

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

- Date and Time:-** Wednesday 10 December 2025 at 10.00 a.m.
- Venue:-** Rotherham Town Hall, The Crofts, Moorgate Street, Rotherham. S60 2TH
- Membership:-** Councillors Steele (Chair), Bacon (Vice-Chair), Allen, Baggaley, Blackham, Brent, A. Carter, Harper, Keenan, McKiernan, Monk, Tinsley and Yasseen.

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

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

### AGENDA

**1. Apologies for Absence**

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

**2. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 12 November 2025 of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (Pages 5 - 33)**

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 12 November 2025 and to approve them as a true and correct record of the proceedings and to be signed by the Chair.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Items for Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

In accordance with the outcome of the Governance Review in 2016, the following items are submitted for pre-scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting on Monday 15 December 2025. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are invited to comment and make recommendations on the proposals contained within the report.

### **6. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026-27**

Report to follow.

### **7. Library Strategy (Pages 35 - 125)**

Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment.

#### **Recommendations:**

That Cabinet:

1. Note the review of performance against the 2021–2026 Library Strategy, including key achievements and challenges identified during the Strategy period.
2. Approve the undertaking of a period of consultation with the public, partners, stakeholders and interested parties on the development of a new Library Strategy for the period 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service.
3. Agree that a further report be brought to Cabinet following the consultation to present a draft Library Strategy 2027–2032, which will identify potential service improvements and efficiencies.
4. Authorise the Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism to notify the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) of the intention to consult on the Library Strategy and any potential changes to service provision.

### **8. Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy (Pages 127 - 196)**

Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment.

#### **Recommendations:**

That Cabinet:

1. Endorses the formal adoption of the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31.

2. Notes that the Rotherham Employment and Skills Board is tasked with overseeing the delivery and monitoring of the Strategy and with reporting on progress to Cabinet and the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) on an annual basis.

**For Information/Monitoring:-**

**9. Work Programme (Pages 197 - 199)**

To consider the Board's Work Programme.

**10. Work in Progress - Select Commissions (Pages 201 - 207)**

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Select Commission on work undertaken and planned for the future:

- Health Select Commission
- Improving Lives Select Commission
- Improving Places Select Commission

**11. Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

To review and identify items for pre-decision scrutiny from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

Link to: [Browse plans - Forward Plan of Key Decisions, 2025 - Rotherham Council](#)

**12. South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

As part of their role the Chair and Vice Chair of OSMB are appointed to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chair of OSMB is the Vice Chair on this committee.

This committee holds the MCA to account and ensure that all aspects of the decision-making process are transparent, inclusive and fair. The Committee are responsible for checking that the MCA is delivering its objectives and that the decisions made in policies, strategies and plans have been made in the best interests of the residents and workers of South Yorkshire.

The published agenda packs and minutes can be accessed via: [South Yorkshire MCA](#).

Members who have comments and queries regarding any item on any agenda should refer this to the Chair of OSMB and the Governance Manager at the earliest opportunity to ensure they're reflected in debate during the relevant public meeting.

**13. Call-in Issues**

To consider any issues referred for call-in from recent Cabinet meetings.

**14. Urgent Business**

To determine any item which the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

**The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held on Tuesday 13 January 2026 commencing at 10.00 a.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Edwards', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Edwards,  
**Chief Executive.**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**  
**Wednesday 12 November 2025**

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Baggaley, Blackham, Brent, A. Carter, Harper, Keenan, McKiernan, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Apologies were received from Councillors Allen and Monk.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

**54. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2025**

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 15 October 2025 be approved as a true record.

**55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In relation to the Call-in - Selective Licensing Policy item on the agenda Councillor Tinsley declared that he had previously held a licence in Maltby. It was not a financial interest.

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

No questions were received.

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

There were no reasons to exclude the press or public.

**58. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE**

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance & Community Safety introduced the report explaining that the reports was an update on the council's budget and the medium-term financial strategy to 2028-29. It included the standard technical base required, recognition of financial pressures impacting service delivery, and the ongoing effect of inflation on the council's base costs.

The technical adjustments also included the council's assessment of the potential impact of the government's fair funding review, which aimed to make significant changes to the way local authority funding was allocated. The review was expected to introduce major changes to the formulas used for funding distribution, and it appeared that more areas would require additional funding.

The medium-term financial strategy was scheduled for further revision ahead of the council's budget-setting in March 2026 to reflect the local

government settlement once issued, along with budget policy proposals on council tax levels, reserves, fees and charges, and any required budget savings.

The funding review represented the most significant change in local government funding approaches for many years and introduced a degree of uncertainty. The medium-term review sat alongside financial monitoring, which was presented to Cabinet and projected a financial overspend of £0.9 million.

Council tax collection rates remained strong despite cost-of-living challenges faced by residents and businesses. However, due to the impact of Speciality Steel, there was a potential effect on business rates. The Council expected to balance its budget to the outturn position before year-end, although risks remained, and the use of reserves might have been required.

Judith Badger, Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services followed on by explaining to members that this was a point in time based on the Council's best understanding of the situation, with some significant changes since the budget was set in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) back in March.

Members of Scrutiny were due to receive the presentation on the final MTFS near budget time in the usual way, but an update at this point in the year was provided to bring members up to date with how the position was looking. It was a plan based on planning assumptions, estimates, and available information, and the government's budget at the end of the month was expected to give some indications of new factors to consider and whether they aligned with the Council's expectations.

The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services pointed out to members that this reflected only the national policy position and not the Council's settlement. The actual settlement, knowing how much money the Council would receive from government, was not expected until quite close to Christmas, likely late December. So, this was presented to bring members up to speed, but it was highly likely the position would change again later in the year when the Finance team took Members through the detail before budget setting.

The Chair asked Rob Mahon, Assistant Director, Financial Services to run through the key changes concentrating on the children's services aspect. The Assistant Director, Financial Services noted the easiest starting point was the table at 2.15, which set out the main changes to the MTFS at that point in time based on available information and a review of assumptions around inflation, key contracts, pressures, and opportunities.

The table at 2.15 began with the MTFS position approved at Cabinet and Council for 2025–26 to 2027–28. At that stage, the Council had a balanced budget for 2026–27 and a pressure of £3.2 million for 2027–28.

The MTFS had not been extended as far as 2028–29; however, had it been, it would have shown a pressure of £6.8 million.

As part of the MTFS review, assumptions and the budget position were monitored and reported to Cabinet throughout the year. A key challenge for 2028–29 was the impact of previous capital investment decisions, with borrowing costs carried forward. Treasury management savings of £3–4m had been secured for 2025–26 to 2027–28 but were expected to drop out in 2028–29, creating a £4m pressure. Further savings might be possible, but economic conditions were too uncertain to project at this stage.

Revised inflation assumptions were also highlighted. The local government pay award for 2025–26 was 3.2%, higher than the 2% anticipated in the budget, creating a £2.3 million impact year-on-year and compounding future pay award assumptions. Inflation assumptions for social care providers, particularly adults and Children and Young People's Service (CYPS), were increased to provide capacity to meet potential demand.

Members were informed that Speciality Steel had ceased to exist, leaving 22 months of unpaid debt covering the last quarter of 2023–24, the whole of 2024–25, and the first six months of 2025–26. The company was taken over by a government-appointed liquidator. While rates for the remainder of the financial year were expected from the liquidator, no payments would be received for the outstanding debt. This would be managed through the business rates collection fund.

It was explained that the structure of the national business rates collection fund meant that the Council did not take a single year “big bang” impact when losing a major business ratepayer, such as Speciality Steel. The collection fund allowed the deficit to be managed over time. This meant the Council would carry the deficit in its non-domestic rates (NDR) collection position but could gradually reduce NDR assumptions, as reflected in the relevant line, to account for a reduced level of income from business rates. This approach would bring the position back to balance or surplus over time.

The longer-term sustainability of the site remained uncertain, and it was too early to determine whether an equivalent business would occupy the site in the future. At present, the Council was dealing with a historical write-off position. Business rates growth had been low in 2024–25, concluding at the end of that financial year, after budget setting. A review was carried out in early 2025–26, which resulted in softened growth assumptions for business rates. A similar review would take place heading into 2026–27 as part of the budget-setting process. While some growth during 2025–26 might provide an additional benefit, the current position remained challenging.

It was noted that there were additional inflation impacts across the board. Inflation remained at 3.8%, which was still higher than the historical Bank

of England base rate target of 2% for CPI inflation. This continued to drive up some of the core costs funded through the MTFS.

Members were informed of a few simpler adjustments, including the PES Education System pressure. This related to new capital investment approved in the previous year's budget. As the project progressed, it became clear that there would be a greater level of dual running between the old system and the new system to ensure a smooth transition. This required additional system capacity and some extra resources to deliver the scheme. While not a significant adjustment, it was necessary.

CYPS placement pressures were also highlighted, as this had been a key issue raised by members over recent years. The challenge was twofold: a long-standing non-delivery of savings linked to placement pressures and an overspend in the CYPS budget year-on-year. However, it was noted that the budget had been reduced annually, and overall CYPS spend had been coming down. Compared to nearest neighbours, whose costs were increasing, the Council was now reaching a positive position.

Work on the MTFS was well advanced, and it was hoped that some of the savings could be reflected in monitoring reports for Cabinet between November and January. It was explained that a significant portion of the savings linked to placements had effectively been delivered. In 2019–20, the Council had 600 looked-after children, compared to 472 at the start of planning for 2025–26, with a rolling target of around 470. If the Council were still funding 600 placements at current prices, costs would be approximately £9.5 million higher. The reduction in looked-after children numbers and the move to more appropriate and affordable placements had significantly improved the CYPS budget position over the past five years.

However, the wider challenge remained market forces, with inflation on placement costs driven by both general inflation and high demand in the sector.

It was noted that demand had driven prices upward, resulting in significantly higher inflation levels. Benchmarking had been undertaken, and there was potential to set out clearly, either in the next monitoring report or the forthcoming budget report, that inflation for CYPS placements had likely been underestimated in recent years when compared to the wider national market.

This would support a case for declaring a substantial portion of savings as appropriately delivered and for uplifting the CYPS placement budget. At that point, the working draft of the MTFS included £2 million, although this was not expected to be the final position. As highlighted by the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services, this represented a point in time, and work would continue. It was intended to increase CYPS budgets for 2026–27.



The Assistant Director for Financial Services reported that £4.3m was allocated for Home to School transport in the 2025–26 budget after strengthening policies and controls. Costs were contained, but rising demand from the September 2025 intake created minor pressure to be addressed in the MTFS. Delayed SEND reforms limited options to reduce overspend beyond current efficiencies. Some figures remained provisional as the MTFS was in draft, with updates due in January. Potential pressures included increasing complexity in adult care and higher baby pack costs if current investment continued.

It was agreed that Local Plan costs would be managed through a dedicated reserve rather than annual allocations, with funds drawn down as activities were confirmed. UKSPF ended at the close of the financial year. Several council-supported activities risked being unfunded in 2026–27, and discussions with South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and on the integrated settlement were ongoing to identify future funding options.

The Council's local council tax support top-up scheme had reached the end of its current funding, as it was an annually agreed project. Members noted the need to decide whether to continue the scheme and how to fund it. A key cost pressure from the 2025–26 pay award was the removal of Spinal Column Point 2 from the NJC structure from April 2026. Options were being considered to adjust the staffing structure, likely requiring staff to move to higher grades, with cost impacts under review. The Household Support Fund ended, and government proposed a Crisis Resilience Fund using the same funding pot. The council was engaged in consultation on the scheme, but guidance had not yet been issued.

Funding for Extended Producer Responsibility in the MTFS was increased from £4m to £5.8m following greater certainty from government, representing a £1.8m uplift. The Fair Funding Review was highlighted as a major source of uncertainty, proposing significant changes to the local authority funding formula.

The Fair Funding Review aimed to redistribute local authority funding to areas of greatest need and deprivation. Under the current formula, the Council expected up to £20m additional funding by 2028–29, tapered over three years to avoid sudden impacts. Pensions revaluation was discussed, with the employer contribution rate currently at 17.3%. Following consultation and challenge, the Pensions Authority proposed a 5.2% reduction, with an 80% likelihood of remaining 120% funded in three years. This outcome was considered positive, reducing costs by approximately £6m annually over the MTFS period.

The impact of Consumer Price Index (CPI) was noted as significant, with September CPI being the key metric for inflating council funding and provider cost assumptions. The MTFS reflected a broadly balanced budget for the next two years, with a projected gap in the final year. This was not considered a major concern due to uncertainties around the Fair

Funding Review and potential changes over the next three years.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised.

It was noted that CYPS were significantly behind on delivering £4.5m savings for 2025-26, with £2.3m savings built into 2026-27. Councillor Blackham sought clarification on whether the 2026-27 savings were dependent on achieving the 2025-26 target.

The Assistant Director, Financial Services noted that the 2025-26 pressure was mainly due to rising placement costs rather than non-delivery of savings. Two CYPS savings areas remained in progress: completion of the in-house residential placements programme and increasing fostering numbers. These were expected to reduce costs in future years. The £2m increase in the MTFS was a holding position, with further adjustments likely to address placement pressures. Some non-delivery of savings was expected to carry into 2026-27, linked to incomplete residential homes. However, the number of looked-after children had significantly reduced, supporting overall savings delivery.

It was assumed that these assumptions had been built into the upcoming budget round. Councillor Blackham sought clarification on the likelihood of receiving a reliable budget for 2026-27 from CYPS. In response the Assistant Director, Financial Services explained the draft MTFS incorporated all current information and would form the basis of the Budget and Council Tax Report, creating a more robust position for CYPS for 2026-27. It was noted that the CYPS budget remained vulnerable to high-cost placements, with single cases potentially exceeding £1.7m annually, making future budgets subject to significant volatility.

Councillor A Carter sought clarification on whether the short-term financial impact from the closure of Specialty Steel had been reflected in the medium-term position and what effect this might have on council tax increases. It was also noted that the MTFS assumed a 3% annual council tax rise, and clarification was requested on whether this included the 2% adult social care precept or was in addition to it.

The Assistant Director, Financial Services indicated the MTFS assumed a 3% annual council tax increase as a planning assumption, with the split between basic council tax and the adult social care precept to be determined during the budget process. The maximum increase without a referendum was noted as 5%. Regarding Specialty Steel, the unpaid bill would result in a business rates write-off, already reflected in MTFS assumptions. This would create a deficit in the Business Rates Collection Fund, requiring gradual adjustment of future assumptions. The future sustainability of the site remained uncertain.

In a supplementary question, Councillor A Carter sought clarification that the MTFS assumed no business rates from the Specialty Steel site and

asked about the financial impact on council taxpayers. He queried whether discussions had taken place with government to mitigate the impact of the closure of this nationally significant industry on the council and local taxpayers.

The Assistant Director, Financial Services said the MTFS accounted for the write-off of debt from Specialty Steel and assumed continued business rate income for the current year while the government remained in occupation. Future sustainability of the site was uncertain, with discussions ongoing. The risk would be carried in the MTFS, as loss of business rates would create additional budget pressure, though not directly linked to council tax increases, which were determined alongside all other pressures and opportunities.

Councillor Baggaley asked how confident the Council was that the TBC items listed in the table would not lead to an unbalanced position in future years. The Assistant Director, Financial Services noted that, while the Council had a strong track record of setting balanced budgets, the current position remained uncertain due to the Fair Funding Review. The outcome was expected in late December and could either improve or worsen the funding position. The MTFS process would continue to be closely monitored, with flexibility to adjust assumptions as needed. Work on the TBC items was progressing, but the Fair Funding Review was identified as the greater risk.

The Chair asked when the Council would need to start addressing the projected budget gap for 2028-29 and at what point action should be taken. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services noted that the upcoming settlement would provide a clearer three-year position. Future budget gaps would depend on factors such as capital investment decisions, the Fair Funding Review, council tax levels, and other uncertainties. The MTFS currently assumed a 3% annual council tax increase as a planning figure, with the final decision to be made during the budget process. Reserves remained strong and could be used strategically if required, though none were currently allocated for this purpose. Members were advised that figures could change significantly, and options would be considered once the settlement and other variables were confirmed.

Councillor Blackham asked whether the Council was a preferential creditor in relation to Specialty Steel. The Assistant Director, Financial Services confirmed there would be no recovery of the debt.

Councillor Bacon raised a question about the South Yorkshire Pensions Fund position, asking whether 120% funding was considered reasonable or if a lower level would be preferable. It was noted that the actuary determined the funding level, and the Council had challenged the previous overly prudent position. Following lobbying by South Yorkshire councils, the rate was reduced to 120%, which was considered reasonable, though still cautious. The outcome was viewed positively, as

it avoided future increases in employer contributions and delivered significant savings.

Councillor A Carter raised a concern about whether the MTFS assumption of future business rates from the Specialty Steel site was overly optimistic and the potential financial implications for the Council if this income did not materialise.

The Chair noted that any loss of business rates from the Specialty Steel site would be addressed through the annual budget-setting process. The Assistant Director, Financial Services confirmed the potential impact was £1.3m per year and would be managed within the MTFS if the site ceased to generate business rates, though this would not affect the 2026–27 position.

Cabinet Member for Finance & Community Safety noted that the main issue was the Fair Funding Review and advised waiting for the government's announcement before reviewing figures. He stated that the Council had managed its financial position prudently and would act accordingly once the settlement was confirmed.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations:

1. That Cabinet note the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29 update.

## **59. GENERAL ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance & Community Safety introduced the report noting that the Council adopted the General Enforcement Policy in May 2023, as required by statutory guidance to ensure engagement with regulators, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in policy development. The review aimed to confirm stakeholder consultation and identify any necessary amendments. Consultation was scheduled from 1 December 2025 to 27 February 2026, involving council colleagues, elected members, partners, stakeholders, and the public. The adopted review policies were set out in Appendix 1, and the consultation plan in Appendix 2. Following consultation and analysis, a refreshed policy was planned for presentation to Cabinet in May 2026 for consideration.

The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment said the Council last reviewed its enforcement policy in 2023. Cabinet was asked to approve consultation on proposed changes, scheduled for December and January, with a further report planned for spring to adopt a revised policy.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised.

Councillor Yasseen provided feedback prior to consultation, recommending a relationship-based approach to enforcement focused on education and support rather than punitive measures. It was suggested that the consultation team work with the corporate community engagement team to strengthen engagement. The need for Equality Impact Assessments to address impacts on protected groups rather than only reporting respondent demographics was highlighted.

In response Sam Barstow, the Assistant Director for Community Safety and Street Scene welcomed members' comments and agreed that the core aim of the enforcement policy remained achieving compliance. It was noted that most issues were resolved early without formal enforcement, though the Council would act robustly where necessary. The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene confirmed that feedback on consultation and equality duties would be taken forward, with officers working closely with other departments and ensuring a strong focus on equality in decision-making.

Councillor A Carter raised concerns about the Equality Impact Assessment, noting it stated no impact on protected characteristics. It was suggested that enforcement could disproportionately affect these groups and that the consultation plan lacked measures to engage hard-to-reach groups, such as those with disabilities or limited literacy. Councillor A Carter did not support recommending the consultation to Cabinet in its current form.

The Chair asked how the authority would ensure engagement with hard-to-reach groups, including those for whom English is not a first language.

The Assistant Director for Community Safety and Street Scene clarified that Cabinet was being asked to approve consultation, not the enforcement policy itself. A full Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment would be completed when the revised policy was considered post-consultation. Members were assured that consultation would aim to reach all parts of the community, including internal stakeholders, councillors, partners, businesses, and community groups. Methods included online surveys, printed copies in libraries and community venues, social media promotion, direct notifications to councillors and businesses, and public events in accessible locations. Key stakeholders such as South Yorkshire Police, Chamber of Commerce, Fire and Rescue Services, and other council services would also be engaged.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Community Safety confirmed that consultation aimed to be accessible and inclusive, engaging a community reference group representing protected characteristics, including people with learning disabilities, autism, BME groups, and faith communities. A standard checklist and specialist organisations, such as businesses, were used to ensure outreach to seldom-heard groups. It was noted that while responses could not be guaranteed, efforts were made through varied mechanisms to promote co-ownership of the policy.

The Chair moved to a vote with the majority of members being in favour of supporting with recommendations to Cabinet and one being against.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet:

1. Approve a consultation with stakeholders to be undertaken in respect of the General Enforcement Policy to inform a review.
2. Note that a refreshed Policy will then be presented to Cabinet in May 2026 following the consultation.

## **60. ANNUAL COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT 2024/25**

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance & Community Safety introduced the report noting this was the annual report covering formal compliments and complaints for the 2024-25 financial year. Overall complaints received by the Council decreased by 1%. Complaints remained an important tool for learning and improving services.

The report included performance data broken down by Council directorates, enabling assessment at both Council and team levels. Complaints were noted as valuable for identifying issues, checking processes, and making necessary apologies and corrections. The Council had continued to make it easier for people to complain through multiple channels, including writing, email, and text.

Headline figures showed compliments increased from 902 to 1,309 (a 45% rise), continuing the year-on-year upward trend. Social Care recorded the largest increase, followed by Environment Services and Housing. Most complaints were resolved at Stage One, with only four reaching Stage Three for Member Review Panel consideration.

The Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services gave a presentation on the annual compliments and complaints report for the period up to March 2025, highlighting key points. It was reported that previous recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) had been addressed, including an all-member session in March covering complaint management procedures and member roles.

Headline figures showed complaints decreased slightly by 1%, from 1,212 to 1,198. This was still the third-highest total in the past five years, indicating further work was needed.

The graph in the presentation showed complaints (red line) rising over previous years, followed by a slight drop and levelling off last year. It was noted that further reduction was needed. Compliments (green line) continued to rise steadily over five years, increasing from 902 to 1,309 last year, largely driven by Adult Care.

Of the 1,198 complaints received, 369 (31%) were upheld, an increase from 294 the previous year, though the proportion remained consistent at around one-third. The largest category was quality of service, followed by lack of service and staff conduct/attitude, which decreased compared to the previous year. Most complaints (93.5%) were resolved at Stage One; 42 progressed to Stage Two and only four reached Stage Three.

By directorate, Housing and Regeneration & Environment recorded the highest complaint volumes. Regeneration & Environment saw the largest absolute increase, rising from 373 to 468 (25%), followed by Children and Young People's Services.

Housing complaints decreased from 615 to 471, and the Assistant Chief Executive's directorate reduced from five to three. Public Health remained at zero complaints.

The increase in Regeneration & Environment was mainly due to waste management issues from the previous year, rising from 165 to 267. Children and Young People's Services also saw an increase in EHCP-related complaints, from 14 to 24, reflecting a national challenge. Despite the higher volume of complaints, Regeneration & Environment achieved the largest improvement in timeliness, increasing from 79% to 85%, meeting the Council's target. Overall, 81% of complaints were responded to within timescales, compared to 82% the previous year, still below the 85% target. Finance and Customer Services recorded the highest performance at 88%. Adult Care improved slightly from 75% to 77%.

It was noted that work would continue with service managers to improve timeliness. The matter would be discussed further with the Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence and Complaints Manager to review processes. Reference was made to previous improvements achieved on Freedom of Information requests, and it was emphasised that responsibility for timely responses rests with management, not solely the complaints team.

Compliments increased by 45%, from 902 to 1,309, mainly driven by Adult Social Care, which doubled its numbers. Regeneration & Environment also saw a 40% rise (85 more), and Housing increased by 38% (77 more). While this may suggest improved customer satisfaction, further analysis was needed to confirm.

The Next steps included:

- Continuing training for frontline staff to reinforce their role in shaping customer experience.
- Improving timeliness of complaint responses.
- Rolling out reporting dashboards for managers to access complaint data more easily.
- Enhancing processes for recording and sharing compliments.
- Completing the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

- Streamlining complaint handling with Customer Services through system automation to reduce delays in directing complaints to the appropriate officers.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised and began by noting that 31% of complaints were upheld. What lessons were learned from these cases? The Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services noted that complaints varied widely, and feedback was always provided to managers. Responsibility for addressing issues lay with service areas. Examples included benefit entitlement complaints, where outcomes could not be changed, and complaints about staff attitude or handling of service issues, which were addressed through training and discussions with officers. The importance of tone and customer interaction was emphasised. Complaints were not lost in the corporate process but dealt with by management. Capturing learning consistently across all areas remained a challenge.

