please refer to the Lift Safety Policy.

6.6 Repairs to communal aerials

Repairs to communal aerials should be attended within 5 working days.

6.7 The Council's repairs responsibilities

The Council is responsible for the structure, exterior, services, and fixtures and fittings, and any communal areas in the building, excluding communal gardens. In all cases, repair is considered before renewal.

The Council is responsible for the following:

a) Drains, gutters, and outside pipes,
b) Roof, external walls, doors, and windows,
c) Maintenance of pipework for water, and gas and electricity installations, within the boundary of the home,
d) Outbuildings,
e) Sewers which are not the responsibility of another person or body,
f) Paths, steps, or other access routes that connect the front of the property to the front door, and the front door to the back door,
g) Heating and hot water systems including central heating, gas fires, fireplaces, flues, ventilation and chimneys,
h) Water, including baths, wash-hand basins, sinks, toilets, pipes, drains, and guttering,
i) Fitted kitchens,
j) Medical lifts and hoists, and passenger lifts fitted by the Council,
k) Services to utilities including gas pipes, electrical wiring, and any fixed appliances provided by the Council, and
l) Communal areas such as hallways, door entry systems, fire alarms, stairs, lifts, landings, and communal entrances.

The Council will not repair or replace items:

a) Which are old but functional – if they are working well, they may not be repaired or replaced,
b) For cosmetic reasons – such as a scratch on a windowpane, or a stain on a floor tile,
c) Which could be a minor trip hazard such as a loose tile or a crack in the pavement (unless the tenant has mobility issues),
d) Which do not match the rest of the kitchen or bathroom. (If an exact replacement cannot be found, the closest match possible will be fitted, but the entire kitchen or bathroom suite will not be replaced.)
e) This includes unsafe fencing. Where fencing is broken or unsafe, the Council will remove the fencing and will only replace it by exception.

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6.8 Tenants' repairs and responsibilities

To ensure tenants receive a fair and value for money service, tenants are responsible for carrying out some minor repairs. A full list of these can be found in the Tenants' Guide to Your Home and the tenancy agreement.

Unless provided by the Council's Furnished Homes service, tenants are responsible for the connection of washing machines, dishwashers, tumble dryers, cookers, and any other electrical appliances.

Any work to gas, electrical or water supplies must be carried out by a qualified and competent person. Failure to do so may constitute a breach of tenancy.

Examples of tenant responsibilities include:

a) Tenant's own fixtures and fittings, eg. curtain rails,
b) Internal decoration,
c) Repairing small cracks and holes in walls and ceilings,
d) Repairing tile grouting,
e) Any lock changes as a result of lost or stolen keys,
f) Clearing external grates,
g) Clothesline hooks and clothes posts,
h) Repairing and replacing boundary fences, gates, and associated hardware
i) Internal door handles and latches,
j) Floor covering, including vinyl and carpets (unless provided as part of the paid for Furnished Homes package),
k) Very small areas of mould which can be easily wiped away, eg, on a windowsill or at the bottom of a window where condensation is sometimes found.

Plumbing repairs include:

a) Refixing or renewing a toilet seat,
b) Refixing or renewing the plug and chain for the bath, sink, or wash hand basin,
c) Refixing or renewing cylinder jackets,
d) Refixing or renewing high level toilet flush chains,
e) Plunging minor blockages to sinks, baths and showers.

Electrical repairs include:

a) All extension leads,
b) Light bulbs, including outside lights,
c) Tenants own non-standard light fittings, fluorescent tubes and starters,
d) TV aerials, satellite dishes, or sockets other than communal sockets,
e) Telephone cables and equipment, except door access control,
f) Resetting timer controls to heating and hot water systems, including changing batteries.

Please note, this is not an exhaustive list.

The Council may carry out repairs caused through damage by the tenant and the costs will be recharged to the tenant.

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To avoid further damage to the property or risk of injury, it is tenants' responsibility to report repairs promptly.

6.9 Tenants' Personal Circumstances

The Council will take into account whether a tenant or household member has a health condition which is being adversely impacted by the repair which therefore requires more urgency than the designated timescales.

High priority is also given to repairs arising from harassment, domestic violence, or offensive graffiti.

Depending on tenants' needs, and in particular circumstances, the Council will endeavour to do the following:

- Adjust the urgency of a repair if the risk to health, safety and security is increased due to tenants' personal circumstances,
- Officers/operatives may make a safeguarding referral if vulnerabilities are identified, and if it is understood that the household could benefit from wider support,
- Offer additional support to tenants who may need reassurance regarding the nature of the repair and how it will be carried out.

The Council will aim to record tenants' relevant support needs and personal circumstances on IT systems and refer to this information when liaising with tenants. To do this, the Council will encourage all tenants to share information about their personal circumstances and vulnerabilities when engaging with services.

Due to limitations in the Council's IT systems, the Council may on occasion request that a tenant provides information about their circumstances at the point at which they report a repair. This is because information already held by the Council about the tenant's circumstances may not be available to Council officers logging repairs.

7 LEASEHOLDERS' RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

The Council's obligations to leaseholders include keeping the building in which the leasehold property is sited, in a good state of repair. This includes the external fabric of the building, and any shared or communal areas.

In turn, leaseholders are obligated to pay a share of the costs for carrying out those repairs; the details of these repairs are set out in leaseholders' annual service charge invoices. The apportionment of these charges can be found in leaseholders' leases.

For more information, please refer to Leaseholders' Rights and Responsibilities on the Council's website.

8 REPAIRS TO NEW BUILD PROPERTIES

New Council properties, whether built by the Council or acquired on the open market, are subject to a 12-month defects period.

For acquisitions of new build properties, or properties acquired on the open market, building contractors and housebuilders are responsible for dealing with any defects identified during the 12-month defects period. They are responsible for defects arising from faults in materials, manufacturing, and installation but any repairs needed as a result of tenant use, are dealt with in the same way as other responsive repairs.

Repairs requested during the defects period will be triaged before being passed onto the contractor/housebuilder. This is to ensure that the repair is needed due to a defect. Triaging the repair will reduce the likelihood of the Council being charged by the contractor for an incorrect call out.

Emergency repairs to new build or acquired properties align with the Council's timescales for emergency repairs to its other stock. If necessary, the Council will instruct its own repairs and maintenance operatives to carry out the repair and consider recharging the contractor/house builder afterwards.

9 NO ACCESS

It is important that Tenants allow operatives access to carry out repairs, servicing, and maintenance, as stated in tenancy agreements and Guide to Your Home. In some cases, if tenants refuse to grant access to operatives, the Council will apply to court to gain access.

If operatives are unable to access the property to carry out a repair, a missed appointment card will be left at the address requesting that the tenant contacts the Council to arrange a new appointment.

If the appointment was initially made to carry-out a repair which is causing a risk to the tenant, their household members, and other residents, or is causing damage to the property, the Council will explore all available options to gain access, including legal action.

The Council is legally obligated to carry out certain maintenance and servicing works, such as annual gas servicing. The Council sends appointment letters to tenants with a date and time to carry out the work and, if operatives are unable to gain access to the home on the first occasion, a second appointment letter will be sent, and, if necessary, a third appointment letter. Tenants have the opportunity to contact the Council and rearrange the appointment at any time.

If, after three attempts, the Council still cannot access the property, legal proceedings may commence, and the Council may apply to court to gain access.

Council officers or agents may enter the property without giving notice if entry is necessary because of an emergency. If forced entry is needed, the local Police will be notified and, when appropriate, a request for assistance will be made.

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10 COMPLIANCE

Legislation places a duty on landlords to service and maintain elements of tenants' homes regularly. In addition to repairs, the Council has specific responsibilities relating to:

- Gas safety
- Electrical safety
- Water hygiene checks
- Servicing passenger lifts, medical lifts, and hoists
- Asbestos inspection
- Damp and mould
- Fire safety, and
- Maintenance of communal areas.

For more information, please refer to the Council's Compliance Policies.

11 DAMP AND MOULD

The Council is taking a proactive approach to dealing with damp, mould, and condensation in Council properties and currently runs this aspect of the repairs and maintenance service to different timescales than other repairs. For more information, please refer to the Damp, Mould, and Condensation Policy.

12 TENANT ALTERATIONS

Tenants are entitled to make improvements and alterations to their home but must get written permission before carrying out any work.

A tenant alteration pack can be requested and must be completed, giving details of the type of work proposed and a basic drawing of the change. It is important that tenants do not start work without written permission. If permission is not provided, then tenants may have to return the property to how it was before or will be re-charged for the Council to carry out the repairs.
Tenants must get permission to carry out the following, or other similar work:

- Decorate the outside of the property,
- Any structural alteration, improvement, or addition to the building,
- Any change to the fixtures and fittings or additions to the fixtures and fittings.

  This includes:
  - Building a garage or shed or other large structure in the garden
  - Laying a drive or car parking space
  - Installing a shower, central heating or gas fire. (Please note, the installation of log burners or dual fuel fires is not allowed.)
  - Artexing ceilings. (the Artexing of walls is not allowed)
  - Removing walls
  - Installing a new fitted kitchen
  - Installing fitted wardrobes
  - Laying laminate flooring
  - Installing a new bathroom

- Building a porch
- Removing or replacing internal and external doors
- Constructing a door arch
- Putting up TV aerials or satellite dishes
- Installing CCTV cameras or other surveillance
- Altering the garden or boundary of the property

This list does not state every type of alteration which requires permission.
In addition, building regulation approval or planning permission may be required dependent upon the type of work. It is the tenant's responsibility to obtain any relevant permissions.

The Council will not take responsibility for the repair or maintenance of installations fitted by the tenant unless this has been agreed in writing.

13 TENANT RECHARGES

Tenants will be recharged for any works required as a result of tenant damage or fault. For example, any deliberate or accidental damage that could have been prevented with reasonable care – such as doors being damaged, or keys lost, and a lock change required.

At the end of a tenancy the Council may take steps to recover reasonable costs incurred if:

- Missed or damaged items need to be replaced or repaired,
- Aids and adaptations are removed without the Council's permission,
- Any tenant alterations do not comply with relevant regulations and have to be replaced or repaired,
- Any tenant alterations were made without the Council's written consent (see the Tenants' Alterations Procedure),
- Items are left in the home and need to be removed and stored, after the termination date,
- Items are left in the home which need to be disposed of by the Council,
- The property needs to be cleaned.

The Council will charge tenants for any works which are listed above as tenants' responsibilities if the work is carried out by the Council or its contractors to return the property to its original condition.

14 DECORATION ALLOWANCE

Once properties are let, tenants take responsibility for decorating their homes as detailed in the tenancy agreement.

When delivering some works to properties, tenants' decoration to walls and ceilings can be damaged and compensation is paid to tenants to help towards the cost of redecorating; this compensation is called Decoration Allowance.

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Decoration Allowance does not cover the full cost of re-decorating, rather it is a sum awarded to acknowledge the damage done to décor which can be used to contribute towards the cost of redecorating.

The Council has a legal duty to make good or compensate for damaged decorations as a result of works carried out to their homes. Examples of such repair work may include:

- Electrical re-wiring following an electrical fault,
- Broken bathroom fittings and associated re-tiling,
- Insecure external windows/doors,
- Loose or detached banister/handrail,
- Leaking roof,
- Repairing a defective damp proof course.

The Council has no legal responsibility to provide decoration allowance following an improvement to a home. As a good landlord the Council wishes to help tenants where decorations have been disturbed following programmed/ improvement works. Not all improvement works will cause damage or require the full decoration of a room. Examples of programmed works can include:

- Kitchen replacement (if the Council does not redecorate following fitting),
- Bathroom replacement (if the Council does not redecorate following fitting),
- Damp proof course renewal,
- Installing a Damp Proof Course for the first time,
- Plastering.*

* Most damage to plasterwork is discovered during routine redecoration by a customer. In such circumstances, compensation for damage to decoration is not appropriate. If the Council has to make good plasterwork as a result of damage caused during repair work, then the customer should be compensated by way of a decoration allowance.

From April 2025, the Council's sums and payment methods for decoration allowance will change:

CURRENTLY	FROM APRIL 2025
Payment of £25 per room damaged	Payment will increase to £50 per room damaged
Awarded per habitable room	Will be awarded: • per room, including halls, stairs and landing which will count as one room. • for any other rooms within the main envelope of the property and in which tenants carry out their daily lives – this does not include outhouses.
Paid by cheque	• Paid as a credit to the tenant's rent account, or • by cheque, issued in the tenant's name

No limit	Limited to £350 per property.

The sums awarded will be reviewed every three years.

15 RIGHT TO REPAIR

If there are delays with works being carried out, and the work is not completed to the timescales specified in the service standards, the Right to Repair Scheme may offer tenants the chance to request that an alternative contractor carry out the work. If the repair is still not done, the tenant may be entitled to compensation.

The Right to Repair only applies to certain eligible repairs. Additional information on the scheme is available in The Guide to your Home.

16 AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS

The Council is committed to helping tenants stay in their homes for as long as they choose. If tenants require adaptations to their homes, such as handrails to the entrance to doors, or a shower unit rather than a bath, an assessment can be requested. The Council may be able to assist with funding towards the cost of adapting homes to better meet a tenant's assessed care needs.

More information can be found in the Council's Aids and Adaptations Policy.

17 USING REPAIRS DATA TO INFORM INVESTMENT DECISIONS

The Council draws on multiple data sources to understand the expected lifespan of components of its housing stock. These data indicate the expected lifespans of roofs, kitchens, boilers, etc.

Examples of this include:

- Analysis of repairs data to inform capital programmes, eg, roofing programmes,
- Referrals from each areas' Technical Officers, drawing on their experiences and inspections in a locality,
- Tapping into the knowledge and data of contract partners,
- Referrals from Technical Officers regarding pathways, paving, etc, which are passed for possible inclusion in the Environmental Programme,
- Looking at data from proactive hot-spot areas for damp and mould.

18 DISREPAIR AND COMPENSATION

In some circumstances, the Council may need to offer a tenant compensation, including:

- If a tenant has completed agreed improvements to their home which qualify for compensation,
- Right to Repair (see section 15),
- If the Council or its contractors accidentally damage tenant property when carrying out a repair,

- If the Council's/contractor's service has been considerably below a reasonably expected standard and if the tenant has been substantially inconvenienced or incurred a financial loss.

Tenants are able to lodge a disrepair claim with the Council if the Council has been informed of a defect and been given reasonable opportunity to rectify it but has not done so. Please refer to the Council's website to find out more about Housing Disrepair Claims.

19 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Council supports equality of access for all its tenants, especially those who are at most risk due to their/their household members' needs, those who have difficulties managing their property, and those who struggle to sustain a tenancy. The Council recognises that some groups with protected characteristics are more likely to fall into one of these categories.

Where appropriate the Council will adapt working practices to ensure tenants do not face additional barriers when accessing services. This includes providing information to tenants in Braille, large print, audio, or alternative languages.

The Council will record and monitor data to gain insight on satisfaction levels and service outcomes for tenants with protected characteristics and use this information to help improve services.

The Council will take into account whether a resident has any particular needs that give a specific repair more urgency than the designated timescales.

Depending on tenants' needs, and in particular circumstances, the Council will adjust the urgency of a repair if the risk to health, safety and security is increased due to tenants' personal circumstances.

20 MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE

This policy and the repairs and maintenance service will be monitored through a variety of means, including:

- Regular performance reports, including a monthly performance scorecard and a quarterly compliance scorecard
- Contract monitoring meetings with contractors
- Tenant feedback, including the level and nature of complaints from tenants regarding repairs and maintenance, tenant perception measures results, and instant satisfaction survey results (tenants are sent a text message after each repair requesting feedback).

Responsive repairs and Tenant Satisfaction Measures; please see Appendix B for a full list of performance indicators for responsive repairs and Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

For more information regarding compliance monitoring and performance, please refer to the Compliance Policies.

21 COMPLAINTS

Anyone who feels that they have had a poor service from the Council, or one of its contractors, and has tried to get the problem solved by speaking to an officer from Housing Services, can make a complaint.

For more information about how to make a complaint, please refer to the Council's Complaints Procedure for Housing Services.

22 HOW TENANTS CAN GET INVOLVED

The Council is keen to involve tenants in shaping its services and ensuring the Council delivers on the issues which matter most to tenants.

By working together, the Council and tenants can develop and improve services for all customers. From how well Council policies are explained to where and how money is spent, tenants can have a say on what happens.

The Council convenes a Repairs sub-group of the Housing Involvement Panel which includes tenant representatives.

For more information, please see the Council's Tenant Engagement Framework or visit the Council's Tenant Involvement web pages
www.rotherham.gov.uk/tenantinvolvement
Email customerinvolvement@rotherham.gov.uk, or
Phone 01709 822100

Tenants could also contact the local tenant federation.
Rotherham Federation of Communities
Web www.rotherhamfederation.org
Email info@rotherfed.org
Phone 01709 368515

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APPENDIX 1

COMPLETE LIST OF EMERGENCY REPAIRS

REPAIR	WHEN IS THIS REPAIR CLASSED AS URGENT?
Waste pump not working	If this is a wet room
WC pan blocked	If it is the only toilet in the property
Fire alarm triggered in neighbourhood centre	Always
Fire alarm triggered in block of flats	Always
Repair communal external door (Property Not Secure)	Always
Refix hip/ridge tiles – if roof leak or dangerous	If the tiles are hanging dangerously
Renew hip/ridge tiles – if roof leak or dangerous	If the tiles are hanging dangerously
Refix loose concrete coping	If the coping poses a significant risk to tenants or members of the public
Refix loose brick on edge coping	If the coping poses a significant risk to tenants or members of the public
Soil pipe leaking on joint	If the pipe is leaking raw sewage
Soil pipe cracked and leaking	If the pipe is leaking raw sewage
Refix soil pipe	If the pipe is at imminent risk of falling
Cooker control unit (switch and socket) damaged/not working	If there are bare wires showing or signs/smells of burning
Cooker outlet (plate behind cooker) damaged/not working	If there are bare wires showing or signs/smells of burning
No power or lights	If trip switches have been reset and there is still no power/lights
No power to property	If trip switches have been reset and there is still no power/lights
No lights to property	If trip switches have been reset and there are still no lights
Light switch damaged or not working	If there are bare wires showing or if there are signs of burning
Smoke alarm/beeping/sounding	If the alarm is sounding constantly
Socket/fused spur damaged/not working	If there are bare wires showing or signs/smell of burning
Water leaking on to electrics	Always
Boundary wall loose or crumbling	If the wall is at risk of falling
Cladding boards loose or damaged	If the cladding is at risk of falling
Coping loose/missing bricks	If the wall is at risk of falling
Coping loose/missing concrete	If the wall is at risk of falling
Repair concrete canopy over door	If the canopy is in a dangerous state
Repair timber canopy over door	If the canopy is in a dangerous state

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REPAIR	WHEN IS THIS REPAIR CLASSED AS URGENT?
Repair PVC canopy over door	If the canopy is in a dangerous state
Gain entry to property/lock change	Always
Wall unit unsafe	If the unit is at risk of falling imminently
Supply and fit grab rail to shower/bath	If the tenant is ready to leave hospital and the works are needed as part of their discharge.
Supply and fit grab rail to toilet	If the tenant is ready to leave hospital and the works are needed as part of their discharge.
Supply and fit grab rail to external door	If the tenant is ready to leave hospital and the works are needed as part of their discharge.
Supply and fit key safe	If the tenant is ready to leave hospital and the works are needed as part of their discharge.
Leaking pipe work at roof level	If the leak is coming into the property and affecting the electrics
Leak from cold water tank	If the leak is affecting the electrics or if the leak cannot be contained
External water mains pipe burst/leaking	If the leak is within the boundary of the property
External water mains pipe frozen	If the pipework is within the boundary of the property
Soil pipe leaking	If the pipe is leaking raw sewage
Soil pipe loose	If the pipe is at imminent risk of falling
Pot loose or broken	If the chimney pot is at imminent risk of falling
Chimney stack loose or crumbling	If the stack is at imminent risk of falling
Barge boards missing, loose or rotten	If the loose boards pose an imminent danger of falling
Fascia boards missing, loose or rotten	If the loose fascia boards pose an imminent danger of falling
Soffit boards missing, loose or rotten	If the loose soffits pose an imminent danger of falling
Board up window	Always

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APPENDIX 2

COMPLETE LIST OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR RESPONSIVE REPAIRS AND TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES (TSMs)

RESPONSIVE REPAIRS	TSMs
% of four-hour responsive repairs which are attended within timescales	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard
% of four-hour emergency gas responsive repairs which are attended within timescales	Number of responsive repairs raised during reporting year
% of responsive repairs completed "Right First Time"	Number of responsive repairs cancelled by landlord (the Council) or at the tenant's request, for any reason
% of gas responsive repairs completed "Right First Time"	Number of responsive repairs reclassified either by addition of extra time or change in status to another work category, eg Planned
Average number of days to complete a void (major works and minor works)	Number of responsive repairs completed in first year
% of 24-hour urgent gas responsive repairs which are attended within timescales	Number of responsive repairs which have not been completed (work in progress)
% of appointed responsive repairs which are completed within timescales	Asbestos safety checks
% of appointed gas responsive repairs which are completed within timescales	Lift safety checks
% of planned revenue works which are completed within timescales	Gas safety checks
% of aids and adaptations which are completed within timescales	Fire safety checks
% of voids uncap and tests Availability of Uncap & Test slots	
% of repairs where an appointment has been made and kept	

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Appendix 2

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING SERVICES GAS & CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY POLICY

NOVEMBER 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

The health and safety of tenants, residents, visitors, staff, and contract partners is of paramount importance to the Council. The risk of gas and carbon monoxide escape presents a significant hazard to the safety of buildings and their occupants, and it is imperative that there are robust management and early warning systems in place to significantly reduce risks.

The key objective of this policy is to ensure the Council, employees, partners, and tenants are clear on their legal and regulatory gas and carbon monoxide safety obligations in respect of housing assets. This policy provides the framework all key stakeholders will operate within to meet these obligations.

The delivery of this policy is an integral part of the Council's holistic management of gas and carbon monoxide safety across its portfolio of assets as detailed within the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

2 SCOPE

This Policy aims to demonstrate that the Council has relevant measures in place to comply with the Gas Safety (installation and use) Regulations 1998 as amended and the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022:
This policy also operates within the context of additional legislation (see Appendix)

It covers assets within the responsibility of the Council's housing service, including residential properties, neighbourhood centres, garages and boiler houses but does not apply to managing gas and carbon monoxide safety within non-council owned dwellings or other council assets such as schools, care homes, offices, or commercial properties.

This policy applies to all employees who are involved with the management and maintenance of housing services including contractors or visitors to buildings for the purpose of performing their work duties, and is underpinned by the following principles:

- Ensuring compliance with legal and statutory requirements.
- Ensuring, as far as is reasonably possible that gas and carbon monoxide risks are minimised.
- Ensuring all gas and carbon monoxide equipment on the Council's estate is regularly maintained, and records kept in line with legal requirements. This includes cyclical servicing and inspections of gas installations.

2.1 Guidance and codes of practice

The principal guidance and codes of practice applicable to this policy are:

- Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) - The ACoP applicable to this policy is: ACoP L56 - 'Safety in the installation and use of gas systems and appliances' (fifth edition 2018.