The Complaints Manager explained that learning from complaints fell into two categories: capturing and applying lessons. Managers investigating complaints were required to identify learning, which was recorded and reported at management meetings monthly, quarterly, and annually. Some findings were included in the annual report. Common themes included:

- Staff performance issues addressed through supervision and training.
- Communication gaps where clearer updates to customers could have prevented complaints.
- Strategic process improvements to close service gaps.

It was noted that Housing had embedded a Tenants Learning from Complaints Panel, working with Rotherfed to review complaints and associated learning. Feedback from tenants was fed into housing management meetings to support service improvements, providing valuable resident insight beyond internal review.

Councillor McKiernan noted the absence of other strategic directors, given that many topics discussed fell under their portfolios. The use of the term “customers” in the report was queried, suggesting most were residents rather than business customers. Councillor McKiernan confirmed his first question on trends in upheld complaints had been answered and asked why compliments had increased, particularly in Adult Social Care. It was queried whether this was due to proactive requests for feedback or surveys.

The Complaints Manager explained that compliments were largely unsolicited feedback from residents, not actively requested by the Council. However, managers were encouraged to forward compliments for logging rather than leaving them informal. This approach helped ensure compliments were recorded alongside complaints. Some services,



such as Community Occupational Therapy, routinely surveyed customers after visits and efficiently submitted positive feedback, resulting in higher recorded compliments.

Councillor Yasseen noted that compliments had increased significantly in some areas, notably Adult Social Care and Regeneration. How could members be assured that learning from these positive outcomes was shared across other directorates where complaints remained high? Members had not seen any evidence of other directorates adopting the practices that worked well in Adult Social Care. In response the Complaints Manager noted there was a competitive element in collecting compliments, with Adult Social Care and Housing encouraged to compare results. Services were reminded to capture compliments during resident engagement and forward them to the complaints team for logging. Techniques such as surveys and follow-up work were highlighted as effective in increasing recorded compliments.

The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services acknowledged that compliments were harder to encourage compared to complaints, which were usually driven by service failures. Compliments were generally unsolicited, though residents could submit them via the website. The point was raised about asking for feedback at the point of service or resolution, which could involve Customer Services and frontline staff. This would be explored further to improve how compliments are captured and used for learning.

On terminology, it was noted that most interactions were with residents, though “customers” was sometimes used where services were purchased. Feedback on this point was accepted. The absence of other directors was also noted, and this would be fed back as their input was important for answering service-specific questions.

Councillor Yasseen suggested utilising positive feedback more effectively, noting the Council’s role as the largest employer in Rotherham. A suggestion was proposed regarding sharing compliments, with resident consent, through newsletters and local communications to highlight good work and reflect the efforts of staff, many of whom are local.

Councillor Brent noted that while many directorates, such as Housing and Regeneration & Environment, were obvious points for complaints and compliments, some areas like Children and Young People’s Services (CYPS) might not be. It was queried how complaints or compliments received by schools, which delivered education on behalf of the Council, were captured, as these did not appear to be included in the report.

The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services agreed that the point was valid and needed consideration. Current reporting covered complaints in line with the Ombudsman’s Code, but wider feedback from commissioned services or schools was not routinely captured. The challenge of collecting broader data without disrupting service delivery

was acknowledged, and the matter would be reviewed to explore possible solutions. Similar gaps were noted in areas such as Public Health and housing providers, where complaints and compliments often sit with commissioned services. The aim would be to find ways to capture this information to support improvement and recognition.

Councillor A Carter reflected on terminology, noting that “customer” was an improvement compared to the previous use of “complainant,” though views differed on whether “resident” or “customer” was preferable. It was acknowledged that cultural change in how the organisation responded to complaints was still needed, but progress had been made.

Councillor Tinsley asked whether the complaints reported followed the formal procedure and raised the issue of defining what constituted a complaint. It was suggested that lower-level issues reported via the Council website, which residents may consider complaints, could be collated as separate data. Capturing this could provide earlier opportunities for service improvement and potentially generate compliments when issues are resolved promptly.

The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services agreed that while formal complaints must follow Ombudsman processes, the purpose of collecting data was to use it meaningfully. The point was made that many contacts from residents are not formal complaints but service requests or queries, and these interactions could provide valuable insight. Capturing all types of contact, whether formal or informal, could help identify trends and improve services. The challenge of integrating this broader data into reporting was acknowledged, and the suggestion would be considered further.

In a further response the Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence confirmed that service requests, such as missed bin collections or pothole reports, were recorded and fed into the relevant services for monitoring and management. This data was reviewed through management and directorate meetings to ensure a complete picture of service performance. Councillor Tinsley noted that the lack of follow-up after service requests was a missed opportunity. It was suggested that an easier process for confirming satisfaction could be considered, rather than requiring residents to search online for the formal complaints’ procedure. Many residents might assume they had already complained, leaving issues unresolved and feedback uncollected.

In a further question, Councillor Yasseen noted that while complaints had fallen by 1%, this offered limited assurance given that totals remained the third highest in five years. The need to view data over a longer period for better perspective was stressed. The 25% rise in complaints within Regeneration & Environment, particularly waste management, which had increased by 62%, excluding recent disruptions was highlighted.

Councillor Yasseen went on to express concern that key drivers of

resident satisfaction, such as waste collection, street cleanliness, and green spaces, were not being prioritised, despite their significant impact on public perception.

It was asked how the Council could place greater emphasis on these universal services and respond more effectively when issues arise.

In response to these points the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services acknowledged that the statistics confirmed public dissatisfaction with certain services, but the underlying reasons were already known and taken seriously. Complaints data was valuable for showing the scale and impact on residents rather than identifying unknown issues. The Council used this information corporately to inform improvements and ensure feedback loops were strengthened, including better communication with residents about progress.

Work was underway with Customer Services to create an end-to-end feedback process to reduce repeat contacts. Broader service demand data was also monitored. Examples included housing complaints related to damp and mould, which prompted increased Council activity to address the issue. All complaints data was reviewed at senior levels to ensure action on key service concerns.

The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene noted that services such as waste management involved millions of interactions annually, so any increase in complaints was taken seriously and reviewed alongside wider data sources, including crew feedback and operational systems. Complaints were one of many measures used to inform decisions on service improvements and investment. An example was given where missed collections were often due to large refuse vehicles accessing narrow streets. In response, Cabinet approved investment in narrow-access vehicles, which were now in operation and reducing related complaints. This illustrated how complaint data, combined with other insights, informed practical service improvements.

Councillor Yasseen asked whether the Council used national comparators, such as the LGA satisfaction survey, to benchmark performance. It was noted that previous national surveys, like the former Place Survey, had not been replaced and queried if metrics such as the LGA's 76% satisfaction rate for waste collection were used to assess improvement needs against national averages. The Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence confirmed that benchmarking was undertaken using national and local surveys. The Council continued to run its own resident satisfaction survey, which provided useful feedback on key issues and informed core metrics within the Council Plan. Comparisons with national data were possible but limited, as not all areas conducted similar surveys and statistical differences made direct comparisons challenging. Work was ongoing to align the next local survey with the national survey and to obtain Yorkshire and Humber data for broader context.

The Vice-Chair noted that residents expected basic services to be delivered correctly and expressed frustration when simple issues were not addressed proactively. Examples included pothole repairs and pavement moss clearance, where additional visible issues were left unresolved, requiring separate reports.

It was suggested that some complaints could be avoided through more proactive processes and asked how member casework was utilised within the compliance process, noting its potential value in identifying trends and informing improvements. The Chair added that casework often involved complaints about council services and queried its role in the complaints procedure.

The Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence confirmed that when casework was clearly flagged as a formal complaint, it was logged in the system, passed to the complaints team, and managed through the standard process, with responses provided to both the resident and the member. Broader casework trends were reviewed by the Customer Experience Board, alongside other metrics such as call volumes and web demand. Those datasets were triangulated to identify recurring issues, trends, and areas requiring further investigation or action.

The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene confirmed that member casework was reviewed both individually and cumulatively. Individual issues were addressed by service managers, while aggregated casework data was included in regular performance reports to identify trends and inform service improvements.

In response to concerns about proactive behaviours, it was noted that expectations for officers to assess the wider environment during tasks were set by Cabinet and senior management. While these behaviours were encouraged, operational constraints sometimes required prioritisation based on the Highway Management Code, which defined repair urgency. Nonetheless, managers committed to reviewing individual cases and learning from them to improve services.

A question was raised by the Vice-Chair regarding complaints about street bins not being emptied, as the data primarily focused on household waste. It was noted that during the latter part of the reporting period, there were numerous complaints, including observations within wards of overflowing street bins. Clarification was sought on the process for ensuring bins were emptied properly and how operatives reported issues to improve scheduling. The query also asked whether there had been an increase in complaints about street bins during that time. At this point the Chair reminded members that the discussion should relate to the previous year and not the current year.

The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene noted that a recent workshop held with members of OSMB had reviewed the data, which showed a spike in complaints during an unseasonably hot bank

holiday weekend, leading to increased bin usage. More broadly, the council had invested in additional operatives and a new IT system to replace outdated processes. This system enabled operatives to record bin fullness and report overflows, allowing data-driven adjustments to collection schedules. These measures aimed to proactively manage demand and prevent issues.

A query was raised by Councillor Baggley, about how complaints were managed within required timeframes and how delays were avoided when progressing from Stage 1 to Stage 3. Clarification was also sought on how complaints were classified in reports, particularly when they spanned an annual period, whether by the date received or the date closed. The Complaint Manager confirmed that all formal complaints were performance-managed through weekly dashboards, showing in-time and out-of-time cases to managers at all levels. Monthly and quarterly reports were also provided, and the complaints team chased managers individually to ensure timely handling. Where possible, complaints were resolved quickly to avoid lengthy Stage 2 investigations, though this could occasionally delay escalation. Escalation times were governed by the Housing Ombudsman's code and, from April 2026, by the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman code. Data reported included all complaints received and resolved within the period.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

1. Noted the Annual Compliments and Complaints Report for 2024/25.
2. Agreed that future reports included data to demonstrate that complaints raised through the member casework system were dealt with through the Complaints process.
3. Agreed that detail should be provided, in future reports, of improvements put in place arising from the learning of complaints, including how this is applied across the Council and not just in the particular Department or Directorate affected.

**61. CALL-IN - SELECTIVE LICENSING POLICY (LISTED AS ITEM 8 ON THE 20 OCTOBER 2025 CABINET AGENDA)**

In relation to this item, Councillor Tinsley declared that he had previously held a licence in Maltby. It was not a financial interest.

Councillor Yasseen expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to present the call-in, noting that raising housing standards across Rotherham was a shared priority. It was stated that while the principle was supported and had been backed over the past 10 years, Councillor Yasseen did not support the current proposal. Concerns were raised that the model would not deliver lasting change, as similar issues persisted in the same streets after a decade. The procedural, legal, and policy concerns were highlighted, including flaws in the consultation process, inadequate responses during engagement events, and anomalies such as reopening the consultation and rebranding it as "landlord licensing," which it was

believed was inconsistent with the Housing Act. Evidence-based feedback had previously been submitted, including examples of inaccuracies on the council's website and maps.

Councillor Yasseen stated that the consultation process had undermined trust and integrity, describing aspects as misleading. Concerns were reiterated about the equality analysis, noting that it lacked evidence of mitigating measures for disproportionate impacts on protected groups. Reference was made to central Rotherham areas, Boston Castle, Wath East, and Wath West, where engagement events were held and which have high ethnic diversity. Additional concerns included inadequate data on mobility and immigration markers under the Housing Act, particularly the mobility index, and a lack of transparency regarding alternative schemes submitted during consultation.

In continuation Councillor Yasseen cited Little London in Maltby as an example, noting it had previously been identified for improvement, fined, and featured on a national programme for poor housing conditions, yet was removed from the proposed selective licensing scope. Questions were raised about the basis for accepting or rejecting schemes and concerns expressed about transparency, as residents perceived possible preferential treatment of landlords. It was emphasised that the call-in focused on tenants' rights to safe, secure, and decent homes, which they felt had not been achieved over the past decade. They argued that the proposed model risked duplicating regulation given the forthcoming Renters Reform Bill and Awaab's Law and suggested waiting for these measures to be implemented. A borough-wide scheme, similar to Barnsley's approach, was strongly supported as an alternative to selective licensing.

Councillor Yasseen went on to raise concerns about the financial model, noting that over 300 properties had been removed from the selective licensing scope without clear rationale and questioning how this affected projected income from licence fees. Clarification was sought on whether any deficit had been accounted for and whether funding was ring-fenced for the dedicated team. It was queried how tenant involvement would be strengthened, expressing doubt based on previous poor engagement outcomes and a lack of significant changes in approach. Finally, concerns were reiterated about transparency in property removals, with assurances requested that decisions were not influenced by lobbying.

Councillor A Carter confirmed agreement with previously stated reasons for the call-in and requested either a revision of the decision or, at minimum, a pause for Cabinet to reconsider pending the impact of the Renters Reform Bill and Awaab's Law. Councillor A Carter highlighted that Brinsworth was newly included in the scheme and reiterated long-standing opposition to selective licensing due to perceived lack of effectiveness. Additional points included:

- Consultation results: 80% of tenants said they would not support the scheme if it led to rent increases, and 59% of overall

respondents opposed the scheme.

- Evidence of success: The report cited Maltby as proof of concept, but this was questioned, noting repeated cycles of licensing and continued issues.
- Impact on rents: Concern was expressed that selective licensing could raise rents in lower socio-economic areas, making housing unaffordable for local residents.

It was argued that selective licensing was punitive yet ineffective, citing national examples, and suggested that forthcoming legislation, including a national landlord registry, would provide stronger enforcement and broader improvements. A borough-wide approach was supported rather than selective licensing.

The Vice-Chair expressed initial concerns about potential rent increases but acknowledged that officers had referenced a report suggesting otherwise. It was asked whether any supplementary evidence could be provided to address those concerns and queried whether the issue related to supply, such as landlords leaving the market and reducing availability, or whether it was an external factor that would inevitably increase rents.

In response Councillor Yasseen noted that while some landlords had sent letters, they were not lobbying on behalf of landlords but advocating for a better approach. They shared recent examples, including a tenant who reported a rent increase after years of stability and expressed concerns that selective licensing would not address wider community issues. Councillor Yasseen also cited feedback from a landlord in Clifton who was selling a property due to opposition to the policy. It was argued that national reports did not reflect local realities and reiterated concerns that rents would rise and that the proposed scheme lacked a broader strategy to tackle underlying problems.

As a sponsor of the call-in request, Councillor A Carter noted evidence from landlords indicating rents could rise and agreed multiple factors were involved. It was highlighted that the borough relied heavily on the private sector to meet housing needs due to limited council housing. Concern was expressed that landlords selling properties could reduce rental stock, limiting options for residents wishing to remain in their communities. Councillor A Carter warned that this could harm social housing provision and lead to poorer landlords entering the market, ultimately lowering standards.

In a follow up question, the Vice-Chair noted that officers might argue the scheme provided powers to inspect properties and address faults, and asked whether any aspects of the Renters Reform Bill could mitigate this.

In response to the question, Councillor Yasseen reflected on lessons from the first decade of the scheme, citing inefficiencies such as properties registered but not inspected despite fees being paid. It was argued that

selective licensing had not delivered its intended outcomes and highlighted the benefits of the forthcoming Renters Reform Bill, which would require landlords to register properties and strengthen tenant rights. Councillor Yasseen suggested this national approach would be more effective and efficient than current practices and recommended pausing the scheme until these changes were implemented.

Councillor Blackham referred to legal grounds in the report, noting a statement that the designation could risk being deemed ultra vires. It was asked whether this was a genuine risk and if the council might be acting beyond its powers, stressing the seriousness of the issue and questioning whether such a risk was acceptable.

In response Councillor Yasseen stated they believed several council policies had been breached, as detailed in their call-in request. They emphasised that their role was to present a case based on resident engagement and improving housing standards, not to provide legal expertise. They warned of potential legal challenges, citing past cases where landlords had taken the council to court, which, although successful, were costly and time-consuming. Concerns were raised that the current scheme could expose the council to similar risks, particularly given growing dissatisfaction. Councillor Yasseen also questioned the effectiveness of the scheme, noting issues such as cannabis cultivation increasing in Eastwood during its implementation and failure to meet inspection targets.

Councillor A Carter added that, even if the council successfully defended any legal challenge, exposing itself to such risk was not a prudent use of public funds. They argued that resources should be directed toward core services, especially given the potential duplication with the forthcoming Renters Reform Bill, which is expected to take effect in 2026. They recommended pausing the selective licensing scheme for 12 months to assess the impact of national legislation before proceeding, noting that circumstances had changed since the original decision and that a review was now appropriate.

In a supplementary question Councillor Blackham asked whether, given the potential risk of acting ultra vires, the council should pause the scheme and seek legal advice to confirm its position. Councillor A Carter agreed, stating that a pause was appropriate and added that, regardless of legal opinion, proceeding would not represent good value for money.

The Chair invited the Monitoring Officer to address concerns regarding legal risk. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that while the report acknowledged a potential risk of challenge, such risks exist for many council decisions, particularly controversial ones. Previous challenges to selective licensing had been successfully defended. Legal advice had been sought throughout the process, and external counsel retained to ensure decisions were lawful and defensible. The Monitoring Officer stated that the decision-making process had been appropriate and that,



should the Cabinet decision stand, the council would be able to robustly defend any legal challenge.

Councillor McKiernan expressed concern that the call-in did not present new evidence, noting that many of the questions raised had already been addressed during previous scrutiny, including consideration of the Renters Reform Bill before it became law. They asked what was new in the call-in that justified Cabinet revisiting the decision, given the extensive pre-decision scrutiny already undertaken.

Councillor Yasseen disagreed with the suggestion that the call-in lacked new points, stating that previous responses had been inadequate. They highlighted equality concerns as an example, noting that earlier replies focused on commitment rather than concrete actions or mitigation measures. Councillor Yasseen stressed that tenants deserved better outcomes, citing persistent deprivation in areas like Eastwood despite 10 years of selective licensing. It was explained that issues had been raised repeatedly over several months with little response, which was why they continued to press for improvements.

Councillor A Carter added that, while scrutiny had taken place previously, the situation had changed since the Cabinet decision because the Renters Reform Bill had now passed, and its provisions were clear. It was argued that this represented a significant development and justified reconsideration of the scheme.

At the Chairs invitation, the Cabinet Member for Housing began by thanking colleagues for agreeing on the aims of selective licensing, safe communities, decent homes, and healthy living, and acknowledged the robust scrutiny previously undertaken.

The Cabinet Member for Housing stated they did not believe the consultation was flawed, asserting that proper process had been followed. The extensive engagement undertaken was outlined, including notifications to 16,000 addresses, emails to residents and agents, landlord newsletters, social media, press releases, paid adverts, ward newsletters, public meetings, town council forums, door-knocking, posters, and targeted engagement with minority groups. Paper surveys were also provided on request, and feedback led to updates in consultation materials, removal of a potentially biased question, extended consultation, and revised boundaries. In conclusion it was felt that the consultation was adequate and inclusive.

The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene thanked members for their questions and provided clarification. They noted that while only 20% of councils operated selective licensing in August 2024, 25 new schemes were launched during 2024 and 37 were under consideration by January 2025, indicating growing adoption nationally. On procedural concerns, it was confirmed the consultation was robust and adaptable, with Cabinet fully aware of the majority opposition when

making its decision. The decision was based on statutory guidelines and a strong evidence base.

It was stated there was no rebranding and that the equality impact analysis complied with the Equality Act and council frameworks, drawing on consultation data, ward demographics, deprivation indices, and census information. Risks and mitigations were identified, and the policy aimed to advance equality by removing barriers to reporting and ensuring proactive inspections.

On migration and mobility indices, it was clarified these were referenced for context but not used as grounds for designation. All alternative schemes submitted were assessed and documented in the report. Regarding Little London, it was explained its exclusion was due to historic circumstances involving two major landlords, making a different approach viable.

The Assistant Director outlined legislative changes during the process, noting that the removal of the 20% threshold requirement allowed councils greater flexibility to consider additional areas for future selective licensing.

Finally, the Assistant Director clarified that while the Renters Reform Bill had now become law, there had been no substantive changes since previous discussions. They noted that implementation would take time, with measures such as the national landlord database not expected until winter 2026. It was explained that selective licensing still offered unique benefits, including the ability to set local conditions tailored to Rotherham's needs, which the national legislation could not provide.

The Cabinet Member for Housing addressed legal and procedural points, confirming that areas were designated based on meeting at least one of five statutory criteria, poor housing conditions, antisocial behaviour, high deprivation, high crime, or low housing demand. They emphasised the scheme's purpose of professionalising the private rented sector and protecting tenants. The Cabinet Member noted that while the Renters Reform Act was now law, full implementation would take time, and selective licensing remained essential for setting local conditions.

The achievements of previous schemes were highlighted, including addressing over 8,000 hazards, inspecting 2,300 properties, tackling 2,000 antisocial behaviour cases, and securing 15 successful prosecutions with 23 pending. One in seven inspected properties had serious Category 1 hazards. The Cabinet Member rejected claims of landlord self-regulation, stating that some landlords with convictions had opposed the scheme. It was argued that rent increases were landlord decisions, not a direct result of licensing, and fees equated to less than £1 per week. Evidence showed no strong link between licensing and rent rises.

The Cabinet Member concluded that selective licensing had delivered

improvements, citing Maltby as an example, and reiterated its role in reaching vulnerable tenants who might otherwise face barriers to reporting issues.

Councillor Yasseen noted there was no mention of finance regarding the 319 properties that had been removed. The documentation did not account for this, even though they had already been excluded before the cabinet paper. It was felt this was a poor financial response, given that many of the arguments were strongly based on financial considerations.

The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene explained that finances were recalculated for the final cabinet report. The team had responded to consultation feedback, which included requests to penalise bad landlords and support good landlords, leading to a review of the fee structure. The removal of properties also prompted a review of the scheme's expenses, and budgeted costs were reduced to reflect the lower income.

The second finance question from Councillor Yasseen concerned legal counsel. It was noted that legal advice had been sought throughout the process, and clarification was requested on how much of this cost came from the council's general fund. The Assistant Director reiterated that as the Monitoring Officer had noted, counsel's advice had been taken. These costs were not linked to selective licensing and were funded from the council's general fund. The exact cost was not available at the time, but the officer agreed to discuss with legal colleagues and provide details if appropriate.

Councillor Yasseen noted that, based on the latest figures, 15 of the 16 areas selected for selective licensing had become more deprived over the past 10 years. Concern was raised that the proposed approach appeared to replicate a scheme that had not delivered improvement, with deprivation worsening in most areas, including Eastwood, which ranked among the top 2% most deprived nationally. The question asked was how the new scheme would address issues that had not been resolved in the last decade.

The Assistant Director acknowledged that there was a fundamental difference of opinion on the success of previous schemes. The factual point that deprivation had increased in the designated areas was accepted, though the national context was unclear. The Assistant Director stated that the scheme had been successful in improving housing conditions for tenants in selective licensing areas, delivering positive outcomes. Scrutiny had reviewed the scheme several times and recommended closer alignment with wider council policies and strategies. The proposed scheme was described as different, with a critical change being the introduction of area plans based on available data, consultation feedback, and using selective licensing as one tool within a broader approach to improve wider outcomes. In summary, the Assistant Director believed selective licensing had significantly improved individual

properties and tenants' conditions, and the new model reflected scrutiny recommendations and public consultation, aiming to deliver better results for residents.

Councillor Yasseen acknowledged the level of consultation but expressed concern that the consultation document was biased, as highlighted in their submitted analysis. They noted that only one question had been changed, whereas their review suggested around 60% of the content was biased. They asked whether more could have been done to make the process fairer and more accessible. The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that, in her opinion, no further changes were necessary.

The Vice-Chair noted the justification for selective licensing as a local response to national issues but questioned how this aligned with studies suggesting rents do not increase as a result. Concern was raised about the potential for rising rents due to basic economic principles and the risk of council policies contributing to this. It was asked how confident officers were that rents would not rise, given that decision ultimately rested with landlords.

In response the Cabinet Member stated they could not be fully confident that landlords would avoid rent increases, acknowledging that some might use the scheme as justification. An example was cited where a landlord planned a rent rise after five years without an increase. However, it was noted that rules governing rent increases in the private sector remained in place and must be followed. The Cabinet Member emphasised that good landlords had been recognised through reduced fees, amounting to less than £1 per week, and argued that any significant rent increase would likely be for reasons unrelated to selective licensing.

Councillor Tinsley noted that the Rental Rights Bill was not yet fully implemented and asked whether, once the housing order and related measures such as the landlord register were in place, the council would review how these interact with selective licensing and consider whether the scheme should continue. In response the Assistant Director confirmed that the scheme would be reviewed annually. If conditions changed to the point where selective licensing was no longer considered necessary or proportionate in specific areas, a recommendation could be made to Cabinet to consider withdrawal.

In a supplementary, Councillor Tinsley asked whether the Rental Rights Bill's decent homes standard would operate in the same way as selective licensing, using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System for monitoring. The Assistant Director explained that some aspects would be similar, but others would differ. Selective licensing was highlighted as a local tool that allows tailored conditions, such as stricter overcrowding thresholds based on usable living space rather than total square meterage, which includes kitchens and bathrooms. This flexibility enables the council to address specific local issues. While some elements will be covered nationally under the Rental Rights Bill, others will not, which

underpins the council's approach.

The Vice-Chair raised concerns about situations where landlords with problematic tenants might be disproportionately affected. They asked what would happen if a tenant caused damage or issues, making it harder for the landlord under the Renter's Rights Bill to evict them, while also facing council inspections identifying hazards. The Cabinet Member clarified that landlords remained responsible for ensuring properties were free from hazards, even if tenants caused damage. Regarding antisocial behaviour, it was noted that under the Renter's Rights Bill, landlords could still evict tenants for a valid reason, but no-fault evictions were no longer permitted. Eviction for antisocial behaviour remained possible, subject to following the correct process.

The Assistant Director highlighted differences between selective licensing and the Renter's Rights Bill. The Bill focused on tenants' rights and offered little on managing antisocial behaviour, whereas selective licensing allowed local requirements for landlords to address such issues. It was noted that selective licensing provided additional levers beyond ensuring homes were decent and fit for habitation, by elevating expectations for landlords to manage tenants effectively for the benefit of the wider community.

The Vice-Chair asked what safeguards were in place for landlords dealing with tenants who caused property damage, particularly if issues arose immediately before an inspection. They queried how landlords could report such situations to the council and ensure their concerns were taken into account. The Assistant Director stated that enforcement was evidence-based. Landlords could demonstrate compliance by showing regular property inspections and that hazards had not previously been identified. It was acknowledged that tenants might cause damage or create issues, but officers were experienced in assessing housing conditions and determining causes. The general enforcement policy applied to selective licensing, with the focus on compliance and achieving positive outcomes for both landlords and tenants.

At the Chair's invitation the Cabinet Member for Housing concluded that the call-in should not be accepted for several reasons. On procedural grounds, they stated the consultation was not flawed in design or execution; it was extensive, inclusive, and transparent. Proper processes had been followed, and the consultation was considered adequate. On legal grounds, they believed the criteria for designating selective licensing were clear and had been met, with no breach of equality duty. On impact grounds, they stated the scheme did not disproportionately affect Roma or other ethnic minority tenants, as ward inclusion was evidence-based and clearly set out in the submitted papers. Finally, on reasonableness, they believed the Cabinet decision to approve six further designations was reasonable and evidence based. They reiterated that the purpose was to ensure safe living conditions and create safer, healthier communities for a better Rotherham.

The Assistant Director agreed with the Cabinet Member's summary and added that no new information had been presented for scrutiny to consider. They noted that the same conclusion had applied at the end of the previous scrutiny session.

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Yasseen thanked everyone for their contributions. They stated that while everyone agreed on the desired outcomes, they believed selective licensing had not achieved improvements in housing standards or quality of life over the past ten years. National IMD data showed that 15 of the 16 designated areas had become more deprived during this period. Councillor Yasseen advocated for an alternative, borough-wide approach to improving housing standards, noting that most councils without selective licensing had found other methods. Councillor Yasseen also suggested pausing the scheme in light of upcoming national changes, such as the Renters' Rights Bill, and recommended revisiting the policy next year.

At the Chair's invitation Councillor A Carter clarified that the OSMB's decision was whether to accept the Cabinet's decision or request reconsideration. They confirmed that the call-in proposal sought Cabinet's agreement to a 12-month pause, as outlined in the call-in document. They noted that the Cabinet Member believed the consultation was robust but had personally observed very low tenant engagement in Brinsworth. They highlighted that most residents did not support selective licensing and expressed concern that the council was proceeding with an unpopular scheme. They argued that decisions should reflect tenants' wishes rather than assumptions about their best interests. Councillor A Carter questioned the adequacy of criteria used for designation, noting reliance on deprivation rather than evidence of poor housing standards. They also raised concerns about rent increases, citing contradictions in the Cabinet Member's statements. They reiterated that deprivation had worsened in previous selective licensing areas and warned that continuing the scheme could exacerbate this trend. In conclusion, they recommended pausing the decision and revisiting the policy after 12 months.

The Chair invited members of OSMB to make comments with the Vice-Chair stating that he would vote to refer the decision back to Cabinet. They explained that, regardless of personal views, Cabinet ultimately makes the decision, but it was felt the reasons for the call-in should be reviewed again at Cabinet level. The Vice-Chair expressed concerns about the consultation process, including the removal of a question due to potential bias, and noted uncertainty around the issue of rising rents. They concluded that Cabinet should revisit the matter and review it properly and confirmed his support for referral.

The Chair noted three options available were that OSMB could decide not to support the call-in, allowing the original decision to be implemented. Alternatively, OSMB could refer the matter back to Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out its concerns in writing. In exceptional

circumstances, OSMB could refer the decision to full Council. If Council supported the call-in, the matter would be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration; if not, the original decision would stand.

The Chair moved to a vote for those in favour of supporting option one, to not to support the call-in, allowing the original decision to be implemented. Six members of the Board voted in favour of supporting option one. Five members of the Board voted against supporting option one, therefore it option one was carried, and the original decision could be implemented.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

1. Did not support the request for call-in, therefore the original decision could be implemented with immediate effect.

## **62. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Governance Manager noted that work programme was presented in the report. She highlighted that follow-up on life-saving equipment and related by-laws remained a priority. She also confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the Rotherham Youth Cabinet regarding topics and timing for the Children's Commissioners Takeover Challenge, which would be scheduled into the work programme.

Councillor Yasseen recalled that, following a recommendation from the Youth Cabinet a few years ago, the plastic cups were replaced with paper cups at the Town Hall. They advised ensuring this commitment was upheld, as the Youth Cabinet might comment on it during their visit.

**Resolved:** - That the Work Programme be approved.

## **63. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS**

Improving Places Select Commission Update:

Councillor McKiernan, Chair of Improving Places Select Commission reported that the previous meeting on 21 October covered the Housing Strategy 2025–2030 and its Draft Action Plan, which will monitor progress under four key priorities. Performance would be measured annually (April–March), with progress reports presented each July. Members also received information on the Pride in Place programme for central Rotherham (2025–2035), formerly the Neighbourhood Plan, and on the council's regeneration strategy and funding approach. The council prioritises projects first and then seeks funding, rather than waiting for government funds.

Updates were provided on the Neighbourhood Board, due at Cabinet on 17 November, and on future plans for the East area.

Additional work programme items included the School Road Safety

Review, with follow-up meetings arranged; an antisocial behaviour workshop scheduled for 4 December at the Town Hall; and plans for a market library redevelopment site visit.

The next meeting on 16 December would consider the Bereavement Services Annual Report and the Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report.

Health Select Commission Update:

Councillor Keenen, Chair of Health Select Commission noted that the next meeting on 20 November would scrutinise the Mental Health Strategy (pre-decision), Place Partners winter planning, and the Health and Wellbeing annual report.

An unpaid carers' strategy workshop was scheduled for 28 November in conjunction with Improving Lives. Feedback was provided on the Access to Contraception review, which was thorough and aimed for Cabinet consideration before the end of the municipal year. Findings from the Menopause Workshop would be reported after the contraception review, with both pieces of work showing complementary themes. Plans were underway for a site visit to the Same Day Emergency Care facility at Rotherham Hospital, alongside potential visits to the lung clinic in early 2026, ahead of items coming to Health Select in March.

Attendance at the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 October was reported, where views were shared on consultation findings regarding proposed commissioning changes for gluten-free prescribing and IVF. High engagement from Rotherham residents provided reassurance their views were considered. Additionally, with Barnsley Council's support, stroke emergency care and aftercare pathways were successfully added to the work programme following residents' concerns.

Improving Lives Select Commission:

Councillor Brent, Acting Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission noted that Members had received updates on the Home to Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy (2023–2028) and the draft SEND Sufficiency Strategy, both of which were positively received.

The December meeting would include updates on responses to Prevention of Future Deaths reports and the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Assurance Report.

Members of ILSC were invited to a November workshop on the Child and Unpaid Carers' Strategy for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of Cabinet consideration.



**64. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions November 2025 to January 2026.

The Governance Manager noted that the December meeting would include the HRA Business Plan and rent setting for 2026–2027, the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy (pre-decision), and the Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report.

Items on the forward plan included the Unpaid Carers Strategy (2026–2031), Adult Social Care Charging Policy, Housing First Recommissioning, Care Leaver Offer and Charter, Inclusion Strategy Annual Report (formerly Equalities and Diversity Inclusion Strategy), the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund, and the Library Strategy. Non-key decisions included updates on the Adult Social Care Mental Health Strategy and Housing Repairs and Maintenance.

Suggested items for consideration by OSMB were the Adult Social Care Charging Policy, Inclusion Strategy, and Library Strategy. Members agreed to review and provide feedback following further discussion.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

1. Agreed that the following items would be added to the December agenda as part of OSMB's pre-decision scrutiny work:
  - Rotherham Employment & Skills Strategy - Pre-decision scrutiny.
  - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026- 27 – Pre-decision scrutiny.
  - Inclusion Strategy and Annual Report – Pre-decision scrutiny.
  - Library Strategy – Pre-decision scrutiny.

**65. SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chair reported that there was nothing to update from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, as no formal meeting had taken place. An informal update on bus services had been received.

**66. URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items.

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 15 December 2025

**Report Title**

Library Strategy

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

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Andrew Bramidge – Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

**Report Author(s)**

Zoe Oxley, Head of Operations and Business Transformation  
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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

This report provides a review of performance against the 2021–2026 Library Strategy and its associated objectives and performance targets. It establishes that the majority of actions and objectives set out within the Strategy have been achieved, contributing to the Council's wider ambitions for thriving neighbourhoods, cultural engagement, health and wellbeing, and improved digital access.

The report seeks approval to undertake a public consultation on a new Library Strategy for the period 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service. The consultation will ensure that the new Strategy remains relevant, continues to meet community needs, and aligns with the Council's priorities and national library frameworks, and also meets the statutory service requirements.

**Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Note the review of performance against the 2021–2026 Library Strategy, including key achievements and challenges identified during the Strategy period.

2. Approve the undertaking of a period of consultation with the public, partners, stakeholders and interested parties on the development of a new Library Strategy for the period 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service.
3. Agree that a further report be brought to Cabinet following the consultation to present a draft Library Strategy 2027–2032, which will identify potential service improvements and efficiencies.
4. Authorise the Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism to notify the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) of the intention to consult on the Library Strategy and any potential changes to service provision.

**List of Appendices Included:**

Appendix 1 – Library Strategy 2021 - 2026

Appendix 2 – Service Offer

Appendix 3 – Library Strategy Performance Against Objectives and Targets

Appendix 4 – Part A – Initial Equality Screening Assessment

Appendix 5 – Part B – Equality Analysis Form

Appendix 6 – Climate Impact Assessment

**Background Papers**

None

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

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Library Strategy**

### **1 Background**

#### **1.1 Purpose of the Report**

1.1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Review performance against the 2021–2026 Library Strategy.
- Summarise key achievements and challenges.
- Seek approval to undertake a borough-wide public consultation to inform the development of a new Library Strategy for 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs.

#### **1.2 Statutory Duty and Local Responsibility**

1.2.1 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, the Council has a statutory duty to provide “a comprehensive and efficient” public library service for all persons desiring to make use of it. While national standards for library provision no longer exist, each library authority is responsible for determining how services are delivered in response to local needs, priorities, and available resources. Library services are now shaped by local policy frameworks and delivered through a range of models, including physical libraries, digital access, and community partnerships. It is therefore essential that decision-making is clear and transparent, supported by robust governance, that service planning is based on an assessment of need, demographic data, and community engagement and that delivery aligns with an approved Library Strategy, ensuring consistency with corporate priorities. The Council must continue to meet its statutory obligations while adapting to changing patterns of use, and financial constraints. This approach ensures that the library service remains sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs and expectations of Rotherham residents.

1.2.2 Authorities considering making changes to the provision of their library services are advised to notify the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

#### **1.3 The Current Service Overview**

1.3.1 Rotherham’s Library Service operates 15 libraries, including one community-managed site at Brinsworth, which is run by volunteers through the Parish Council. Libraries provide free access to books, e-books, and other loan materials, as well as public computers and internet facilities. To support digital inclusion, an ‘assisted digital’ offer helps customers access Council and partner services if they are unable to self-serve, with support provided by trained staff. Libraries also deliver a

varied programme of activities for children, young people, adults, and families, promoting literacy, learning, and wellbeing. The Service Offer by site can be found in Appendix 2.

- 1.3.2 The service also provides vehicle-based outreach for older residents who cannot easily visit a library, a Schools' Loan Service offering resources to support reading and the wider curriculum, and a digital library provision enabling users to join online and access e-books and other resources remotely.
- 1.3.3 The service currently operates with a net budget of £3 million and an establishment of 78.5 full-time equivalent staff.

#### **1.4 The Current Strategy**

- 1.4.1 The current Library Strategy was developed following a comprehensive analysis of local need and significant public consultation. It was approved by Cabinet in October 2020 and adopted by Council in November 2020, providing the framework for modernising library services across the Borough. It set out an ambitious plan to improve library buildings and facilities, strengthen community partnerships, increase digital inclusion, and deliver cultural and learning opportunities for residents.
- 1.4.2 The Strategy aligns with key Council priorities, including the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy, Cultural Strategy, Economic Growth Strategy, Customer Access Strategy, Digital Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as well as national priorities through the Libraries Connected Universal Offers which focus on Reading, Culture and Creativity, Information and Digital and Health and Wellbeing.

#### **1.5 Performance Review**

- 1.5.1 This report demonstrates that the majority of actions and objectives within the 2021–2026 Strategy have been achieved, contributing significantly to the Council's ambitions for thriving neighbourhoods, cultural engagement, health and wellbeing, and digital inclusion.

#### **1.6 Proposed Next Steps**

- 1.6.1 Approval is sought to undertake a borough-wide public consultation to inform the development of a new Library Strategy for 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs. This consultation will ensure that the next Strategy reflects community priorities, addresses areas of underperformance, and continues to align with statutory obligations and Council objectives. It will also provide an opportunity to consider how libraries can best support thriving neighbourhoods, digital inclusion, cultural engagement, and health and wellbeing in a sustainable way.

## 2 Key Issues

### 2.1 Review of the 2021–2026 Library Strategy

2.1.1 The Library Strategy 2021–2026 provided a clear and ambitious framework for transforming library services across the Borough, built around seven key objectives:

- **Creative and Cultural Enrichment** – Position libraries as vibrant cultural hubs through events, partnerships, and community-led activities.
- **Increasing Reading and Literacy** – Inspire reading for pleasure and lifelong learning through campaigns, challenges, and targeted support.
- **Improved Digital Access and Literacy** – Bridge the digital divide with upgraded technology, makerspaces, and digital inclusion initiatives.
- **Helping Everyone Achieve Their Full Potential** – Support education, skills, and employability through learning programmes and business support.
- **Healthier and Happier Lives** – Promote wellbeing through inclusive spaces, health partnerships, and creative health initiatives.
- **Greater Prosperity** – Contribute to economic growth through investment in modern facilities and regeneration projects.
- **Stronger, More Resilient Communities** – Strengthen community cohesion through partnerships, co-location, and outreach.

#### 2.1.2 Progress against Strategic Outcomes:

##### 1. Creative and Cultural Enrichment

- Libraries evolved into cultural hubs with events like Fun Palaces (expanded from 3 in 2019 to 17 in 2025, attracting 800+ attendees annually).
- Participated in borough-wide cultural programmes (e.g. Children's Capital of Culture).
- Introduced reading gardens, pop-up exhibitions, and creative partnerships such as Flux Rotherham.
- Increased community-led activities and outreach to underrepresented groups (e.g., BAME, disabled residents, Ukrainian community).

*"It was fantastic! It brought together members of the community who don't usually get the opportunity to get together. I spent time with people of all ages and I think one or two re-discovered their passions because they*

*had the chance to try out some activities that they hadn't done for a while. Today, I really felt that I had something to offer my community, and that it was valued by those who participated"*

***Fun Palace Participant***

## **2. Increasing Reading and Literacy**

- Reading for pleasure among young people increased by 156% (target exceeded).
- Expanded Summer Reading Challenge (1,025 finishers) and launched new reading groups.
- Strengthened school engagement through class visits and pop-up libraries.
- Introduced targeted literacy support for early years children from families where English is an Additional Language (EAL).
- Book borrowing remains below target (5.7% vs 8.8% national average).

*"It was a great event to celebrate the achievements of our children"*

***Parent, Summer Reading Challenge event at Magna***

## **3. Improved Digital Access and Literacy**

- Upgraded ICT infrastructure, installed Open+ technology, and introduced Makerspaces . A Makerspace is a collaborative area where people can learn, create and share using tools and technology such as 3D printers, VR, coding kits, and digital equipment supporting creativity, STEAM learning (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) and digital inclusion.
- Supported the Council's commitment to reduce digital exclusion by distributing 1,234 SIM cards and 50 tablets to vulnerable residents.
- Digital membership and e-resource use grew significantly.
- Recognised nationally for strong digital inclusion work (Good Things Foundation study).

*"The doctor told me to join this group and it is the best thing I have ever done...The library is a good place to keep warm, to meet other people and you can bring kids because they've got a nice area for them to read and do activities. The staff are really helpful and I am going to come on a course to learn how to use computers."*

***Participant, Maltby Library and Neighbourhood Hub***

## **4. Helping Everyone Achieve Their Full Potential**

- Delivered coding clubs, homework support, and employability programmes.
- Supported entrepreneurs via Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC).
- Partnered with Pathways to Employment and Source Skills Academy for job clubs and confidence-building workshops.

*"The customer and myself went to the Library who supported us with scanning the 5 page document. At this point she also signed him up for a*



*Library card. Customer Service skills were superb, the customer's first language was not English, so afforded him the time and gave clear, concise information/advice. Contributed to the customer having an excellent customer experience, not only that, I had a great experience, where a fellow RMBC staff member demonstrated the customer service skills we love to see."*

**RMBC Officer**

## **5. Healthier and Happier Lives**

- Created autism-friendly spaces in multiple libraries.
- Hosted mental health exhibitions and wellbeing events.
- Provided warm spaces during the cost-of-living crisis and supported Covid testing during the pandemic.
- Introduced health-focused groups (e.g., Menopause Cafés, Shared Reading).

*"The Menopause Café is such a supportive environment—I felt heard and learned so much from others going through similar experiences it really does make it easier knowing you are not suffering alone"*

**Mowbray Gardens Library participant**

## **6. Greater Prosperity**

- Began construction of the new Central Library (opening Autumn 2026) as part of the Town Centre Masterplan.
- Strengthened partnerships with employment services and delivered job clubs and digital skills sessions.

*"The job clubs at the library have been a huge help—I've learned how to improve my CV and feel more confident applying for roles"*

**Job Club participant**

## **7. Stronger, More Resilient Communities**

- Invested more than £1.5m in refurbishments and £540,000 in IT upgrades.
- Rolled out Open+ at Mowbray Gardens and planned for Brinsworth in December 2025.
- Co-located libraries with other services (e.g., Early Help at Kiveton Park).
- Increased community engagement through events and partnerships with Parish Councils.
- Volunteering hours declined following the Covid-19 pandemic, despite ongoing recruitment efforts.

*"Swinton's refurbishment of the old customer services building into a new library have made such a difference—the space feels modern, comfortable, and welcoming and the reading garden is a wonderful addition"*

**Library Member, Swinton**

*“Thank you for letting me volunteer here, everyone I have worked with are all so welcoming and kind and you make our community better”*

**Volunteer**

## 2.3 Performance Targets

2.3.1 The 2021–2026 Library Strategy established a set of measurable targets to ensure progress could be tracked and evaluated throughout the five-year period. These targets were designed to reflect the service’s priorities and demonstrate the value and impact of libraries across Rotherham. Progress was monitored via monthly dashboards in collaboration with the Performance and Improvement Team.

2.3.2 The table below summarises progress against each target:

Target	Status
Increase the Number of People Who Borrow Books by 10%	Target not on track
Increase the number of library visitors by 10%	Target not on track
Increase reading for pleasure among young people (ages 0–25) by 25%	Target met
Increase the number and range of activities and groups by 10%	Target met
Increase the number of people using IT facilities by 10%	Target met
Increase Self-Service Take-Up by 20%	Target met
Increase the Number of Volunteering Hours by 50%	Target not on track
Maintain customer satisfaction above 95%	Target met
Trial technology which will allow customers to access libraries without staff being present in order to increase opening hours	Target met
Be able to evidence the impact and value that libraries bring to communities through case studies and testimonials	Target met

2.3.3 Seven out of ten targets have been met. Appendix 3 - Library Strategy Performance Against Objectives and Targets provides further detail, outlining performance to date against the key objectives and targets as set out in the Strategy.

## 2.4 Local Context and Future Strategy – Libraries as Neighbourhood Hubs

*“A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life-raft and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination.”*

*Caitlin Moran, Writer and Broadcaster*

2.4.1 The 2021 – 2026 Strategy envisioned libraries as neighbourhood hubs, worthy of investment to cement their role as community living-rooms, where residents can connect, share experiences and learn – both individually and together. The increase in visits to neighbourhood libraries and the wide range of services and activities delivered through libraries, as set out in Appendix 3, suggests that residents recognise libraries as trusted local spaces. In a fast-changing world, they can both

help people keep up, find joy and escape, be safe spaces for healthy debate, build connections, forge friendships, and develop a sense of belonging.