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- The principal guidance applicable to this policy is: INDG285 - ‘A guide to landlords’ duties: Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 as amended Approved Code of Practice and guidance (3rd Edition 2018).

2.2 Regulatory standards

The Council will comply with the Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer Standards for social housing in England.

The Gas Safety Regulations impose duties on the Council to protect customers in their homes. The main duties are set out in Regulation 36 and require landlords to:

- Ensure gas fittings and flues are maintained in a safe condition. Gas appliances should be serviced in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. If these are not available it is recommended that they are serviced annually, unless advised otherwise by a Gas Safe registered engineer.
- Ensure the annual safety check is conducted on each gas appliance and flue within 12 months of the previous safety check.
- Have all installation, maintenance and safety checks conducted by a Gas Safe registered engineer.
- Keep a record of each safety check for at least two years (until at least two further gas safety checks have been conducted).
- Issue a copy of the landlord gas safety record to tenants within 28 days of the check being completed, or upon sign up to any new tenancy.
- Display a copy of the latest safety check record in a common area of a building where the gas appliance serves a communal heating system to multiple homes.
- Ensure that gas fittings which contravene Regulation 30 (e.g. certain gas fires and instantaneous water heaters) are not fitted in any room to be occupied as sleeping accommodation. This includes any room converted into such accommodation.

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations which came into effect 1st October 2022 require the Council to:

- Install a smoke alarm on every elevation with living accommodation.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in any rooms used as living accommodation with a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers).
- Repair or replace faulty smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors as soon as reasonably practicable.

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3 THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO MANAGING GAS & CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY

The Council has a range of measures in place to manage gas and carbon monoxide safety within its properties. The compliance management matrix details all compliance activity, frequency of testing, and how the Council meets its statutory and regulatory obligations. This includes:

- Domestic Landlord Gas Safety Record.
- Non- Domestic Landlord Gas Safety Record.
- Solid Fuel Annual Service and Sweep.
- Carbon Monoxide Detection.
- Liquid Petroleum Gas Landlord Gas Safety Record.
- Heating Pressure Vessels.

3.1 Annual Servicing

The Council will conduct an annual gas safety check to all properties with a gas supply, irrespective of whether the gas is connected or not.

The annual gas safety check will include any testing of tenant owned appliances (excluding tenant's own cookers). Where appliances are found to be faulty, they will be identified in accordance with the Gas Industry Unsafe Situations Procedure (IGEM/G/11 Edition 2) and isolated or disconnected dependent on the severity of the issue. A warning notice will be issued, and the relevant advice given to the tenant explaining why the appliance is considered unsafe.

The Council will conduct an annual gas safety check to all properties where the gas supply has been capped at the request of the tenant on a previous safety check, to ensure the supply has not been reconnected without the Council being notified. At the same time, the Council will check on tenant welfare and assess whether the lack of gas heating is adversely affecting the condition of the property.

Annual visual checks are completed to properties that do not have a gas meter but retain a live gas supply which has been capped at the emergency control valve (ECV).

3.2 New Appliance

The Council will ensure a gas safety check is conducted following installation of a new gas boiler and obtain a landlord gas safety certificate (LGSR) to confirm the necessary checks have been completed. The safety check will include a gas tightness test of the carcass, full commissioning of the newly installed boiler in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and Regulation 26/9, a visual inspection of the meter installation, and an annual service/safety check in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, Regulation 26/9 and the Council's specification on all other gas appliances and associated flues within a property.

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3.3 Void Properties and Mutual Exchange

For safety reasons and best practice, the Council will cap off gas supplies to all properties when the property becomes empty. This will be completed by the end of the next working day following termination of tenancy. The Council will also cap off gas supplies to all new build properties upon receipt of keys at handover from the contractor/developer.

Uncapping and a gas safety check is conducted upon reletting a property at a date agreed with the tenant, and a copy of the Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR) is issued within 28 days of the inspection.

A gas safety check will be completed on the day of a mutual exchange.

3.4 Refurbishment Work

A safety check will be conducted on completion of any repair and/or refurbishment works to occupied or void properties where works may have affected any gas fittings, appliances, or flues all in accordance with Regulation 8.

3.5 Gas Boiler Disconnections

If a boiler cannot be repaired, and leaving it connected to the gas supply would pose a risk of gas or carbon monoxide escape, the boiler supply will be capped/disconnected from the gas supply. If this occurs, then temporary electric heaters will be offered and provided at the time of capping. New parts will be sourced and fitted, or if required, a new boiler supplied and fitted within 9 days of disconnection.

3.6 Carbon Monoxide Alarms and Smoke Detectors

As part of the annual gas safety check (or at void stage) the Council will check smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms are working correctly. A new detector and/or alarm will be fitted If faulty or missing.

3.7 Unsafe Appliances

The Council will ensure that there is a robust process in place for the management of immediately dangerous and at-risk situations identified from the gas/heating safety check or heating repair works, in line with Gas Industry Unsafe Situations Procedure. Any open flue gas appliances found in any rooms that are being used as bedrooms or for sleeping will be removed.

3.7 Solid Fuel Appliances

A HETAS accredited contractor is in place to service existing solid fuel appliances and sweep flues on an annual basis. The contractor will also check and replace as necessary any carbon monoxide detecting device(s)

The Council will not permit installation of solid fuel or any open flued appliances. All existing appliances will be removed prior to any new tenancy.

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3.8 Testing and servicing schedule

GAS ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY
Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR) Domestic	Annually
Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR) Non-Domestic	Annually
Solid fuel Appliances	Annually
Carbon Monoxide Detection	Annually
Heating Pressure Vessels	Annually

3.8 Risk assessment and key controls

- The Council operates effective contract management arrangements with contractors responsible for delivering the service, including ensuring contracts/service level agreements are in place, conducting client-led performance meetings, and ensuring that contractors' employee and public liability insurances are up to date on an annual basis.
- All replacement, modification and installation of gas appliances and heating systems within Council properties will comply with all elements of Building Regulations, Part J Combustion Appliances and Fuel Storage Systems.
- The Council maintains a risk assessment for gas and carbon monoxide safety management and operations, setting out key risks and appropriate mitigations.
- To comply with the requirements of the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002, the Council will consider the safety of its workspaces and plant/boiler rooms of residential blocks that fall within scope of the legislation.
- The Council investigates and manages all RIDDOR notifications submitted to the HSE in relation to gas and carbon monoxide safety and will take action to address any issues identified and make appropriate adjustments from lessons learned.
- A robust process is in place for dealing with reports of fumes and suspected gas escapes.

3.9 Procedures for access

An appointment letter for the annual gas safety check will be posted ten months after completion of the previous check. The appointment will be on or around two weeks from the date of the appointment letter and will provide details for rearranging the appointment if the auto generated appointment is inconvenient. A further appointment letter will be sent if the engineer is unable to access and complete the gas safety check.

The Council will operate a robust enforcement process following three consecutive failed access attempts. Legal remedies available within the terms of the tenancy agreement may be enforced to gain access to the property to carry out the work.

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Where vulnerabilities are known or identified, the Council will ensure the wellbeing of the tenant is safeguarded and work with other agencies and Housing Officers to attempt to address the root cause of the access issue.

3.10 Data and records

The Council will maintain a core asset register of all properties with component and attribute data against each property to show gas safety check requirements.

Copies of all landlord's gas safety records (LGSRs)/certificates will be provided to the tenants or displayed in a common area within 28 days of completion.
A core asset register will be maintained of all properties owned and/or managed by the Council, with component/attribute data against each property to show gas/heating safety check requirements.

A monthly data reconciliation process will be undertaken to manage all changes to stock, including property acquisitions and disposals.

Accurate records will be maintained against each property owned or managed by the Council.

All completed safety check records, warning notices and remedial work records will be retained for at least two years and will have robust processes and controls in place to maintain appropriate levels of security for all gas/heating safety related data and records.

3.11 Competent persons

- Only suitably competent Gas Safe accredited contractors will undertake works to gas fittings, appliances, and flues.
- Only suitably competent HETAS accredited contractors will undertake works to solid fuel fittings, appliances, and flues.
- A check will be made to ensure contractors working on behalf of the Council hold the relevant qualifications and accreditations when procured, and thereafter on an annual basis; and will evidence these checks and each contractor's certification appropriately. The Gas, Electrical and Mechanical Supervisor will have copies of front and backs of all Gas Safe cards held by Service Providers and their sub-contractors.

3.12 Training

The Council will deliver training on this policy and the procedures that support it, through appropriate methods including team briefings; basic gas and heating safety awareness training; and on the job training for those delivering the program of gas and heating safety checks, planned maintenance and repair works as part of their daily job. All training undertaken by staff will be formally recorded.

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4 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

The Council will ensure gas and carbon monoxide safety advice is provided to all tenants and is accessible including providing, if appropriate, the information in braille, large print, audio, or alternative languages. In addition:

- The Council will respond appropriately to meet the needs of tenants who share information regarding a disability or vulnerability and will ensure reasonable adjustments are made to complete electrical testing and maintenance.
- The Council considers excellent communication essential in the effective delivery of safety programmes and will establish a strategy to enhance communication to support tenants' understanding of gas and carbon monoxide safety. This will encourage and support tenants to report any safety concerns and help the Council to engage with vulnerable and hard to reach tenants.
- The Council will share information clearly and transparently and will ensure that information is available to tenants via regular publications and information on the Council's website.
- The Council acknowledges the impacts of energy poverty and will ensure a robust process is in place to support and/or direct tenants to bodies able to offer professional advice.

5 AUDIT, ASSURANCE, AND REVIEW

5.1 Quality Assurance

The Compliance Officer will regularly review process, performance and undertake quality assurance checks to monitor delivery against the policy with oversight by the Compliance Manager and Head of Housing Property Services, this includes monitoring the following:

- 5% random desktop sample of Landlord Gas Safety Records
- 100% certification checks by compliance management system.
- 2.5% field checks including works in progress audits.

5.2 Managing Performance

Performance and progress against key performance indicators will be reported regularly to the Senior Management Team and at least quarterly to senior management and the Cabinet Member via the housing compliance scorecard:

- Properties with a valid Landlord Gas Safety Record (100%)
- Properties overdue at legal stage (0%)
- Valid certification for properties with other heating types (100%)
- Commercial Boilers and Pressure Vessels (100%)
- Properties with Carbon Monoxide detector(s) installed (100%)

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5.3 Document Control/Revision History

This policy will be reviewed annually or before if changes in legislation or regulatory require an earlier review.

DATE APPROVED	18 November 2024
REVISION DATE	November 2027

Version no.	Date	Authorisation route	Summary of changes
	24/09/2024	DLT	Formatting, typos, aligning information with TSMs/KPIs
	07/10/2024	SLT	
	22/10/2024	IPSC	
	18/11/2024	Cabinet	

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APPENDIX

This policy also operates within the context of the following legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- The Occupiers' Liability Act 1984
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996
- Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- Gas Safety (Management) Regulations 1996 (as amended)
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (inc. latest amendments)
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006
- Pressure Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016
- Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002
- Housing Act 2004
- Building Regulations 2010 (England and Wales) approved document J.
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Defective Premises Act 1972

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Appendix 3

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING SERVICES ELECTRICAL SAFETY POLICY

NOVEMBER 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

The health and safety of tenants, residents, visitors, staff, and contractors is of paramount importance to the Council. The risk of electrical fire, shock and even electrocution presents a significant hazard to the safety of buildings and their occupants, and it is imperative that there are robust management and early warning systems in place to significantly reduce risks.

The key objective of this policy is to ensure that Council, employees, partners, and tenants are clear on the Council's legal and regulatory electrical safety obligations in respect of housing assets. This policy provides the framework all key stakeholders will operate within to meet these obligations.

The delivery of this policy is an integral part of the Council's holistic management of electrical safety across its portfolio of assets as detailed within the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

2 SCOPE

This policy aims to demonstrate that the Council has relevant measures in place to comply with the Housing Act 2004, Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Action 2018, Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016.

This policy also operates within the context of additional legislation (see Appendix A).

It covers assets within the responsibility of the Council's Housing Service, including residential properties, neighbourhood centres, garages and boiler houses but does not apply to managing electrical safety within non-Council owned dwellings or other Council assets such as schools, care homes, offices or commercial properties.

This policy applies to all employees who are involved with the management and maintenance of housing services including contractors or visits to buildings for the purpose of carrying out their work duties, and is under pinned by the following principles:

- Ensuring compliance with legal and statutory requirements.
- Ensuring, as far as it reasonably possible, that electrical risks are minimised.
- Ensuring all electrical and mechanical equipment on the Council's estate is regularly maintained, and records kept in line with legal requirements. This includes in respect of cyclical servicing and inspections of electrical installations.

2.1 Guidance and codes of practice

The principal guidance and codes of practice applicable to this policy are:

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- Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment Wiring Regulations British Standard 767:2018 (18th edition amendment 3).
- Code of Practice for the Management of Electrotechnical Care in Social Housing (Electrical Safety Roundtable) January 2019.
- The code of Practice for In-Service Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment (IET) 2020 (5th edition).

2.2 Regulatory standards

The Council will comply with the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards for social housing in England.

The Housing Act 2004 requires that properties are free from Category One Hazards, Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which includes electrical hazards.

The landlord and Tenant Action 1985 and the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Action 2018 place duties on landlords to ensure that electrical installations in rented properties are:

- Safe when the tenancy beings
- Maintained in a safe condition throughout the tenancy so the property is fit for habitation.

To comply with these duties, electrical installations are required to be periodically inspected and tested. There is no legal requirement setting out how frequently we mut carry out inspections and tests in domestic properties, however, the Government is consulting on introducing mandatory checks on electrical installations for social housing at least every five years.

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 places duties on employers that all electrical installations and appliances within the workplace are safety and that only competent persons work on the electrical installations, systems, and equipment.

3 THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO MANAGING ELECTRICAL SAFETY

The Council has a range of measures in place to manage electrical safety within its properties. The compliance management matrix details all compliance activity, frequency of testing, and how the Council meets its statutory and regulatory obligations. This includes:

- Domestic electrical installation condition report.
- Non-domestic electrical installation condition report.
- Smoke detectors.
- Automatic doors, gates and barriers.
- Emergency lighting.
- Portable appliance testing.
- Lightning protection.

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3.1 Electrical installation condition reports (EICR)

A programme of electrical installation inspection and testing is carried out to all domestic, communal areas and neighbourhood centres at least once every five years (unless the competent person recommends the next test must be done sooner than this), upon commencement of a new tenancy or following planned component replacement works.

3.2 Smoke detectors

As part of the annual gas safety check, or at void stage, the engineer will check smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms are working correctly. A new detector and/or alarm will be fitted if faulty or missing.

3.3 Automatic doors, barriers, and gates

Automatic doors are checked and serviced every six months and a certificate of safety provided by the specialist contractor confirming the doors meet British Standard EN 12453.

3.4 Emergency lighting

Emergency lighting is tested by accredited electricians every six months. Any defects are noted and actioned within appropriate priorities.

3.4 Portable appliance testing (PAT)

Any portable equipment (electrical equipment which does not form part of the fixed system is considered to be an electrical appliance). PAT is undertaken by a competent person at intervals dependent upon level of risk. This includes items provided within furnished tenancies and in neighbourhood centres. It does not apply to tenants' own equipment.

3.5 Lightning protection

Lightning protections is tested and certified annually by a specialist contractor and a certificate of compliance held.

3.6 Follow-up work

- The Council will endeavour to repair all Code One (C1) and Code 2 (C") defects and Further Investigations (Fis) identified by an electrical installation inspection and test at the time of the check, to produce a satisfactory EICR. Where this is not possible, we will make the installation safe and return to complete the required remediation works within 28 days where reasonably practicable to ensure a satisfactory EICR is produced.

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- Where C2 defects have been repaired after the inspection date, they will be recorded on a Minor Works Certificate which will be appended to the unsatisfactory EICR deeming the installation satisfactory.
- The Council will review all Code 3 (C3) observations and determine the most appropriate course of action.

3.7 Testing and servicing schedule

ELECTRICAL ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY
Electric domestic EICR	5 years
Electric non-domestic EICR	5 years
Electric automatic doors	6 months
Electric automatic gates and barriers	6 months
Electric emergency lighting service	Annually
Lightning protection	Annually

3.8 Risk assessment and key controls

- The council operates effective contract management arrangements with the partnering contractors responsible for delivering the service, including ensuring contracts and service level agreements are in place, conducting client-led performance meetings and ensuring that contractor, employee, and public liability insurances are up to date on an annual basis.
- The council maintains a risk assessment for electrical safety management and operations, setting out its key electrical safety risks and appropriate mitigations.
- To comply with the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) a Construction Phase Plan will be in place for all repairs work to void and tenanted properties (at the start of the contract and reviewed annually thereafter), component replacement and refurbishment works.
- The Council addresses meter tampering when discovered during routine, cyclical or programmed electrical maintenance.
- The Council investigates and manages all RIDDOR notifications submitted to the HSE in relation to electrical safety and will take action to address any issues identified and make appropriate adjustments from lessons learned.

3.9 Procedures for access

The Council will send an appointment letter for the domestic electrical safety test two months before the five-year anniversary of the previous test. The appointment will be on or around two weeks from the date of the appointment letter and will provide details for rearranging the appointment if the auto generated appointment is inconvenient. A further appointment letter will be sent if the engineer is unable to access and complete the electrical safety test.

The Council will operate a robust enforcement process. Following three consecutive failed access attempts, the Council will use the legal remedies available within the terms of the tenancy agreement, to gain access to the property to carry out the work.

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Where vulnerabilities are known or identified, the Council will safeguard the wellbeing of the tenant.

3.10 Data and records

- The Council will maintain a core asset register of all properties with component and attribute data against each property to show electrical safety check requirements.
- The Council will operate a monthly data reconciliation process to manage all changes to stock, including property acquisitions and disposals.
- The Council will maintain accurate records against each property;
  - Inspection dates
  - EICRs
  - Minor electrical works certificates
  - Electrical Installation Certificates and Building Regulation Part P notifications associated with remedial works

3.11 Competent persons

- Only suitably competent NICEIC, or equivalent, electrical contractors and operatives will undertake electrical works on behalf of the Council.
- We will check that Council contractors hold the relevant qualifications and accreditations when procured, and thereafter, on an annual basis.

3.12 Training

The Council will deliver training on this policy and the procedures that support it, through appropriate methods, including team briefings, basic electrical safety awareness training, and on the job training for those delivering the programme of electrical testing, planned maintenance and repair works as part of their daily job. All training undertaken by staff will be formally recorded.

4 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

The Council will ensure electrical safety advice is provided to all tenants and is accessible including providing, if appropriate, the information in braille, large print, audio, or alternative languages. In addition:

- The Council will respond appropriately to meet the needs of tenants who share information regarding a disability or vulnerability and will ensure reasonable adjustments are made to complete electrical testing and maintenance.
- The Council considers excellent communication essential in the effective delivery of electrical safety programmes and will establish a strategy to enhance communication to support tenants' understanding of electrical safety. This will encourage and support tenants to report any concerns about electrical safety and help the Council to engage with vulnerable and hard to reach tenants.

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- The Council will share information clearly and transparently and will ensure that information is available to tenants via regular publications and information on the Council's website.
- The Council acknowledges the impacts of energy poverty and will ensure a robust process is in place to support and/or direct tenants to bodies able to offer professional advice.

5 AUDIT, COMPLIANCE, AND REVIEW

5.1 Quality Assurance

The Compliance Officer will regularly review process, performance and undertake quality assurance checks to monitor delivery against the policy with oversight by the Compliance Manager and Head of Housing Property Services, this includes monitoring the following:

- 10% random desktop sample of all electrical certification.
- 100% certification checks by compliance management system.
- 2.5% field checks of all categories of electrical compliance.
- 20% of all new installations.

5.2 Managing Performance

Performance and progress against key performance indicators will be reported regularly to the Senior Management Team and at least quarterly to Senior Management Team and the Cabinet Member via the Housing Compliance Scorecard.

- Communal properties having a valid Electrical Installation condition Report (EICR) within the cycle (100%)
- Domestic properties having a valid Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) within the cycle (100%)
- Properties with outstanding C1 actions (0%)
- Properties with outstanding C2 actions exceeding one calendar year since test date (0%)
- Automated doors checked/serviced (100%)
- Automated gates and barriers tested/serviced (100%)
- Lightning conductors tested (100%)
- Properties with a smoke detector (100%)
- Number of RIDDOR notifications to the HSE with regards to electrical safety (0%)

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5.3 Document Control/Revision History

This policy will be reviewed annually or before if changes in legislation or regulatory require an earlier review.

DATE APPROVED	18 November 2024
REVISION DATE	November 2027

Version no.	Date	Authorisation route	Summary of changes
	24/09/2024	DLT	Formatting, typos, aligning information with TSMs/KPIs
	07/10/2024	SLT	
	22/10/2024	IPSC	
	18/11/2024	Cabinet	

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APPENDIX

This policy also operates within the context of the following legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Occupiers' Liability Act 1984
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022
- Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act 2007
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Building Regulations 2010 (England and Wales) – Part P
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Defective Premises Act 1972

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Appendix 4

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy Report	
Directorate: Adult Care, Housing & Public Health	**Service area:** Housing Property Services
Lead person: Wendy Foster	**Contact:** 01709 255047 Wendy-regen.foster@rotherham.gov.uk
Is this a: [x] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify** **Report**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The report is seeking approval of the new Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance, Electrical Safety, and Gas and Carbon Monoxide Safety Policies which set out the Council's approach to dealing with repairs and maintenance, and gas and electrical safety, in the Council's Housing Service asset portfolio.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?	x	
Could the proposal affect service users?	x	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?	x	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		x
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		x

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason

N/A

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6.**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4.**

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made**.**

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

In 2023, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act was introduced. The Act was implemented to give tenants greater powers and improve access to quick and fair solutions to problems following the fire at Grenfell and the death of two-year old Awaab Ishak. Both tragedies highlighted failings in the governance and regulation of social housing.

There was a good deal of learning to be taken from the preventable death of Awaab, whose passing was directly linked to extensive damp and mould in the family home, in Rochdale. Awaab's family had limited English, so it was difficult for them to fully understand their rights and the standard of repairs and maintenance which they could expect from their landlord. Furthermore, the information available to the family was not easily accessible and, despite reporting the damp on several occasions, they struggled to make their voices heard.

Enabled by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH) published four consumer standards on which the performance of social housing landlords is assessed. The most relevant standards for this assessment, and driving the work of Housing Property Services, is the Safety and Quality Consumer Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

- **The Safety and Quality Standard** requires landlords to keep their homes safe and free from hazards. It covers repairs, maintenance and planned improvements, health and safety, decency, and stock quality.
- **The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** requires landlords to treat tenants with fairness and respect, engage with and make information available for tenants, and to consider the diverse needs of their tenants.

For the past year, the Council has been looking at its key documents, ensuring they are available to tenants online, and producing versions of more technical documents which are easier to read and understand. They must also be accessible and easy to translate into other languages.

Housing Services is sharing its legal and regulatory performance with tenants and letting them know the set timescales for carrying out urgent and standard repairs, so they can hold the service to account.