- 2.4.2 Rotherham Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs support a range of Council priorities. Libraries strengthen the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy by creating inclusive spaces for community activity. They support the delivery of the Customer Access Strategy, promoting a digital-first approach by enabling residents to self-serve online while offering assisted digital support for those who need help. Libraries also play a key role in delivering the Digital Strategy, helping bridge the digital divide and improve skills.
- 2.4.3 As places for reading, writing, theatre, music, art, making, and entertainment, libraries contribute to the Cultural Strategy (2019–2026), which will be refreshed for 2027–2034, by helping to widen access to cultural opportunities and experiences. They have a key role to play in Creative Health – utilising creative and cultural engagement to improve people’s mental health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation and supporting the Five Ways to Wellbeing – which underpins so much of Rotherham’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Furthermore, they assist Adult Social Care and Housing by providing trusted, community-based spaces that promote independence and inclusion.
- 2.4.4 Through reading materials, IT and a range of courses and classes, libraries are equipped to support education in its broadest sense, aligning with priorities for children and young people embedded in the Council Plan, offering opportunities for informal and intergenerational learning. Schools’ visits and the Schools Loan Service support students to learn at every key stage, across the whole curriculum, underpinned by literacy honed through reading for pleasure. The co-location of the youth centre and Kiveton Library has enabled closer working between Library Services and Early Help.
- 2.4.5 By helping individuals develop skills and become job-ready, libraries are already supporting delivery of the new Economic Growth Plan – Forging Ahead (2025–2030) and further partnership-working with Pathways to Work and Employment Solutions will increase libraries impact in this critical area.
- 2.4.6 As neighbourhood hubs, libraries also host a range of activities in collaboration with other services, the voluntary sector and other public sector agencies, such as the Department for Work and Pensions, South Yorkshire Housing Association, Citizens Advice and RNN (Rotherham College). These include courses and classes, help with benefits, advice sessions and consultation events, including Ward Member surgeries.
- 2.4.7 Whilst much has been achieved in libraries’ role as neighbourhood hubs, there is still much to be done. This is particularly in relation to how staff work with residents, empowering residents to have a voice in decision-making beyond the development of the Library Strategy itself and working

with residents to build on their strengths and find solutions to local problems. Volunteering is one way of achieving this, but more needs to be done here. Libraries' engagement in the delivery of the Children's Capital of Culture programme, has helped to build co-production skills with library staff, and further training will ensure that more library staff are confident in working in this way.

*"Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities"*

*R. David Lankes, Professor of Librarianship, University of Texas*

2.4.8 Following consultation, Cabinet and Council will be asked to consider and approve a refreshed Library Strategy. To ensure the Strategy places communities at the heart of decision-making, it is essential to undertake a comprehensive review of current provision and re-assess local need. This process will identify opportunities to enhance or amend the core service offer and ensure alignment with changing expectations of service users and non-users, the evolving nature of reading and information delivery, Rotherham's demographic profile, and the financial context within which the service operates. A robust needs assessment will form the foundation of this review, providing evidence to inform future priorities. It will highlight gaps in provision, barriers to access, and areas of underperformance, ensuring that the next Strategy is built on clear data and community insight.

2.4.9 In an era of misinformation and rapid change, libraries remain trusted sources of knowledge, helping communities to develop skills and confidence. By working with partners and stakeholders across Rotherham, and ensuring that residents are at the heart of service planning, delivery and evaluation, the Council can ensure that libraries and neighbourhood hubs are vital to the development of neighbourhoods as thriving places where people can achieve a good quality of life, feel safe and be proud of where they live.

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

3.1 Three options were considered in relation to the development of the new Library Strategy for 2027–2032.

#### **3.1.1 Option 1: Undertake a Public Consultation**

This option involves engaging with residents, staff and stakeholders to inform the development of the new Strategy and future service delivery model. It ensures the Strategy reflects community needs, supports continuous improvement, and aligns with Council priorities and national frameworks. In addition to the consultation, this approach will also draw on internal data, performance reviews and officer expertise to provide a robust evidence base for decision-making. This is the recommended option.

#### **3.1.2 Option 2: Develop the Strategy Internally Without Consultation**

This approach would rely solely on internal data, performance reviews, and officer expertise to shape the new Strategy. While it may be more

time-efficient, it risks overlooking community priorities and missing opportunities for co-design and innovation. It may also reduce public buy-in and limit the Strategy's effectiveness.

### 3.1.3 **Option 3: Do Nothing**

This option would mean keeping the current Library Strategy without making any updates or revisions. While this approach avoids the resource and time commitment of developing a new Strategy, it risks the service becoming outdated and misaligned with evolving community needs, Council priorities, and national frameworks.

## **4 Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 The purpose of the consultation is to gather views from residents, stakeholders, and partners to ensure the refreshed Library Strategy reflects community priorities, addresses areas of underperformance, and supports continuous improvement. It will also explore opportunities to modernise the service offer, including technology, co-location, and enhanced digital access.
- 4.2 The scope of the consultation will include understanding barriers to library use and book borrowing. It will explore how libraries can promote reading for pleasure, support literacy development, and engage underrepresented groups.
  - 4.2.1 An example of this ambition is the National Year of Reading 2026, a landmark initiative led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) under the banner *Stories That Connect Us*. Rotherham Libraries will deliver a borough-wide programme celebrating storytelling in all its forms, aiming to embed reading into everyday life and create a lasting legacy.
- 4.3 A range of engagement methods will be used, including online and face-to-face surveys, focus groups, targeted events, and outreach through library sites and community networks. There will be a particular focus on engaging underrepresented groups such as young people, men, BAME communities, and people who self-identify as disabled. Evidence from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) shows that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are significantly less likely to use libraries compared to more affluent groups, often due to barriers such as lack of awareness, digital exclusion and competing life pressures (*DCSM/Ipsos, What Works to Engage Library Non-Users, 2025*). The service will also be targeting this group as part of the engagement approach to ensure the Strategy addresses inequality and improves access for all.
- 4.4 The consultation will be aligned with Rotherham Council's corporate strategies and national frameworks, including the Libraries Connected Universal Offers. In line with the Council's strengths-based approach, it will focus on building upon the assets, skills, and aspirations within

communities to co-create a library service that reflects local priorities and empowers residents.

4.5 Feedback will be sought across the following areas:

- **Vision and Priorities** – The overall vision for the libraries and neighbourhood hubs service and key priorities for the next five years.
- **Service Areas and Community Needs** – Which aspects of the service are most important, including reading and literacy, digital access, health and wellbeing, cultural activities, learning opportunities, and community support.
- **Current Usage and Access** – How people currently use libraries, what services they value most, and what changes would encourage greater use.
- **Future Service Options** – Potential developments such as technology enhancements, co-location with other services, volunteering opportunities, and alternative service models.
- **Role in the Community** – Perspectives on libraries as community hubs and suggestions for additional services or activities.
- **Equality and Inclusion** – Ensuring the service meets the needs of all residents and identifying barriers to access or participation.
- **Digital and Outreach Services** – Opinions on online library services, schools loan service, home library service, and how these could be improved.
- **Demographic Information** – Collecting data to understand the reach and impact of the service across different groups.

4.6 In addition, the Strategy will consider the following priority areas:

- Widening access and inclusion, addressing barriers for under-represented groups and expanding outreach.
- Promoting literacy and reading for pleasure, improving book borrowing and circulation.
- Supporting skills, lifelong learning, and economic growth, including employability and digital literacy.
- Enhancing libraries as community hubs, supporting social connection, cultural engagement, and volunteering.

4.7 The consultation will use a combination of structured and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative and qualitative feedback. This input

will directly inform the draft vision, strategic priorities, and service model for the new Library Strategy.

- 4.8 The Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism will formally notify the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) of the intention to consult and the potential for future changes to service provision, in accordance with statutory expectations.
- 4.9 Following the consultation, a further report will be brought to Cabinet presenting the draft Library Strategy 2027–2032, identifying potential service improvements, community priorities, and opportunities for greater efficiency and impact.

## 5 Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The Service recognises the importance of engaging with communities at the earliest stage in shaping the future library Strategy. Early engagement will ensure that decisions are informed by local priorities and evidence, supporting the development of a modern, effective library offer that meets statutory obligations and community expectations.

- 5.1.1 The key milestone dates for the development of the Library Strategy and the final service delivery model are outlined below:

- **January 2026 – DCMS Notification & Consultation Planning**  
Notify DCMS of intention to consult; develop consultation plan; begin internal planning for assessment of need.
- **February – July 2026 – Public Consultation (Phase 1)** Launch borough-wide consultation; engage stakeholders including staff and Trade Unions; promote widely; gather insights on service satisfaction, emerging needs, modernisation, opening hours, self-access, volunteering, co-location, and aspirations for the new Town Centre Library; complete assessment of need.
- **August – October 2026 – Analysis and Draft Strategy Development** Analyse consultation feedback and assessment findings; draft new Library Strategy; test and refine draft with stakeholders; notify DCMS of potential changes to service delivery.
- **October 2026 – Launch of New Town Centre Library** Open flagship library; showcase modern facilities; promote draft Strategy and future vision.
- **November 2026 – Cabinet Report (Phase 2 Engagement Approval)** Present draft Library Strategy and proposed service delivery model to Cabinet; seek approval for second-phase engagement.
- **November 2026 – January 2027 – Public Consultation (Phase 2)** - Conduct second-phase engagement on draft Strategy and final

service offer; analyse feedback; update equality impact assessment.

- **November 2026 – January 2027** - Budget implications to be considered as part of the annual budget setting process.
- **February 2027** – Produce engagement analysis report; finalise Library Strategy, revised service offer, and associated budget implications; staff and Trade Union engagement on revised service structure.
- **March 2027** – Request Cabinet approval of the Library Strategy and final service offer.
- **April 2027** - Request Full Council approval of the Library Strategy and final service offer.

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

- 6.1 The current approved net revenue budget for the Library Service is £3 million. It is anticipated that the majority of the consultation activity will be delivered by staff within the Culture, Sport and Tourism Service and primarily communicated through digital channels, with any minor ancillary costs (such as printing) absorbed within existing approved revenue budgets. Where meetings are required, these will be held in Council-owned buildings wherever possible to avoid additional expenditure.
- 6.1.1 Any budgetary implications, capital and revenue, that arise through the consultation process and the development of the new Strategy, will be considered as part of the Council's annual budget setting process.
- 6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. If there is a need to procure goods, works or services from third party suppliers to support the consultation process, these must be procured in compliance with the relevant procurement legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023 subject to the route to market undertaken) as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

## **7 Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, the Council has a statutory duty to provide a *“comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof.”* In fulfilling this duty, the Council must ensure access to a sufficient range and quality of books, printed materials, and other resources, and encourage both adults and children to make full use of the service, including providing advice and bibliographical information. A failure to comply with this statutory duty could lead to a complaint being made to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.



7.2 The Council must also comply with the Equality Act 2010:

- Section 149 – Public Sector Equality Duty is in force and requires the Council to have due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
- Protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.
- This duty involves removing or minimising disadvantages for those with protected characteristics, meeting the different needs of those with protected characteristics, encouraging participation in public life where it is disproportionately low, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.3 The consultation proposed within this report recommends utilising several methods to engage residents and will specifically seek views from under-represented groups. This would assist the Council in demonstrating compliance with its Public Sector Equality Duty and also inform the most appropriate ways to meet its statutory obligations under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

**8 Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

Should any Human Resources matters arise from any future proposals resulting from the consultation, the Council will follow due processes.

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

9.1 The proposed consultation and development of a new Library Strategy for 2027–2032 will have direct implications for children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs play a vital role in supporting early years development, literacy, digital inclusion, and social connection for these groups.

9.2 The current Strategy places a strong focus on children and families within its core offer, committing to increase activities for children and families, promote reading and literacy for all ages, and support cultural engagement through partnerships such as the Cultural Partnership Board.

9.3 The consultation will seek to understand how services can better meet the needs of children and young people, particularly in relation to reading

for pleasure, homework support, and safe, inclusive spaces for learning and creativity. It will also explore how libraries can strengthen their role in safeguarding and supporting vulnerable adults, including those experiencing isolation, mental health challenges, or digital exclusion.

- 9.4 This work aligns with the Council Plan 2025–2030 and the Children and Young People’s Partnership priorities, which aim to ensure children and young people are healthy, safe from harm, ready to learn for life, and prepared for the world of work. Libraries contribute to these outcomes by providing safe spaces, early literacy programmes, homework support, and cultural enrichment.
- 9.5 The consultation and future proposals will also build on the legacy of Rotherham’s Children’s Capital of Culture 2025 festival year, which placed children and young people at the heart of cultural decision-making. This legacy includes commitments to sustain creative learning opportunities, co-created activities, and cultural engagement beyond 2025, ensuring libraries remain key venues for creativity, skills development, and inclusive participation.
- 9.6 Future delivery models could include activities co-created with children and young people, as well as co-located and co-delivered services to enhance accessibility and engagement.

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

- 10.1 An equality analysis will be undertaken on any proposals. Initial screening is at Appendix 4 – Part A, and a full Equality Analysis Form is at Appendix 5 – Part B.
- 10.2 The Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Strategy aims to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for all, addressing protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and carers, as well as socio-economic factors. Libraries offer safe, accessible spaces, free digital access, and inclusive resources in line with national Universal Offers and the Future Libraries Project.
- 10.3 The consultation will seek views from under-represented groups to inform a revised Equality Action Plan, ensuring barriers are addressed and services remain inclusive and equitable.

## **11 Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 An initial assessment is provided in Appendix 6. The proposed consultation and new Library Strategy (2027–2032) is expected to have minimal impact on carbon emissions. Potential effects include:
  - **Buildings:** Longer opening hours for some libraries; mitigated by heating and lighting only when needed and monitoring usage.

- **Transport:** Minor increase in staff and visitor travel; mitigated by local delivery, active travel promotion, and car sharing.
- **Waste:** Small-scale events may generate limited waste; mitigated by using recyclable materials and avoiding single-use plastics.

11.2 Libraries also support climate resilience by offering safe spaces during extreme weather, integrating health and wellbeing services, and creating green spaces. Recent refurbishments and co-location improve energy efficiency, while digital services reduce paper use and staff travel. Overall, impacts are minimal, with mitigation and monitoring measures in place.

## 12 Implications for Partners

12.1 Targeted consultation will take place with a range of Council services, alongside engagement with Asset Management, to identify opportunities for co-location of services within library buildings and to explore ways to further develop the local library offer. This approach will ensure that libraries are integrated into the wider neighbourhood hub model, creating efficiencies, improving access to services, and strengthening partnerships across health, education, culture, and customer access.

## 13 Risks and Mitigation

13.1 To ensure robust decision-making, proposals for consultation must consider statutory obligations, resource availability, and the needs of all communities, including vulnerable groups. The following risks and mitigations have been identified:

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to meet statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964	Extensive engagement before implementing the final Library Strategy and service offer. DCMS kept informed throughout.
Reputational damage	Full public consultation on the proposed Strategy and service model.
Low response rate or limited engagement in consultation	Use multiple channels (online, in-person, social media, community events). Targeted outreach to underrepresented groups. Accessible formats and clear messaging.
Misinterpretation or misinformation about proposals	Publish clear, consistent information. Provide dedicated contact points. Monitor social media.

Accessibility barriers for vulnerable groups

Offer alternative formats (easy-read, large print, translations). Provide assisted digital support. Engage community partners to reach those with limited digital access.

Delays in consultation process impacting Strategy timeline

Develop detailed project plan with contingency time. Assign clear responsibilities and monitor progress regularly.

#### 14 Accountable Officers

Polly Hamilton, Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism  
Zoe Oxley, Head of Operations and Business Transformation

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	26/11/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	25/11/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	24/11/25

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



# ROTHERHAM'S LIBRARY STRATEGY

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2021-26

[www.rotherham.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/libraries)

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# WELCOME TO OUR LIBRARY STRATEGY 2021-2026

Welcome to our new Library Strategy 2021 – 2026

We are pleased to present our new Library Strategy. We have spent the last 18 months talking and listening to over 1500 people to understand what matters most to local people about their libraries. We have learned what libraries should be focusing on over the next few years and what we need to do to improve residents' experience of using our libraries.

We have also learned that libraries are a vital part of our neighbourhoods and that they have the power to change the lives of those who use them. We heard that our libraries and neighbourhood hubs have helped people into work, strengthened local community networks, inspired people to read and provided a wealth of free activities for children and families. During the COVID-19 lockdown, 579 new people joined our libraries. There were 904 new online users, over 15,000 engagements with online library activities and a Facebook and Twitter reach of over 400,000.

We have learned that over 99 % of customers love our libraries – and we need more people in Rotherham to enjoy their benefits.

*To make this happen, residents can expect to see:*

- Improvements to library buildings, to make them more accessible and to create a warmer welcome
- More help to get people reading and to enjoy free books and reading materials
- Better ICT provision to enable more people to get online
- More advice and support services being delivered through libraries – bringing the Council and voluntary sector partners even closer to communities, helping people help themselves
- More activities for children, families and vulnerable people – right on your doorstep

We will spend the next five years working to put our new Strategy into practice. We hope you will join us – either online or at a library near you.



**Councillor Allen**

Cabinet Member for Cleaner,  
Greener Communities

**“ Stories are the secret reservoir of values:  
change the stories individuals and nations live by and tell themselves,  
and you change the individuals and nations. ”**

**BEN OKRI**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for people who want to use it.

In this Strategy we present a vision and framework for our Libraries service over the next five years, which we believe will meet the needs of people in Rotherham.

There are 15 libraries across the borough. Currently 98 % of Rotherham residents are able to access a library within 2 miles of their home.

As part of a commitment to widening access, the library service provides vehicle-based services, mainly to older people who might otherwise be unable to get to a library, and a Schools' Loan Service, which offers resources to support reading, literacy and the wider curriculum in schools.

There is also a digital library provision, which enables people to access the service online. Users can join the library, along with enjoying online activities and events.

In order to produce a strategy to meet the future needs of the community the service has:

- ✓ carried out consultation with the public, members of library staff and partners
- ✓ examined usage, performance and demand for the service
- ✓ assessed the Service's contribution to corporate outcomes and priorities
- ✓ taken into account key national, regional and local strategies

- ✓ benchmarked the service against other local authorities: taking account of innovation, good practice and lessons learned
- ✓ reviewed available resources, including staff, buildings and stock

## What will the strategy achieve?

### *For our communities:*

- ✓ more people will enjoy the benefits of reading
- ✓ more people will get active and creative, taking part in library activities and groups as a way to stay healthy and well
- ✓ more people will have the opportunity to volunteer and become employment ready
- ✓ more people will feel part of their community and feel happier and less isolated as a result.
- ✓ more people see libraries as essential community and cultural hubs, a first point of contact for Council services

### *For our service:*

- ✓ there will be increased financial sustainability, ensuring that libraries have a bright future at the heart of our town and neighbourhoods
- ✓ our staff and volunteers will be proud to work for us
- ✓ other organisations will want to be our partners because of our great reputation
- ✓ our buildings will be better equipped and more welcoming





# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The way that people use their library is changing, and with it, their expectations and demands of their library service.

Nationally, traditional usage of libraries is generally on the decline, however, more recently Rotherham saw an increase in both the numbers of people who borrowed books and in those who visited libraries across the borough.

Our offer of digital resources is also showing a positive increase in usage as a result of Covid-19 lockdown. In recent years, we had an increase of over 70 percent in total e-resource downloads which is reflective of the national trend of moving towards digital services, as more and more people have access to technology and the internet.

Not only are attitudes to technology changing, but also the needs of the people of Rotherham. With more children coming from lower-income families and increasing social isolation and loneliness across all ages, our library service must play a vital role in reaching out to every single person in the Borough regardless of age, gender or social and economic background.

The library service needs to offer something for everyone, whether this is a space for quiet study or reading, or exciting activities, events and groups which bring people together.

This strategy identifies improvements needed in order to tackle the challenge of providing more modern and sustainable services in the face of increasingly complex demands.

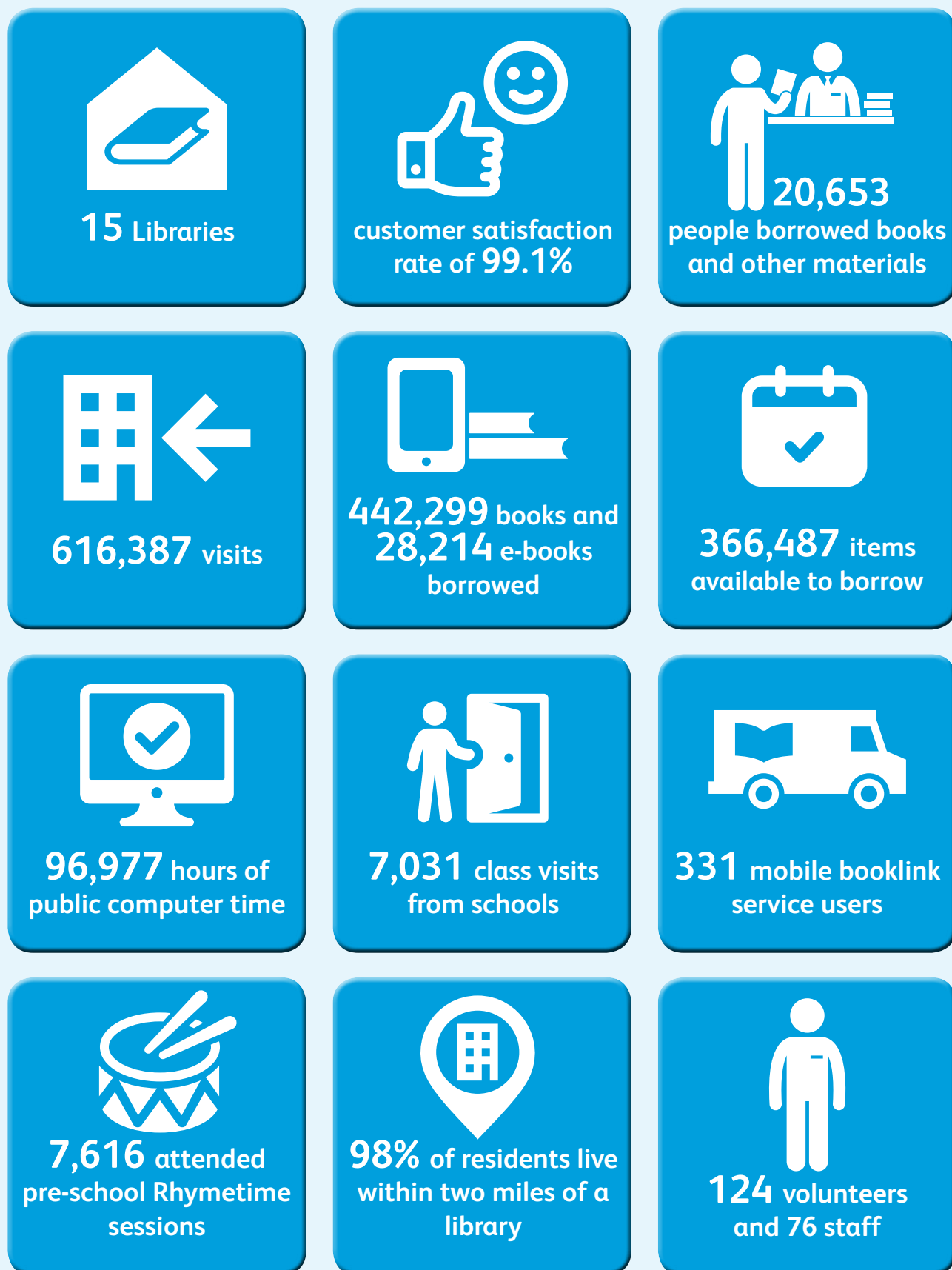
Locally, there are clear opportunities for this library strategy to provide a framework for cross- council work in the following areas:

- ✓ Rotherham's School Improvement Service (RoSIS), by improving reading and literacy attainment levels for children
- ✓ Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy, by giving opportunities for people to come together, to get involved in their local neighbourhood and to participate in interesting, enjoyable and creative events and activities

- ✓ Cultural Strategy, by offering a programme of cultural and artistic activities and events that provides everyone with the opportunity to enjoy some form of creative experience
- ✓ Economic Growth Plan, by supporting individuals to become job-ready
- ✓ Delivery of the Building Stronger Communities action plan, by providing opportunities for neighbourhood engagement and a visible, well-used and vibrant community hub
- ✓ Children and Young People's Plan, by providing opportunities for informal and intergenerational learning in a safe, attractive space
- ✓ Health and Wellbeing Strategy, by reducing social isolation and maintaining good mental health, using the Five Ways to Wellbeing as a framework for activities
- ✓ Supporting Adult Social Care and Housing in providing safe, trusted community-based places for service users and increasing opportunities for independent living
- ✓ Supporting the Customer Access Strategy through providing free Wi-Fi and digital assistance, so that customers who need help feel supported and able to access the services they need



Figure 1: **Key facts** about Rotherham Library Services



## READING PICTURES, SEEING STORIES

“Reading Pictures, Seeing Stories”, a regional visual literacy project funded by the Arts Council, was delivered in autumn 2018 at Wath library. It focussed on the power of illustrations in books with Michael Morpurgo’s book “War Horse” as the theme in commemoration of the end of the Great War. Library staff delivered the Arts Award to school-children and Wath Central Junior School created an exciting exhibition in the Library.

Children’s author and illustrator Liz Million led workshops to inspire children in their own art work on the Great War theme.

Over 300 children were involved, and the exhibition in Wath Library was visited by nearly 100 people. One visitor commented: “What a fantastic exhibition. You can clearly see a lot of hard work has been undertaken by the children of Wath Central to create such a thought-provoking display. Well done to all!”



## LEGO CLUBS

Thurcroft Library started a regular Lego Club for families in spring 2018 and it proved so popular that clubs were quickly extended to all our libraries. Library staff encourage children to use their imagination in creating and sharing stories using their models and to work together on projects.

The sessions are suitable for young people with all levels of ability and the overall response is excellent, particularly with children who have special educational needs and disabilities.

Some of those attending, children and their parents/carers, have shared what they think about the Lego clubs:

*“All of my friends come now to the Library, we had never been until the Lego club started!”*

*“It’s a great way to do something free as a family, we love it”*

*“I forgot how much I loved Lego, now my son and I can enjoy it together like I did with my father when I was younger”*



**“ Libraries allow children to ask questions about the world and find the answers. And the wonderful thing is that once a child learns to use a library, the doors to learning are always open. ”**

**LAURA BUS**

Figure 2: **Services and facilities** delivered by Rotherham Libraries



# WE LISTENED - WHAT DID YOU TELL US?

Over the last 18 months, Rotherham Council has undertaken consultation about our libraries in two phases. We have heard from over 1500 members of the public, stakeholders and partners to find out what people think of Rotherham libraries. People have told us what is most important to them and what their priorities are for library services in the future. A summary of the consultation findings is available as a supporting document to this strategy.

## Top four public priorities



## Key points from the consultation were as follows:

- **Books and reading** are the top priority for both adults and children, including audiobooks and e-books.
- Libraries are seen as a great **benefit to children**, with many users seeking a wider range of facilities and services catering to children and families.
- For **children and young people**, a wide range of modern and appealing books is a priority. They also want a more vibrant environment, with more activities, events and clubs available.
- People approve of recruiting **more volunteers** in their local library service, though paid **staff are viewed as skilled and knowledgeable**, and crucial to the service.
- People value having an **easily accessible** local library, close to home or easy to get to on public transport. Those who do not use libraries report that they would be encouraged to use them if they were in more convenient locations.
- People want libraries to be the social hub of the community, and consider it important that library buildings are **modern, clean and welcoming** with improved convenient opening hours.
- Library users agree that **technology**, should be used to enhance what is offered by the library, and to reduce costs and offer greater choice.
- People agree that **moving or sharing buildings** with organisations can help to increase usage and make libraries more sustainable in the community.
- Those who do not use libraries feel that they do not offer any services or facilities that they want to use. Many **people buy their own books and access information online** at home.

Since the new Library Strategy has been out for final consultation in 2020, there has been the opportunity to consider further feedback in light of learning from the lockdown period due to COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted that the way in which the library service delivers its offer moving forward will be different to the way it was prior to lockdown, particularly in relation to its online offer and how services are delivered through physical library sites. The service has had to reconsider the implications of reinstating a full service and must adapt in order to protect staff and the community.



## OUR VISION

Libraries are a friendly and welcoming gateway to a world of reading, information, learning and creative activities, at the heart of our neighbourhoods. We seek to build on the strong community spirit that exists throughout the borough, to create access to a wide range of services and to place libraries at the heart of community life. Our libraries and neighbourhood hubs are modern, relevant and innovative facilities that meet the needs of people from all sections of the community.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to utilise our libraries to help people to help themselves, to be better informed, and to get active and creative, more often.



## OUR STRATEGY

Over the next few pages we set out how we will make our vision real for local people...



# CORE OFFER

## Our Libraries

- Located in the heart of Rotherham's communities, our libraries will be recognised as neighbourhood hubs that are welcoming and safe and places to access information along with recreational, cultural and learning activity.
- Our library buildings will bring together Council services and partners in order for people to access a range of services at a local level.
- Our Libraries will carry an up-to-date and wide selection of books and reading material, including e-books, e-magazines, spoken word and large print.
- Our libraries will be easily accessible and offering ease of access for people with disabilities. They will be well used, with up-to-date facilities and be responsive to changing requirements, using available technology and resources effectively.

## Our People

- We will provide a level of service which is enjoyed and valued by those who visit the library, so they want to come again and tell others about their experience.
- We will engage with library users and partners in meaningful ways, automating processes where possible to release time for genuine co-working with community groups, voluntary organisations and internal departments to deliver more efficient and better services.
- Our staff are our most valued resource: we will invest in their knowledge and skills and give them opportunity to develop and apply their expertise with regular reviews of training needs, a programme of workforce development and specialist development where appropriate.

- Volunteers play a vital role in supporting and enhancing Rotherham libraries and will continue to do so in the future. The service recognises the added value that volunteers bring by offering their time, skills, experience and commitment. We will ensure our volunteers feel valued and get something worthwhile from the time they give us. In order to do this, we will continue to work closely with Voluntary Action Rotherham to ensure their interests and skills are well matched to our opportunities and that they are fully trained and properly supported by our paid staff.

## Our Activities

- **Reading:** this is key to taking advantage of opportunities in life, so we will inspire Rotherham's children, young people and their families to enjoy reading, enabling them to improve their quality of life and realise their full potential.
- **I.T.:** we will encourage and support people to help themselves wherever possible, equipping them with the knowledge and means to get online using up-to-date I.T. equipment, and access information and services independently.
- **Activities:** we will provide a wide range of activities, events, groups, clubs and courses to inspire and enable people to get more active and creative, more often.
- **Learning and Information:** we will provide support, advice and resources to enable people to learn, develop skills and enjoy healthy lifestyles.
- **Community:** we will be genuine neighbourhood hubs, bringing people and services together and encouraging people to build the support networks and partnerships they need to thrive.



# NATIONAL PRIORITIES – LOCAL IMPACT

## National Priorities for Libraries

Library services across the country are delivered in different ways as services are shaped by local policy, customer need and available resources.

Libraries Connected (a membership organisation advocating for the power of libraries, representing heads of library services in England, Wales and N. Ireland) has developed a package of Universal Offers which helps to underpin national and local priorities, providing a framework for future service developments around the key areas of:

- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Digital and Information

- ✓ Culture and Creativity
- ✓ Health and Wellbeing

Each of these key areas are underpinned by the Children's Promise which aims to ensure that Children are involved in decisions about the services that affect them as well as being offered opportunities to volunteer and the Six Steps Promise ensuring that the library service supports people with vision impairments.

Also, the Libraries Taskforce 2016 report "Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021", presents a vision of excellence including **seven key outcomes** which our Library Strategy supports.

“ Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve, and contribute to improving our quality of life. Libraries change lives for the better. ”

SIDNEY SHELDON



# OUR ACTIONS

**The seven outcomes** presented in Libraries Deliver 2016-2021 by the Libraries Taskforce are incorporated within our goals as a Library Service and also have a broader application in the priorities presented in the Rotherham Council Plan. This strategy aligns closely to the Rotherham Cultural Strategy in order to support its key goal to enable everyone to get active, get creative and get outdoors, more often. Our Action plan follows the seven key themes of the Libraries Deliver report:

## 1. Cultural and creative enrichment

- ✓ We will offer a programme of cultural and artistic activities and events that provides everyone with the opportunity to enjoy some form of cultural experience. This will be supported through our partners, such as the Arts Council and Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance.
- ✓ We will seek funding to extend our cultural offer and engage with a wider range of interests, in particular supporting the local and regional cultural sector.
- ✓ We will seek to bring art, dance, music and theatre into the library space, with particular emphasis on bringing stories to life.
- ✓ We will improve our communication about library activities, especially those which are free and low cost.

## Case Study:

### FUN PALACES

Fun Palaces is an ongoing campaign celebrating culture at the heart of community, using arts, science, craft, tech, digital, heritage and sports activities as a catalyst for community engagement. 2019 saw the third year of Fun Palaces in Rotherham Libraries with successful events over the first weekend in October at the Central Library in Riverside House, Wath and Maltby libraries.



Since the first year Rotherham took part in this national initiative, interest and enthusiasm has grown with a steady year-on-year increase in those taking part and visiting the

events. Everyone who attended said they would recommend the events to others; they generated a sense of community and pride in where they lived, as well as a positive mood-boosting benefit.

Activities have been wide-ranging, with community groups and individuals coming to share their skills and pastimes with great enthusiasm. Indian dancing, Morris dancing, music and singing, papercraft, book-folding, painting, stamp-collecting and much more. One little girl who had made a paper flower returned to show her friend how to do it. This is what Fun Palaces are all about, learning something new and passing it on!

In April 2019 the central Fun Palaces team announced National Lottery funding which will support the work of the Fun Palaces campaign over the next 5 years. As a part of this, Rotherham Council will be included in the expanded programme with a Rotherham Fun Palaces Ambassador to help create and lead local cultural and community activities.

## 2. Increased reading and literacy

- ✓ We will encourage and support everyone, especially children and young people, to develop a life-long love of reading; for example, through continuing our partnership work with places where children go and organisations which work with them, such as schools and Grimm & co.
- ✓ We will offer a wide range of reading items, including e-books, large print, audio-books, newspapers and magazines, to support the personal literacy development of individual readers.
- ✓ We will continue to develop readers' groups, including online, themed and targeted groups.
- ✓ We will participate in national and regional reading events that encourage participation, especially among children, such as the Summer Reading Challenge.

## Case Study:

### SHARED READING

Rotherham Libraries partnered with Sheffield and Doncaster in the 'Shared Reading' project, led by 'The Reader' and funded by Arts Council England.

Reading groups met to improve connection and wellbeing, especially among people feeling isolated or vulnerable, through sharing thoughts, memories and stories inspired by reading aloud. Several volunteers became Reader Leaders to run groups themselves and

the project is expanding from the initial six groups to new locations in the Borough.

Some of the people attending groups have shared how it benefits them with the following comments:

*"It's a way of making new friends"*

*"It welcomes people from all walks of life and also provides a good cuppa and nice biscuits!"*

*"It encourages people not to be afraid to read out aloud"*





### 3. Improved digital access and literacy

- ✓ We will continue to offer free Wi-Fi access in all our library buildings and we will offer customers the facility to print from their own devices.
- ✓ We will provide up-to-date computer equipment for people to use free of charge.
- ✓ Through trained staff, volunteers and partners we will support people getting online and using I.T. with confidence.
- ✓ We will encourage digital literacy among children through developing such things as makerspaces and code clubs.

## Case Study:

### INVESTING IN DIGITAL

People who are ‘digitally literate’ are more likely to experience good employment, better health and make savings in household costs. There are still too many people in Rotherham who are digitally-excluded. The reach of libraries within Rotherham means that our library staff and partners are uniquely placed to help people get online, particularly in areas of deprivation. Library staff are there to support and upskill people to become

independent users of the internet. This helps people to access services more easily, to learn, and to interact with others.

In recognising the importance of supporting Digital inclusion, £405k from the Council’s Capital Programme has been invested in order to upgrade the public I.T. provision which includes new public access PCs across all libraries. Free Wi-Fi across all libraries will continue and the delivery of activities such as code clubs and provision of makerspaces will increase.



#### 4. Helping Everyone Achieve their Full Potential

- ✓ We will continue to offer a wide-ranging stock of materials for loan or reference in various formats, both traditional and digital.
- ✓ We will ensure library staff are trained to support customers to make the best use of the full range of library resources, along with encouraging the take up sector specific qualifications.
- ✓ We will increase the number of new apprenticeships available within the service.
- ✓ We will support children with homework, students with their studies and adults with access to online information in relation to such things as jobs and benefits.
- ✓ Supported by Voluntary Action Rotherham, we will offer a range of volunteering opportunities to individuals and community groups in supporting delivery of the library service.

## Case Study:

### VOLUNTEERING TO SUPPORT THE LIBRARY SERVICE

Laura was appointed as a Library Volunteer at Riverside House. Having done her own family tree, she was enthusiastic to help other people by starting a weekly family history group. With the support and help of Library staff, she produced flyers and distributed these to local businesses in the town centre. The group started with just a couple of members but grew as word spread and it now sees up to eight people on a regular basis and meets twice a week in the Library.



Following this, Laura then helped with an event for The Big Read, when the author Mari Hannah came to Riverside Library to run a book group as part of Harrogate International Festivals Programme. During the summer she helped to

promote volunteering at the annual Volunteers Walk organised by Voluntary Action Rotherham and then in autumn worked at Rotherham College during Freshers Week, promoting both volunteering and library services' public consultation.

As part of the annual Fun Palace event in October, Laura introduced adults and children to playing the ukulele and it was so popular that she is starting a ukulele group once a month in the central Library at Riverside.

After applying for a post as a library assistant, she has been successfully appointed and will now be working across the borough in all fifteen libraries - a good news story both for Laura and the library service.

Laura says: "Volunteering with the library has opened up so many opportunities for me. Not only has it led to a paid job with the library, but I've also had the chance to start a ukulele group and a family history group which will be great experience to further my career. I have managed to work my volunteering around my studies as well."

Over the next 5 years, Rotherham libraries will create volunteering opportunities for more people, adding value to our services and helping people develop their skills and confidence.

## 5. Healthier and Happier Lives

- ✓ We will promote reading for pleasure as a positive benefit to health and mental well-being.
- ✓ We will host events, activities and groups whose purpose is to encourage and support a healthier, happier lifestyle.
- ✓ We will provide and support the use of information on physical health and mental well-being, through our own resources and in partnership with others.
- ✓ We will actively seek to reduce social isolation and loneliness through the organisation of reading groups and activities in which people can come together.
- ✓ We will offer a service to those who are potentially lonely and vulnerable through our Booklink and Home Library Services.
- ✓ Libraries will support the Council, suppliers and communities to address the climate change emergency.

## Case Study:

### LIVE WELL

This project worked with local communities and partners to improve the general health and mental wellbeing of local people.

“Cuppa and a Chat” sessions took place in three Libraries, where around 60 local people and school children chatted about how the ways we communicate have changed. Further events were delivered in partnership with local organisations including “Get Healthy Rotherham” and “Places for People” at five libraries. Topics covered included healthy eating and weight management, relaxation and stress management, exercise and fitness.

Yoga taster sessions were delivered in four libraries, and the response was excellent: *“Yoga was fantastic! Would love to see this being put*

*on regularly”. “Would be nice to have more Yoga weekly, or some other form or exercise.” “Excellent, really good”*

More books to support healthy living, mental health and well-being have been added to library stock and a “Dark Den” has been provided at Kiveton Park Library to offer a quiet, calm place for children who may be on the autistic spectrum and overwhelmed by the noise and bustle in the library.



## 6. Greater Prosperity

- ✓ We will offer work clubs in conjunction with partners.
- ✓ We will offer assisted digital support and beginners I.T. sessions to support people getting online and becoming confident computer users.
- ✓ We will work with partners to offer space for Information, Advice and Guidance particularly for those seeking or offering employment and training.
- ✓ Build a new library in Rotherham Town Centre, helping to revitalise the town and supporting the retail and hospitality sectors.

## Case Study:

### A NEW LIBRARY FOR ROTHERHAM TOWN CENTRE

Over the next five years, the Council will work with partners and the community to create a new community hub.

The hub will be a landmark feature for the community: a bright, welcoming, aspirational

hub, aimed at encouraging people to explore the environment and what it has to offer to Library members. It will offer a state-of-the-art book display, digital technology and dynamic social space in which to meet and learn.

Funding has been sought for this ambitious £5.7m project through the Future High Street Fund scheme.



“ The only thing that you absolutely have to know is the location of the library ”

ALBERT EINSTEIN



## 7. Stronger More Resilient Communities

- ✓ Our libraries will function as friendly and welcoming community hubs, freely accessible to all. This will include reviewing: if buildings are in the right location; if they can be co-located with other services/partners; if the buildings require refurbishing/ modernising; if the service can host wider cultural and heritage activity.
- ✓ Work with appropriate partners and the community to create a new community hub in the town centre in order to increase engagement and increase footfall. The hub will be a landmark feature for the community: a bright, welcoming, aspirational hub, aimed at encouraging people to explore the environment and what it has to offer to Library members.
- ✓ Where partners express an interest in running a community library, a feasibility study will be undertaken. In cases where there is support from the local community and a sound business case to do so, the Council would look to transition the management of the service over to the community. A comprehensive support package from the Council would be put in place.
- ✓ Our staff and volunteers will be trained to provide excellent customer service to all those who wish to use our services.
- ✓ We will review our opening hours in line with customer and staff feedback and statistical information, and engage with local community groups and seek to implement automated solutions, in order to keep libraries open for more people, for more of the time.
- ✓ We will host a wide range of diverse events and activities that build community identity and cohesion.
- ✓ We will work with local people to shape our future services, extending ownership, responsibility and pride.

## Case Study:

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN LIBRARY SERVICES

In 2018, Brinsworth Parish Council was successful in obtaining Big Lottery Funding in order to build a new Brinsworth Resource Centre. In 2019, Brinsworth Parish Council approached the Council to improve library services within the community, specifically with a view to replacing the old 'portacabin' which had housed the library for over 20 years. The pavilion building, next door to the new Resource Centre, was extended in 2020 to accommodate a library that forms part of the new Brinsworth Community Hub.

Placing the library within the hub creates opportunities for daily informal and formal interactions which strengthen community cohesion. In 2021 the library will be managed by Brinsworth Community Trust (of which the

Parish Council is the sole trustee). The library will continue to form part of the Council's statutory provision and the Council will continue to provide support services - including supply and maintenance of stock, access to the Library Management System, and specialist library staff support including the training of volunteers.

The scheme enables increased community involvement in local library services, enabling the community to shape its service to meet local needs. This contributes to achieving a number of strategic priorities, notably, the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy 2018 - 2025.





# MONITORING OUR IMPACT

Rotherham Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs will provide quarterly updates on our progress and publish an Annual Report. We have set targets as follows:

*By 2026 we will:*

- ✓ Increase the numbers of people who borrow books by 10 percent
- ✓ Increase the number of visits by 10 percent
- ✓ Increase reading for pleasure amongst young people by 25 percent
- ✓ Increase the number and range of activities and groups by 10 percent
- ✓ Increase the number of people using I.T. facilities by 10 percent
- ✓ Increase self-service take up such as online renewals and online requests by 20 percent
- ✓ Increase the number of volunteering hours by 50 percent
- ✓ Maintain our levels of customer satisfaction above 95 percent
- ✓ Trial technology which will allow customers to access libraries without staff being present in order to increase opening hours
- ✓ Be able to evidence the impact and value that libraries bring to communities through case studies and testimonials



“ A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life-raft and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination. On a cold rainy island, they are the only sheltered public spaces where you are not a consumer, but a citizen instead. ”

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## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

**Introduction**

This document provides an overview of activities and services delivered across library sites, mapped against the Libraries Connected Universal Offers and the Local Offer. The purpose of this table is to demonstrate how our library programmes align with national priorities, while also providing local initiatives that reflect the needs and interests of local communities.

**Universal Offer Definitions**

- **Reading:** Encouraging reading for pleasure and learning through a wide range of programmes, events, and collections.
- **Digital:** Promoting digital inclusion and skills development by providing access to technology and digital training.
- **Health & Wellbeing:** Supporting physical and mental wellbeing through resources, activities, and community partnerships.
- **Culture & Creativity:** Enabling creative expression and cultural engagement through events, exhibitions, and participatory opportunities.
- **Information & Learning:** Facilitating lifelong learning and access to trusted information through courses, advice, and support services.

**Wath Library Service Offer**

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Toddle Time sessions Reading challenges Reading Well collection Empathy collection School visits After school reading clubs
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Basic IT classes Free Wi-Fi access Wi-Fi printing Makerspace STEAM activities Public computers with scanner National Databank

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Action on Hearing Loss monthly drop-in Warm Welcome space Chess club Yoga group
	Culture & Creativity	Art exhibitions (schools & local artists) Makerspace adult and children sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions
	Information & Learning	RNN community courses Open Arms advice session Tutor sessions Homework Club Employment support – Working Win
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Participation in town centre events (May Festival, Christmas Lights) Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Toddler groups hiring meeting space
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries Meeting room

## Aston Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Storytime sessions Reading Well collections School visits Chatterbooks sessions
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Wi-Fi printing Free Wi-Fi access Coding Club

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		Public computers with scanner National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Breastfeeding support Wellbeing sessions Wellbeing Craft Group Hearing aid support Warm Welcome space Public Living Room (Camerados movement) Knit and Natter group Adult games group
	Culture & Creativity	Craft sessions Art displays Creative workshops Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions Adult craft group
	Information & Learning	Employment supporting (Working Win, SYHA and DWP) RNN community courses Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Community events Litter picking equipment for loan
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries Blue Car Badge appointments Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction/Council Tax appointments Self-serve kiosk

## Dinnington Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Reading challenges School visits Readers Groups
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Free Wi-Fi access Wi-Fi printing Public computers with scanner

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Hearing Aid Clinic Baby & Toddler Time Wellbeing groups Healthwatch sessions Warm Welcome space Knit and Natter group Board games group
	Culture & Creativity	Children's craft sessions Community craft group Teen craft group RNN community courses Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions
	Information & Learning	Open Arms sessions Work coaches Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Local events Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Toddler groups
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries Blue Car Badge appointments Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction/Council Tax appointments Self-serve kiosk

## Greasbrough Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Mini Melodies School visits
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Free Wi-Fi access Wi-Fi printing Public computers with scanner National databank Photocopying and printing services

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

	Health & Wellbeing	Weigh and play baby clinic Breastfeeding support RNID hearing aid support Warm welcome space
	Culture & Creativity	Family activities with Flux Craft sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions RNN community courses
	Information & Learning	Open Arms sessions Employment support – Working Win & DWP Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Genealogy group
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries Meeting room hire

## Kimberworth Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Mini Melodies Homework Club School visits Story Stop
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Wi-Fi printing Free Wi-Fi access Public computers with scanner National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Sit & Natter group Knit and natter group Planned Health Advice Clinic Future health partnerships Warm welcome space Cultural event puzzles

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

Local Offer	Culture & Creativity	Creative displays Cultural-themed children's activities Holiday activities Seasonal events
	Information & Learning	Homework Club
	Community Engagement	South Yorkshire Police surgeries Hosting tenants/residents associations Litter picking equipment for loan
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries

## Kiveton Park Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Reading Well collections School visits
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Wi-Fi printing Free Wi-Fi access Public computers with scanner National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Warm Welcome space Holiday activities Seasonal events SEND Safe Space Knit and Natter group
	Culture & Creativity	Creative displays Creative activities Craft sessions LEGO sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events
	Information & Learning	Children's Makerspace STEM sessions Displays Homework Club



## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

Local Offer	Community Engagement	Hosting tenants/residents associations Litter picking equipment loan
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries Meeting room hire

**Maltby Library Service Offer**

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Reading Well collections School visits Readers group Mini Melodies
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Free Wi-Fi access Wi-Fi printing Public computers with scanner National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Community Youth groups Open arms – Citizen Advice Bureau Employment support - Working win/ Employment solutions Warm welcome space SEND safe space Knit & Natter group Board games
	Culture & Creativity	Creative displays Creative activities Craft sessions LEGO sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events RNN community courses Mindfulness colouring Sewing group
	Information & Learning	Displays

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	B:Friends
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries Meeting room hire Blue Car Badge appointments Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction/Council Tax appointments Self-service kiosk