The Council is starting to build greater knowledge of its tenants through Housing Estates' tenancy verification visits, as well as inviting tenants to tell us about the personal circumstances. This is particularly important to Housing Property Services as medical conditions which impact a household, or other circumstances, such as having very young children in the home, may impact the priority level given to the repair they are reporting.

The publication of these policies seeks to deliver clarity and information to tenants so they can assess whether the Council is providing the level of service set out in these policies.

The majority of the Council's repairs are carried out by two contract partners, Mears and EQUANS. They currently collate feedback from the Council's tenants regarding repairs

and maintenance. The Council aims to move the collection and analysis of tenant feedback in-house, starting with damp and mould works.

Equalities information has been included in the Council's questionnaire sent to tenants who have recently received a survey/treatment following a report of damp and mould. Feedback will be analysed to assess the satisfaction level across all tenants, including those with protected characteristics. Appropriate action will be taken by the Council if feedback suggests a lack of satisfaction with a particular group of tenants or if there is little or no feedback from a group with protected characteristics.

- **Key findings**

Housing Services needs to grow its knowledge and understanding about its tenants and their personal circumstances. This will enable to the Council to tailor the delivery of its repairs and maintenance service to better meet its tenants' needs.

There is a need to ensure policies are easily accessible to tenants, easy to understand, and easily translated into other languages.

- **Actions**

Tenant feedback will be analysed monthly to ensure a consistency of service across all tenants.

Housing Property Services will continue to engage with, and seek the opinions of, tenants before publishing information and agreeing policies.

Complaints will be monitored in HQIP to identify trends in complaints, either from a specific group of tenants, regarding a specific type of repair or with a specific property type.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	27.09.24
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	03.10.24
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Wendy G Foster Improvement Manager

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Lynsey Stephenson	Head of Housing Property Services	03.10.24

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date screening completed	3 October 2024
Report title and date	Repairs and Maintenance Policy
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	Cabinet – 18 November 2024
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	01/10/24

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Appendix 5

PART B – Equality Analysis Form

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title:	Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy, Electrical Safety, and Gas and CO Safety Policies
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 01/10/24	
Directorate: Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	**Service area:** Housing Property Services, Housing Services
Lead Manager: Wendy G Foster	**Contact number:** (01709) 255047
Is this a: [X] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance		
Name	**Organisation**	**Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)**
Wendy G Foster	RMBC	Improvement Manager
John Oliver	Agency/RMBC	Compliance Manager
Lynsey Stephenson	RMBC	Head of Service

3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)
This may include a group/s identified by a protected characteristic, others groups or stakeholder/s e.g. service users, employees, partners, members, suppliers etc.)

These policies apply to all tenants living in the Council's HRA/residential properties, many of whom will have protected characteristics.

What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)

The Housing Service holds equalities information on Council housing tenants and on its employees. This information is considered when a report is submitted.

Tenants Scrutiny Panel were consulted on the draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy on 15 July 2024, SMT on 17 July 2024, and DLT on 23 July and 24 September. The policies will be presented to SLT on 7 October 2024, IPSC on 22 October 2024, and Cabinet on 18 November 2024.

Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?

The Council has only recently started to collate information regarding equality information on pregnancy.

What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?

- Customer feedback is received and monitored daily.
- KPI information and TSM data is collated monthly/quarterly through Performance, Intelligence and Improvement, and shared across Housing Services' Heads of Service and Assistant Director, at the monthly HQIP meetings.
- Complaints information relating to repairs and maintenance is also shared at HQIP.

Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)	Tenants Scrutiny Panel were consulted on the draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy on 15 July 2024. Tenants were keen to remove/replace the term 'vulnerabilities/vulnerable tenants', as some individuals

	may need repairs prioritising but would not consider themselves vulnerable. The Council's approach is that, in many cases, the repair/environment can impact tenants' vulnerability. This has been replaced with 'personal circumstances'.
Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s)consulted and key findings)	SMT on 17 July 2024, and DLT on 23 July and 24 September. The policies will be presented to SLT on 7 October 2024, IPSC on 22 October 2024, and Cabinet on 18 November 2024. Amendments have been made to include a section on Leaseholders, append a list of emergency repairs, include new build properties/market acquisitions (12 month defects period), and replace the word 'vulnerable/vulnerabilities', with personal circumstances.

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)
How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance) As well as the list of emergency repairs at Appendix 1 of the policy, there is scope to upgrade non-emergency repairs to emergency status. This results in repairs being carried out within 4 hours, rather than during a mutually convenient appointment, within 28 days of the repair being reported. For example, should a tenant have a shower over a bath in their home, and report a repair with their shower, it would ordinarily be repaired within 28 days as the bath provides a bathing facility. However, the Council understands that there are some medical conditions for which bathing is detrimental, in these instances the shower repair will be classed as an emergency and attended within 4 hours.
Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups? The policies largely reflect the status quo so it is likely that agreeing the policies will have a neutral or slightly positive impact on Rotherham's residents. The Council is focussing on the accessibility of its repairs and maintenance policy and making it easier for tenants to report repairs and book an appointment which is convenient for them. This can be done either through calling the customer contact centre or online through Housing Online (HOL).

It is understood that HOL cannot currently be viewed in other languages. The cost to make this happen is considerable but is being considered as accessibility is key to delivering against the Transparency, Influence and Accountability consumer standard, as published by the Regulator of Social Housing and enforced through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers? With agreement of the policies by Cabinet, HPS will increase the amount of decoration allowance awarded to tenants following works which damage the décor in their homes. It is understood that the increase in decoration allowance will support all tenants who need to redecorate following works to their homes. Within the policy, tenants are invited to share their personal circumstances when reporting repairs. The consideration of tenants' personal circumstances, and how those circumstances will be taken into account when determining the urgency of repairs, will have a positive impact and improve the lives of tenants as the Housing Service starts to tailor its services to meet tenants' needs.
What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another) Tenants' personal circumstances may sometimes lead to a non-urgent repair being reclassified as urgent. If this occurs frequently, non-standard jobs appointed jobs, which on average are usually completed with 15 days, may take a little longer to complete but would still be carried out within the stated 28 days.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance

le of analysis:	Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy, Electrical Safety, and Gas and CO Safety Policies
Directorate and service area:	Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, Housing Services, Housing Property Services
Lead Manager:	Lynsey Stephenson, Head of Service

Summary of findings:

There is a need to ensure a robust performance management framework to ensure the service is being prioritised to individuals whose personal circumstances may lead to a non-urgent repair being reclassified as urgent.

The Council needs to continue to collate and quality check the information held regarding its tenants equalities information.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Building on the equalities information the Council holds regarding its tenants and their household members	**Age, disability pregnancy/maternity, ethnicity**	Ongoing

Continue to monitor performance and complaints	**Age, disability, pregnancy/maternity, ethnicity**	Ongoing
With the exception of damp and mould reports, tenant feedback is collated through the Council's repair partners, EQUANS and Mears. The Council will monitor responses received for damp and mould to ensure the respondents reflects the borough's demographic and amend the process if needed. It is envisaged that, in the longer term, the Council will directly collate feedback for all repairs and maintenance.	**Age, disability, pregnancy/maternity, ethnicity**	January 2025
The Council will roll out its direct collation of tenant feedback to tenants who receive capital works. If successful, direct collation of tenants' feedback to repairs and maintenance, will be fully carried out in-house.	**Age, disability, pregnancy/maternity, ethnicity**	January 2025 July 2025

***A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups**

6. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
SLT	Chief Exec and Directors	7 October 2024
James Clark	Assistant Director, Housing Services	1 October 2024

7. Publishing	
The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If this Equality Analysis relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date Equality Analysis completed	1 October 2024
Report title and date	Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy, Electrical Safety, and Gas and CO Safety Policies, Cabinet 18 November 2024
Date report sent for publication	1 December 2024
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	1 October 2024

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Appendix 6 – Carbon Impact Assessment

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	**Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.**	**Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts**	**Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out**
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	Increases	In 2019, both external contractor partners set up an office/works base within the Borough.	Housing Service's repairs contracts were previously delivered by two external contract partners. One of the two partners changed for the new contract in 2019.	The content of the contracts which mention environmental management are 3.3.10, 3.3.10.2, 3.3.10.7, and 3.3.17.(See below).	The Contract states, 'contractors must respond promptly to requests which the Client may make from time to time for emission-based information. This could include but is not limited to, CO_2/NOx and PM10 emissions.'
Emissions from transport?	Increase	There will be a carbon impact from contractors visiting properties to carry out repairs and maintenance.		Where possible, Council Officers work within a given geographical area. The repairs and maintenance contracts issued to the Council's two contract partners were split geographically and awarded for work in the south of the borough, and work in the north of the borough. Both contract partners established a works-base within the borough.	Officer travel is included with the Council's Net Zero 2030 greenhouse gas emissions accounting. For contractor transport, the council has the ability to request emissions data from contractors, including transport emissions.

Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	Increase	Repairing and renewing items within Council housing will produce waste. The Council's and Contractor's approach is to repair where possible.		The Council and its contractors will ensure that all wastes arising from repairs and maintenance are treated according to the waste hierarchy i.e., with a preference for re-use [where this will not unduly increase fire safety hazards elsewhere], composting or recycling, with disposal to incineration and energy recovery a least favoured option.	The Council has a legal duty of care to ensure that waste it transfers is managed correctly, throughout its complete journey to disposal or recovery.
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	Decrease	Timely servicing of gas appliances, servicing and checks may reduce the energy needed to heat the home.			Not possible to monitor. The Council does monitor the energy performance of homes through EPCs which measure theoretical rather than actual energy use.
Emissions from construction and/or development?	None	Construction and development sit outside of these policies.			
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None				
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields: The Gas and Carbon Monoxide, and Electrical Safety Policies seek to prevent leaks and fires by regularly inspecting and servicing gas and electrical installations. Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in Council housing are tested during the gas servicing visit.					

Fire is a significant potential source of greenhouse gas emissions, directly and through the damage it causes to buildings and their subsequent repair, demolition, or reconstruction. By seeking to mitigate fire safety risks, the Council's proposed Gas and CO, and Electrical Safety Policies may help to avoid these carbon impacts.

Below are excerpts from the Contracts with the Council's external repairs contractors.

3.0 Key Expectations

being aware of environmental considerations (and implications) in all areas of its activities and in particular, when maintaining and repairing the stock, minimising waste and reducing its carbon footprint;

3.3 Service Provider Obligations

3.3.10 Corporate Social Responsibility

3.3.10.2 Economic

demonstrate carbon reduction or offsetting.

employ Environmental policy and prevention strategies.

3.3.10.7 Environmental management

The Service Provider shall consider the relevance of sustainability at all stages of the life cycle in the provision of services, including the consideration of commercial needs, the minimisation of negative impacts, and also the maximisation of positive impacts on society and the environment. The Client encourages the Service Provider to consider sustainability at all stages rather than as a one-off activity.

The Client will require the successful Service Provider to measure how management of environmental issues during service delivery will reduce or prevent significant environmental impacts. The Client Minimum Standards Charter (see appendix 15) insists that all charter signatories will commit to protecting the environment, minimising waste and energy consumption and using other resources efficiently. These commitments will also apply to their supply chain.

Mandatory for all:

- Eliminate unnecessary waste by adopting the "reduce, reuse, recycle" philosophy.
- Be a good neighbour, minimise negative local impacts (noise, air quality etc.), improve green areas (e.g. biodiversity, visual attractiveness etc.).
- Reduce carbon footprint – be aware of main impacts on carbon emissions including the indirect carbon used in manufacturing processes and the direct impact of operations and logistics.

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

The new policy does not represent a significant change to current practices or emissions produced by the existing service. Emissions are created through the following activities:

- Non-domestic emissions: increase in emissions from contractors' work bases.
- Transport: increase in emissions – this is mitigated by officers' and contractors' workloads being split by geographical area to minimise travel between homes.
- Waste: carrying out repairs may result in increases in emissions from waste – this is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy, as required by law.
- Housing: likely decrease in emissions due to timely servicing of gas appliances, servicing and safety checks.

Emissions from transport and waste are likely to increase, due to the Policy's application: however, mitigations and monitoring actions are available as outlined in the table above.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Lynsey Skidmore, Head of Property Services, Adult Care, Housing & Public Health Wendy G Foster, Improvement Manager, Housing Property Services, Adult Care, Housing & Public Heath
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	*Defining and Aligning: Embodied carbon targets and net zero definitions*. LETI (May 2021). Available from: <https://www.leti.uk/carbonalignment> *Waste duty of care code of practice*. Defra & the Environment Agency (November 2018). Available from: < https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/waste-duty-of-care-code-of-practice>
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	Tracking reference: CIA344 Katie Rockett, Climate Change Officer

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 18 November 2024

Report Title
Temporary Accommodation Policy

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)
Helen Caulfield-Browne
Housing Options Operational Manager
Helen.caulfield-browne@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report seeks Cabinet approval of a new Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy (Appendix 1). The report sets out the objectives and principles that are reflected in the Policy and explains how the Council intends to meet its statutory obligations under the Housing Act 1996 and The Homeless (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2012, in line with the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities and the objectives and principles of Rotherham's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The report also provides Cabinet with an update on the growing demand for temporary accommodation and the work being undertaken by the Council to improve outcomes for residents and reduce the impact on the Council's financial position. The report requests a specific, time-limited delegation to expand the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to meet demands.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the increase in homelessness and growing demand for temporary accommodation and the work being undertaken by the Council to respond to this demand.

2. Approve the adoption of the new Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy (Appendix 1).

3. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health for a 3-year period in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make operational amendments to the Policy when the need is identified.

4. Note officers' intention to continue to pursue opportunities for a 3-year period to increase the portfolio of Council-owned temporary accommodation to meet service demands, subject to available budget and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024
Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment - Part A and Part B
Appendix 3 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers
Rotherham's Homelessness and Prevention Rough Sleepers Strategy 2023 -2026
Households in Temporary Accommodation (England) Commons Library Research and Briefing Report Jan 2023

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
None

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Temporary Accommodation Policy

1. Background

1.1 Housing plays a vital role in supporting residents to achieve and maintain the life they want to lead, and good quality, secure and affordable homes support positive health, educational and economic outcomes. Recognising this, the Council's Homelessness and Prevention Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2026 sets out the Council's aim to prioritise homelessness prevention.

1.2 National rates of homelessness and use of temporary accommodation are currently the highest on record. According to national housing charity Shelter, 112,660 households were homeless and living in temporary accommodation at the end of 2023, a record high figure and up 12% in a year. In the same year, 317,430 households were accepted as either homeless or at imminent risk of it by their local authority, the highest number since records began, and up 9% on the previous year.

1.3 Rotherham is not immune to these national trends. The Council has experienced significant increases in demands for homelessness services over the last few years. In the financial year 2022/23, 1,409 homelessness applications were received. During the same period, there were 771 placements into hotel/bed and breakfast temporary accommodation. In 2023/24 the number of homelessness applications increased by 7.9% to 1,521, while the number of placements increased by 29% to 995. The placement of families with children also increased in 2023/24: 258 families with children were placed in hotel/bed and breakfast accommodation, a 14.2% increase from 2022/23. It should be noted that some households may have been placed more than once.

1.4 As well as an increase in the total number of placements, from 771 in 2022/2023 to 995 in 2023/2024, the average length of stay in temporary accommodation is also increasing. In 2023/24, the average length of stay in hotels/bed and breakfast was 36 days, while in self-contained furnished temporary accommodation the average stay was 112 days for singles, couples and families. There is a legal limit of six weeks for families placed in hotel / bed and breakfast accommodation, which the Council has not breached.

1.5 The table below provides a breakdown on the numbers of households living in different types of temporary accommodation at the end of March 2023 and at the end of March 2024.

	End of March 2023	**End of March 2024**
RMBC-owned dispersed properties	80	100
Hotels/B&B	50	74
Privately owned furnished TA (nightly charged)	10	1
Total	**140**	**175**

1.6 These significant increases in demand have led to gross expenditure on hotels and private nightly charged temporary accommodation more than doubling between 2020/21 and 2023/24. In the last financial year, the Council spent £1,742,252 on this sort of accommodation.

1.7 Many of the factors driving these outcomes relate to national policy – including how the private rented sector is regulated, and the benefits system – and housing market factors. The Council is also seeking to improve its services to manage pressures locally, with three aims:

- Reducing the flow into temporary accommodation through improving prevention and early intervention outcomes and strengthening the quality of casework and statutory decision making.
- Improving the size, quality and cost effectiveness of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio.
- Increasing the flow out of temporary accommodation through enhancing the Council's settled accommodation options for homeless households.

1.8 This report focuses on the Council's approach to managing its temporary accommodation service including decision-making, risk management and safeguarding, housing management, support and quality standards.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The Council is proposing to adopt a Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy owing to the significant increase in the number of placements being made. Although the adoption of such a policy is not in itself mandatory, there are legal and regulatory standards for performance and compliance regarding temporary accommodation placements that must be observed. The proposed new Policy will formalise some of the extensive work that is already undertaken by the Housing Options Service in assisting those households who are homeless and eligible under the Housing Act 1996 for assistance and in need of temporary accommodation.

2.2 The Policy aims to:

- Set out the Council's approach to placing homeless households in emergency and temporary accommodation.
- Ensure the Council is compliant with legislation, guidance, case law, and good practice relating to the provision of temporary accommodation.
- Set out the factors that will be considered to make sure that the temporary accommodation being offered is suitable and allocated fairly.
- Keep households that are homeless safe and supported, including those who are homeless because of domestic abuse.
- Monitor demand and if required use opportunities that become available to increase the number of temporary accommodation units in Rotherham that are of suitable quality and are affordable.
- Set out how the Council will provide a good quality temporary accommodation service.
- Ensure the effective management of temporary accommodation premises.

- Outline how the Council supports households who approach the Council in need of temporary accommodation, to ensure they are treated in a consistent manner and with empathy and respect.
- Improve customer satisfaction with the temporary accommodation service.
- Keep the cost of the Council's temporary accommodation to a minimum by reducing the use of hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation.

2.3 The Council is committed to ensuring that its temporary accommodation portfolio is large enough to meet the overall level of need, and that it contains the right kinds of accommodation to ensure individual needs can be met. However, in practice the availability of suitable accommodation is extremely limited, which is why like many local authorities the Council has made extensive use of hotel/bed and breakfast establishments in recent years. Because of the mismatch between supply and demand, clear policy is needed on how decisions to place households are made.

2.4 The proposed new Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy is contained in Appendix 1. The main features of the Policy are outlined in this report.

Temporary accommodation portfolio

2.5 The Policy explains that the Council owns or commissions a portfolio of temporary accommodation that has grown in size over the last few years. The most recent expansion entailed utilising Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) funding to secure an additional 16 dispersed properties, bringing the total to 144 properties (this includes 13 ringfenced for victims of domestic abuse).

2.6 Accommodation that is owned and managed, or directly commissioned by the Council, is generally the best quality and most cost-effective form of temporary accommodation available. The Council is continually reviewing the size and effectiveness of the portfolio with a view to pursuing further expansion. This may include non-self-contained supported temporary accommodation as well as dispersed self-contained properties.

Suitability of temporary accommodation

2.7 The Policy provides a clear and consistent approach to assessing households for temporary accommodation in line with statutory requirements to ensure suitability. As far as reasonably practicable, the Council will secure accommodation in the Rotherham area. Where this is not possible, the Council will make all efforts to place homeless households as close as possible to Rotherham and prioritise households with the highest need back into Rotherham at the earliest opportunity.

2.8 The Policy sets out the factors that the Council must consider when determining whether temporary accommodation is suitable for a household, taking into account the location and other factors such as:

- The significance of any disruption that would be caused by the location of the accommodation to the employment, caring responsibilities, or education of the person or members of the person's household.

- The proximity and accessibility of the accommodation to medical facilities and other support that is currently used by or provided to the person or members of the person's household that are essential to the wellbeing of the person or members of the person's household.
- The proximity and accessibility of the accommodation to local services, amenities, and transport.

2.9 The Policy reaffirms that hotels or bed and breakfast accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable for 16- and 17-year-olds. The Policy refers to the joint working protocol between Children's Services and Housing for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds and how the Council will approach assessment of needs.

2.10 The Policy explains that while families can be placed in hotels or bed and breakfasts when there are no other options available, the Council will adhere to the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003 by ensuring that no household with family commitments stays in this type of temporary accommodation beyond 6 weeks for each single homeless application made. There is a commitment that the Council will aim to move families out of hotels or bed and breakfast at the earliest opportunity.

2.11 The Practice Guidance for Temporary Accommodation Placements document which sits within the policy document expands upon the approach that should be taken by officers when determining the suitability of a placement, including any associated risks, timely reviews, and robust monitoring.

2.12 The Policy sets out how the Council will consider potential risks associated with placing multiple vulnerable households in one location. The Practice Guidance for Risk Assessing and Managing the Impact of Hotel and Bed and Breakfast Placements (Appendix 1 - Part B of the Policy) expands upon the approach that will be taken by officers in the effective management of hotel and bed and breakfast placements within communities.

<u>Food and cooking facilities</u>

2.13 The Council has no statutory obligation to provide or pay for the provision of food or to provide cooking facilities. Cooking facilities are provided in all Council-owned dispersed temporary accommodation properties but are generally not available in hotels or bed and breakfast accommodation. Some Councils have stopped paying for breakfast for hotel placements and only provide accommodation as a way of addressing the financial pressures due to the increasing demand of temporary accommodation. The Policy proposes that the Council continue the practice of offering breakfast where it is available for hotel placements. The Policy also emphasises partnership working between the Council and voluntary and community sector organisations who may be in a position to assist homeless households with access to cooked meals.

<u>Offers, refusals and right to review</u>

2.14 The Council always aims to offer suitable accommodation to the household at the first time of offer. The Policy explains that households who have any reservations about the suitability of accommodation being offered should

initially discuss the matter with the officer managing their homeless application. It also explains that the suitability of accommodation provided in performance of the 'main housing duty' is subject to a statutory right to review, and that the consequences of refusing a suitable offer could be that the Council may not owe any duty to provide further accommodation.

Households with pets

2.15 Many households that experience homelessness rely on their pets for emotional support and safety. However, when requesting assistance with temporary accommodation, pet owners often have to choose between rehoming their pet with friends or family or placing their pet in a kennel or a cattery.

2.16 In the Homelessness Code of Guidance, local authorities are asked to be sensitive to the importance of pets to some applicants, who may rely on them for companionship. Although the Code of Guidance recognises that it will not always be possible to make provision for pets, it is recommended that local authorities give careful consideration to this aspect when making provision for households that wish to retain their pet.

2.17 During engagement to support the development of this Policy, some customers voiced the importance of their pets and the upset it has caused them not having their pet with them. As a result of this, the Policy proposes that the Council provides a more flexible and sensitive approach to individuals who are pet owners who find themselves homeless and in need of temporary accommodation. Although there is no guarantee suitable temporary accommodation will be available, each case will be considered on its merits and where permission is granted, certain conditions will apply that will be linked to the household licence agreement. This is a shift from the current approach which entails a near blanket prohibition of pets in temporary accommodation owned by the Council.

2.18 The Households with Pets Practice Guidance (Appendix 3 – Part D) to the Policy, which sits within the policy document expands upon the proposed approach that the Council will take when considering granting permission.