**Mowbray Garden's Library Service Offer**

<b>Offer Type</b>	<b>Offer Name</b>	<b>Activities / Services</b>
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Reading Well collections School visits Play readers group Book group Readers group Mini melodies Story Stop
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions ICT drop in support sessions Free Wi-Fi access Wi-Fi printing Public computers with scanner Open+ (library open without staff being present) National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Asian women's group Asian men's group Family gardening group Community pantry Buddies social group – neuro diverse adults Warm welcome space B:friend's group

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		Employment support with Working Win Knitting and crochet group Knit and Natter group
	Culture & Creativity	Creative displays Creative activities Craft sessions Creative writing sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions Poetry writing Art classes and sewing lessons and textile art sessions in 2025/26 RNN activity sessions
	Information & Learning	Displays English lessons Maths lessons Open Arms sessions Citizens Advice Bureau sessions British Sign Language Homework club Age UK sessions
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Rotherham Anglo-Polish Society Toddler groups
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries Meeting room hire Self-service kiosk

## Rawmarsh Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Readers group Reading Well collections School visits Themed book displays Shared reading group Book clubs

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Wi-Fi printing Free Wi-Fi access Public computers with scanner National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Age UK sessions Mental health social groups to reduce isolation Warm welcome space Knit and Natter group SEND safe space Knit and Natter group
	Culture & Creativity	Creative/Cultural displays Creative activities Craft sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions RNN community courses
	Information & Learning	Displays Employment support sessions – Working Win Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Community group meetings Local event hosting Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Toddler groups
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries Meeting room hire Blue Car Badge appointments Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction/Council Tax appointments Self-serve kiosk

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

## Riverside Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Reading Well collections School visits Story stop Storytime sessions Readers groups Shared Reading group VIP reading group
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Free Wi-Fi access Wi-Fi printing Public computers with scanner National Databank Hublets Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Health information displays Warm welcome space Public Living Room (Camerados movement) Menopause cafe Mindful Mondays Board games group Knit and Natter group Sit and natter group Jigsaw group Death café
	Culture & Creativity	Creative displays Creative activities Craft sessions Art exhibitions Cultural displays – Creative writing sessions Hive writers – Teens Rotherham Writers group Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions Steinway – music recitals

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		Mini music makers Brickin' Brilliant adult LEGO club. Daft crafts
	Information & Learning	Children's Makerspace - STEM sessions Information displays Employment Solutions partnership working National Careers service ad-hoc RNN ICT drop in sessions Tenancy Support drop in sessions Homework Club Rotherfed sessions ESOL group Conversation Spanish group
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Refugee support Community group meetings Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Toddler groups Dungeons & Dragons
	Practical Services	Gallery hire Self-service kiosks

## Swinton Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Readers group School visits Mini Melodies Reading well collection Empathy collection
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Wi-Fi printing Free Wi-Fi access Public computers with scanner National Databank

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Health information displays Warm welcome space
	Culture & Creativity	Creative/Cultural displays Creative activities Craft sessions RNN community courses Crime Writing - Workshop Creative Writing Sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions Crochet club Knit and Natter group Friendship Group
	Information & Learning	Information displays Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Community group meetings Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Toddler groups
	Practical Services	Meeting room hire Councillor surgeries Blue Car Badge appointments Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction/Council Tax appointments Self-serve kiosk

**Thorpe Hesley Library Service Offer**

<b>Offer Type</b>	<b>Offer Name</b>	<b>Activities / Services</b>
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Story stop Storytime sessions Readers groups

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Wi-Fi printing Free Wi-Fi access Public computers with scanner National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Health information displays Warm welcome space Knit and Natter group Coffee, chat and reminisce group
	Culture & Creativity	Creative/Cultural displays Creative activities Craft sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events LEGO sessions
	Information & Learning	Information displays Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Toddler groups

**Thurcroft Library Service Offer**

<b>Offer Type</b>	<b>Offer Name</b>	<b>Activities / Services</b>
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions School visits Readers group
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Wi-Fi printing Free Wi-Fi access Public computers with scanner National Databank Photocopying and printing services Code club Bee-bots club



## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

	Health & Wellbeing	Health information displays Warm welcome space Coffee morning
	Culture & Creativity	Creative/Cultural displays Creative activities Craft sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events
	Information & Learning	Homework Club Family History club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Community group meetings Litter picking equipment for loan
	Practical Services	Councillor surgeries

## Wickersley Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime sessions Reading well collection Empathy collection School visits Storytime sessions Readers groups Mini Melodies
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Wi-Fi printing Free Wi-Fi access Public computers with scanner RNN – beginners IT weekly sessions National Databank Photocopying and printing services
	Health & Wellbeing	Health information displays Jigsaw/games club Warm welcome space

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		Employment support – Working Win Knit and Natter group
	Culture & Creativity	Creative/Cultural displays Creative activities Craft sessions RNN community courses Rotherham Creative activities LEGO sessions Holiday activities Seasonal events
	Information & Learning	Information displays Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Community group meetings Stay & Play Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hobby Groups	Toddler groups Cubs Scouts Local Nurseries Beavers Brownies Rainbow Club
	Practical Services	Meeting room hire Councillor surgeries Self-serve kiosk

## Brinsworth Library Service Offer

Offer Type	Offer Name	Activities / Services
Universal	Reading	Rhymetime Storytime School visits Childminder visits
	Digital	Learn My Way ICT support sessions Free Wi-Fi access Wi-Fi printing Public computers with scanner

## Appendix 2 – Libraries Service Offer

		Photocopying and printing services Adult games group Knit and Natter group
	Health & Wellbeing	Warm Welcome space Employment support sessions – Working Win
	Culture & Creativity	Craft sessions Adult craft group Art displays Sewing Club LEGO sessions Jigsaw Club
	Information & Learning	Homework Club
Local Offer	Community Engagement	Community events Litter picking equipment for loan
	Social & Hubby Groups	Senior Social Club
	Practical Services	Self-serve kiosk

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## **APPENDIX 3 – REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS – ROTHERHAM LIBRARY STRATEGY 2021 – 2026**

### **1. Objectives**

#### **Creative and Cultural Enrichment**

Library usage across Rotherham continues to grow in areas that support creativity, culture, and community engagement. Libraries are evolving into vibrant cultural hubs, with increased participation in reading, activities, and digital services.

A diverse programme of events has been delivered across Rotherham libraries and community venues, including Fun Palaces, pop-up libraries, author visits, and creative workshops. Fun Palaces, part of a national programme, support creative health and volunteering by enabling communities to design and deliver their own cultural activities, helping build confidence and resilience through hands-on participation. With support from the National Lottery, the appointment of a Rotherham Fun Palace Ambassador has helped expand the initiative from three Fun Palaces in 2019 to 17 in 2025, now attracting around 800 attendees annually.

Events take place not only in libraries but also in spaces such as Rotherham Minster and Greasbrough Park, with activities led by local residents. These community-led groups continue year-round, fostering connection, skill-sharing, and a sense of ownership.

Libraries have also contributed to the Children's Capital of Culture (CCOC) initiative, co-creating events with schools and partners, and participating in borough-wide programmes like Roots Festival. Outdoor engagement has grown through reading gardens at Swinton, Mowbray Gardens, and Thurcroft, and creative events in parks and green spaces.

Collaborations with Heritage Services have enabled the delivery of pop-up exhibitions, innovative "mini museum" concepts, and reflective events such as the Hope Fields memory trees within libraries which was part of the wider Hope Fields Thrybergh Country Park project. Each library featured a white wooden tree, inviting visitors to write heartfelt messages in memory of loved ones lost during the pandemic.

Each ward has a Community Host Organisation who will support their ward's Heritage Producer. Libraries are working with CCOC to become the community hosts, working with the Heritage producer to connect with groups to deliver activities. Libraries support them with devising, planning and delivering their end-of-project outcomes.

Libraries work closely with Neighbourhood Co-ordinators to deliver joint events, including VE Day celebrations, Christmas light switch-ons, May Day events and circus-themed community events.

Targeted outreach has successfully engaged underrepresented groups including men, BAME communities, disabled residents, and young adults through partnerships with Voluntary Action Rotherham, YAWR, and events such as the Ferham Festival.

In addition, a Ukrainian community group has been established at the Central Library, further extending engagement efforts.

While these initiatives have made meaningful progress, it is acknowledged that more work is needed to ensure broader and sustained inclusion across all communities.

Creative partnerships, such as with Flux Rotherham, have supported inclusive, arts-based projects. Since 2022, libraries have joined Flux pop-ups across the borough, from large-scale events like WOW Festival and Roots Carnival to smaller, targeted activities. These have promoted library services, delivered themed storytimes, and showcased Makerspaces.

Libraries also collaborate with Parish Councils. For example:

- Wickersley Library co-delivers annual events like the Summer Reading Challenge celebration and Christmas fair, with over 200 attendees at the recent summer fair.
- Thurcroft Library, co-located with the Parish Hall since 2023 works with the Parish Council on events, including winter fairs and Christmas activities.

### **Increasing Reading and Literacy**

Rotherham Libraries continue to inspire residents to read for pleasure through a vibrant annual programme of events and activities that support literacy and lifelong learning. As a key partner in the Rotherham Loves Reading campaign and the Take 10 initiative, libraries encourage residents to read for ten minutes a day to boost wellbeing and mental health. This is supported by free activities for children, book clubs, themed reading packs for early years, and tailored reading support—all backed by Public Health.

The Summer Reading Challenge has grown year-on-year, with 1,025 finishers this year and an annual celebration event. Other activities supporting reading have included story walks, author visits, and the expansion of reading groups across the borough, including new sessions in Rawmarsh, Greasbrough, and Wickersley, catering to all ages and interests.

Libraries have strengthened engagement with schools through increased class visits, pop-up libraries, and curriculum-linked resources. Focused support is provided for under-fives, early years, and children with English as an Additional Language (EAL), including ESOL reading sessions. Partnerships with schools, nurseries, and literacy charities have deepened, especially during the pandemic and recovery period.

Innovative initiatives such as BookTrust Storytime have engaged disadvantaged families and encouraged regular story sharing. A Home Educators' Book Group, launched during lockdown, now meets in person and continues to attract families not previously engaged with library services.

Rotherham's book borrowing performance remains below target at 5.7%. National data from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) shows a 24% rise in book issues per 1,000 people in 2022/23, indicating some post-pandemic recovery. However, only 8.8% of the UK population are active borrowers,

down from 18.1% in 2011/12, pointing to a long-term national decline in traditional library use. Rotherham's lower-than-average borrowing rate highlights a local challenge within this broader context.

In response, Rotherham Libraries are reviewing local literacy data to better understand how child and adult literacy levels may be influencing engagement. National research from the National Literacy Trust shows that low literacy is closely linked to reduced library engagement, particularly in areas facing economic disadvantage. For example, children in high-priority areas reported higher reading enjoyment when supported by targeted literacy programmes, even as national enjoyment levels declined.

Source: [The Impact of Our Work in Communities – National Literacy Trust](#)

This insight will inform targeted outreach and programming in the next strategy period, ensuring library services are responsive to local needs and aligned with broader efforts to improve literacy, wellbeing, and access to cultural resources.

### **Improved Digital Access and Literacy**

Rotherham Libraries have made significant progress in enhancing digital access and inclusion. Investment in ICT infrastructure has delivered upgraded public access PCs, new self-service kiosks, and improved signage and printing facilities. Open+ technology at Mowbray Gardens and Brinsworth offer extended access during unstaffed hours, making library services more flexible and accessible.

Digital innovation is thriving, with code clubs, makerspaces, and staff-led inclusion sessions supporting older residents and those less confident with technology. Makerspaces at Wath and Kiveton Park offer hands-on experiences with 3D printing, pottery wheels, and VR headsets, supported by staff trained through the University of Sheffield and STEM Ambassadors. Hublet tablet devices, self-service tablets designed for public use, are being trialled at the Central Library, offering flexible access to digital resources and services.

Pop-up digital sessions have been delivered across the borough, including regular Makerspace activities at some sites. Free internet access, assisted digital support, and training delivered in partnership with local organisations have helped more residents get online and build digital confidence.

Rotherham is also tackling data poverty head-on. National Databank SIMs are available at 14 library sites, providing essential connectivity to communities in need. Since the launch in May 2023, the service has issued over 1234 SIMs, helping bridge the digital divide. Additionally, 50 tablets were distributed to vulnerable residents, including refugees, through funding from the Good Things Foundation. This project was part of Rotherham's place-based Digital Inclusion Programme.

Digital membership has grown significantly, with over 135,000 e-resources accessed and 3,823 new members joining during the pandemic. Libraries continue to offer eBooks, eMagazines, and eNewspapers, supported by targeted marketing to ensure residents can make the most of these resources.

Rotherham's digital offer compares favourably with other UK library authorities. According to the Good Things Foundation's 2023 Digital Inclusion in Libraries report, Rotherham was one of just twelve services selected for in-depth study due to its strong digital inclusion work. Rotherham stands out for its integrated approach combining infrastructure, outreach, and creative programming. This includes advanced technologies like VR, 3D printing, and tablet lending, alongside targeted support for those most at risk of digital exclusion.

This shows Rotherham's commitment to tackling digital inequality, promoting innovation, and ensuring that library services remain inclusive, modern, and responsive to community needs.

### **Helping Everyone Achieve Their Full Potential**

Rotherham Libraries continue to support learning, skills development, and personal growth for residents of all ages. Regular study support, homework clubs, and coding workshops are delivered across multiple sites, helping children and young people build confidence and digital skills. The Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) at Riverside Library provides access to specialist databases and resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Partnerships with organisations such as the Source Skills Academy have enabled employability and confidence-building courses within libraries. Libraries also offer apprenticeships, volunteering roles, and work experience opportunities. A recent example includes a successful funding award to host a CCOC trainee to work alongside library staff and partners to consult with children and co-design creative projects delivered across library sites and pop-up events throughout the borough.

Libraries are increasingly supporting adult skills and employability through targeted partnerships. In addition to work which was done with the Source Skills Academy, the service is now aligning with the Council's Pathways to Employment programme. This includes hosting job clubs, confidence-building workshops, and digital literacy sessions at Riverside, Dinnington, and Maltby libraries. These initiatives are particularly focused on supporting young people aged 16–25 and adults facing barriers to employment, helping them build essential skills and prepare for future opportunities.

To ensure high-quality support, library staff have undertaken e-learning to strengthen their knowledge of library resources and digital services. This includes completing Libraries Connected modules such as Key Digital Skills and Media and Information Literacy, enabling staff to better assist customers with online services and build digital confidence.

### **Healthier and Happier Lives**

Rotherham Libraries continue to play a vital role in supporting public health and wellbeing across the borough, delivering a wide range of initiatives that promote healthier lifestyles, reduce isolation, and improve mental wellbeing.

Libraries have expanded their collections to include more resources on healthy living, mental health, and wellbeing. Autism-friendly spaces have been created at



Kiveton Park, Aston, Maltby and Rawmarsh, featuring sensory equipment to support children and families, working in partnership with the SEND team and Children Centres. Reading gardens at Swinton, Mowbray Gardens, and Thurstcroft offer calming outdoor spaces for reflection, relaxation, and community engagement.

A Mental Health Exhibition was held at Riverside's gallery space, curated by the Fun Palace Ambassador in partnership with Mind and Crossroads Care. The exhibition featured poetry, paintings, digital art, and 3D pieces created by individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges. It not only showcased the incredible talent within Rotherham but also helped reduce stigma and spark important conversations.

Libraries have hosted a variety of health-themed displays and wellbeing events while also providing warm, safe spaces during the cost-of-living crisis. During the pandemic, library staff supported the Covid testing centre at Riverside House and distributed home testing kits through the LFT Community Collect scheme.

Targeted outreach has helped address health inequalities. Working with partners such as Get Healthy Rotherham, libraries have delivered events focused on healthy eating, stress management, and physical activity.

A growing number of health and wellbeing groups have been introduced, including Menopause Cafés, Musically Minded and Shared Reading sessions.

Volunteering opportunities, friendship groups, and "Cuppa and a Chat" sessions have helped reduce loneliness, alongside inclusive reading groups for underrepresented communities.

Libraries continue to promote reading for pleasure as a powerful tool for mental wellbeing. In partnership with Public Health and NHS teams, libraries based in Joint Service Centres at Aston, Maltby, and Rawmarsh are reaching those who benefit most.

The Booklink and Home Library Service remain essential in supporting vulnerable and isolated residents. They also work with care homes and social care providers to deliver targeted programmes that reduce social isolation.

Senior Library Officers are represented on the Rotherham Creative Health Board, which aims to embed arts and culture into public health delivery. The focus is on improving wellbeing through creative interventions, such as poetry, music, and visual arts, particularly for people experiencing isolation, mental health challenges, or long-term conditions. Libraries are working with NHS neighbourhood teams to develop targeted Creative Health activities that are inclusive and accessible, especially for residents who may not engage with traditional health services.

### **Greater Prosperity**

Work has now started on the new Central Library, part of the wider Rotherham Markets redevelopment, with opening planned for Autumn 2026. The new library will offer a modern, accessible space with a café, meeting rooms, gallery, and maker's space bringing together culture, learning, and community in the heart of the town

centre. This investment supports the Town Centre Masterplan and aims to boost wellbeing, footfall, and local pride.

Libraries have strengthened partnerships with employment services, working collaboratively with Job Centre Plus, RNN Group, Pathways, and Rotherham United Community Sports Trust (RUCST) to deliver job clubs, training sessions, and support for job seekers. ICT classes and assisted digital support continue to bridge the digital divide, equipping residents with essential skills for work and everyday life.

### **Stronger, More Resilient Communities**

Over £1 million has been invested in refurbishing library buildings, with improvements to décor, furniture, signage, and digital screens. Most sites now feature drink facilities along with public toilets. An additional £540,000 has funded IT upgrades, including new public access PCs and self-service kiosks. Open + technology is now offered at Mowbray Gardens and is planned to go-live at Brinsworth in December this year.

Libraries are becoming increasingly integrated into their communities:

- Kiveton Park Library was redesigned and co-located with Youth Services, creating a flexible, multi-purpose space that includes a community kitchen. Early Help services now use the building when the library is closed, delivering groups such as “Age 0 to Walkers” and baby weigh-ins, as well as booking the meeting room during the week and running half-term and summer activities.
- Thurcroft Library relocated to the Gordon Bennett Memorial Hall, increasing footfall and strengthening partnerships with the Parish Council and local groups.
- Swinton Library moved into the former customer service centre as part of the town centre redevelopment. This new, improved redevelopment offers a café within the vicinity, meeting spaces, and greater public visibility.
- The new Brinsworth Library is a strong example of how libraries are evolving to become more embedded within their local communities. Officially opened to the public on 2nd March 2020, the library was constructed with funding from Section 106 contributions, matched by RMBC capital investment. From April 2021, the library transitioned to a community-managed model, led by a Parish Council Library Supervisor and supported by a team of local volunteers. RMBC continues to provide core resources including books, IT equipment, training, and ongoing support. This Library has seen a 10% increase in footfall, reflecting strong community engagement and the success of the partnership model.

All 15 libraries continue to support community group activity, democratic engagement, and partnership delivery. Staff work closely with Neighbourhood Co-ordinators to align services with ward priorities and strengthen local relationships.

Adopting a ‘Libraries First’ approach, Rotherham Libraries have become true community hubs. Residents can now access a range of advice services, youth services, public health initiatives, employment support, assisted digital support for those who are unable to self-serve and creative activities. Pop-up advice sessions,

community meetings, and co-located services, such as Early Help at Kiveton Park, have further embedded libraries into the fabric of local life.

Targeted outreach has successfully engaged non-users and underrepresented groups, including residents with protected characteristics. Libraries continue to collaborate with Citizens Advice to provide welfare and money advice, deliver health and wellbeing programmes like “Get Healthy Rotherham,” host job clubs, and partner with cultural organisations, museums, and artists to enrich the borough’s cultural life.

## 2. Performance Targets

The 2021–2026 Library Strategy established a set of measurable targets to ensure progress could be tracked and evaluated throughout the five-year period. These targets were designed to reflect the service’s priorities and demonstrate the value and impact of libraries across Rotherham.

Library services in Rotherham were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with face-to-face provision suspended and staff redeployed to support essential community functions. The most affected site was Riverside Library, which closed in March 2020 and remained unavailable for public use until Monday 19th July 2021. During this time, the building was repurposed as a foodbank and a Lateral Flow Testing Centre, limiting access to core library services. Staff were also allocated to support these operations, contributing to reduced performance across key engagement metrics.

The baseline year for performance measurement was 2018/19, as reported in the strategy. The following summary outlines progress against targets as of the end of 2024/25, in line with the “Monitoring Our Impact” framework.

### Increase the Number of People Who Borrow Books by 10%

Target: Increase the number of active borrowers (including physical books and ebooks, e-audiobooks and e-magazines) by 10% from the 2021/22 baseline of 20,653, aiming for 22,718 by the end of 2025/26.

Performance 2024/25:

- Active Borrowers: 16658
- Progress: The service is not on track to meet its target.
- Shortfall: A deficit of 6060 borrowers compared to the target.

Key Challenge:

The underperformance is primarily driven by the Central Library, which continues to struggle with user recovery following extended closure and disruption.

- Active Borrowers: 15,792
- Progress: The service is not on track to meet its target.
- Shortfall: A deficit of 6,926 borrowers compared to the target.

Key Challenge:

The underperformance is primarily driven by the Central Library, which continues to struggle with user recovery following extended closure and disruption.

Benchmarking & Context:

- Rotherham Active Borrower Rate (2024/25): 5.7%
- National Average: 8.8%
- Neighbouring Authorities:
  - Barnsley: 10.3%
  - Doncaster: 5.9%

While national borrower rates have declined over the past decade, Rotherham's comparatively lower engagement levels highlight the need for targeted intervention. The opening of the new Central Library presents a timely and exciting opportunity to re-engage the community, strengthen outreach, and improve performance through focused and innovative strategies

- Increase the number of library visitors by 10%

Target: Increase total library visitor numbers by 10% from the baseline of 616,387, aiming for 678,026 by the end of 2025/26.

Performance 2024/25:

- Total Visits: 395,297
  - Community Libraries: 348,961
  - Central Library: 46,296

Community Libraries are on track, showing strong performance with a 24% increase in footfall between 2022/23 and 2024/25. This growth is largely driven by the capital investment programme, which has enhanced facilities and engagement across local sites.

In contrast, the Central Library is significantly underperforming, with visits down 74% from its baseline of 176,996. This decline is primarily due to:

- A 17-month closure during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A slower return of key customer groups.

As a result, the Central Library is not on target to contribute effectively toward the overall visitor goal. However, the planned relocation is expected to drive a substantial recovery in footfall and help realign performance.

- Increase reading for pleasure among young people (ages 0–25) by 25%

Target met: Engagement with young people reading for pleasure has reached the target.

The target was to increase engagement by 25% from a baseline of 3,248. By the end of 2024/25, engagement had risen to 8,367, representing a 156% increase. This

significant growth reflects the success of targeted programmes, outreach initiatives, and improved access to reading opportunities across the borough.

□ Increase the number and range of activities and groups by 10%

Target met: The service aimed to increase the number and diversity of activities and groups by 10% from the baseline of 1,609, targeting 1,770 by the end of 2025/26.

Current Performance (2024/25):

Activities and Groups Delivered: 2,786  
Increase from Baseline: +73.2%

The target has been significantly exceeded, with a 73.2% increase in the number and range of activities and groups compared to the baseline. This reflects strong community engagement, effective outreach, and the success of programming across library services. The growth demonstrates the service's ability to respond to local needs and interests, and positions Rotherham's libraries as vibrant, inclusive spaces for learning, creativity, and connection.

□ Increase the number of people using IT facilities by 10%

Target met: The service aimed to increase IT facility usage by 10% from the baseline of 76,489, targeting 84,138 by the end of 2025/26.