Support and resettlement

2.19 Between March and June 2023, a needs analysis was undertaken which identified that approximately 40-50% of people in temporary or emergency accommodation had recognised support needs that relate to their ability to live independently and sustain a tenancy. During engagement to support the development of this policy, customers voiced the importance of receiving good support and having access to the right information and knowing who to contact in the Council.

2.20 The Policy sets out how the Council will ensure that support is available to households throughout their stay in temporary accommodation, which will help households achieve a prompt and successful move into a more permanent home and achieve the outcomes agreed in their Personal Housing Plan. All households will be allocated a named officer, and the Council is in the process

of commissioning a specialist service to provide more intensive move-on support specifically for single people and families that are in temporary and emergency accommodation.

2.21 Examples of support that will be offered include:

- Support in understanding rights and responsibilities whilst in temporary accommodation.
- Help in applying for benefits.
- School admissions being addressed, to get children into school swiftly, minimising educational disruption.
- Links established with other agencies where needed e.g., Social Care, Children's Services, Domestic Abuse Services and Drug and Alcohol support.
- Support to register with Health Care, which includes linking in with Gateway Primary Care, which specialises with hard to reach and vulnerable groups.
- Earlier conversations regarding housing options and support to join the Council's housing register.

Temporary accommodation service standards

2.22 The Council is committed to providing a high-quality temporary accommodation service. To support this, the Policy introduces a set of proposed service standards (Appendix 1 – Part C within the policy document) influenced by engagement with Council staff, customers with lived experience and external partners. Customers voiced that when living in temporary accommodation, it was important that they felt safe and secure and were being listened to, with empathy and understanding. This is reflected in the standards.

2.23 The Service Standards focus on customer services, physical standards, service management and support and represent a level of quality which council officers will work from. The standards will enable customers to understand what level of service they should expect from the service.

Management of temporary accommodation including ending placements

2.24 The Policy includes the actions that the Council will take in relation to breaches of temporary accommodation agreements or where households are believed not to be using their temporary accommodation. This ensures a consistent and fair approach for all households in temporary accommodation and is compliant with relevant legislation. The Policy also commits to the service to developing local operational procedures to work alongside the Policy.

2.25 The Policy also sets out the range of reasons why the Council may discharge its duties to accommodate in line with legislation.

Safeguarding

2.26 This Policy makes an explicit link between homeless households in need of temporary accommodation and safeguarding in respect of children, young people, and vulnerable adults placed into temporary accommodation. In particular, the Policy includes the factors the Council must take into account

when determining the suitability of accommodation secured under the Housing Act 1996 as set out in the Homelessness Code of Guidance.

2.27 The Policy states how the service will take ownership of its safeguarding responsibilities for children, young people and adults taking appropriate action when required to ensure children, young people and adults are protected in line with corporate safeguarding policies. The Policy emphasises the importance of managing safeguarding risks, both to homeless individuals and others they may come into contact with, through strong multi agency working practice. The Assistant Director of Housing will continue to attend the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board as a full member.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 It is recommended that the Policy is approved by Cabinet to help ensure that the Council is compliant with legislation, guidance, case law, and good practice relating to the provision of temporary accommodation.

3.2 An alternative option would be to continue without a comprehensive policy. This approach could deliver some of the benefits outlined in this report, but not to the same extent or degree. There is a risk that homeless households, other residents and professionals would not have a clear understanding of how decisions to accommodate households are made and how temporary accommodation is managed.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The development of the Policy has benefited from the insights of Council and external stakeholders, including voluntary sector agencies, primary health care, adult and children's social care, housing, and customers. Consultation and engagement activities were completed between 1st March 2024 to 31st May 2024.

4.2 A range of customer engagement activities were undertaken to gather views from a diverse range of people who have lived experience in accessing temporary accommodation. Customer engagement and engagement activities included:

- Home visits to households currently living in temporary accommodation.
- A telephone survey undertaken with households who had experience of living in temporary accommodation.
- Housing support providers gathered the views from their own customers.
- Drop-in sessions were held at Shiloh, a homelessness charity, where customers had the opportunity to express themselves on what was important to them in relation to temporary accommodation.

4.3 The voice of our customers has been pivotal in influencing and shaping the Policy. Feedback has included the following:

"Pets are important and help me through difficult times, they are my therapy".

"Hotels need to be the last resort, having no cooking facilities in hotels can be a real struggle".

"Service standards needs to have a good level of furniture, decent decoration, I need to feel safe and secure".

"As a victim of domestic abuse, it was important to have somewhere I could feel safe and clean for my children".

"It's important to receive good support, consideration needs to be given to each individual's situation. I needed help to register with a GP and sort out my benefits".

4.4 In addition to gathering the views of people with lived experience, officers consulted members of the Housing Involvement Panel, the Strategic Homelessness Board, and the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The Assistant Director of Housing will have responsibility for implementing the Policy. It is proposed that the new Policy is introduced on 18th January 2025 following the Cabinet decision which will allow a 2-month implementation period. An implementation plan will support the launch of the new policy to ensure that teams are fully informed of any changes to their current practice, identify any training and development needs and ensure operational procedures are aligned with the new Policy.

5.2 The Service is committed to continuous improvement and will ensure there is a focus on quality assurance and performance monitoring. The Council will use performance reports and data to proactively understand demand, effectiveness and the outcomes achieved by the temporary accommodation service.

5.3 The Policy will be fully reviewed every three years by Cabinet or sooner by the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health if required.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Activity associated with the new Policy will be contained within existing budget provision. It is anticipated that no additional resource or savings will result from the implementation of the new Policy.

6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

6.3 The procurement of the housing related support service for single people and families that are in temporary and emergency accommodation referred within the report is being conducted via the Council's Housing Related Support: Flexible Purchasing System, in compliance the Council's Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations (as amended).

6.4 Any new procurement activity to be developed to respond to temporary accommodation requirements will be procured in line with the Council's Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations (as amended) or the subsequent Procurement Act.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The adoption of a Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy is not a mandatory requirement. However, in *Nzolameso vs Westminster City Council [2015]*, the Supreme Court recommended Local Authorities produce and keep up to date a publicly available policy for the procurement and allocating of temporary accommodation units, that could be used to explain the individual factors that have been taken into account when offering such accommodation to households.

7.2 The legislative framework and guidance relating to the allocation of temporary accommodation can be found in the body of the report. Legal Services have consulted on and reviewed the Policy to ensure no aspects of the Policy are deemed unlawful.

7.3 Implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy will allow for a transparent and consistent approach to the provision of the growing demand for temporary accommodation.

7.4 A failure to implement the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy could result in complaints about the allocation of temporary accommodation and the decision-making process and result in local criticism/reputational damage and/or the utilisation of time consuming and resource draining internal review/appeal processes. If matters cannot be resolved internally, they may be escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, which may result in an award of compensation. A decision not to implement the Policy could also lead to legal challenge by way of Judicial Review. If it is implemented, it is vital that the Policy is adhered to as failure to do so poses the same risk in relation to legal challenge.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no HR related concerns.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Children and Young Peoples Services (CPYS) have been consulted on the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy. All households who have identified vulnerabilities or safeguarding concerns have been considered as appropriate. Children and young people will be appropriately managed and provided with support.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Data and consultation have been used to understand Rotherham's homeless households needs in relation to temporary accommodation placements. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for this Policy. The Policy

sets out consideration for households with certain protected characteristics in relation to the suitability of a temporary accommodation placement. This includes households with children or who are pregnant should not be in a hotel/bed and breakfast placement longer than 6 weeks. Consideration includes households that have health factors, or a disability, or care and support needs, or the need to access any specialist medical services that are only available in Rotherham.

10.2 There is no identified negative impact through the implementation of this Policy. The Policy recognises the diverse needs of homeless households and is inclusive to all people with protected characteristics who are eligible for assistance under the Housing Act 1996. The Policy makes a commitment to providing a consistent and fair approach to the assessment and factors considered when making a suitable placement of temporary accommodation.

10.3 The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy recognises the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive service that will cultivate empathy and compassion towards individual needs.

10.4 An implementation plan for the launch of the new Policy will ensure information is accessible both online and a customer easy read temporary accommodation leaflet is developed which will explain key elements of the Policy.

10.5 The Council makes efforts to ensure that the temporary accommodation portfolio meets the diverse needs of residents in Rotherham. The Council reviews needs and demand regularly to ensure that there is sufficient and suitable temporary accommodation available to meet the expected need. To assist with this the Council will collate and monitor and review equality data to identify trends and improve service delivery.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Climate change poses a significant threat to environments, individuals, communities, and economies on a local, national, and international scale.

11.2 It is the Council's aim to be net carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and for Rotherham as a whole to achieve the same position by 2040. It is acknowledged that emissions will be difficult to calculate. The Council will be mindful of energy efficiency measures present in the delivery of the temporary accommodation service and identify any improvements required including the development of future temporary accommodation through its own delivery programme.

11.3 Other areas for consideration will include:

- Transportation - Staff travel, effective planning, and geographical casework to minimise unnecessary travel.
- Employee Engagement – Educate and engage with staff teams on sustainability practices and encourage them to contribute towards reducing emissions in the workplace.
- Waste Reduction (furniture/whitegoods) – ensure the use of recycling to minimise waste sent to landfills.

- Supply Chain – Considered when using external suppliers, using local suppliers to reduce transportation.

11.4 Anticipated implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change are detailed in the Carbon Impact Assessment (Appendix 3).

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 While the Policy is focused on the Council's statutory role, a partnership approach is key to achieving positive outcomes for homeless households. Many of the key partners have been consulted and engaged in the preparation of the Policy.

12.2 The Policy will provide a clearer pathway to temporary accommodation, providing clear guidance and information for all internal and external partners as well as internal officers. This Policy is aligned with the partnership approach which is embedded within the Council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2026.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The Policy is intended to set a compliant standard for homelessness services and duties in regards of temporary accommodation. Failure to meet the Council's statutory duties can result in potential legal consequences and judicial review along with investigation by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The adoption and implementation of the Policy is aimed at minimising the risks of non-compliance.

13.2 A summary of risks and mitigation is provided in the table below:

Risk Identified	Overall Risk	Risk Management – Mitigations
1. The risk of the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy not adequately communicated leading to incorrect application of the Policy: • Financial loss • Reputational damage on individual cases	Low	• The correct staff resources and processes are in place, and through regular and robust progress monitoring. • Local operational procedures will be reviewed and aligned with the new Policy. • Training will be given to officers in regard to the new Policy. • The Policy will be published on the Council's website. • A customer's easy read leaflet on the key areas of the Policy will be developed.

2. The risk of the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy becoming out of date due to policy and context changes at the national and local level: • Financial loss • Reputational damage on individual cases	Low	• Reviewing the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy every three years. • Monitoring of any legislative changes or significant changes to local demand and need. • Making any minor changes to the Policy or any changes to the practice guidance notes, through delegated powers to the Assistant Director of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member following the approval of this approach outlined in this report.

14. Accountable Officer

14.1 Assistant Director of Housing

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	04/11/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	21/10/24
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	16/10/24

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This report is published on the Council's website.

APPENDIX 1

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy

2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Council aims to work with households to prevent homelessness and encourages people to approach the Council as early as possible if they are threatened with homelessness or are concerned about their housing situation. The Council will do it's best to help people remain in their homes, or if that is not possible, to help them find somewhere else that is settled before they have to leave their home. However, in some circumstances, this will not be possible, and the Council may have a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation in line with legislation. This Policy does not cover housing management lettings, or the allocation of accommodation where there are social care statutory duties which do not fall under the homelessness legislation.

1.2 This Policy sets out how the Council will meet its statutory responsibilities to provide temporary accommodation for:

a) Interim temporary accommodation, which is made under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996, during the relief duty while homelessness enquiries are undertaken.
b) Temporary accommodation placements for households accepted as homeless under the main duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.
c) Temporary accommodation placements made under Section 190 of the Housing Act 1996 following a decision that a household became homeless intentionally.

1.3 This Policy has been developed collaboratively across Housing Services, Health & Social Care, Children's Services and with stakeholders in Rotherham.

1.4 The voice of people with lived experience of homelessness and temporary accommodation has played a pivotal part in shaping this Policy. Feedback has been collected from a variety of sources. We have spoken to homeless households who have shared their experience and told us what they consider as important.

2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK, LINKS TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

2.1 Temporary accommodation is a form of housing assistance that local authorities in England may provide to homeless households who are eligible for assistance, in priority need, and not intentionally homeless. The provision of temporary accommodation is governed by Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

2.2 The Policy has given regard to the above and all relevant legislation, which includes:

- Homeless (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2012
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)

- Localism Act 2011
- S11, Children Act 2004
- S23 and S42 Care Act 2014
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Equality Act 2010
- Associated Case Law, including the following:

2.3 Nzolameso v Westminster City Council (2015) This case established that the local authority must not make an offer of accommodation outside the applicant's district of residence, unless it is satisfied that there is no suitable accommodation available within the district, and that it has taken into account the impact of the location on the applicant and their family, especially in relation to education and health, social networks. The Supreme Court judgment included a set of requirements that local authorities need to consider when allocating temporary accommodation to homeless households. These include:

- A requirement that local authorities need to explain their decisions in regard of the location of the temporary accommodation offered.
- Each local authority should have, and keep up to date, Policy for allocating temporary accommodation to homeless households.
- The Policy should reflect the authority's statutory obligations, under both the Housing Act 1996 and the Children's Act 2004.
- Where there is an anticipated shortfall of accommodation in the Borough, the Policy should explain the factors to be taken into account when making decisions on where a household is placed.
- The Supreme Court also proposed that each local authority should have a Policy for procuring sufficient units of temporary accommodation, to meet anticipated demand for the coming year.

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2026

2.4 The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy sets out the Council's strategy for preventing homelessness. There is a commitment in the strategy to minimise the use of temporary accommodation and improve the quality of temporary accommodation.

2.5 As part of the effort to assist rough sleepers, the Council operates a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to provide emergency temporary accommodation to rough sleepers to prevent deaths on the streets caused by extreme weather conditions.

Council Plan

2.6 This Policy supports the Council's aims and priorities set out in the Council Plan 2022-2025, specifically:

- Every neighbourhood thriving
- People are safe, healthy and live well

- Every child able to fulfil their potential
- Expanding Economic Opportunity

Housing Strategy

2.7 This Policy supports the Council's aims and priorities set out in the Housing Strategy 2022-2025, specifically:

- Supporting people to live independently
- Strengthening communities

Domestic Abuse Strategy

2.8 This Policy supports the Council's aims and priorities set out The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027, specifically:

- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Responding to Change and Need
- Support to Children and Families
- Providing Safe Accommodation and Appropriate Support

Housing Allocations Policy

2.9 The Housing Allocations Policy sets out the criteria and procedures that the Council uses to prioritise households for housing owned by the Council and a proportion of homes owned by our private registered provider (housing association) partners in the borough. Households that are owed a main homelessness duty are given reasonable preference, as set out in the Policy.

Housing Acquisitions Policy

2.10 The Housing Acquisitions Policy sets out the Council's approach to acquiring homes to meet local housing needs. It sets out the different methods of acquisition and how the Council will assess housing needs for acquisitions. The Policy provides a route to increase the availability of accommodation to prevent and address homelessness.

3. NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

3.1 There are several challenges placed on the homelessness service overall in terms of the increased demand for temporary accommodation and challenges in procuring accommodation to ensure there is an adequate supply. Demand for temporary accommodation in the longer term is difficult to forecast as it is driven by a complex range of social, economic, and external factors, as well as changes to national legislation and Policy. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 increased the time that those who are 'intentionally homeless' and 'in priority need' must be accommodated for, through the introduction of the 56-day 'relief duty.' This inevitably increased the use of temporary accommodation.

3.2 One of the biggest national and local challenges is the ability for local authorities to successfully move households into permanent and secure housing due to a lack of housing supply.

3.3 In Rotherham, there were 175 households living in all types of temporary accommodation at the end of March 2024, a 25% increase from the previous year, as well as an increase of 32% of households living in hotels/bed and breakfast from the previous year. There were 6 families living in hotels/bed breakfast at the end of March 2024 in comparison to 5 at the end of March 2023.

3.4 In Rotherham, between April 2022 and March 2023, 36% of households placed into temporary accommodation stated that they had support needs. 65% of those with a support need stated that they had 2 or more support needs. Support needs could include substance misuse, offending behaviour, mental and physical ill health and domestic abuse.

3.5 Despite the challenges placed on the Council's homelessness service, the Council is committed to meeting its temporary accommodation duties and providing effective support. The Council will seek to ensure that the provision of temporary accommodation meets local needs.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4.1 The guiding principles of this Policy mirrors the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2026, which underpins the Council's approach to both the delivery and development of temporary accommodation.

4.2 The guiding principles are:

- Partnership Working
- Person-centered
- Solution Focused
- Responsive

4.3 The Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Service will recognise the negative impact experiencing homelessness can have on individuals and families and that everyone will have their own story to tell. The Service will create an inclusive and supportive approach that will cultivate empathy and compassion in every interaction with homeless individuals and take meaningful actions to support them that are responsive, person-centered and solution focused.

5. AIMS OF THE POLICY

5.1 To set out the Council's approach to placing homeless households in emergency and temporary accommodation.

5.2 Ensure the Council is compliant with legislation, guidance, case law, and good practice relating to the provision of temporary accommodation.

5.3 To set out the factors that will be considered to make sure that the temporary accommodation being offered is suitable and allocated fairly.

5.4 Keep households that are homeless safe and supported, including those who are homeless because of domestic abuse.

5.5 To set out how the Council will provide a good quality temporary accommodation service.

5.6 Ensure the effective management of temporary accommodation premises.

5.7 To outline how the Council supports households who approach the Council in need of temporary accommodation, to ensure they are treated in a consistent manner and with empathy and respect.

5.8 To improve customer satisfaction and overall customer experience with the temporary accommodation service.

5.9 Keep the cost of the Council's temporary accommodation to a minimum by reducing the use of hotels, bed and breakfast.

6. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PORTFOLIO

6.1 Temporary housing can include various types of accommodation, such as Council-managed self-contained properties, group living and accommodation that is managed through local charities, or a private property owner. Temporary accommodation can also include bed and breakfast or hotels.

6.2 A key difference between temporary accommodation and other types of accommodation offered to households is that it is not offered as a stable or permanent home.

6.3 The Council makes efforts to ensure that the temporary accommodation portfolio meets demand. The Council reviews needs and demand regularly to seek to ensure that there is sufficient and suitable temporary accommodation available to meet the expected need. When calculating the expected need, previous year's data and trends are considered along with any known external factors and anecdotal evidence such as the difficulties faced in securing suitable temporary accommodation.

6.4 The Council will use all opportunities that become available to increase the number of temporary accommodation units in Rotherham that are of suitable quality and are affordable. This will improve the Council's offer in meeting its statutory duties and help to minimise out of area placements and the use of hotel or bed and breakfast placements.

Dispersed self-contained properties

6.5 These properties are mainly owned and managed by the Council. The size of accommodation ranges from one-bedrooms to larger family-sized housing and can be bedsits, flats, or houses. The locations of the properties are dispersed across the Rotherham area. There may be occasions where the Council uses properties owned

and managed by a private property owner and this may include properties located outside of Rotherham.

6.6 There is no statutory duty to provide furnished accommodation; however, Council owned temporary accommodation properties are furnished and have everything a household will need to live in (see section on Service Standards).

Hotels/Bed and Breakfast

6.7 The Council utilises hotel/bed and breakfast establishments, although availability can be very limited. Some placements are made in other local authority areas.

6.8 The Council will use this type of temporary accommodation where emergency accommodation is required at very short notice or where there is no alternative accommodation available.

6.9 Whenever a household is accommodated into a hotel or bed and breakfast, attempts will be made to identify alternative temporary accommodation as soon as possible.

Food and Cooking Facilities

6.10 The Council has no statutory obligation to provide or pay for the provision of food or to provide cooking facilities, although breakfast may be included as part of a hotel or bed and breakfast booking where this provision is available. There are no cooking facilities provided at hotels or bed and breakfast accommodation. Some hotels or bed and breakfasts will provide access to a microwave at their own discretion. As a minimum, a kettle will be provided in each room. The Council work in partnership with a number of local charities and agencies. When placements are made information on these services, including local shops, emergency food services, food banks and any other assistance available in accessing food will be provided.

Other Types of Temporary Accommodation

6.11 The Council commissions supported housing, which includes specialist young people's assessment units, shared supported housing for individuals who have been found to be rough sleeping, and refuges for victims of domestic abuse. This category of temporary accommodation includes provision that is commonly referred to as hostels. As the Council develops its temporary accommodation portfolio, other types and models of temporary accommodation will be considered.

Accessible Temporary Accommodation

6.12 The Council will provide temporary accommodation units within the Council's in-house temporary accommodation portfolio that are wheelchair accessible. The accommodation will aim to provide external arrangements for the entrance, internal circulation space, door and corridor widths, and usable living spaces including the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom space(s) where this is possible.

6.13 The Council will identify accessible accommodation where it is needed when making a placement in hotels or bed and breakfast.

Temporary Accommodation for Council Tenants

6.14 There are circumstances in which a council tenant may require a temporary decant, for example, as a result of planned major works, improvement works which are required to a household's home, safeguarding reasons, or an emergency such as fire and flood. As a responsible landlord the Council will arrange alternative accommodation in line with the Council's Decant Procedures for existing council tenants.

6.15 For some urgent moves a homelessness application will be taken under the Council's statutory homelessness duties and temporary accommodation will be provided until a suitable decant property can be sought. Temporary accommodation could be a hotel, bed and breakfast or council furnished temporary accommodation. The Housing Allocation Policy has provision to identify a suitable vacant property, as a managed move in preference to the use of emergency homelessness temporary accommodation.

7. OFFICE OPERATING HOURS

7.1 Households who require emergency temporary accommodation on the day will need to approach the Council's office, at Riverside House, during normal working opening times, Monday – Fridays, 08:30 – 17:00 (with the exclusion of Bank Holidays and the Christmas closedown) Households are encouraged to approach as early as possible in the day to allow sufficient time for an assessment of their eligibility for temporary accommodation and for the Council to make necessary arrangements. Households will need to provide proof of identification wherever possible. However, the Council recognises that in some cases, such as households fleeing domestic abuse this may not be possible straight away.

7.2 The Council's homelessness service recognises that reasonable adjustments may need to be considered for households who may not be able to attend in person due to a disability, health condition, or where there is risk to a household's safety due to fleeing violence or harassment. Adjustment may include home visits, or telephone assessments.

7.3 The Council operates it's homelessness service 24 hours a day and 365 days of the year.

7.4 The Homeless Service can be contacted by telephoning 01709 336009 at any time day or night. If a homeless household contacts the Council outside of normal office hours, the Homelessness duty officer will decide if a duty to provide temporary accommodation is owed; if so, the household will be placed in the available accommodation. The household will be asked to attend the Council office the next working day. (This does not include bank holiday, the Christmas closure or weekends).

8. SUITABILITY OF A TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT

8.1 If the Council accepts a duty to provide temporary accommodation, the Council will consider the needs of the household as part of their homelessness assessment. This will include factors in relation to the suitability of temporary accommodation and identify any risks to help determine a suitable temporary accommodation placement.

8.2 All offers of temporary accommodation will comply with legislation, including the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 and give regard to the Homeless Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. The Council should be mindful of:

- Relevant considerations for families with children and their duties under Section 11 of the Children's Act 2014 with regards to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Safeguarding responsibilities to protect adult's right to live in safety and free from abuse and neglect and its duties under section 23 and 42 of the Care Act 2014.
- Victims of domestic abuse and the Councils statutory duties under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 where it states that the Council must ensure all victims of domestic abuse have access to the right support within safe accommodation when they need it.

8.3 In determining whether temporary accommodation is suitable for a household, the Council must take into account the location and other factors such as:

- Where the accommodation is situated, if outside of Rotherham and the distance to its own local authority area.
- The significance of any disruption that would be caused by the location of the accommodation to the employment, caring responsibilities, or education of the person or members of the person's household.
- The proximity and accessibility of the accommodation to medical facilities and other support that is currently used by or provided to the person or members of the person's household that are essential to the wellbeing of the person or members of the person's household.
- The proximity and accessibility of the accommodation to local services, amenities, and transport.
- In some circumstances, it is acknowledged by the Council that it may be more appropriate for a placement outside of the area to be arranged, for example, where a household may be at risk within Rotherham.

8.4 Hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation is not regarded as suitable for 16- and 17-year-olds.

8.5 While families can be placed in hotels or bed and breakfasts from time to time, many of these placements are usually as a result of emergency placement, whereby it hasn't been possible to prevent homelessness or secure any alternative accommodation. The Council will adhere to the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation)

(England) Order 2003 and Homelessness Code of Guidance by ensuring that no household with children or who are pregnant stay in this type of temporary accommodation beyond 6 weeks for each single homeless application made.

8.6 If there are any safeguarding concerns about any households, the Council will request consent from the police, probation, Social Care or other relevant agency to disclose relevant risk information to the accommodation provider prior to the placement being made.

8.7 The approval route of a temporary accommodation placement will be made by the senior duty officer for temporary accommodation placements on that day. Case records should evidence how decisions to place a household in or out of an area have been reached, considering the household's collective and individual needs and any impact of such a decision in accordance with its statutory duties.

8.8 The Practice Guidance for Temporary Accommodation Placements document **(Appendix 1- Part A)** expands upon the approach that should be taken by officers when determining the suitability of a placement, including any associated risks, and timely reviews. The Practice Guidance may be updated from time to time in line with operational demands and changes in national guidance and legislation.

8.9 The suitability of temporary accommodation will need to remain under review once a placement has been made. The Council will respond to any relevant change in circumstances that may affect suitability until such time as the accommodation duty is brought to an end.

8.10 When making hotel and bed and breakfast placements, the Temporary Accommodation Service will give consideration specifically in relation to the impact of placing multiple vulnerable households in one location and the potential impact this may have on individuals and the surrounding community, alongside the necessity of fulfilling statutory homelessness duties, the overall availability of suitable accommodation, and the overarching priority to avoid out-of-borough placements wherever feasible.

8.11 The Practice Guidance, Risk Assessing and Managing the Impact of Hotel and Bed and Breakfast Placements document **(Appendix 1- Part B)** expands upon the approach that will be taken by officers in the effective management of hotel and bed and breakfast placements.

8.12 The Temporary Accommodation Service will ensure operational systems are effective to ensure mechanisms are in place to alert themselves to those cases that will require more regular reviews because the household's needs and or risks are likely to change. This will include close monitoring systems and reviewing households' needs as circumstances change. It should be noted that temporary accommodation that is suitable for a short period under Section 188, such as hotels/bed and breakfast for example, may not necessarily be suitable under the main duty under Section 193. The Council will endeavor to ensure households are placed into furnished temporary accommodation wherever it is practical and appropriate to do so.

Households who have recently arrived in the country (within the last 2 years, and have not had settled accommodation in the 3 years prior to arrival)

8.13 This assessment will comply with temporary legislation, which in 2022 made changes to the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 and gave local authorities greater flexibility in how they can fulfil their homelessness duties for households that have recently arrived in the country (within the last 2 years, and not having had settled accommodation in the 3 years prior to arrival). Where local authorities have to place households out of area, their assessment of the suitability of accommodation will not need to consider the distance from the authority and disruption to employment, education and the proximity to medical services.

8.14 However, the local housing authority, must consider the significance of any disruption which would be caused by the location of the accommodation and any caring responsibilities of the person or members of the person's household for persons with whom there are family associations. This means that the Council has greater flexibility when it is not possible to place households in the local area. It should be acknowledged that this is a temporary legislation change which will end on the 1st of June 2025.

Young People – 16–17-year-olds

8.15 Where a young person aged 16–17 is homeless, the Council's joint protocol between Children's Services and the Homelessness Service will ensure that through the appropriate assessment, the needs of homeless 16 and 17 year olds are appropriately met, whilst fulfilling statutory duties under the legal framework.

8.16 The joint protocol aims to provide young people with the support to address problems and to experience a timely and coordinated response to their needs so that, wherever possible, homelessness can be avoided and a planned approach to finding suitable accommodation is made. As far as it is reasonably practicable, the Council will secure accommodation in its own area. Where this is not possible, the Council will make all efforts to place homeless households as close as possible to Rotherham.

Hospital Discharges

8.17 The Homelessness Service will work in partnership with the Adult Care Integrated Discharge Team to help avoid delayed discharges from hospital and assist in preventing homelessness for patients, focusing on planned moves where the homelessness service has a statutory duty to assist under Housing Act 1996.

Prison Leavers

8.18 The Homelessness Service will work in partnership with Probation and HM Prisons to assess individuals prior to prison release and establish the Council statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996.

9. PRIORTISATION OF PLACEMENTS AND MOVING WITHIN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

9.1 Where there are more households requiring in-area placements than there is temporary accommodation available, and/or more households requiring placements than there is self-contained temporary accommodation available, the Council may use its discretion to decide how the placements are prioritised based on each individual household's case, factoring in the level of need and risks and the availability of different types of accommodation. This is detailed in The Practice Guidance for Temporary Accommodation Placements document **(Appendix 1- Part A).**

9.2 It may be necessary to move homeless households to another temporary accommodation to make the best use of available resources. The Council is committed to keeping moves from one temporary accommodation to another to a minimum wherever possible to avoid any unnecessary disruption. An example of why a household may be asked to move may include where an accessible or adapted temporary accommodation property is needed or where a more suitable temporary accommodation has become available.

9.3 Households will be required to move when requested. If the household refuses to move, this may result in the Council ending its duties.

9.4 Where the Council decides it has a statutory duty to provide a household with temporary accommodation, the Council will consider personal preference within the constraints of the availability of the temporary accommodation but ultimately will prioritise individual needs over personal preference.

9.5 As a general approach, temporary accommodation is allocated on the day that it is needed. However, the Council may reserve a number of in-area temporary accommodation units for planned moves or to ensure certain types of accommodation are always available to respond to specific needs as they arise.

9.6 Where the Council has to use temporary accommodation not owned by the Council, providers are at liberty to refuse any placement. Where an accommodation provider refuses to accept a household, the Council will try other providers, but there may be occasions when the risk presented by an individual household member means that no providers will accept them. In this situation, the Council will continue to seek temporary accommodation as required under legislation, but in doing so, it will also seek assistance from other agencies where it is considered appropriate.

10. OFFERS, REFUSALS AND RIGHT TO REVIEW

10.1 The Council will make one suitable offer of temporary accommodation to meet the Section 188 duty owed to the household. (See Appendix 1 -Part A, Section 2, regarding the suitability assessments). If this is an interim offer made before the Council has made a decision on the household's homelessness application and the household refuses an offer of accommodation, they will need to make their own arrangements until a final decision is made on the household's homeless application. If the Council subsequently accepts that a Section 193 duty is owed the Council will

make a second and final offer of temporary accommodation where it is needed. If the household refuses the offer, the Council has no duty to make any further offer of accommodation.

10.2 Upon the household accepting the temporary accommodation offer, they will be expected to agree to the rules set in place for the placement.

10.3 If the lead household member(s) refuses an offer of temporary accommodation or fails to take up occupation of the property under any duty (which may include out of area placements), they will be asked to provide reasons for their refusal on a refusal form which will be reviewed by a senior manager.

10.4 The Council aims to offer suitable accommodation at the first offer. Households who have any reservations about the suitability of the accommodation being offered should initially discuss the matter with the Homelessness Service.

10.5 The lead household member(s) will be notified in writing of the possible consequences of refusal and be advised of what their rights are for a statutory review.

10.6 Households will be encouraged to accept the offer that has been made but can pursue where there is a right to review whilst they are in occupation of the temporary accommodation or where a household may decide not to take the offer. Further details on when a right to review can be considered are detailed in the section below. The continuation of the temporary accommodation placement will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the overall merits of the review request and any new information or evidence that may affect the original decision.

10.7 If for any reason a household is not satisfied with the service that has been provided, they can also make a complaint in accordance with the Council's Complaints Policy (See Section 21).

Rights to a Statutory Review

10.8 **Interim duty** (under Section 188) - There is no statutory right to review the suitability of accommodation provided under the relief duty (although judicial review can be applied for). If the offer of a suitable offer of temporary accommodation is refused, the Council may not offer any further temporary accommodation as there is no duty owed.

10.9 **Main duty** (under Section 193) - The suitability of accommodation provided in the undertaking of the main housing duty is subject to a statutory right to review. Households owed such a duty will be advised in writing of this right and how to exercise it. Under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996, a review request should be made within 21 days of being notified that the offer is suitable. After this time, the only remedy is through judicial review.

10.10 If the temporary accommodation is refused and, upon review, the Council is satisfied that the accommodation is suitable, the Council will notify the lead household

member(s) in writing that they are no longer owed a main duty and no further offer of temporary accommodation will be made, therefore, the Council will discharge its duty under the Housing Act 1996 (Refer to Section 16, Ending Temporary Accommodation Placements).

10.11 If the Council accepts the reasons for a refusal and agrees the offer was unsuitable, a further final offer will be made.

11. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION AGREEMENTS

11.1 At the start of a temporary accommodation placement, the lead household member(s) will be asked to sign an agreement in person, setting out the rules and conditions laid down by the Council. The lead household member(s) will be notified about the consequences of breaching the terms of their placement.

11.2 Depending on the type of accommodation being offered, households will be required to sign to confirm their agreement to the following:

- Hotel occupancy agreement - Specific rules relating to the hotel accommodation.
- A license agreement – used for the occupation of accommodation in pursuance of the council's functions under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

11.3 In the event of a breach of the terms of placement provided by the Council (including hotel placements), if this is the first breach and not of the most serious nature, then the placement may not be ended. However, the Council will issue a verbal warning and ensure this is recorded in the case notes. If a second breach occurs, a written warning will be given, explaining that if there is a further breach, they will receive a final written warning. If a further breach is committed, it is likely it will result in the relevant notice being issued to terminate the placement.

11.4 Any reasonable adjustments in terms of the suitability of the temporary accommodation or where it is identified additional support would benefit the household will be considered. The aim will be to support the household to understand their rights and responsibilities and the consequences if they do not comply with the accommodation agreement.

11.5 If the lead household member(s) behaviour or that of a member of their household is extreme, for example, physical violence or significant damage, a Notice to Quit may be served without prior warnings and the placement may be ended.

11.6 For households under main duty (Section 193), if the loss of temporary accommodation is caused by a deliberate act or omission, they may be found intentionally homeless. This means the Council would have no duty to offer a long-term home.

11.7 The Council reserves the right to use its discretion in what constitutes a less or more serious breach and the actions taken to manage this, as long as it complies with legislation, is fair and consistent in the approach.

11.8 The Council may recharge the lead household member(s) where the Council has to recovery incurred costs in relation to (but not limited to):

- Where the lead household, member of the household or visitors has caused damage to the temporary accommodation.
- Where fittings and furniture provided by the Council or a third-party provider are lost, sold or otherwise disposed of.
- Where fines are incurred and charged to the Council due to the behaviour of the household, members of the household or visitors.

11.9 Local procedures will set out how the temporary accommodation service will manage temporary accommodation breaches; this will include accountable senior officers for authorising warnings and issuing a Notice to Quit. Officer will also refer to Appendix 1, (Part B) - Practice Guide, Risk Assessing and Managing the Impact of Hotel and Bed and Breakfast Placements.

Households absent from temporary accommodation

11.10 Officers will be observant in looking for signs where households are not using their temporary accommodation, subletting, or for serious breaches of the agreement.

11.11 Where there is reason to believe that the household is not using their temporary accommodation, all efforts to contact the household will be made. There may be valid reasons, for example where an individual has been admitted into hospital etc. Appropriate notice will be served where there are reasons to believe the temporary accommodation is not being used. If the placement is in a hotel the household will be booked out. Where there are safeguarding concerns relating to not being able to contact the household, for example a suspected missing person, appropriate action will be taken in line with safeguarding policies and local procedures.

11.12 Local procedures will set out how the temporary accommodation service will respond to concerns where a person cannot be contacted and there may be concerns relating to their safety and welfare; this will include, for example, liaising with other agencies, if and when a missing person report should be made, appropriate safeguarding referrals and ensuring the appropriate records of decision-making when the Council make a decision to end a temporary accommodation placement in accordance with legislation.

12. SUPPORT AND RESETTLEMENT

12.1 The Council will ensure that support is available to households in temporary accommodation throughout their stay. This will help households achieve a prompt and successful move into a more permanent home. Each lead household member(s) will be allocated a named Council Resettlement and Support Officer, or similar role

through a commissioned support service, who will work with them to ensure their temporary accommodation agreement conditions are met and support them with their individual Personal Housing Move on Plan.

12.2 The Council may commission additional support for households in temporary accommodation to assist with the sustainment of occupancy and faster move on. Availability of this support would be subject to budget.

12.3 The Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Service will aim to adopt a person centered, strength-based approach ensuring that individuals lead in identifying their own goals and support needs and have shared accountability to achieve the desired outcome of settled housing. The Service will aim to empower individuals, draw on their strengths and capabilities, promote and improve their quality of life by facilitating timely access to necessary support, thus reducing the risk of repeat homelessness, and enhancing housing stability.

12.4 Support will be delivered with compassion and empathy, without judgement. Practical support can include (but not limited to):

- Support in understanding rights and responsibilities whilst in temporary accommodation.
- Help in maximising benefits that the household may be entitled to.
- School admissions being addressed, to get children into school swiftly, minimising educational disruption.
- Instigate early help assessment being completed in a timely fashion for households with children, where appropriate.
- Former council rent payment plans being established at outset of the placement.
- Links established with the Income Team regarding Housing Benefit claims for occupancy charges.
- Links established with other agencies where needed e.g., Social Care, Children's Services, Domestic Abuse Services, Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol support.
- Support to register with Health Care, which includes linking in with Gateway Primary Care, which specialises with helping hard to reach and vulnerable groups.
- Support to register on the Council's Housing Register (where eligible) and provide necessary documents required.
- Earlier conversations regarding private rented sector or direct applications to Housing Associations to help moving on from temporary accommodation.
- Discuss any changes in circumstances in the suitability of the temporary accommodation placement.

12.5 Regular visits by the Resettlement and Support Officers, or similar commissioned support roles to all temporary accommodation will also assist with:

- Identifying any potential 'hidden' support needs or issues a household may be facing, which would not necessarily be picked up over phone contact.
- Discovery of temporary accommodation property abandonments.
- Quicker identification and action on property issues, e.g., disrepairs, damp, mould or intentional damage.

- Addressing any issues relating to the use of the temporary accommodation property or hotel/bed and breakfast placement.

13. ACCOMMODATION SERVICE STANDARDS

13.1 The Council is committed to providing a high-quality service. The Council promotes a safe, secure, and supportive environment for all temporary housed households.

13.2 The Temporary Accommodation Service Standards are set out in **(Appendix 1- Part C)** of this Policy and details of what our customers should expect from the service.

13.3 There may be rare occasions when a temporary accommodation property is let urgently to avoid the use of hotel/bed and breakfast, where there are outstanding minor repairs, replacement furniture etc. This will be noted on the property inventory with an indication of when the repair or replacement will be carried out during their occupancy. This will also be explained by the officer carrying out the sign up of the property. No properties will be let where it compromises health and safety.

14. HOUSEHOLDS WITH PETS

14.1 The legal position is pets are not considered part of the household, and the Council does not have a duty to accommodate pets in temporary accommodation. Households are encouraged to make alternative arrangements for all pets while they are in temporary accommodation, which the Council can support with.

14.2 However, the Council recognises that households may have no alternative options available for their pets and understands that pets can play an important emotional and supportive role in the household. Although it is not always possible to make provisions in temporary accommodation for pets, the Council will be sensitive to this matter and give careful consideration to individual household circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

14.3 Under the Equality Act 2010 the Council will consider any reasonable adjustments required for households with an assistance dog.

14.4 The Households with Pets Practice Guidance **(Appendix 1 Part D)** expands upon the approach that the Council will take when a household with a pet(s) needs temporary accommodation. The Guidance may be updated from time to time in line with operational demands and changes in national guidance and legislation.

15. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION COSTS

15.1 Temporary Accommodation must be affordable to be considered suitable. The household should be able to afford the costs of accommodation from their income after essential expenses, such as reasonable living costs and child support payments.

15.2 The Temporary Accommodation Service will keep up-to-date local procedures on the management of income revenue to ensure effective income management and

support for households to ensure they understand their responsibilities and income revenue is maximised.

15.3 The Council will advise the household of the charges that apply to the type of accommodation being offered at the sign-up. The charge is calculated as a daily charge for all council temporary accommodation properties, hotel/bed and breakfast and nightly charged private temporary accommodation. This will be explained when the placement is being made.

15.4 The occupancy charge is eligible for housing benefit assistance, depending on the household's income. Assistance will be given by the Temporary Accommodation Service and the Council's Income Team, in making housing benefit claims in a timely manner.

15.5 In situations where a homeless household does not receive full housing benefit due to eligibility, the lead household member will be responsible for paying the difference between their maximum benefit entitlement and the cost of the accommodation charge. Where a household is not entitled to housing benefit, they will be responsible for the full charge.

15.6 Households residing in Council temporary accommodation will be informed that they are responsible for the payment of their personal gas and electricity utility use, and how to pay for this for the duration of their placement. Information will be provided at sign-up.

15.7 Households will be responsible for obtaining and paying for their own television license.

16. ENDING TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENTS AND DISCHARGING DUTIES

16.1 When the Council makes a decision to end its duty to provide temporary accommodation, the Council will notify the lead household member(s) as detailed below:

16.2 The Council may discharge its duties to continue to provide temporary accommodation under Section 188 Housing Act 1996, by serving reasonable notice. Reasons why the Council may discharge its duty under Section 188 include where a household has breached the terms and conditions of any type of temporary accommodation, or where they have found not to be in priority need following a homelessness investigation (not an exhaustive list).

16.3 The notice is excluded from the requirement to issue 4 week's Notice to Quit (NTQ). The Council will use its discretionary powers to decide on what reasonable notice will be given, on a case by case basis.

16.4 The Council may discharge its duties to provide temporary accommodation under Section 193 Housing Act 1996 under the following circumstances:

- Accepts an offer of suitable accommodation, and the Council gives notification in writing of the possible consequences of refusal or acceptance.
- Refuses an offer of suitable accommodation, and the Council gives notification in writing of the reasons for the offer, the possible consequences of refusal, and the right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation.
- Is homeless intentionally from the temporary accommodation provided by the Council, and the Council gives notification in writing of the reasons for the decision, the possible consequences of the decision, and the right to request a review of the decision.
- Ceases to be eligible for assistance, and the Council notifies them in writing of the reasons for the decision, the possible consequences of the decision, and the right to request a review of the decision.
- Withdraws the application for assistance, and the Council notifies them in writing of the possible consequences of withdrawal.

16.5 Under section 193A the main housing duty can be discharged with the acceptance of an offer of a private rented sector offer which is a form of accommodation that is available for at least 12 months, meets the relevant standards, and is affordable for them. The Council must also give notification in writing of the possible consequences of refusal or acceptance, and the right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation.

16.6 Where the Council discharges its duty by using the private rented sector as a suitable settled offer of accommodation, the same regard to making a suitable temporary accommodation offer must be considered as set out in the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.

16.7 Where the main duty is discharged by a suitable offer of accommodation being refused a minimum of 28 days' notice will be given by serving a Notice to Quit. The same notice period will be given for households staying in a hotel or bed and breakfast.

16.8 On expiry of the Notice to Quit served, the Council is required to obtain a possession order and eviction notice from the court before taking any action to evict the household.

16.9 If a household is in a hotel/bed and breakfast and has been asked to leave by the establishment due to a breach of the rules, the Council will consider placing the household in alternative suitable temporary accommodation, whilst thoroughly investigating the rule break. Following this, the Council will conclude if the rule break constitutes a finding of intentionality. If so, the lead household member(s) will be notified of the intentionality decision, and a minimum 28 day's Notice to Quit will be served.

16.10 Where the Council discharges its duty due to the household refusing a suitable offer or when deemed to be intentionally homeless and there are children in the household, the service will notify the Council's Children's Services for assistance under Section 17 Children Act 1989 subject to consent from the household. A referral to Children's Services may also be made without the household's consent where there are safeguarding concerns.

16.11 Where the Council discharges its homelessness duty, set out in Section 16 of this Policy, support will continue whilst households are within the notice period of the temporary accommodation. Where alternative accommodation has not been secured, support will continue to focus on any alternative housing options available. Officers will give regard to individuals' vulnerabilities and continue to identify any additional support, liaise with any agencies involved and make appropriate referrals to support services subject to the individual household member's consent.

16.12 Where there is a vulnerable adult in the household subject to consent, the service will liaise with Adult Social Care and make a referral where appropriate, in order for social care to determine if there is a duty under the Care Act 2014. A referral to Adult Care may also be made without the consent of household members where there are safeguarding concerns.

16.13 All referrals should be made at the earliest opportunity to ensure there is an effective multi-agency approach.

17. STORAGE AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL BELONGINGS

17.1 A household is unlikely to be able to take all their belongings into temporary accommodation. For example, no furniture or large items are allowed, unless they are required to meet a specific medical or health need, in which case permission must be granted by the Council.

17.2 Under Section 211 of the Housing Act 1996, if someone is placed in temporary accommodation and there is a likelihood (not just that it is a possibility) of loss or damage to their personal property and they are unable to protect their belongings or make other arrangements to do so, the Council may have a duty to make reasonable steps to protect those possessions. The personal property of the household includes personal property of any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them. There are two ways in which the Council can perform its duty to protect property:

- Moving it to a particular location requested by the lead household member(s)
- Dealing with personal property, by arranging its storage.

17.3 Household income and affordability should determine if households are able to pay or make a contribution for their own removals and storage.

17.4 The Council can make reasonable charges, including a charge for disposing of property in particular circumstances.

17.5 The Council's responsibility ends when it considers that the belongings are no longer at risk because the household can protect them. This will normally be where the household has been offered or found accommodation where they can receive their possessions.