Performance 2024/25:

- Usage: 91,097
- Increase from Baseline: +19%

The target has been successfully exceeded, with a 19% increase in IT facility usage compared to the baseline. This reflects strong engagement with digital services and the effectiveness of library sites in meeting the evolving needs of users. The growth highlights the value of accessible technology in supporting learning, job-seeking, and digital inclusion across Rotherham's communities.

□ Increase self-service take up such as online renewals and online requests by 20%

Target: Increase self-service transactions (e.g. self-service, Wi-Fi printing, online renewals and online requests) by 20% from the baseline of 261,219, aiming for 313,463 by the end of 2025/26.

Performance 2024/25:

Usage: 332,458

Increase from Baseline: 27.27%

The target has been achieved, and this improvement is attributed to the implementation of new technologies, such as Wi-Fi printing, which have enhanced accessibility and convenience for users.

● Increase the Number of Volunteering Hours by 50%

Target: Increase volunteering hours by 50% from the 2021/22 baseline of 3,207, aiming for 4,811 by the end of 2025/26.

Performance 2024/25:

- Volunteering Hours: 2,221
- Change from Baseline: -30.75%

Volunteering hours have declined by 30.75% compared to the baseline, indicating that the service is not currently on track to meet its target. A significant contributing factor is the loss of volunteer capacity following the COVID-19 pandemic, with many individuals not returning to their roles. This has had a lasting impact on service delivery and community involvement.

To address this, a refreshed recruitment campaign will be delivered along with stronger recognition and support for volunteers.

□ Maintain customer satisfaction above 95%

Target met: Customer satisfaction levels have exceeded 95%, with an overall customer satisfaction of 98.66% for 2024/25.

□ Trial technology which will allow customers to access libraries without staff being present in order to increase opening hour

Target on track: The Open+ system has been successfully implemented at Mowbray Gardens Library, enabling customers to access the library independently during extended hours. The rollout at Brinsworth Library is progressing well and remains on track for completion by December 2025

□ Be able to evidence the impact and value that libraries bring to communities through case studies and testimonials

Target met: A series of case studies have been provided throughout the Library Strategy, clearly demonstrating the impact libraries have on individuals and communities. These examples highlight real-life outcomes across areas such as literacy, wellbeing, digital inclusion, and community cohesion.

## 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: Library Strategy**

**Directorate: Regeneration and Environment**

**Service area: Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs**

**Lead person: Zoe Oxley**

**Contact: 01709 334283**

Is this a:

☒ **Strategy / Policy**
☐ **Service / Function**
☐ **Other**

**If other, please specify**

### 2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The screening document supports the Cabinet report “Review of the 2021 - 2026 Library Strategy and proposal to undertake consultation for the 2027-2032 library strategy/future service delivery model”. The report will be presented to Cabinet in December 2025. Its purpose is to review performance against the 2021–2026 Library Strategy, summarise key achievements and challenges, and seek approval to undertake a public consultation on the development of a new Library Strategy for 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs.

The previous Rotherham Library Strategy 2021–2026 provided the framework for the

## Appendix 4

delivery and development of library services across the Borough. The strategy set out an ambitious plan to modernise library buildings, strengthen community partnerships, increase digital inclusion, and provide cultural and learning opportunities for residents. It supported the Council's key strategies including the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy, Cultural Strategy, Economic Growth Strategy, Customer Access Strategy, and Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as well as national priorities through the Libraries Connected Universal Offers.

The service envisages that a refreshed and modernised strategy for 2027 to 2032 will deliver a fresh approach to how services are delivered over the next 5 years and ensure that every corner of the borough has to opportunity to have their say about how we do this, to guarantee that no community is left behind and those who are the hardest to reach are included.

### 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?**

An Equality Analysis has been produced and the appropriate approvals received. During the production of the new Library Strategy, a wide range of organisations and individuals will be included, and this will be reflected in the Equalities Impact Analysis. The library strategy consultation for the 2027-2032 will draw from a variety of sources with representation of people with protected characteristics. In addition, many of the organisations involved work directly with people from a cross section of the community so will represent their views.

- **Key findings**

The Service seeks to ensure that an action plan is developed and maintained as the service evolves, to address areas for improvement, and where we need to widen access and make the customer base more diverse. This will link into the wider strategic agenda of the Council. As well as having an exceptionally high rate of customer satisfaction, currently the Service is engaging well with the following key areas, including those with protected characteristics: Females borough wide, White British people, those who do not declare themselves as disabled and the following age groups: 4-11, 26-40, 41-65 and 65 and over. Further work is required in order to engage better with the following; Males of all ages, borough wide, BAME, Disabled People, Ages 0-3, 12-17 and 18-25.

The Service will create an action plan as part of the EIA to address these. It will be maintained as the recommendations evolve and highlight where we may need to widen access and involve other partner organisations. The delivery of the action plan will have a positive impact on many local groups and improve engagement across the under represented areas.

- **Actions**

A robust action plan is to be developed to address the areas where following analysis, the service is falling short in terms of regular engagement. It is envisaged that the Service will work with the wider Council and community and voluntary partners to focus on this utilising cross cutting agendas including the Thriving neighbourhoods strategy, Cultural Strategy, Health and Wellbeing agenda, Building Stronger Communities vision and the Creative Health Programme.

## Appendix 4

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	December 2025 onwards
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	TBC
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Gina Szumski, Operational Manager

### 5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Polly Hamilton	Assistant Director, Culture Sport & Tourism	28/10/25

### 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](mailto: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.

<b>Date screening completed</b>	24/10/25
<b>Report title and date</b>	Review of the 2021 - 2026 Library Strategy and proposal to undertake consultation for the 2027- 2032 library strategy/future service delivery model 15/12/25
<b>If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication</b>	15/12/25
<b>Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement</b> <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a>	28/10/25

## 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: Library Strategy 2027-2032	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 10 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2025	
Directorate: Regeneration and Environment	Service area: Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs
Lead Manager: Zoe Oxley	Contact number: 01709 334283
Is this a:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
If other, please specify	

## Appendix 5

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)
Zoe Oxley	RMBC	Head of Operations and Business Transformation
Gina Szumski	RMBC	Operational Manager
Rowena Woods	RMBC	Service Manager

### 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 current Rotherham Library Strategy (2021–2026) has provided a solid foundation for the delivery and development of library services across the Borough. However, the landscape of public service usage has evolved significantly in recent years, influenced by both external environmental factors and shifting expectations among service users. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, acted as a catalyst for change, reshaping how individuals engage with public spaces and digital services.

As we look ahead to the development of the 2027–2032 Library Strategy, it is essential to ensure that our approach remains responsive, inclusive, and equitable. The revised strategy will reflect the Council's commitment to meeting its statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. This duty must be fulfilled not only in terms of access and provision but also in ensuring that services are equally accessible and beneficial to all members of the public, regardless of age, background, ability, or socio-economic status.

#### Embedding Equality and Inclusion

The new strategy will place a stronger emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion by:

- Actively engaging underrepresented groups, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled individuals, older adults, and young people, to understand and respond to their specific needs.
- Ensuring that library spaces are welcoming, safe, and culturally sensitive, with staff trained in inclusive practices and customer service.
- Expanding digital access and literacy support, particularly for those who face barriers to technology, such as low-income households or older residents.
- Promoting community-led programming that reflects the diverse voices and interests of Rotherham's population.

### Enhancing Service User Outcomes

Libraries are more than repositories of books—they are community anchors that support lifelong learning, wellbeing, and social connection. The strategy will aim to improve service user outcomes by:

- Measuring impact through user feedback, engagement data, and community outcomes, rather than just usage statistics.
- Supporting educational attainment and employability through targeted resources, workshops, and partnerships with local organisations.
- Facilitating health and wellbeing initiatives, such as reading for mental health, social prescribing, and safe spaces for community interaction.
- Encouraging active citizenship and civic engagement by providing access to information, democratic participation, and volunteering opportunities.

### Responding to Financial Pressures with Innovation

While financial constraints continue to affect the Council's budget, the library service has adapted by embracing innovative solutions that maintain accessibility and inclusivity for all residents. Initiatives such as the introduction of Open+ technology have extended access to libraries beyond traditional staffed hours, ensuring that people with varying schedules can still benefit from library services. Enhanced digital resources, including e-books and online learning platforms, provide flexible options for those unable to visit in person, helping to reduce barriers for individuals with mobility challenges or caring responsibilities. In addition, libraries are increasingly used as community hubs, offering safe, welcoming spaces for local groups and organisations to deliver activities that support social inclusion and wellbeing. These approaches help ensure that, despite financial pressures, the service continues to promote equality of opportunity and meet the diverse needs of Rotherham's communities.

The £1.4 million capital investment approved in 2021 enabled significant improvements across the 14 neighbourhood sites, including enhanced ICT infrastructure and modernised interior design. These upgrades have not only improved the physical environment but have also supported inclusive service delivery, such as the creation of flexible spaces for community use and digital engagement.

The relocation and refurbishment of facilities at Thurcroft and Swinton demonstrate the Council's commitment to maintaining high-quality, accessible services in areas of need, ensuring that no community is left behind.

Libraries are for everyone and the service is committed to ensuring that Rotherham libraries are inclusive and engaging with all sectors of the community, including people with protected characteristics. The priority is to ensure that all residents are able to enjoy the benefits of Rotherham's Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs. More groups and partner organisations are using the local community library as a valuable local base for their activities.

The priorities of the service are aligned to the wider Culture, Sport and Tourism (CST) service and as such, Libraries contribute to the cultural strategy outcomes, whereby a programme of

cultural and artistic activities and events will be delivered to provide everyone with the opportunity to enjoy some form of creative experience.

Diversity and equality go hand in hand with the arts and culture, as they encourage individuals from every background and ability to realise their true potential therefore contributing to citizens artistic and cultural talent. The Council believes that libraries are a critical link between Rotherham communities and the wider cultural agenda. The location of libraries within the heart of communities affords the ideal platform to develop this piece of work.

Libraries occupy a position of trust within local communities, with a customer base which strongly values local proximity and the diverse offer which is available. The thriving neighbourhood strategy works hand in hand with a library service offer within a neighbourhood setting which allows the service to tailor community activities with the demographic of each specific community where it is located.

In addition, Libraries play an important role in supporting health and wellbeing. For vulnerable and inactive people, libraries can assist to re-motivate individuals to go outside and walk to their local library, giving purpose to their 'daily exercise'. Reading has been proven to be beneficial to mental health, and libraries have been developing work in this field, recognising that, particularly for people with low-level mental health issues (depression and anxiety), libraries offer a source of solace, respite and self-help. For this latter group, safe engagement with the physical world is an important part of reducing social isolation.

In considering how the service can better exercise the Public Sector Equality Duty it is important to consider this in relation to staff, customers, the complete library offer and the library buildings. The way in which libraries can incorporate this is as follows;

**Staff:** We seek to make staff and volunteers broadly representative of the community we serve. This may involve changes to current processes, and the way in which staff are recruited will be reviewed to make it more inclusive of those with protected characteristics. All staff will be encouraged to act as allies and advocates, supporting equality as a core principle of our service.

**Customers:** The Council's Customer Access Strategy sets out how we will meet customer needs and demands by using resources effectively and making services accessible to all, regardless of circumstances. It explains how we will strengthen customer relationships, improve experiences, and increase satisfaction by working closely with customers to understand and respond to their needs. Libraries will seek to engage people who are currently non-users, particularly those with protected characteristics. The service has identified under-representation among males, young adults, and individuals from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and will seek to address this over the lifetime of the strategy. In addition, the service recognises the importance of engaging other groups who may face barriers, including disabled individuals, older adults, young people, low-income households, people with mobility challenges or caring responsibilities, and those experiencing mental health issues or social isolation. This commitment is reinforced by the Council's Digital Strategy, which focuses on improving customer experience through inclusive digital services and ensuring that libraries remain accessible to all, including those at risk of digital exclusion. Together, these strategies aim to remove barriers, promote equality of opportunity, and deliver a library service that reflects the diversity of Rotherham's communities.

**The Offer:** Libraries will ensure that the book stock, resources and activity programmes are inclusive and diverse, and that we include books written by people with protected characteristics. It is important that books and other resources are available in diverse formats to address sensory impairments or language barriers. It is also important to focus efforts on underrepresented groups within the service to understand their needs and embrace their requirements to ensure libraries are attractive to everyone. Libraries will work over the new five-year strategy to ensure that artists, partners and organisations that we collaborate with are diverse and committed to widening and diversifying engagement. Targeted events, projects and activities will be co-designed in collaboration with the very people we are seeking to work with.

**Library Buildings:** Library buildings will continue to play a vital role in delivering an inclusive and accessible service. The new strategy will focus on ensuring spaces are safe, welcoming, and physically accessible for all users, including those with disabilities, older adults, families, and individuals with caring responsibilities. Recent capital investment has supported improvements such as modernised interiors, enhanced ICT infrastructure, and flexible spaces for community use and digital engagement. These upgrades help create environments that promote equality, cultural participation, and social connection within local communities.

Libraries will use their position within neighbourhoods to deliver activities that empower communities, including events such as Fun Palaces, which encourage people to create with, by, and for themselves. The service will help develop local networks by linking individuals and organisations, encouraging staff and partners to co-create with local people, and supporting grassroots groups to showcase their value. Working in tandem with Fun Palaces and other arts organisations, libraries will shine a light on existing creative skills and activities, connecting people and organisations to collaborate for positive change. Libraries will also work with other Council services and community and voluntary sector partners to harness local strengths and assets, including individuals' abilities, ensuring that Rotherham libraries remain central to community life.

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

The service holds data on existing library users from the Library Management System covering 2021/2022 to 2024/2025. This data is collated monthly for all sites and enables comparison against the overall Rotherham population to assess representation of people with protected characteristics. Combined with insights from the local needs assessment and consultation, this analysis will help identify gaps and under-represented groups, informing targeted actions within the new Library Strategy to improve equality of access and engagement.

#### **Key trends identified from current data (2024/25):**

- **Age:**  
The 41–65 age group accounts for 24.15% of registered users and 15.77% of active borrowers, making it the largest registered segment. However, children aged 4–11 represent 18.03% of registered users but dominate active borrowing at 39.15%, indicating strong engagement among younger users.
- **Gender:**  
Female users make up 56.21% of registered users and 58.87% of active borrowers, while males represent 37.99% registered and 33.03% active, highlighting a gender imbalance in usage.

- **Ethnicity:**  
White British users remain the largest group at 60.05% registered and 60.3% active. Representation among Asian British (4.66%), Black British (1.97%), and other ethnic groups is significantly lower. Notably, 28.28% of active users declined to state ethnicity, limiting understanding of diversity.
- **Disability:**  
Only 3.44% of registered users and 3.24% of active borrowers self-declare as disabled, while 39.4% declined to answer, creating a substantial gap in understanding and potential underrepresentation.

### **Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?**

Analysis shows under-representation among BAME individuals, young people aged 12–25, males, and those who self-declare as disabled. While libraries engage well with females, children aged 4–11, and older adults (65+), further work is needed to widen access and diversify the customer base.

Current data provides insight into age, sex, disability, and ethnicity. However, there are areas where our understanding is more limited, including:

- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Faith
- Civil partnerships and marriage
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Certain socio-economic factors (e.g., parents, carers, looked-after children, unemployed individuals, people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic abuse, and those experiencing homelessness)

The new strategy will seek to improve awareness of these groups through engagement and partnership working, ensuring that future service planning considers the needs of all communities.

As part of the new Library Strategy, Rotherham Libraries will develop and deliver a robust action plan to increase understanding of these issues and address under-representation in both service usage and workforce diversity. This will include working with other Council departments (e.g., Children's Services, Adult Social Care) and voluntary sector partners to strengthen engagement and align with wider strategic priorities.

### **Planned Engagement and Needs Assessment**

To inform the development of the new Library Strategy and service delivery model for Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs, a comprehensive programme of engagement, analysis, and local needs assessment will be undertaken:

- **February – July 2026 – Public Consultation (Phase 1):**  
Borough-wide consultation to gather insights on how residents use library services and what matters most to them for the future. This phase will explore satisfaction levels, emerging needs, modernisation priorities, opening hours, self-access options, volunteering opportunities, co-location possibilities, and aspirations for the new Town



<p>Centre Library. Engagement will include current users, non-users, staff, Trade Unions, and other stakeholders, ensuring diverse voices are heard. A local needs assessment will also be carried out during this phase to identify gaps in provision and ensure the strategy reflects community priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>August – October 2026 – Analysis and Draft Strategy Development:</b> Analyse consultation feedback and local needs assessment findings to draft the new Library Strategy. Test and refine the draft with stakeholders and notify the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) of any potential changes to service delivery.</li> <li>• <b>November 2026 – Cabinet Report (Phase 2 Engagement Approval):</b> Present the draft Library Strategy and proposed service delivery model to Cabinet for approval to proceed to a second phase of engagement.</li> <li>• <b>November 2026 – February 2027 – Public Consultation (Phase 2):</b> Conduct a second phase of engagement on the draft strategy and proposed final service offer. Analyse feedback and update the Equality Impact Assessment accordingly.</li> <li>• <b>March 2027 – Finalisation:</b> Produce an engagement analysis report, finalise the Library Strategy, revised service offer, and associated budget implications. Continue engagement with staff and Trade Unions on the revised service structure.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?</b></p> <p>Following the launch of the previous Library Strategy, an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) Action Plan was implemented to monitor engagement with groups identified as least engaged, including men, disabled people, young people, and individuals from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.</p> <p>This approach will continue and be strengthened under the revised Library Strategy 2027–2032. Monitoring will include refreshed community engagement and targeted actions to reach groups who may be less visible or more at risk of exclusion.</p> <p>To ensure the impact of the new strategy is assessed effectively, existing quarterly monitoring arrangements will be enhanced. Current reporting against corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be broken down by protected characteristics to provide a clearer picture of equality outcomes.</p> <p>Additional analysis will be undertaken to identify trends and gaps in representation. The EIA Action Plan will be integrated into the wider Library Strategy Action Plan, with progress reviewed regularly throughout the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The service will work closely with the Council’s Performance Team to ensure robust monitoring and reporting, enabling timely interventions where inequalities are identified.</p>	
<p><b>Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)</b></p>	<p>Formal engagement has not yet taken place, this is scheduled to begin in February 2026</p>

<b>Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)</b>	Formal engagement has not yet taken place, this is scheduled to begin in February 2026.
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#### 4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

##### **How do you think the Policy/Service meets 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. Rotherham also includes Carers as a specific group. Other areas to note are Financial Inclusion, Fuel Poverty, and other social economic factors. This list is not exhaustive.

The Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Strategy is intended to fulfil the statutory requirement to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service” for all who want to use it. It presents the following as vital to our service offer:

- **Libraries Connected nationally accepted Universal Offers:** Culture & Creativity, Health and Wellbeing, Information & Digital and Reading,
- **Future Libraries Project** (CILIP & Arts Council England, 2024)

This initiative includes two key components:

- Come Rain or Shine: Preparing Public Libraries for the Future in an Age of Uncertainty – a strategic foresight report exploring challenges and opportunities for libraries up to 2040.
- Future Libraries Toolkit – a practical framework for libraries to assess their community context and plan resilient, adaptive services.

The project builds on the original *Envisioning the Library of the Future* priorities and updates them with a futures literacy approach. Key themes include:

- Strategic resilience and adaptability
- Community engagement and co-production
- Digital transformation and horizon scanning
- Skills development and leadership capacity

The Service provides a hub at the heart of the local community and for those areas without access to a local building, there is a mobile and home delivery service.

The stock policy aims to provide a broad range of material in a variety of formats: material in print (hardback and paperbacks, newspapers and magazines) audio visual and electronic formats. The service may focus on particular needs and demands when setting annual priorities, so it is therefore possible to find the same title in ordinary print, large print, spoken word, downloadable spoken word and e- book.

Overall 9% of residents in Rotherham Borough describe themselves as from a non-white UK population. 2.2% of the population in Rotherham, 2,562 people, report that they cannot speak English well or at all. The library service ensures that materials in a variety of community languages are available, particularly within the catchment areas of the Central library at Riverside and Mowbray Gardens library and access to online content is free of charge.

Every library offers free Wi-Fi access to the internet and all libraries have computers available free of charge to library members.

The service has invested in online resources including a wide selection of e-books, e-magazines and downloadable spoken word titles. The service participates in a co-operative partnership with a number of other library authorities which has significantly increased the number of e-book titles available to our borrowers at no extra cost to the service.

### **Protected characteristics and the impact of the Library Strategy**

#### **1. Age**

Libraries offer materials in multiple formats (e.g. large print, spoken word), which supports older adults and those with age-related impairments. Youth engagement involves the inclusion of Culture & Creativity and Reading offers which can support early literacy and creative development for children and young people.

#### **2. Disability**

The availability of large print, spoken word, downloadable formats, and home delivery services directly supports individuals with visual impairments, mobility challenges, or other disabilities. Digital Inclusion is evidenced by offering free Wi-Fi and computer access to help bridge the digital divide for disabled users who may lack access at home.

#### **3. Race and Ethnicity**

Language Support is delivered by the provision of materials in community languages and targeted support in areas like Riverside and Mowbray Gardens helps address the needs of non-English speakers (2.2% of the population). Cultural representation is considered across all areas of service delivery. The stock policy and Universal Offers can be tailored to reflect diverse cultural backgrounds, promoting inclusion.

#### **4. Religion or Belief**

While not explicitly addressed, inclusive stock policies will ensure representation of various religious texts and culturally relevant materials.

#### **5. Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment**

While not directly referenced, the strategy's emphasis on co-production and community engagement offers opportunities to include LGBTQ+ voices and ensure safe, welcoming spaces. Digital and Reading offers will be curated to include diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, promoting visibility and understanding.

#### **6. Pregnancy and Maternity**

Home delivery and mobile services can benefit new parents or those with limited mobility due to pregnancy. Rotherham Libraries deliver family-oriented programming, hosting early years activities weekly, which align with health and wellbeing goals.

## Appendix 5

## 7. Marriage and Civil Partnership

No direct mention, but inclusive programming and resources will support relationship wellbeing and family life.

## Strategic Strengths

- **Resilience and Adaptability:** The Future Libraries Toolkit encourages libraries to respond to evolving community needs, which is essential for equity.
- **Community Engagement:** Co-production ensures that services are shaped by diverse voices, including those with protected characteristics.
- **Digital Transformation:** Expanding online resources supports accessibility and inclusion, especially for those facing barriers to physical access.

## Recommendations

- **Equality Monitoring:** Collect and analyse usage data by protected characteristics to identify gaps and improve targeting.
- **Inclusive Co-Production:** Ensure engagement activities actively include underrepresented groups.
- **Staff Training:** Continue developing staff awareness of equality, diversity, and inclusion to support respectful and informed service delivery.

This section will be reviewed once engagement has been undertaken and proposals are developed.

**Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups?**

As highlighted above, the groups identified through the equality analysis highlights areas where Rotherham libraries can improve in terms of engagement with these sectors of protected characteristics. Whilst there may be obvious barriers of engagement such as accessibility to buildings which will be covered as part of the consultation and engagement, it is important for the Library service moving forward to acknowledge these priority areas and embark upon a revised EIA action plan to address these, which will include working with voluntary organisations, community groups, charities and public health. Through this approach we will be able to ensure that we are directly targeting those that are unrepresented within Rotherham libraries. By setting out a revised EIA action plan it will allow us to identify any problems or barriers these groups face which prevents being an active user of Rotherham libraries.

**Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers?**

These are yet to be determined, there needs to be more work on ensuring the service offer is appropriate and accessible for minorities within the overall population but the core service offer ensures all sectors are addressed. This will be done as an ongoing piece of work as the new Strategy is drafted to ensure that the service offer within each community promotes community cohesion and has a positive impact on the lives of those accessing the service.