Personal belongings when no forwarding address

17.6 Due to limited storage and cost implications, the Council is not able to store household's personal belongings indefinitely. The Council's license agreement used for Council temporary accommodation properties provides a statement referring to protection of belongings, which includes if the household discontinues with their homelessness application or ceases to be eligible for assistance with their housing need, leaving their personal property either in storage or accommodation provided by the Council, and they leave no forwarding address, their personal property will be stored or allowed to remain in the accommodation provided by the Council for 28 days. At the end of this period, their personal property will be disposed of if no contact is made.

17.7 Therefore, the Council is in effect giving notice at the start of the placement regarding what will happen if there is no forwarding address or contact.

17.8 The Council will make reasonable steps to contact the household, where possible.

17.9 The Council may use its discretionary powers to store personal belongings beyond the 28-day notice date when considering any special circumstances.

18. SAFEGUARDING

18.1 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This Policy makes an explicit link between homeless households in all temporary accommodation and safeguarding in respect of children, young people and vulnerable adults placed into temporary accommodation. In particular, the factors the Council must take into account when determining the suitability of accommodation secured under the Housing Act 1996 as set out in the Homeless Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities).

18.2 The Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Service will take full ownership of their safeguarding responsibilities for children, young-people and adults. Appropriate action will be taken when required to ensure children, young people and adults are helped and protected. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring appropriate officers are trained in child and adult safeguarding, domestic abuse and trauma informed practices.
- Ensuring that the workplace culture enables effective practice in safeguarding, and that everyone understands the Council's corporate children and adults safeguarding policies.
- Officers are encouraged to practice concerned curiosity.
- Regular staff supervisions, and reflective learning sessions and workforce development opportunities.
- Comprehensive record-keeping of practice and decision-making.
- Management oversight of decision-making.
- Making appropriate referrals to agencies and services that clearly state what is being requested.

- Having due regard to any equality matters, including the need to take steps to take account of household members who may have a disability.

18.3 The Service will also identify household's areas of need and any associated risks, which includes safeguarding, before making a suitable placement. Factors considered include (not limited to):

- Risks to the applicant or members of the household.
- Risk to other residents living in the same location/establishment, e.g., hotel, bed and breakfast.
- Risk to staff.
- Risk to community safety and any safeguarding implications.

18.4 The Service will:

- Practice effective multi-agency working, working together with partners, for example, attending multi-agency meetings which include, social services, domestic abuse service, area housing, community safety and South Yorkshire Police, which focuses on managing risks in the community, linking in with suitable temporary accommodation placements.
- Work closely with non-Council owned temporary accommodation establishments/ private owners to ensure that there are effective communication channels in place to enable a two–way discussion at the earliest opportunity. Council officers will respond appropriately where there are risks and safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure that there are regular visits/ keeping in touch with households living in temporary accommodation, including hotel/bed and breakfast establishments/private owned temporary accommodation, both in and out of Rotherham. Providing effective, person centered support to households to assist with their Personal Housing Plan, including support to link into health services, schools and support to help with swift move on from temporary accommodation to more settled housing.
- Ensure where a household has been placed out of area, the Council will notify the host local authority as soon as possible of the placement through a Section 208 notification and at the latest 14 days of the accommodation being made available to the household.

18.5 The Housing Assistant Director or their nominated deputy will attend the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB) as a full member. RSAB is a multi-agency strategic partnership made up of senior/ lead officers within adult social services, criminal justice, health, housing, community safety and voluntary organisations. It coordinates the strategic development of adult safeguarding across Rotherham and ensures the effectiveness of the work undertaken by Partner Agencies in the area. RSAB aims to achieve those objectives whilst supporting individuals in maintaining control over their lives and in making informed choices without coercion.

19. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

19.1 The Council wants to improve the lives and well-being of everyone in the Borough.

19.2 The Council aims to ensure its policies and procedures are fair and transparent. The Council will apply this Policy fairly and give equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, transgender status/or gender reassignment, race and religion or belief. All members, employees, and agents of the Council must seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality, diversity, inclusion, and good relations between all groups.

19.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of this Policy and recognises that this Policy does set out consideration for households with certain protected characteristics in relation to the suitability of a temporary accommodation placement. This includes households with children or who are pregnant should not be in a hotel/bed and breakfast placement longer than 6 weeks. Consideration includes households that have health factors and that have care and support provided by other statutory agencies or the need to access any specialist medical services that are only available in Rotherham.

19.4 This Policy recognises the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive service that will cultivate empathy and compassion and understand individual's needs.

19.5 The Council recognises that the likelihood of becoming homeless and the experience of homelessness can vary disproportionately depending on factors like ethnicity, disabilities and sexual orientation. The Council will record and monitor data to gain insights on the impact of this Policy on diverse household(s) and contribute towards the needs analysis of future temporary accommodation needs.

20. DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION SHARING

20.1 All data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).

20.2 The Council may investigate or formally verify any of the information provided in connection with the assistance of temporary accommodation. In order to progress with the placement of temporary accommodation and ongoing support, it may be necessary to share information provided internally with other services or other organisations' that may assist with the provision of temporary accommodation. These may include, but is not limited to

- Rotherham Council – Adult Social Care or Children's Services.
- Rotherham Council – Housing Benefits, Income Team.
- Relevant Agencies appointed by the homeless household.

20.3 The Council is under a duty to protect public funds and may use the information provided for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies administering public funds solely for these purposes. The above information will need to be communicated with the associated household at the time their personal information is obtained in the form of a Privacy Notice. This is necessary to comply with an individual's 'Right to be Informed' in accordance with GDPR.

20.4 Safeguards will ensure the security of the data and will comply with Article (1) (f) of GDPR.

21. COMPLAINTS

21.1 If for any reason a household is not satisfied with the service that has been provided, they can make a complaint in accordance with the Council's Complaints Policy. Information on how to make a complaint will be provided on request or when it is considered that this information will be of assistance.

21.2 Information can also be found on the Councils webpage: www.rotherham.gov.uk/council/complain-council-services/1

21.3 Details of how to make a complaint will also be included in any correspondence setting out decisions made under this Policy.

21.4 The Council recognises that vulnerable people may need additional support when raising concerns informally or when making a complaint under this Policy and will also signpost people to the support available locally through groups such as Citizens Advice.

21.5 Once the Council's formal complaints process has been exhausted, the Local Government can be approached to review and investigate complaints about this Policy.

21.6 Any such complaint will be treated seriously and will (if necessary) be reflected in subsequent reviews of this Policy or in amendments to the way that services are delivered.

22. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING PERFORMANCE

22.1 The Service is committed to continuous improvement and will ensure quality assurance practice is in place, which will focus on a range of areas. This will include ensuring that customers' housing requirements in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Housing Act 1996 (as amended), Equality Act 2010, Homelessness Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012), and all other relevant legislation, are being correctly assessed. This will make sure effective and robust practice is in place to secure positive outcomes. Quality assurance will include but not limited to:

- Continuous cycle of case audits, both open and closed and draw upon evidence regarding decision making, quality of case management/support and customer service.
- Quality checks on the temporary accommodation physical standards.
- Evaluation of customer feedback and complaints, members enquiries and Ombudsman investigations.
- Evaluation of customer satisfaction surveys.

22.2 Identified areas for improvement and shared learning will be taken forward to help develop and deliver bespoke internal training, targeted at the appropriate officers within the Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation teams, with the intention of improving the service delivery.

22.3 The Council will use performance reports and data to proactively understand demand, effectiveness and the outcomes achieved by the temporary accommodation service. Performance measures include:

- Where hotel/bed and breakfast is the only option, the Council ensures that families with children, or a person who is pregnant is accommodated for no more than 6 weeks and are moved to more appropriate accommodation.
- Minimising the length of time of any households accommodated in a hotel/bed and breakfast.
- Understanding the demand of temporary accommodation and ensuring that the range of temporary accommodation provisions meet local need.
- Maximising the occupancy rate of RMBC temporary accommodation properties to ensure best value and improve homeless household's experience.
- Use effective budgetary monitoring to ensure best value and maximisation of resources with the financial budget.

22.4 The Homelessness Manager and Temporary Accommodation Manager will maintain oversight of day-to-day delivery of the service and will be responsible for reporting to the Head of Housing Options on performance and quality. Performance reports will be shared and discussed with the Housing Senior Management Team and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for homelessness.

22.5 The Council is required to report on its bed and breakfast or hotel usage to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and to work towards a plan to minimise the use of hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation.

23. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

23.1 This Policy will be implemented from 18th January 2025 and will be reviewed every three years or more frequently as changes in legislation or regulation dictate.

23.2 For any operational changes to the Policy, authority is delegated to the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

APPENDIX 1 – (PART A) - PRACTICE GUIDANCE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT

1. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDANCE

1.2 This guidance sets out the Council's approach to the placement of households in temporary accommodation, both in and out of the Rotherham area.

1.3 This guidance expands upon the approach detailed in main body of the Temporary Accommodation Policy document (Section 11), specifically in relation to what factors should be considered by the Council's Homeless and Temporary Accommodation Service as part of the needs assessment to determine the suitability of a temporary accommodation placement in or out of the Rotherham area.

1.4 This ensures that:

- The Homelessness Service take a consistent approach to evaluating the risks, needs, assets, and support requirements of households,
- Decisions are in alignment with the homeless applicant's Personal Housing Plan (PHP), and
- A strength-based approach is taken to assessing suitability of the accommodation, so that decisions take account of what a person or household can do for themselves.

1.5 This Practice Guidance is underpinned by the Homeless and Temporary Accommodation Operational Procedures. All procedures are aligned with the Temporary Accommodation Policy.

1.6 A detailed homelessness assessment which will consider any associated risks will be undertaken by the Homeless Officer. This will ensure a consistent and high-quality decision-making on the suitability of a placement is made.

1.7 This assessment will take into consideration the suitability factors when making a suitable offer of accommodation, including a temporary accommodation placement and any associated risks.

1.8 As far as reasonably practicable, the Council will secure accommodation in its own area. Where this is not possible, the Council will make all efforts to place households as close as possible to Rotherham.

1.9 In some circumstances, it is acknowledged by the Council that it may be more appropriate for a placement outside of the area to be arranged, for example, where a household may be at risk within Rotherham.

1.10 Where domestic abuse is apparent, consideration will be given as part of the safety planning. Where domestic abuse services are involved, this will be done in consultation with the domestic abuse service involved and the applicant. Options may include in area safe temporary accommodation and/or a managed transfer out of the area.

1.11 The Council have a number of units of specialist temporary accommodation for households affected by domestic abuse. These should be considered in the first instance if an in-area placement is considered appropriate.

1.12 We want to ensure that the location of temporary accommodation placements is suitable for households, so as to minimise disruption to:

- Employment,
- Caring responsibilities,
- Education of the person or members of the person's household,
- Access to medical facilities,
- Access to services that are essential to the well-being of the person or members of the person's household, and
- Access to local services, amenities and transport.

2. Suitability Factors

Affordability

2.1 The Council will ensure that accommodation is affordable and will consider each households income and reach a conclusion as to what will be affordable by carrying out a household financial assessment.

2.2 The Council will take affordability into account by (but not limited to):

- Financial resources available to the household (i.e. all forms of income), including, but not limited to:
- Salary, fees and other remuneration (from such sources as investments, grants, pensions, tax credits etc.).
- Welfare benefits or entitlements.
- Payments due under a court order for the making of periodical payments to a spouse or a former spouse, or to, or for, the benefit of a child.
- Payments of child support maintenance due under the Child Support Act 1991.
- Contributions to the costs in respect of the accommodation which are or were made or which might reasonably be expected to be, or have been, made by other members of their household (most members can be assumed to contribute, but the amount depends on various factors including their age and income).
- Also, the costs in respect of the accommodation, e.g. occupancy charges and other reasonable living expenses.

2.3 The Council will need to consider whether the household can afford the housing costs without being deprived of basic essentials such as food, clothing, heating, transport and other essentials specific to their circumstances. Housing costs should not be regarded as affordable if the household is left with a residual income that is insufficient to meet these essential needs.

Size of Temporary Accommodation

2.4 The Council must consider whether adequate space and room standards exist for the household to be fit to inhabit, containing no category 1 hazards within the meaning of the Housing Act 2004 Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

2.5 Households will often be placed in accommodation that have fewer bedrooms than a household would be entitled to have on a permanent basis, when the placement is for temporary accommodation as is it isn't necessary for the size criteria calculated for social housing purposes to reflect the criteria for temporary accommodation. However, the Council will be mindful of the rules of overcrowding.

2.6 Reasons for refusing a property, for example, due to no provision of parking or the lack of access to a garden will not normally be considered as reasons for refusing an offer.

2.7 In all types of temporary accommodation provided to households with children under the age of 2, there should be adequate space for cots to ensure safe sleeping arrangements.

2.8 The Council is committed to promoting safe sleeping for children under 2 years of age whilst they are living in temporary accommodation. Wherever feasible the Council will provide travel cots to households who need them, including placements provided by a third-party supplier. Where placements are made at a very short notice there may be occasions where this may not always possible. The Council will ensure a travel cot is in place at the earliest opportunity.

Education

2.9 The Council understands that disruption to education can be detrimental to a child's development. Temporary accommodation will normally be considered suitable where it is no more than a 60-minute journey by public transport, of the child's or children's current school, unless other factors supersede this.

Consideration will be given to the following (but not limited to):

2.10 Households containing a child with special educational needs who is receiving education or educational support in the Rotherham area, where change would be detrimental to their wellbeing.

2.11 Where a child is experiencing transition points in their education, e.g., from nursery to juniors, from juniors to secondary school.

2.12 The level of need for all children as, there may be various levels within the household.

2.13 Consideration of a child's vulnerability if they are travelling from out of area into Rotherham, consider level of interchange, combined with age and distance of travel.

2.14 Households who have as part of their household a child or children who are enrolled in GCSE, or A Levels in the Rotherham area, with exams being taken within the academic year and are in years 11,12 or 13.

2.15 Where there may be the likelihood of any disruption to a child's education the Council will support the parent and liaise with the school, through sensitive conversations, with the consent of the parent to help support any reasonable adjustments whilst in living in temporary accommodation. Where an Early Help referral is appropriate this will be discussed with the parent.

2.16 Where out of area placements are made, the Homeless and Temporary Accommodation Service is unable to help with the cost of getting children to school.

The Councils Home to School Transport Policy sets out a range of transport assistance and eligibility criteria.

Households should be supported by the service to understand the support available. The Councils school transport webpage can be found online: www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/download/213/schooltransport

Health and Wellbeing

2.17 Consideration will be given to the following factors (but not limited to):

2.18 A household with severe and enduring health conditions, including mobility and mental health related conditions requiring intensive and specialist medical treatment or support that is only available in the Rotherham area.

2.19 Storage requirements for specialist medical equipment and disabilities requiring separate sleeping quarters for members of the household will be taken into account.

2.20 All decisions made will take account of the welfare and safety of children (Children's Act 2004) that are part of the household.

2.21 Households with children where Children's Services are involved and have an open case, where an out of area placement would be detrimental to their wellbeing. Or families who have high social needs and where it is confirmed that a transfer to another area would significantly impact their welfare.

2.22 Households who are in receipt of a care package and range of health care options will be prioritised for placements inside of the Rotherham area.

2.23 Households where the female is pregnant and requires continuation of midwifery services in-area.

2.24 Households with a severe and enduring mental health problem who are receiving psychiatric treatment and aftercare provided by community mental health service

and have an established support network where a transfer of care would severely impact on their wellbeing.

Employment

2.25 Consideration will be given to the following factors (but not limited to):

2.26 Where households who are in paid employment and they are required to commute to reach their normal workplace from the accommodation that is being provided.

2.27 Where practicable, any member of the household who is in employment will not be placed more than a 20-mile radius from their place of employment if employment is located in Rotherham.

2.28 Consideration will also be given to the affordability of the travel arrangements needed to reach the place of employment. The Council is not able to help with the cost of travel.

2.29 Employment includes higher or adult education, vocational or professional training, a recognised apprenticeship, or self-employment with a business registered within the Rotherham area. This will also include women who are on maternity leave from employment. It also includes any household members who have a confirmed start date to commence employment in the Rotherham area.

Caring Arrangements

2.30 Consideration will be given to households that have a long-standing arrangement to provide care and support to another family member in-area where the person cared for would likely require statutory health and social care.

Exceptional Circumstances

2.31 Any other special circumstances that may impact on the suitability of the offer of temporary accommodation will be taken into consideration.

2.32 It should be noted that the above categories and priorities are for guidance only, and the individual circumstances of each household, including the time likely to be spent in the accommodation, must always be taken into account when determining the suitability of an offer of temporary accommodation.

2.33 Where there are more households requiring in-area placements than there is temporary accommodation available, it will be necessary to make decisions about the suitability of out of borough placements and how households are prioritised based on suitability factors.

2.34 Each household will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Homeless and Temporary Accommodation Service will need to balance their decision against the type, location of temporary accommodation and level of any identified risks.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT

Completing the risk assessment.

3.1 An individual risk assessment will be completed by the Homelessness Service where there are concerns that the household might pose a serious risk of harm to themselves or others. Where there are identified risks, steps will be made to mitigate the risk(s), consideration will be given to the location and type of temporary accommodation.

3.2 Competent trained officers should complete the risk assessment where appropriate. A list of competent officers is maintained by the Homelessness Service. Training is provided consistently to implement this practice guidance along with local operational procedures relating to placements of temporary accommodation.

Making the Temporary Accommodation Placement

3.3 The approval route for agreeing a temporary accommodation placement will be made by a Homeless Senior Officer.

3.4 The Homeless Officer will provide all necessary information based on the household's need assessment and any identified risks, detailing what type of temporary accommodation is required and any specific temporary accommodation needs and restrictions to the Temporary Accommodation Placement Officer who will make the placement.

Monitoring the Temporary Accommodation Placements

3.5 The Temporary Accommodation Service will be responsible for monitoring placements, having regard to suitability, risk, community impact, out of area placements and move on.

3.6 The monitoring of placements will include the planning and coordination of moving any out of area placements back into Rotherham where practical to do so and moving households occupying hotels/bed and breakfast into furnished temporary accommodation, subject to suitability and availability.

3.7 The Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Service will ensure that they have a set of comprehensive local procedures, that sets out roles and responsibilities on needs and risk assessment, approval of placements, prioritising out of area placements back into area, escalating risk, monitoring processes and reporting.

APPENDIX 1 - (PART B) - PRACTICE GUIDE - RISK ASSESSING AND MANAGING THE IMPACT OF HOTEL AND BED AND BREAKFAST PLACEMENTS

1. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDANCE

1.2 This guidance sets out the Council's approach to the placement of households in hotel and bed and breakfast temporary accommodation and will work in conjunction with the individuals needs and risk assessment.

1.3 This guidance expands upon the approach detailed in the main body of the Temporary Accommodation Policy document, Section 8.11 and is specifically in relation to what risk and impact factors will be considered by the Council's Temporary Accommodation Service before making a placement, to ensure that there is an effective approach to managing these placements , ensuring that all households placed and local residents are safe, healthy and live well.

2. MANAGING PLACEMENTS

2.1 The Council is committed to effectively managing all hotel and bed and breakfast placements.

2.2 The Temporary Accommodation Service will manage hotel/bed and breakfast placements and refer to the household's individual homeless needs and suitability assessment, which will include any identified risks, before making the placement. Refer to Appendix 1, Part A – Practice Guidance of Temporary Accommodation Placements, Section 3.

2.3 When a hotel placement is the only option it is important officers consider the following:

- The impact of placing multiple vulnerable households in one location and considering the potential impact this may have on individuals and the surrounding community.
- Whether other local authorities or agencies are also placing vulnerable households in the same establishment or location.
- The potential impact of the dynamics of different cohort(s) with different characteristics and vulnerabilities placed at one location at one given time.

2.4 The above factors always need to be considered alongside the necessity of fulfilling statutory homelessness duties, the overall availability of suitable accommodation, and the overarching priority to avoid out-of-borough placements wherever feasible.

Who is responsible for undertaking a hotel/bed and breakfast risk and impact assessment?

2.5 A senior temporary accommodation officer will be responsible in assessing if a hotel/bed and breakfast risk and impact assessment is needed for each hotel/bed and breakfast establishment that is in use for placing households who need emergency temporary accommodation.

2.6 Where it is required, a central hotel/bed and breakfast risk impact placement assessment will be recorded and accessible to all officers. Effective communication of such assessments and outcome should be shared within the Head of Housing Options who will counter sign the risk and impact assessment.

When should a hotel/bed and breakfast risk and impact assessment be undertaken?

2.7 A range of factors will be considered, these include:

- Where there is or is likely to be a high volume of households occupying a single establishment at one given time, particularly in cases where households with complex needs are placed.
- Where there are known incidents relating to households placed, where their actions may have a potential impact on others, including residents and the local community.
- The above is not an exhaustive list. An officer may consider that other factors trigger the need to undertake a risk and impact assessment, or an assessment may be requested by the Head of Housing Options.

What should be included in hotel/bed and breakfast risk and impact assessment record?

2.8 A range of factors will be considered, these include (but not limited to):

- The hotel/bed and breakfast profile, including location, capacity, and any relevant community and geographical information, e.g., neighbouring buildings, local amenities, residential area etc.
- Whether there is a mix of private and homeless residents at the establishment.
- The recommended maximum number of households that should be accommodated by the Council per establishment at one given time (always subject to service need in response to demand).
- The proportion / number of households with multiple, complex needs occupying the establishment at one given time at the time of the assessment.
- The predicted number of placements in the up-and-coming week.
- Identified risks and impacts.
- Details of existing and or new risk control measures to help mitigate any risks/impact.
- The decision and any actions taken following the risk and impact assessment.

- The accountable officer for making the decision and date.
- The review date, which should be a minimum of a monthly review. However, dynamics of an establishment can change significantly for example an escalation of incidents, an isolated incident or an increase or decrease of placements may trigger an earlier review.

What control measures should be considered to help mitigate risk?

Temporary Accommodation team

2.9 The Temporary Accommodation Service will be responsive to any concerns or issues at the earliest opportunity and consider the following factors in mitigating identified risks (but not limited to):

- Consider if placements need to be paused until control measures are effective, reduce the number of households placed by moving households to alternative temporary accommodation, review the type of cohort being placed.

Other control measures may include (but not limited to):

- Room checks are carried out at least once per week, by the Temporary Accommodation Visiting Officers. This is to check for usage and any health and safety or safeguarding concerns.
- Carry out safe and well visits to individuals and support visits where appropriate to meet their need.
- Increasing drop-in sessions where its practical to do so in the establishment, increase presence in the establishment.
- Effective coordination of move on where appropriate.
- Thoroughly explain the responsibilities of the occupancy agreement, focus on behaviour where there are concerns relating to individual households, reinforce this by issuing and explaining the Code of Conduct letter to all new placements and reiterate where needed.
- Where a household is found to have breached the hotel/bed and breakfast occupancy agreement, appropriate action will be taken as detailed in the main body of the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy, (Section 11, Temporary Accommodation Agreements.
- Ensure there are weekly reviews until the risk is controlled or removed.

Partnership Working

- Effective partnership working, for example partnership working with Council's Community Protection Unit and SY Police and local area housing offices.
- Ensuring that there are early discussions where there are indications of community impact issues, escalating these concerns where appropriate to senior management at the earliest opportunity to ensure that that there is senior management oversight.

- Housing Options staff attending multi partnership meetings, such as the Rotherham North, South and Central Area Tasking & Co-ordinating Meeting.
  A key role of the meetings is to ensure effective two-way connectivity and information sharing with their respective Area, Community MARAC and the Locality Management meeting. They should not replace everyday effective inter-agency working.
- Senior managers responsible for temporary accommodation hotel placements will ensure that they play a key role in any specific actions agreed in any action plans through the Area Tasking & Co-ordinating meeting which may directly or indirectly link to placements. Relevant intelligence gained from such muti agency meetings should be used to help inform the risk and impact assessment and mitigate any risks at the earliest opportunity.

When should there be a review of the risk and impact assessment?

2.10 As a minimum a monthly review of the risk and impact assessment should be undertaken by the Senior Temporary Accommodation Officer. This should be recorded and dated adding any further actions, or recording the decision that no further actions are required, and placements are resumed as normal.

3. MANAGEMENT CONTROLS FOR NEW USE OF HOTELS/BED AND BREAKFAST PLACEMENTS

3.1 When a new hotel / bed and breakfast establishment is considered for use, this must be approved by the Head of Housing Options. If use without approval is unavoidable (e.g., due to an overnight placement) then retrospective authorisation must be sought on the next working day.

3.2 When a new hotel/bed and breakfast establishment is considered and where it is proposed that usage would account for more than 25% occupancy at the establishment this must be approved by the Assistant Director of Housing.

3.3 Before the Council uses a hotel establishment the Council will have direct conversations with hotel management to fully explain the implications of the acceptance of homeless household placements from all sources into a commercial hotel environment and how the proportion of this cohort may change the nature and their legal responsibilities of their business. This may include the business becoming a House in Multiple Occupation under the Housing Act 2004, invalidating their public liability / property insurance, changes to their fire risk assessment and their wider responsibilities under the Health and Safety at work Act 1974.

3.4 The Council will only work with hotel establishments who will agree to have regular communication with the Council and notify the Council of the proportion of homeless household resident. The Council's Temporary Accommodation Service will monitor this on a monthly basis and ensure that appropriate records are in place.

4. MONITORING OF THE OVERALL LOCAL IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

4.1 Data will be collated and monitored by the Area Tasking & Co-ordinating Group in relation to the number of incidents linked to hotel/bed and breakfast household and establishments. Data will inform any local trends in community impact and help to inform appropriate actions.

APPENDIX 1 - (PART C) TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION SERVICE STANDARDS

1.1 The Council is committed to providing good quality temporary accommodation. The Council will ensure that everyone has fair access to housing services and will:

1.2 Be sensitive to each household's individual needs and circumstances and ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

1.3 Work effectively and jointly with other services provided by Rotherham Council and other public bodies, private and third-sector organisations.

1.4 Provide opportunities for households to have their views heard and taken into account.

1.5 Create a Psychologically Informed Environment, and ensure staff are trained in trauma-informed care to ensure a person-centred approach.

1.6 Follow the Council's Customer Service Standards

1.7 Satisfy any public sector equality duty owed under Equality Act 2010.

1.8 Satisfy any safeguarding or welfare duty owed under Children Act 2004.

Physical Standards

1.9 The Council will use hotels or bed and breakfast for the following reasons:

(a) emergency accommodation is required at very short notice (for example to discharge an interim duty to accommodate); or,

(b) there is simply no better alternative accommodation available, and the use of bed and breakfast/hotel accommodation is necessary as a last resort.

1.10 Temporary accommodation will:

1.11 Comply with relevant housing quality standards including health and safety, hygiene and fire legislation and regulations.

1.12 Meet the physical requirements of all members of the household.

1.13 Have accessible accommodation that is able to meet the needs of any disabled person within a household.

1.14 Have sufficient space to meet the needs of the household, in accordance with the Temporary Accommodation Policy.

1.15 Have adequate toilet and personal washing facilities.

1.16 Have a suitable standard and level of furniture to meet the households needs, where relevant to the type of temporary accommodation provided.

1.17 Have adequate cooking facilities, where relevant (excluding bed and breakfast/hotels).

1.18 Have an acceptable standard of cleanliness and decoration.

1.19 Have a sufficient heating system.

1.20 If the temporary accommodation is a property owned by the Council and has a garden, then this will be maintained on a planned scheme of work throughout the period of April to October (Access will be required to the garden for this works).

1.21 There may be rare occasions when a temporary accommodation property is let urgently to avoid the use of hotel/bed and breakfast, where there are outstanding minor repairs, replacement furniture etc. This will be noted on the property inventory at sign up and households will be provided with an indication of when the repair or replacement will be carried out during their occupancy. No properties will be let where it compromises to health and safety.

Service Management and Support

1.22 The Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Service will ensure:

1.23 When households are placed into temporary accommodation, whatever the type of temporary accommodation, a written agreement will be provided.

1.24 The written information will provide clear details of when and how the nightly occupancy charge should be paid. Households will be aware of their rights and responsibilities during their stay in temporary accommodation. Where relevant to the type of temporary accommodation, households will be provided with their accommodation agreement.

1.25 Where households are placed into a Council owned temporary accommodation property, they will be provided with an inventory, which can verify the condition of the property when a household moves in. The inventory will confirm specific health and safety checks that have been undertaken on the property, including the legionella flush and checks on the smoke, carbon monoxide detectors and a list of household items provided.

1.26 Information will be provided to the household from the offset, which will include access to support, local community information, fire safety information, information on how to report a repair and emergency contact numbers.

1.27 Should a household wish to make a complaint, there will be information provided on how to make a complaint, which will be made available in different formats. Where a household wishing to make a complaint requires support to do so, support and advice will be provided.

1.28 Households will be provided with a named Council Officer, who can support households living in temporary accommodation, which includes support to move on into more settled accommodation.

1.29 Households will be given at least 24 hours' notice before an officer visits the household in temporary accommodation. Notice can be given verbally, either via a phone call or in person, or in writing via text, email, or letter. If the proposed visit is inconvenient, the aim will be to agree a more suitable date and time.

Where visits relate to visiting council owned temporary accommodation

1.30 There will be regular visits to the property in relation to support, discuss move on plans, property health and safety checks.

1.31 The Council Officer will make reasonable attempts to contact the household and make prearranged visits. However, there may be times where a Council Officer exercises their right to access the property without notice under the license agreement. Examples for this may include, where there is an immediate health and safety or safeguarding concern or where the household has failed to respond to the officer's request to make contact, where there are reasons to believe the household has not been staying at the property as agreed in the license agreement or where there are reasons to believe the property is being used for illegal purposes.

APPENDIX 1 (PART D) – HOUSEHOLDS WITH PETS PRACTICE GUIDANCE

1.1 The Council's legal position regarding the homelessness legislation does not consider pets to be part of the household and the Council do not have a duty to accommodate pets into temporary accommodation. Households are encouraged to make alternative arrangements for any pets whilst they are in temporary accommodation. The Council will discuss these options and can provide information for dog kennels and catteries.

1.2 However, the Council recognises that homeless households may have no alternative options available for their pets, as well as their pets playing an important, supportive and emotional role to the household. Where possible, the Council will be sensitive in this matter and give careful consideration to individual household circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

1.3 Under the Equality Act 2010 officers should be mindful of the Councils duty to consider any reasonable adjustments for households with an assistance dog.

1.4 The lead household member(s) will be required to ask the Council for permission for their pet/s to live in the temporary accommodation placement, this will be dependent on the type and size of the temporary accommodation available, and if the property has direct access. Pets are not usually considered for non-Council owned temporary accommodation, hotels or bed and breakfasts and accepting pets in these circumstances would always ultimately be at the discretion of the accommodation management.

1.5 The lead household member(s) will need to initially complete a Pet's in Temporary Accommodation Questionnaire as part of the assessment and provide details on what alternative interim rehoming options the household has explored giving the reasons why they feel that they need to have their pet living with them in temporary accommodation. The following factors will be taken into consideration (but are not limited to):

- Length of time household has had the pet.
- The type, breed and number of household pet(s).
- The pet is not listed in the schedule of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976.
- Dogs are not listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.
- Historic and current behaviour of the pet, this includes control of a dog in relation to the owner's responsibility under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.
  Examples: if there have been any issues relating to the control of the dog, including, has the dog ever bitten anyone and if there has been any anti-social behaviour.
- If the owner feels their dog needs to be muzzled.

- The owner's commitment as a responsible pet owner, for the care and wellbeing of their pet whilst living in temporary accommodation, including access to veterinary care.
- Cats and dogs are microchipped and up to date with flea treatment.
- Pets are not used for breeding or offered for sale from the temporary accommodation.
- Appropriate arrangements if a pet needs to be left alone for longer periods in the temporary accommodation property.
- Previous damage to a property or furniture, caused by the owner's pet(s).

1.6 There is no provision for accommodating non-domestic pets, but support will be provided to access appropriate re-homing options.

1.7 Where permission is granted by the Council, the lead household member(s) will be asked to sign a contract of expectations for pets in temporary accommodation, alongside their licence agreement. Any breaches of their licence agreement can result in the pet(s) having to leave the temporary accommodation, or the loss of the temporary accommodation placement.

1.8 Any damages or additional cleaning caused by having a pet in temporary accommodation can result in the lead household member(s) being recharged.

1.9 Where permission is granted at one temporary accommodation address and then later the household has to move to a different temporary accommodation address, it should be noted that there is not an automatic right for the permission to be extended to the new address. A review will be required, and a new contract of expectations will need to be signed, along with a new licence agreement, where permission is granted.

1.10 If there are no temporary accommodation properties available with direct access where a pet is allowed to reside, then the pet may not be taken into consideration when making a suitable offer of temporary accommodation, unless it is an assistance dog.

2. Definition of a Domestic Pet

2.1 For the purpose of this Policy, a domestic pet is defined as: -

- Dog (excluding any dogs highlighted by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991)
- Cat
- Bird (such as a budgie and cockatoo)
- Fish
- Small, caged rodent
- Small non-poisonous caged reptile
- Non-poisonous contained insect or amphibian
- Guinea pig
- Rabbit

APPENDIX 2

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Temporary Accommodation Policy	
Directorate: Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	**Service area:** Housing Options
Lead person: Helen Caulfield-Browne	**Contact:** Helen.caulfield-browne@rotherham.gov.uk 01709 807831
Is this a: [X] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
Development of a new Temporary Accommodation Policy The Temporary Accommodation Policy will provide a framework on how temporary accommodation will be allocated and managed, as well as providing the information on the Councils responsibilities, including its statutory legal duties on providing temporary accommodation to those that are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, published by MHCLG states (at paras 17.48 -17.62) that housing authorities are advised to develop policies for the procurement and allocation of accommodation which will help ensure that suitability requirements, including the location of the accommodation, are met. The Policy will take

the statutory guidance into account when making decisions about out of borough temporary accommodation placements.

The development of the Policy will take into consideration relevant health and safety regulations, The Homelessness Suitability Order 2003, including the recent amendments which came into force in 2023. The Policy will have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, as required by section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

No formal consultation is required. However, the voice of households with lived experience of temporary accommodation will play an important role in influencing and shaping the Policy. A range of engagement and consultation activities have commenced with customers and stakeholders.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?	X	
Could the proposal affect service users?	X	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?	X	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?	X	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		X
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		X

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason

N/A

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6.**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4.**

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

How have you considered equality and diversity?

The Policy aims in achieving well-balanced fair decisions to households in crisis who have to go into temporary accommodation.

The Policy will seek to ensure that all placements are made on the basis of a balanced assessment of the needs of all households requiring temporary accommodation set against consideration of the type and location of accommodation that is available to be allocated at any given point.

The Policy will demonstrate a consistent approach with temporary accommodation placements and support tenancy sustainment to those vulnerable households in need of support by providing support so that the household can move on into permanent accommodation.

It is key whilst developing the Policy that there is fair access and outcomes across for all of those needing temporary accommodation whilst ensuring that no protected equalities group is being unintentionally disadvantaged or excluded. It is also paramount to prioritise equality and diversity to ensure fair and inclusive access for all individuals in need. By considering this, the Policy can address the diverse needs and circumstances of a wide range of people, including those from marginalised or underrepresented groups. Embracing equality and diversity within the Policy will also enhance the suitability of the accommodation services provided.

To ensure that the development of the Policy identifies any barriers, there will be a thorough data analysis on temporary accommodation stock, usage and current service design/processes in place, as well as a comprehensive consultation undertaken to capture the views of those with lived experience of temporary accommodation, and views from partners and stakeholders. The outcomes of the consultation will be used to 4 Part A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment Form support in shaping a service which will offer equality and diversity for Rotherham residents who require support with substance misuse.

The data analysis being undertaken will look at the following sources of data:

- HCLIC data (government reported data including homelessness approaches and cases data)
- RMBC Housing Register
- Temporary Accommodation data (including stock, utilisation, throughput and

household makeup)
- Local population demographic data

Key findings

It is not anticipated that this Policy will address any differences that may be encountered in the nine protected characteristics. The Policy will give consideration for households that have health factors and that have care and support provided by other statutory agencies or the need to access any specialist medical services that are only available in Rotherham.

The Policy is there to support those who have been assessed as being in a priority need of needing temporary accommodation to elevate their current homelessness whilst suitable and permanent accommodation is sought. As such, no group or individual across Borough should be adversely affected or disadvantaged as a result of this Policy.

The Policy will have a positive impact by ensuring that the type of accommodation allocated to those in need is suitable for the household.

An analysis on of those already accessing the service will help ensure that the Policy has a positive impact across all communities and protected characteristics.

The Policy will actively recognise the difficulties faced by those facing homelessness and rough sleepers in accessing temporary accommodation.

The Policy will align with other key strategies and frameworks across the Council as part of the “One Council” approach. Such as the following:

- Council Plan and Year Ahead Plan
- Housing Service Plan
- Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Housing Allocation Policy
- Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy

Actions

A full Equality Analysis will need to be completed once all consultation has been completed. The data gathered will be used to shape the Policy to ensure it is reflective of local demographics.

It will be important to engage with a diverse range of customers and stakeholders as part of the development of the Temporary Accommodation Policy.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	May 2024
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	June 2024

Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Helen Caulfield-Browne Housing Options Operational Manager

5. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Sandra Tolley	Head of Housing Options	18 March 2024

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	18/03/2024
Report title and date	Temporary Accommodation Policy
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	September 2024
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	18th March 2024 Approved 19th March 2024 Steve Eling Policy and Equalities Manager

PART B – Equality Analysis Form

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 17th May 2024	
Directorate: Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	**Service area:** Housing Options
Lead Manager: Helen Caulfield-Browne	**Contact number:** Helen.caulfield-browne@rotherham.gov.uk 01709 807831

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance		
Name	**Organisation**	**Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)**
Helen Caulfield-Browne	RMBC – Housing Options	Housing Options Operational Manager
Daisy Wardle	RMBC – Housing Options	Development Officer
Sandra Tolley	RMBC – Housing Options	Head of Housing Options

3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)
This may include a group/s identified by a protected characteristic, others groups or stakeholder/s e.g. service users, employees, partners, members, suppliers etc.)

The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy will be a new Policy.

Temporary accommodation is a form of housing assistance that local authorities may provide to homeless households who are eligible for assistance, in priority need, and not intentionally homeless. The provision of temporary accommodation is governed by Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The aims and objectives of the Policy are:

- To set out the Council's approach to placing homeless households in emergency and temporary accommodation.
- Ensure the Council is compliant with legislation, guidance, case law, and good practice relating to the provision of temporary accommodation.
- To set out the factors that will be considered to make sure that the temporary accommodation being offered is suitable and allocated fairly.
- Keeping households that are homeless because of domestic abuse safe and supported.
- Ensure the effective management of temporary accommodation premises.
- To outline how the Council supports households who approach the Council in need of temporary accommodation, to ensure they are treated in a consistent manner and with empathy and respect.
- Keeping the cost of the Council's temporary accommodation to a minimum by reducing the use of hotel, bed and breakfast and third-party supplier managed temporary accommodation.

The Policy is to help ensure that the Council's duties to provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households are met. This Policy can be shared with stakeholders, partners, employees and members of the public to raise awareness of the Councils Policy and to inform operational practice.

What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)

What we know: households placed into temporary accommodation

The following data, gathered between financial year April 2022 and March 2023.

All of this data has been collated from individual homeless households who have approached the Council assistance and provided with temporary accommodation.

1409 people have approached and presented themselves either at risk of homelessness or homeless and a case was opened. 80% of those that approached us had a duty accepted. 868 temporary accommodation placements were made within this year.

The main reason for homelessness is family or friends no longer willing to accommodate, which affected 20% of those households placed into temporary accommodation. The second most common reason was domestic abuse, which affected 12% of those that approached us. The other main reasons were eviction from private rented sector (8%) and fleeing violence (non-domestic abuse) (4%).

Support Needs

36% of those placed into temporary accommodation stated that they had support needs. 65% of those with a support need stated that they had 2 or more support needs.

The most common support need was mental health, which 23% stated they had. The second was physical ill health which affects 13% and history/at risk of domestic abuse is the third highest support need, 11% stating that this affected them.

Protected Characteristic	**Evaluation/analysis:**
Age	54% of the main applicants were between the ages of 25 and 40. This figure is higher than the overall population of Rotherham, where 25- to 40-year-olds makes up 19% of the population. 14% of those that needed temporary accommodation were 16- to 24-year-olds. This figure is higher than the overall population of Rotherham, where 16 to 24 year olds makes up 10% of the population. 30% of those that needed temporary accommodation were 41 to 64 years old, this number is lower than the overall population of Rotherham, where 41- to 64-year-olds make up 32%. 3% of those that needed temporary accommodation were 65+. This figure is lower than the overall population of Rotherham, where 65+ year olds make up 20% of the population. This Policy does set out consideration for households age, in terms of 16- and 17-year-olds, as set out in legislation for suitability of temporary accommodation. The Policy does not exclude individuals due to this protected characteristic. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates

	no actual or likely negative impact.
Sexual orientation	The data tells us that 63% of main applicants identify as Heterosexual or straight. 4% identify as part of the LGBT community. A large percentage of 33% either stated that they would prefer not to say, or the data was unknown. Because of this, the data may not reflect a true picture the analysis has been reliant on data available. There is a recommendation and need to focus on quality data input and service data analysis, so that there is fewer missing data. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Race	The main ethnicity of the main applicant is predominantly White British, at 65% and 16% were from the BME communities, this is slightly lower for White British in comparison to Rotherham's population, which is 88.26% and higher for those within the BME community within Rotherham which is 9%. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Sex	50.3% of main applicants stated that they were male, and 49.7% stated that they were female. This is very similar to local population data where 51.7% are male and 49.7% are female. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Pregnancy and maternity	In the financial year 2022/23, 27% of temporary accommodation placements had children and in the financial year 2023/24 26.7% of temporary accommodation had children. 3% of those that were placed into temporary accommodation declared that they were pregnant. However, 34% of those asked did not provide us with an answer, so this figure could be higher. This is likely due to the fact that this question in our housing data base system was not a required question, it is not a required question so figures will be higher in the future. This Policy does set out consideration for individuals who are pregnant, in terms of as legislation for suitability of temporary accommodation. Households with children or who are

	pregnant should not be in a hotel/bed and breakfast placement longer than 6 weeks. The Policy does not exclude individuals due to this protected characteristic. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Married and civil partnership	The data tells us that 45% of main applicants stated that they were single, 9% stated that they were married, 1% stated that they were divorced and 4% stated that they were co-habiting. A large percentage of 41% either stated that they would prefer not to say, or the data was unknown. Because of this, the data may not reflect a true picture, the analysis has been reliant on data available. There is a recommendation and need to focus on quality data input and service data analysis, so that there is fewer missing data. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Disability	In total, 36% of those that approached us stated that they had a disability. 23% stated that they had a history of mental health illness, 13% stated that they had a physical disability. Although the percentage is low in presentations, there are individuals who may not have considered themselves to have a disability and have not disclosed it to us. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact. This Policy does set out consideration for households that have health factors and that have care and support provided by other statutory agencies or the need to access any specialist medical services that are only available in Rotherham. The Policy also states that the temporary accommodation portfolio should aim to provide 3% of the temporary accommodation stock as accessible for disabled individuals who are also wheelchair users. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Gender reassignment	Data is limited; therefore, it has not been possible for us to complete a full evaluation. It is recommended that there is a review on data collation and input of this protected characteristic.

	The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Religion or belief	50% stated that they did not follow any religion or belief, 12% stated that they would prefer not to say, 13% stated that they followed Christianity (all denomination), 4% stated that they were Muslim and 1% stated that they followed any other region. 21% did not state a religion or the information was not inputted by the officer. In comparison to local population data, 49% stated that they were Christian, 40% stated that they did not follow any religion, 5% stated that they were Muslim and 0.3% stated that they followed another religion. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Complex Needs	65% of applicants were considered to have complex needs. Complex needs are defined by the homeless service as a lead applicant having 2 or more areas of vulnerability, such as substance misuse, offending behaviour, mental, physical ill health and domestic abuse. The data for disabilities has been captured separately. This Policy does set out consideration for households that have health factors and that have care and support provided by other statutory agencies or the need to access any specialist medical services that are only available in Rotherham. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.
Domestic Abuse	13% of those that needed temporary accommodation were at risk or had experienced domestic abuse. 79% of households were missing this data, and 8% stated that they had not experienced domestic abuse and were not at risk. This Policy does set out consideration for households that who effected by domestic abuse. Specialist temporary accommodation is provided with support. When considering the suitability factors of a placement location is a key factor to ensure safety. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.

Economic Status	16% of those that needed temporary accommodation were employed, either full time or part time. 84% were unemployed. This Policy does set out consideration in terms of affordability when providing a suitable temporary accommodation placement. The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy indicates no actual or likely negative impact.

Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?

When analysing the local data available specifically from homeless households it demonstrated some gaps in local data reporting. **(Please refer to the table above).** This is due to the functions in the housing data management system IT combined with the quality of data inputs.

This is currently being addressed at has been identified as at Directorate level as a priority and has been added to the risk register to ensure that the data issues are resolved.

What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the Policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?

Any actions derived from this Policy will be monitored and reported on internally through the internal Homelessness Strategic Board and the Homelessness Improvement Board.

The service manager/s responsible for operational delivery of homelessness and temporary accommodation are responsible for the quality assurance of data input and will report to the Head of Housing Options on all performance, including equality analysis and against the aims and objectives of the Policy.

The equality data source NEC is taken from 2023-24 where the fields were not mandatory, this has since been addressed, therefore this should improve but will require oversight to ensure quality assurance and identify and staff training and development.

Analysis of equality and diversity data will be frequently undertaken by the homelessness manager to identify if any protected characteristic groups are under-represented, so these are discussed and help identify any changing trends and the need to respond differently. It is proposed that consideration should be given to undertake the analysis annually as a minimum to help inform local needs when considering future procurement of temporary accommodation units.

Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)	Between February 2024 and April 2024, there was various co-design and engagement activities. We received feedback from 76 customers in total. Activities: • Phone surveys for those with lived experience of

	temporary accommodation as well as home visits to households living in temporary accommodation, homeless supported providers also gathered customer feedback on the Councils behalf. Groups of people who we engaged with included: • Those who have complex needs who reside at vulnerable adult commissioned services and had previously lived in temporary accommodation. • Families with young children, couples and singles who are living in temporary accommodation, various support needs including domestic abuse • Customers that visit Shiloh (Rotherham Homeless charity) and RMBC, Riverside House, homelessness service, (We asked customers to participate in a visual poll which enable them to engage and express what were the most important areas to them that we needed consider in terms of the service delivery and standards within the Policy) • We also consulted with the Councils Housing Involvement Panel (HIP) Key areas of the Policy are led by legislation, however opportunities to influence best practice have been influenced by customer engagement. This includes: • The development of the service standards specifically for temporary accommodation. • Providing a more flexible approach to homeless households with pets, acknowledging that pets provide households with many benefits, one being support with their emotional/mental health. As part of engagement activities, we captured equality data through customer surveys. The analysis of homelessness provisions by different groups have helped to ensure there is a diverse representation across all communities and protected characteristics when consulting and codesigning the Policy with our customer's.

Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s)consulted and key findings)	Between February 2024 and May 2024, there was various co-design and engagement activities. They were either round table discussions, face to face meetings or an online internal staff survey. We received feedback from 125 people. These were done with the following groups: • Housing Options, officers • RMBC Income Team • Workgroup, Housing options Seniors, involved working exercises and co-design. • Homelessness Forum, round the table working exercises. • RMBC - Homelessness Improvement Board • RMBC - Homeless Strategic Board • Adult Care, including Domestic Abuse • Rotherham Safeguarding Board • Childrens Services • Gate Way Primary Health

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance)

The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy is inclusive of all customer groups who are eligible for assistance of temporary accommodation under the Housing Act 1996.

As such, no group or individual across the Borough should be adversely affected or disadvantaged as a result of the Policy. The Policy actively recognises the difficulties faced by those experiencing homelessness and the statutory obligations the Council must consider set out in the Policy around the assessment of the suitability of a temporary accommodation placement and promotes inclusion.

The Policy recognises that the temporary accommodation portfolio must include accessible accommodation for those individuals who have a disability, including customers who need wheelchair accessibility.

The Policy recognises people experiencing homelessness can have multiple support need's and promotes the service standards all customers should receive from the service.

The Policy emphasises the importance in working with colleagues in Adult Social Care and Children Services and specialist agencies, adopting multi-disciplinary approaches which are focussed on the best interests of the person.

Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups?

No there are no identified problems or barriers.
Failure to deliver the Policy may, however, have negative consequences for some protected groups and in that sense the Policy has been designed to meet identified needs.

Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers?

The Policy is designed to support all households to thrive and have a positive impact by accessing suitable temporary accommodation and receiving the right level of support to help people live independently and move on to more settled housing. The policy is intended to minimise any negative effects of the groups of people who are or experiencing homelessness.

The aim will be to develop a leaflet once the Policy is approved, which will be customer friendly and pull out the main key objectives of the Policy to ensure that customers understand the temporary accommodation placement offer in line with the Policy.

What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another)

Future procurement of temporary accommodation considerations to local area and residents:
Location will be a key consideration for future procurement of temporary accommodation, consideration to ensure that temporary accommodation is dispersed and to avoid a high volume of units in the same location will be pivotal when making decisions.

The Policy states that a risk assessment must help information the suitability of a placement, consideration on individuals' safety will also be a factor for consideration.

Flexible approach to pets in temporary accommodation
The development of the Policy identified homeless households with pets who need temporary accommodation will be considered if the request permission for their pets to live with them. In the development of the Policy there has been discussion with Housing Estates Services in relation to responsible pets' owners and the Housing Councils procedures including abandoned pets has been explored and will link to the proposed Policy. The Policy reiterates that households who are given permission will be expected to comply with terms and conditions in relation to their temporary accommodation placement agreement to ensure that all residents in the community are not negatively affected.
Support will be available to all households to ensure they understand their tights and responsibilities.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the Policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance

Title of analysis: Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy
Directorate and service area: Adult Care, Housing and Public Health
Lead Manager: Head of Housing Options
Summary of findings:
Data management system collected equality data; however, the performance of the data input is limited and the quality and capabilities of the data reporting system will need to be addressed to enable a more accurate equality analysis. Local procedures will need to be produced aligned with the Policy to ensure that there is an effective operational practice for all households with protected characteristics. There have been no negative impacts identified. The Policy is reaching all demographic eligible for temporary accommodation under the Housing Act 1996. The Policy supports the most marginalised people in Rotherham who may have protected characteristics and who are homeless.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Robust performance and quality assurance monitoring on equality data	**All**	**Nov 2024 onwards**
Analyse homeless statistics relating to the protected characteristics to ensure there is understanding of housing needs for those who have protected characteristics	**All**	**Annually**

Develop local procedures aligned with the Policy to ensure that there is an effective operational practice for all households with protected characteristics, considering suitability and actions which may result in discharging the Councils duties under the Housing Act 1996.	**All**	**Following the approval of the Policy and forms part of the implementation plan**

***A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups**

6. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Ian Spicer	Assistant Chief Executive/ Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	05/08/2024
Cllr Allen	Cabinet Member for Housing	18/07/2024

7. Publishing	
The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If this Equality Analysis relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date Equality Analysis completed	
Report title and date	Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy
Date report sent for publication	
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	

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APPENDIX 3 – Carbon Impact Assessment

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	**Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.**	**Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts**	**Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out**
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	N/A				
Emissions from transport?	Impact Unknown Potential Impact.	The potential increase of temporary accommodation is likely to increase the need for an increase in staff travel through the use of a vehicle, travelling throughout the Borough when delivering services.		To alleviate any impact on emissions through transport the following considerations will be given: Staff travel - Effective planning, and geographical casework to minimise unnecessary travel. Use of digital/ customers services where appropriate to reduce the need for staff and customers having to use transport to travel into the council office where it can be avoided and considered unnecessary.	Review of the service delivery and working practices Officer travel is included with the Council's Net Zero 2030 greenhouse gas emissions accounting and is monitored by the council's Climate Change team.
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	Impact Unknown Potential Impact.		The potential increase of temporary accommodation may increase the use of furniture and whitegoods that the Council use to furnish the accommodation.	Ensure the use of recycling to minimise waste sent to landfills. Regular checks, e.g. PAT testing on electrical goods to ensure safe and meet health and safety standards for the next resident rather than	Monitoring of Health and Safety Checks to ensure temporary accommodation meets H & S regulations. Budgetary monitoring of white goods and other electrical items.

			The potential increase of temporary accommodation to meet demand may increase the number of resident's waste.	disposing and replacing items. Supply chain will be considered when using external suppliers, using local suppliers. Procurement of services and goods - Contractors will reduce emissions and environmental impact where possible. Although more households may have access to temporary accommodation this may not necessarily mean more people living in the Borough, they are likely to create a small increase in the overall volume of waste created. Residents will be supported to understand their responsibility to dispose of waste appropriately including the use of recycling bins.	This will be monitored through the procurement process. Resident welcome pack will provide support and information
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	Impact Unknown Potential Impact.		Increasing the temporary accommodation portfolio may increase the use of emissions from the heating, lighting and powering of the properties, this would be dependant if building/properties have been in use prior to being used for residential temporary housing.	Increase of temporary accommodation may not necessarily mean more people heating, lighting and powering of the properties used for temporary accommodation, as this will be dependant on the previous use of the properties which may have	It is not possible to monitor emissions from temporary accommodation. The council monitor's EPC ratings of its own housing stock. Temporary accommodation units

				been occupied by residents prior to being used for temporary accommodation. Service standards for council stock will meet the decent Homes Standards and provide effective heating systems. Temporary accommodation, council owned are included within the council's goal to have all council homes at EPC band C by 2030. Residents will be given information relating to making emergency efficiencies.	under HRA are included within the overall monitoring of EPC
Emissions from construction and/or development?	Impact Unknown Potential Impact.		Increasing the temporary accommodation portfolio may utilise the opportunity for new developments. The emissions produced in the short term through construction and materials used will impact on Borough wide emissions.	The use of modern methods of construction will be considered for all new schemes, where value for money can be demonstrated as well as carbon reduction. For refurbishment / retrofit schemes, emissions from the construction and refurbishment of properties could be offset by the reduction in carbon emissions from newly installed components having lower or zero carbon emissions.	Housing Strategy for 2022- 2025 agreed by Cabinet in July 2022 includes the Green Housing Strategy to reduce energy costs and improve efficiency of homes. Outcomes of the strategies are monitored and reported through internal governance.
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	N/A				

Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields: None

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures: The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy will have a limited impact on carbon emissions. However, where there is a need to increase temporary accommodation, either through the Housings Acquisition Policy or new development opportunities there is a potential but unknown at this stage on the likely impact on emissions. The increase of temporary accommodation will be evidence led, through data and trends considered along with any known external factors and anecdotal evidence such as the difficulties faced in securing suitable temporary accommodation. Mitigations on energy efficiency includes: • Staff travel - Effective planning, and geographical casework to minimise unnecessary travel. Use of digital/ customers services where appropriate to reduce unnecessary travel. • Temporary accommodation, council owned stock is included within the council's goal to have all council homes at EPC band C by 2030, the Council will invest in properties to ensure they meet energy efficiency standards. • Residents will be supported to understand their responsibility to dispose of waste appropriately including the use of recycling bins and making energy efficiencies in the home. • Any new temporary accommodation developments will ensure the use of modern methods of construction will be considered for all new schemes, where value for money can be demonstrated as well as carbon reduction. In addition to the mitigations detailed above there will be a focus on employee engagement in regard engaging with staff teams on sustainability practices and encouraging them to contribute towards reducing emissions in the workplace.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: **(Name, title, and service area/directorate).**	Helen Caulfield-Browne Housing Options Operational Manager Adult Care, Housing and Public Health
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	Tracking reference: CIA304 Katie Rockett, Climate Change Officer

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 18 November 2024

Report Title
Household Support Fund Update

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)
Fiona Boden, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence
Fiona.Boden@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Household Support Fund (HSF) has been extended by Government from October 2024 to March 2025, with £421m of funding available in England. Consistent with previous awards, the Council has been awarded £2.489m for the Borough for this time period.

Given the need in communities to commence support for the most vulnerable residents and the timing of the grant award and receipt of the associated grant conditions, a delegated officer decision was taken to allocate this funding on 11th October 2024. This report provides a summary of the allocations of the £2.489m of funding made. Any variations arising through spend are proposed to be managed through adjusting the allocation made towards the Energy Crisis Support Scheme.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the provisional allocations of the Household Support Fund Grant of £2.489m have been made as follows:
    a. £1.028m for food vouchers to children eligible for free school meals for school holidays up to and including Easter 2025.
    b. £1.156m to support applications from households for assistance with energy costs, through the Council's Energy Crisis Support Scheme.

c. £150k towards the costs of the Council's Local Council Tax Support Top Up Scheme.
d. £45k to support care leavers, being young people leaving foster or local authority care and living independently in their own accommodation who are responsible for paying their own utility bills, providing additional financial support through the cost-of-living increases.
e. £60k to local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to support vulnerable households over Christmas / New Year through a supplement to the Crisis Support service level agreement.
f. £50k to provide parcels of household items to be distributed through VCS community support including food banks, social supermarkets, and the Open Arms programme drop-in sessions.

2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Neighbourhood Working, to determine revised and final allocations for the Household Support Grant, to include provision for other eligible actions within the use of Household Support Fund should it not be possible to achieve full spend of the grant through the approved options.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Equality screening
Appendix 2 Climate impact assessment

Background Papers

Officer Decision - 11 October 2024 - Household Support Fund (October - March 2024/25) - Rotherham Council

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
None

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Household Support Fund October 2024 – March 2025

1. Background

1.1 In the first six months of 2024-25, Rotherham Council received £2.489m from the Household Support Fund (HSF). Used to support our most vulnerable residents in the borough, this included:

- £1.586m in food vouchers for children eligible to receive free school meals during the spring bank, summer and autumn half term holidays.
- £500,000 to provide Council Tax Support and £160,000 to provide housing support.
- £181,000 in energy grants through the energy crisis support scheme.
- £36,672 in support for care leavers through food vouchers and support with energy costs.
- £25,000 to provide essential household items for residents, which were distributed through VCS community support including food banks and social supermarkets, and as part of the Open Arms programme drop-in sessions.

1.2 The HSF which was first introduced in 2021/22, has now been extended to the end of March 2025 following a government announcement made in September.

1.3 The grant has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need and struggling with the cost of living. Consistent with previous allocations from the fund, Rotherham has been awarded £2.489m for the final six months of 2024/25, which is consistent with what it has previously received.

1.4 Given the need to get support to vulnerable residents as soon as possible, including launching the energy scheme and putting in place the necessary arrangements for support over the Christmas period via the VCS sector, an officer decision, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Neighbourhood Working, was taken on 11th October 2024. This report updates on this decision and the allocation of the fund.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Household Support Fund was made available by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to county councils and unitary authorities in England to support those most in need. Local authorities were given discretion about exactly how this funding was used within the scope set out in guidance.

2.2 For the period October 2024 – March 2025, HSF guidance makes specific provisions for use of the fund. These are:

- Energy and water.
- Food, whether in kind or through vouchers or cash.
- Essentials linked to energy and water – household goods.
- Wider essentials not linked to energy and water including meeting bills.

- Advice services supplementary to other provision.
- Housing costs taking account of the risk of homelessness and other local factors.

The fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of the fund.

2.3 Conditions also set out that:

- There must be a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining the approach, including how eligibility is defined and how households access the fund.
- The fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need, including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, larger families, single-person households, and those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events.
- Support is not restricted only to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits.
- At least part of the scheme must operate on an application basis.

2.4 Following the experience of previous allocations of this fund, the Council will support a wide range of low-income households and is not limited to those in receipt of benefits. There is flexibility within the fund to identify which vulnerable households are most in need of support and apply discretion when identifying eligibility.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Options were assessed to meet the criteria of the grant funding stream, aligned with the other actions being taken by the Council to support people in need. They were also considered in relation to the previous experience of ‘what works’ in distributing these funds. All the different strands are eligible spend under the previous HSF grant guidance. Specific groups of people identified in the guidance as priority households can be targeted through the applications for support options.

3.2 Food vouchers for school holidays - £1.028m

3.2.1 Continuing to provide vouchers to children eligible for free school meals to cover school holidays, will carry forward support to low-income families in a manner that has proved effective. Assuming use of HSF will cover the Easter holidays in April 2025, this approach would fund five weeks of school holidays from Christmas / New Year onwards. The October 2024 half term is already funded from the first half year HSF grant.

3.2.2 The allocation provides for a growing number of children in receipt of free school meals with the numbers having already increased from 12,955 at Easter 2024 to 13,273 at summer 2024. To accommodate the potential for further growth in demand, an assumption of 13,713 free school meal children has been used to calculate the allocation for October to March 2025. Based on vouchers continuing to be £15 per child per week, this would amount to £1.028m and qualify as pro-active support.

3.3 **Energy support - £1.156m**

3.3.1 The Council's energy scheme was extended into 2024/25 using funding carried over from 2023/24 (Covid Recovery Fund). This was supplemented again using HSF from the April – September 2024 allocation, utilising £174k for energy support. This was open to all households facing hardship, providing grants of £250 each.

3.3.2 Taking account of allocations to other elements of the programme, this would provide £1.156m for energy support, providing up to 4,622 grants at £250 each. These one-off grants would be open to all households, including pensioners. This qualifies as open application-based support.

3.4 **Council Tax Support Top Up - £150k**

3.4.1 The Council has already applied a top-up to Council Tax Support for 2024/25. Many households receiving support will already have been awarded this top up for the full year.

3.4.2 A contribution from the HSF of £150k has therefore been agreed to support the costs of this top up for the second six months of 2024/25. It is projected that around 15,000 households will benefit from the Council Tax Support Top-Up Scheme.

3.5 **Support for care leavers - £45k**

3.5.1 The allocations of HSF for April – September 2024 included a £45k provision to CYPS to continue to support young people leaving care with cost-of-living pressures. This has been extended to cover October 2024 – March 2025 at the same level of funding. This would qualify as pro-active support.

3.6 **VCS support to vulnerable families over Christmas / New Year - £60k**

3.6.1 HSF, and the Covid Winter Grant before it, has enabled local VCS organisations to provide additional support to vulnerable families that they work with, over the last four years. This primarily involved the provision of food hampers over Christmas and New Year. Small grants to organisations were administered by VAR. During Christmas and New Year 2023/24, owing to increased demand an allocation of £55k was provided. This enabled more than 500 Christmas Hampers to be distributed.

3.6.2 It is recommended that £60k is provided for 2024/25 given increases in demand seen in the previous two years. Consistent with how this has been

administered in previously, this is being facilitated through a supplement to the Crisis Support Service Level Agreement (SLA).

3.7 **Wider household essentials support - £50k**

3.7.1 Building on the support provided from HSF between July and September 2024, this allocation will continue to provide parcels of household items (cleaning / personal hygiene etc) to vulnerable households. These would be distributed through VCS community support including food banks and social supermarkets, and as part of the Open Arms programme drop-in sessions.

3.7.2 An allocation of £50k is included on the basis of £25 value for each parcel, this would provide support to 2,000 households. It would be facilitated again through a supplement to the Crisis Support SLA. This would qualify as third-party organisations spend.

3.8 **Balance of spend**

3.8.1 It is likely that actual spend will vary from that allocated to specific uses dependant on demand. It is proposed that to ensure full spend for the year, any balancing sums be applied through the Energy Crisis Support Scheme.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Officers in relevant Council services along with VCS partners have been engaged in developing the approach to the use of this funding allocation.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Arrangements are being put in place to implement the range of support measure so that residents can begin to access the benefits as soon as possible.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 Whilst Rotherham's specific allocation has not yet been announced, the report assumes grant of £2.489m, being the same sum provided for April to September 2024. The proposed spend is in accordance with the previous grant conditions, though progress on spend will need to be monitored to ensure that Government requirements and timeframes are adhered to.

6.2 Scheme spend will be reviewed as part of management of the grant with final allocations being determined once the final cost of holiday food vouchers and demand against the other allocation is confirmed. This aims to ensure that the grant is utilised or committed before 31st March 2025. This includes provision to fund food vouchers for the Easter school holidays in 2025.

6.3 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in the report. Where support is being provided via third party organisations, this is being facilitated via grant agreements, which are outside the scope of procurement legislation. If there is a need to enter

into contracts for goods/services to support this delivery, this must be undertaken in line with both the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules (FPPR's) and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended).

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The recommended proposals are in accordance with the conditions of use of the grant. Further, the scheme is consistent with relevant public law principles, in particular it is lawful, fair and rational.

7.2 The Council can support this type of local welfare provision under the "Local authority's general power of competence", as set out in S.1 of the Localism Act 2011 (c. 20). Further Local authorities' have the ability to act in this area under powers contained in other legislation, for example, section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables local authorities to provide financial assistance to any individual.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no Human Resources implications associated with this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The recommended use of Household Support Fund includes issuing vouchers in lieu of free school meals eligible children for school holidays through to Easter 2025 and support for care leavers.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The objectives of the use of the grants and targeting towards vulnerable households including families with children will contribute to addressing economic and social inequalities. It will have a positive equalities impact.

10.2 Equalities data will be collected as part of administering the programme of support.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no implications for CO2 emissions of climate change.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1. Partner organisation will be engaged in making referrals to support provided under the grant along with direct support to vulnerable households and those struggling with high cost-of-living.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Risk is primarily centred around achieving, whilst not exceeding spend of the grant.

13.2 The grant conditions have yet to be received and this paper has been predicated on the April – September 2024 conditions and could therefore change. Should changes result in any recommended actions becoming ineligible, and free grant budget would be allocated to the Energy Crisis Support Scheme. Owing to the grant allocation not being advised, the result of any change from the estimate used in the report could be addressed through Energy Crisis Support Scheme allocation. To address this, the recommendations provide for a delegated decision, that unless the final grant is substantially different from the estimate, to delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Neighbourhood Working, to determine revised and final allocations for the Household Support Grant. This includes provision for other eligible actions within the use of Household Support Fund should it not be possible to achieve full spend of the grant through the approved options.

14. Accountable Officers

Fiona Boden, Head of Policy Performance and Intelligence

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	04/11/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	17/10/24
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	17/10/24

Report Author: *Fiona Boden*
Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate
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This report is published on the Council's website.

Appendix 1

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Household Support Fund October 2024 – March 2025	
Directorate: **ACX**	**Service area:** **PPI**
Lead person: **Fiona Boden**	**Contact number:** **01709 255233**
Is this a: ☐ **Strategy / Policy** ☒ **Service / Function** ☐ **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The Government is to provide a further allocation of Household Support Fund grant. The allocation is to cover the period 1st October 2024 to 31st March 2024. The funding must be used or allocated during that time. The report has been produced to align with government guidance and on the basis of the evidence of 'what has worked' in delivering this funding previously in the borough. The use of any grant will support families and households in need in Rotherham.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity		
All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity. The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are. When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.		
Questions	**Yes**	**No**
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? *(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)*	x	
Could the proposal affect service users? *(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)*	x	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? *(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)*	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? *(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)*		x
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? *(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)*		x
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? *(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)*		x
If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason		
The objectives of the use of the grants and targeting towards vulnerable households including families with children will contribute to addressing economic and social inequalities. It will have a positive equalities impact.		

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6.**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4.**

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

Owing to the limited timescale to start delivery from October and guidance and funding allocation having only recently been made available, knowledge from support to low-income households from earlier grants streams has been used to inform the proposed uses of the grant funding for the second half of 2024/25.

- **Key findings**

There are specific impacts for low-income households with children, from BME communities and low-income pensioners. The current increase in energy prices as part of cost-of-living increases are likely to have greatest impact on the lowest income and most vulnerable households.

- **Actions**

Equalities data will be collected as part of delivering the proposed support packages. An equality analysis will be completed on the basis of the data collected to inform delivery of the funding streams and at the end of the funding period. It is not possible to complete a full EA ahead of delivering the grant funded support.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	30th April 2025
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	30th April 2025
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Fiona Boden Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Jo Brown	Assistant Chief Executive	

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date screening completed	23rd September 2024 Updated 3rd October
Report title and date	Household Support Fund October 2024 to March 2025 18th November 2024
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	Cabinet Household Support Fund October 2024 to March 2025 18th November 2024
Date screening sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk	23rd September 2024

Appendix 2 – Carbon Impact Assessment

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	**Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.**	**Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts**	**Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out**
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	No change				
Emissions from transport?	No change				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	No Change				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	No Change				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	N/A				
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	N/A				
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields: It is not known how the delivery of this grant may affect the carbon emissions of those in receipt of the support. However, it is considered that the social benefits associated with the scheme outweigh the carbon impacts in this case.					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures: As with all Council activity there are likely to be emissions associated with the delivery of this scheme, however it is expected that these will be minimal and in line with previous iterations of the delivery of the grant.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: **(Name, title, and service area/directorate).**	Fiona Boden, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence, Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	N/A
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	N/A
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	Tracking Number: CIA342 Louise Preston, Climate Change Manager, Finance & Customer Services