## Appendix 5

As part of the library strategy Rotherham libraries will seek to:

- Commit to widening access that the library service provides such as vehicle-based services, mainly to older people who might otherwise be unable to get to a library.
- Adapt the service to the changes of technology to meet the needs of the people of Rotherham including those with protected characteristics.
- Focus on children from lower-income families and increase social isolation and loneliness across all ages.
- Play a vital role in reaching out to all areas of the community in the Borough regardless of age, gender or social and economic background.
- Support in reducing social isolation and maintaining good mental health, using the Five Ways to Wellbeing as a framework for activities, working closely in line with the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2025-2030), which focuses on improving children's and young people's lives, promoting good physical and mental health for all residents, and reducing the impact of negative environmental factors and also supporting Adult Social Care and Housing in providing safe, trusted community-based places for service users and increasing opportunities for independent living
- Libraries will be easily accessible, offering ease of access for people with disabilities. They will be well used, with up-to-date facilities and be responsive to changing local needs, using technology and resources effectively and supporting communities to access this
- Encourage applications from those with protected characteristics for volunteer roles, apprenticeships and library posts.

**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)

Rotherham libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs will undertake a thorough analysis of community consultation and engagement results which will enable the service to implement solutions with the resources available. The consultation will allow the service to refresh the EIA action plan and detail the steps we will take in order to improve engagement with those sectors highlighted following the report. The service is keen to work closely with other areas within the Council to ensure that community relations are at the forefront of the service offer moving forward, and as such, we will endeavour to cross cut with other service strategies.

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

<b>Title of analysis: Library Strategy renewal 2027-2032</b>
<b>Directorate and service area: Culture, Sport and Tourism – Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs</b>
<b>Lead Manager: Zoe Oxley</b>
<div style="background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;"><b>Summary of findings:</b></div> <p>Current data shows strong engagement among children aged 4–11 and females, but under-representation among males, young people aged 12–25, disabled individuals, and Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. Significant gaps remain in understanding other protected characteristics, including sexual orientation, gender reassignment, faith, pregnancy and maternity, and socio-economic factors such as carers, low-income households, and those experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>The new strategy will embed equality and inclusion by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively engaging underrepresented groups through consultation and co-production.</li> <li>Ensuring library spaces are safe, welcoming, and physically accessible.</li> <li>Expanding digital access and literacy support to reduce barriers for those at risk of digital exclusion.</li> <li>Delivering diverse stock and programming that reflects the voices and interests of all communities.</li> </ul> <p>Monitoring arrangements will be strengthened by breaking down performance data by protected characteristics and integrating the EIA Action Plan into the wider Library Strategy Action Plan. Engagement phases in 2026–2027, combined with a local needs assessment, will inform targeted actions to address gaps and improve representation.</p>

The strategy aims to:

- Widen access and diversify the customer base.
- Support health and wellbeing, education, and employability.
- Promote cultural participation and community cohesion.
- Ensure resilience and adaptability through innovation and partnership working.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Public Consultation to be completed	A, D, S, GR, RE, RoB, SO, PM, CPM, C and O	February 2026 – February 2026
Library strategy renewed	A, D, S, GR, RE, RoB, SO, PM, CPM, C and O.	April 2027
Local Risk Assessment to be completed	A, D, S, GR, RE, RoB, SO, PM, CPM, C and O	July 2026

\*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
Polly Hamilton	Assistant Director – Culture, Sport and Tourism	29/10/25

7. Publishing	
<p>The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.</p> <p>If this Equality Analysis relates to a <b>Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision</b> a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.</p> <p>A copy should also be sent to <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a> For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.</p>	
<b>Date Equality Analysis completed</b>	28/10/25
<b>Report title and date</b>	Review of the 2021 - 2026 Library Strategy and proposal to undertake consultation for the 2027- 2032 library strategy/future service delivery model. 15/12/25
<b>Date report sent for publication</b>	
<b>Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement</b> <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a>	28/10/25



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 the Borough 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?	Unknown	Additional activities within library buildings have the potential to generate the requirement to open facilities for longer hours	The impact will be minimal as many of the buildings utilised already host other activities and are open to the public up to 7 days a week, however, there may be circumstances where increasing the opening hours is required ad hoc	Extra care to be taken to ensure buildings are only heated and lit for the times specifically required for delivery of services and additional activities/events.	Monitor timings heating and lighting is utilised.
Emissions from transport?	Unknown	Additional activities and events delivered within communities have the potential to generate increased traffic from those wishing to attend. Staffing numbers may also increase at specific times to support delivery so travel may increase.	The impact will be minimal as we only envisage a small number of additional vehicles per week would be used to attend increased activities or events	Deliver activities within a local area only. Promote active travel measures such as cycling and walking to activities and car sharing where there is a requirement to drive to the session.	Potential to monitor the number of cars used to transport staff where additional cover is needed. Also to monitor the method of transport service users adopt such as walking, cycling or public transport.
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	None	Additional activities and events delivered within communities have the potential to generate increased waste where crafting items and refreshments are used.	The impact will be minimal as we do not host large scale events and those that are delivered as additional will be attended by small/average numbers.	Use recyclable materials where possible and avoid single use plastics across all areas of service delivery.	Potential to monitor the materials used to deliver activities and events and the materials used where refreshments are made available.

Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	None	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Emissions from construction and/or development?	None	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

It is envisaged that the Library Strategy renewal will have little to no impact on carbon emissions for the Council and the town. There are some measures identified that will potentially mitigate against increased emissions, but this is difficult to quantify with only minimal monitoring measures in place.

Additional activities and events within Libraries across the borough have the potential to generate the requirement to open facilities for longer hours- Ensure utilised buildings (if appropriate) are heated and lit for the appropriate times of the activities.

Additional activities also have the potential to generate increased traffic from those wishing to attend and additional staffing if needed - Encouragement of participants to travel to activities by active travel methods. There will be minimal climate impact.

Will the proposal affect Council services' resilience to climate change, or the capacity of people living in the Borough to adapt to climate change?

The strategy supports climate adaptation through community-focused initiatives that build resilience, which includes the following:

- Libraries offer warm or cool, safe spaces during crises (e.g., cost-of-living, pandemic, heatwaves, cold winters), which is vital during extreme weather events or energy shortages.
- Integration with health and wellbeing services helps vulnerable populations adapt to changing social and environmental conditions.
- Creation of green spaces and sensory gardens improving community and environmental resilience.
- Autism-friendly spaces and sensory equipment support diverse needs, while flexible building use (e.g., community kitchens, meeting rooms) enhances adaptability.
- Increased volunteering and community-led events foster local ownership and social cohesion—key elements of climate resilience.
- Training in digital and financial literacy equips residents with tools to navigate climate-related challenges, such as accessing online services or managing energy costs.

Provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

#### 1. Carbon Emissions and Environmental Sustainability

While the briefing does not explicitly quantify carbon emissions reductions, several initiatives contribute to lowering environmental impact and promoting sustainable practices:

- **Refurbishment and Co-location of Libraries:**
  - Over £1 million invested in refurbishing library buildings, improving energy efficiency through modern décor, furniture, and digital infrastructure.
  - Co-location with other services (e.g., Youth Services, Early Help) reduces the need for multiple buildings, potentially lowering the Council's carbon footprint.
- **Digital Access and Inclusion:**
  - Expansion of Open+ technology and self-service kiosks reduces the need for staff travel and physical resources.
  - Growth in digital membership and use of e-resources (eBooks, eMagazines) reduces paper consumption and physical borrowing, contributing to lower emissions.
- **Outdoor Engagement and Green Spaces:**
  - Creation of reading gardens and use of parks and green spaces for events promotes nature-based engagement and supports mental wellbeing.

- These initiatives align with climate adaptation goals by encouraging use of outdoor spaces and fostering community resilience.

## 2. Climate Change Adaptation and Community Resilience

The strategy supports climate adaptation through community-focused initiatives that build resilience:

- **Libraries as Community Hubs:**
  - Libraries offer warm, safe spaces during crises (e.g., cost-of-living, pandemic), which is vital during extreme weather events or energy shortages.
  - Integration with health and wellbeing services helps vulnerable populations adapt to changing social and environmental conditions.
  - Creation of green spaces and sensory gardens improving community resilience as detailed above.
- **Inclusive and Accessible Infrastructure:**
  - Autism-friendly spaces and sensory equipment support diverse needs, while flexible building use (e.g., community kitchens, meeting rooms) enhances adaptability.
- **Volunteering and Outreach:**
  - Increased volunteering and community-led events foster local ownership and social cohesion—key elements of climate resilience.
- **Digital Literacy and Skills Development:**
  - Training in digital and financial literacy equips residents with tools to navigate climate-related challenges, such as accessing online services or managing energy costs.

## Forward-Looking Considerations

The proposed 2027–2032 Library Strategy consultation will explore:

- **Modernisation and Investment Priorities:** Including potential for expanded self-access technology, which could further reduce operational emissions.
- **Libraries as Flagship Cultural and Learning Hubs:** With the new Town Centre Library potentially serving as a model for sustainable design and community engagement.
- **Widening Access and Inclusion:** Ensuring that climate adaptation efforts reach underrepresented groups.

## Supporting information:

Climate Impact Assessment Author

Gina Szumski  
Operational Manager  
Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs  
Regeneration and Environment

Please outline any research, data or information used to complete this Climate Impact Assessment.	<i>Not applicable</i>
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.	<i>Not applicable</i>
Validation	Tracking Reference: CIA533 Louise Preston Climate Change Manager

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 15 December 2025

**Report Title**

Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy

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

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

**Report Author(s)**

Name, Simeon Leach

[simeon.leach@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:simeon.leach@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-wide

**Report Summary**

The current Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy was adopted in 2019. Since the adoption of the Strategy the social, economic and policy contexts have changed significantly, including changes in the work, health and skills landscape following the pandemic, changes in Government policy, and the development of a new South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.

Reflecting these changes, a proposed new Employment and Skills Strategy, covering the period 2026-31, has been produced for the Rotherham Together Partnership.

The new Strategy will contribute to the delivery of the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy but also identifies the key challenges and priorities that are specific to Rotherham and proposes a new focus for the co-ordination of activity in Rotherham.

**Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Endorses the formal adoption of the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31.

2. Notes that the Rotherham Employment and Skills Board is tasked with overseeing the delivery and monitoring of the Strategy and with reporting on progress to Cabinet and the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) on an annual basis.

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Draft Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31  
Appendix 2 Part A – Initial Equality Screening Assessment  
Appendix 3 Part B – Equality Analysis Form  
Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

### **Background Papers**

[Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2019-25](#)

[South Yorkshire Skills Strategy 2024](#)

[Get Britain Working White Paper, November 2024](#)

[Data dashboard](#)

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

None

### **Council Approval Required**

No

### **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No



## **Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Rotherham's current Employment and Skills Strategy is for the period 2019-25. The social, economic and policy contexts have changed significantly during that period. The post-pandemic period saw changes in hybrid working, increased awareness of mental health, and rising levels of economic inactivity. Technological changes such as artificial intelligence and increasing automation, together with demographic shifts and global instability, have driven changes in the wider economy and in the outlook for employment and skills.
- 1.2 In response, the Government has proposed national policy initiatives including Skills England, the Get Britain Working White Paper, and the Modern Industrial Strategy. Regionally, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) has developed a new Skills Strategy, along with the Pathways to Work programme which the Council is supporting and implementing to change the employment support system so that it better supports people back into work.
- 1.3 To respond to these changes, this report proposes a new Employment and Skills Strategy for Rotherham covering the period 2026-31 (included at Appendix 1). This work is underpinned by a detailed data analysis setting out the current baseline for employment and skills in Rotherham.

### **2. Key Issues**

#### **Development of the Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31**

- 2.1 The Strategy is founded on the production of a new Data Dashboard which provides key metrics for Rotherham. Based on the data and evidence, an analysis was produced describing the implications for Rotherham and that in turn informs the case for intervention.
- 2.2 A review of policies, strategies and documents for Employment and Skills was undertaken to inform the development of the Strategy. In particular, the Strategy aims to align with the objectives and funding coming through the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and therefore the new Strategy demonstrates how Rotherham will contribute to the delivery of the stated missions in the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.
- 2.3 The Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy contains three Missions which respond to the local priorities emerging from the analysis and reflect Rotherham's particular opportunities and challenges. There are key roles to be played by a range of partners to address these missions, particularly for employers who have a central role to play not only as the beneficiaries of a skilled workforce but as active investors in the development of their employees.

### **Mission 1 – Supporting people into work**

Rotherham partners will work together to create more opportunities for good work and support more residents to participate in the labour market, so people can prosper and realise their potential. This mission focuses on addressing disparities in the labour market to ensure that residents in all communities have the opportunities and support they need to progress *towards* work, *into* work and remain *within* work.

### **Mission 2 – Improving core skills for employment**

Together, Rotherham supports residents to access lifelong learning opportunities and advance within their chosen careers through equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need to enter and progress in work. This mission seeks to ensure that everyone can access the education, training and competencies they need to prosper and grow.

### **Mission 3 – Delivering a workforce for sustainable economic growth**

In partnership, Rotherham is committed to developing, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to create a thriving, inclusive economy, enabling Rotherham's employers to effectively compete and grow. This mission seeks to ensure that Rotherham's workforce has the skills they need to respond to the needs of a changing economy and seize opportunities as they arise, whilst also responding to the needs of businesses.

2.4 For each Mission, the Strategy highlights a range of existing and planned activities (including those relating to employment support which the Pathways to Work approach will bring together as a single system) to ensure that these continue to deliver for Rotherham residents and businesses. These include:

- The Economic Inactivity Trailblazer and the Health Growth Accelerator
- Adult Skills Fund
- Employment Solutions, Ambition and Advance
- Workwell, Working Win and Connect to Work
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA)  
Apprenticeship Hub Skills Bank funding to support employers with the cost of training their workforce

2.5 There has been a partnership approach to the development of the Strategy. The employment and skills landscape is very much cross-sector and the Council works, as a member of the Rotherham Together Partnership with a wide range of partners in a very complex system – schools and colleges, employers and businesses, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the voluntary sector and private sector providers. Further details of the engagement with partners is included in section 4 of this report.

2.6 Recognising the cross-cutting nature of interventions, the Strategy groups these together under three themes to describe a joined-up approach to delivery that ensures that each theme contributes to multiple missions, creating synergy and amplifying impact:

- Capacity Building and Coordination – laying the foundations for effective delivery through joined-up provision and employer engagement by strengthening systems, partnerships and processes.
- Developing Interventions and Strategy – focuses on designing targeted, evidence-based solutions informed by research and stakeholder insight.
- Delivering Bespoke Solutions –translates groundwork into tailored, high impact responses to local challenges and opportunities.

2.7 Interventions cover a broad range of activities but for each theme a priority action for Rotherham has been identified:

1. **Joined up and tailored provision for 16-24 year olds:** A programme of tailored provision for 16–24-year-olds targeting those most at risk of worklessness.
2. **A workforce investment plan for Rotherham:** Work with employers to produce workforce development plans, delivering sufficient numbers of suitably skilled and qualified staff and for them to provide quality, sustainable employment, with progression opportunities.
3. **A Work Ready Placement Programme:** Provide sector specific training to individuals and support placements directly with employers who have identified hard-to-fill vacancies

### 3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Do not endorse the proposed Strategy - . As a major partner in the Rotherham Together Partnership, the Council's endorsement is critical to the credibility and delivery of the strategy. The Council has taken a leading role within the Rotherham Together Partnership in consulting with a wide range of partners and facilitating a collaborative approach to assessing data, evidence and labour market trends, and to developing the strategy. A decision not to endorse it could undermine the shared commitment to its implementation and weaken the Council's leadership role in shaping the borough's future workforce. **This is not recommended.**
- 3.2 Endorsing the proposed Employment and Skills Strategy (2026–2031) would provide an up-to-date, evidence-based framework to guide collective action on employment and skills across Rotherham that links to the South Yorkshire Strategy and the main policies of the Get Britain Working White Paper. The strategy has been developed through a robust process, including detailed analysis of current and projected labour market data, and engagement with partners. It reflects shared priorities and sets out a clear direction for collaborative delivery. As a key partner in the Rotherham Together Partnership, the Council's endorsement would demonstrate leadership and commitment, helping to secure buy-in from other stakeholders and ensuring the strategy has the credibility and momentum needed for successful implementation. **This is the recommended option.**

#### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 A wide range of Stakeholders have been consulted during the development of the Strategy. These were through a number of workshops and through face-to-face meetings with certain major stakeholders, including:

- Members of the Rotherham Together Partnership
- Business Growth Board – including SYMCA, DWP and training providers including Rotherham and North Notts College (RNN)
- Employment and Skills Board
- Humanitarian and Community Group
- Voluntary and Community Sector through Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) and also consulting individual organisations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Residents through a number of workshops

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

5.1 Responsibility for implementation of the Strategy, and monitoring of its impact, sits with the Employment and Skills Board of the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP), with support from officers from Rotherham Council's Rotherham Investment Development Office (RiDO).

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

6.1 The cost of producing the Strategy is £25k. As part of the £3m SYMCA Feasibility Fund revenue grant allocation, an indicative £30k has been given to cover this cost, however an Officer Decision will need to be approved in order to allocate this formally, as per the grant's delegation.

6.2 The resource implications of the actions contained within the strategy have been categorised into low, medium and high value based on financial ranges; high value being greater than £500,000. Further work is needed to understand whether these estimates are accurate, whether there will be any costs attributable to the Council and how these will be funded. The implementation of any actions within the Strategy will be carried out within existing budgets, or they may be actions by other organisations at no cost to RMBC. Approval of this Strategy does not provide approval to spend on anything not already approved and budgeted for.

- 6.3 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

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

- 7.1 There is no statutory duty to produce an Employment and Skills strategy however to do so means that the Council is able to fulfil the requirements of the Get Britain Working White paper and other related policies as set out in the report and appended Policy. Further, the adoption of such a Strategy and the content of that Strategy is consistent with the Council's duties under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, such as providing data and insight into local employment market needs and skills gaps.
- 7.2 Other than the above, there are no direct legal implications arising from the adoption of the Strategy. Each project and workstream referred to within the Strategy will need appropriate legal considerations to be taken into account at the time of the relevant decision-making and implementation.

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

- 8.1 There are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

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

- 9.1 The Strategy will focus on assisting young people in accessing both training and employment. NEETs have been identified as a major priority, especially those at risk of falling into long term worklessness and the proposed activity will have a major beneficial impact on this group.

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

- 10.1 Both an Initial Equality Screening Assessment and a Full Equality Analysis have been completed and are attached as Appendices 2 and 3.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 A Carbon Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 4. Direct carbon impact is expected to be moderate due to increased building energy use and transport emissions associated with a growing economy. Impact is primarily indirect as a result of increasing levels of economic activity and as a result delivering broader economic growth. Managing and mitigating the carbon impact of growth is outside the scope of this Strategy and will be reliant on wider policies and measures in place.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 It is expected that a wide range of partners will be involved in the delivery of the Strategy. These include:

**Employers** - have a central role to play — not only as beneficiaries of a skilled workforce, but as active investors in the development of their employees. Their commitment to upskilling, training, and creating inclusive opportunities is essential to achieving the strategy's ambitions

**Rotherham and North Notts College (RNN)** – main training provider and recipient of Adult Skills Fund grant funding from SYMCA.

**Voluntary Action Rotherham** – the need for learning to be delivered in our communities, has been identified as essential, especially within the more deprived neighbourhoods.

**SYMCA** – oversee majority of the funding programmes, which will support delivery of the Strategy.

**Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce** – essential that the Strategy meets the requirements of local businesses with regard to the numbers, skills and work readiness of their potential workforces.

- 12.2 These partners are all members of the Employment and Skills Board, which will have responsibility for overseeing delivery of the Strategy.

### **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 That there is insufficient funding to support the activity needed to deliver the Strategy.

**Mitigation:** Work closely with SYMCA and other local authorities to access and maximise all available funding.

- 13.2 That the Strategy does not identify all relevant risks and priorities.

**Mitigation:** There has been wide consultation on producing the Strategy. Its impact will be monitored on a 6-monthly basis and a review of the strategy will be undertaken every 2 years.

### **14. Accountable Officers**

Simeon Leach, Economic Strategy and Partnerships Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	John Edwards	28/11/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	25/11/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	25/11/25

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# Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-2031



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## Foreword

### Foreword



I am proud to introduce the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-2031, a bold and forward-looking strategy that places our residents and businesses at the heart of a thriving, inclusive local economy.

This strategy is more than a document; it is a shared commitment to ensuring that every resident in Rotherham has the opportunity to develop the skills they need to succeed and to access good, meaningful work. It reflects our ambition to build a resilient workforce, support lifelong learning, and create a place where businesses can grow and invest with confidence.

We know that the world of work is changing rapidly. From the rise of digital technologies and green industries to the challenges of economic inactivity and health inequalities, Rotherham faces both opportunities and obstacles. This strategy responds to those realities with clarity and purpose. It sets out three missions that will guide our work: enabling more residents to progress into good work, investing in knowledge and skills, and securing a diverse and skilled workforce.

Crucially, this strategy has been shaped by the voices of our community; residents, employers, educators, and voluntary/community sector partners. It builds on the strengths of our borough, including our proud industrial heritage, our growing innovation district, and our vibrant communities. It also recognises the need for targeted, person-centred support to ensure no one is left behind.

Delivering this strategy will require strong partnerships, sustained investment and a shared determination to make a difference. I am confident that, together, we can realise the vision of a Rotherham where everyone has the opportunity to flourish.

Let us now move forward with purpose and unity to turn this vision into reality.

**Claire McGeough**

Chair of Rotherham Together Partnership, Employment and Skills Board  
Head of Employability and Project Search, Rotherham Opportunities College

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## Introduction

### Background and Approach

Rotherham's new Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-2031 sets out an ambitious vision for how employment and skills will help residents to prosper and businesses to succeed. The strategy provides a clear framework for partnership activity to improve employment and skills in Rotherham over the next five years.

The launch of the strategy coincides with a significant national focus on getting more people into good employment and increasing skills within the workforce. Funding and responsibility for the delivery of support are increasingly being devolved to local places which best understand the needs of their residents and employers.

It also aligns with Rotherham's place-based approach to creating an inclusive and thriving economy, which recognises the importance of investing in communities and strengthening place-based assets to create lasting economic and social impact. The new Employment and Skills Strategy has an important role to play in providing Rotherham's residents with an economy that delivers a better standard of living for all, a healthier life and a cohesive society.

### Development of the Employment and Skills Strategy

This is a strategy co-designed with residents, employers, education and skills providers and organisations who support residents to move into and remain in employment, particularly the voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations who support those residents in greatest need.

The strategy is based on a shared understanding of Rotherham's current employment and skills strengths and challenges and recognises the progress which has been made through the combined efforts of Rotherham partners and the delivery of a range of successful programmes, such as Supported Internships for young people with Education Health & Care Plans. The evidence which underpins the vision, missions and interventions set out in the strategy is summarised in this document and can be found in full here: <https://rotherhamemploymentandskills.co.uk/>

The strategy was shaped through consultations with key stakeholders, a workshop attended by members of the Employment and Skills Board and Business Growth Board, and inputs provided via a range of other groups and partnerships.

## The Strategic Context



Since the publication of Rotherham's Employment and Skills Strategy 2019-2025, the employment and skills landscape has undergone significant change. The pandemic, the rise of hybrid working, the increase in economic inactivity due to ill health and a new government with a focus on accelerating economic growth have all reshaped the context in which Rotherham's employment and skills priorities and challenges must be addressed.

The introduction of **Skills England** bringing together key partners to meet the skills needs for the next decade, the publication of the **Get Britain Working White Paper** to reform employment, health and skills support to tackle economic inactivity and support people into good work, and the development of a **Modern Industrial Strategy** to provide certainty and stability to encourage business investment in the high growth sectors that will drive the UK economy, all highlight the national focus being placed on employment and skills.

There is an increased commitment to supporting those currently not in work to find and maintain employment, especially those who are currently out of work because of ill health – recognising the role of good employment both in driving growth and in supporting improved health and wellbeing. As of September 2024, 44,100 residents are economically inactive in Rotherham, with 16,100 of these being inactive due to long-term sickness. This represents an increase of 5,700 in the economically inactive population, including 3,700 more due to long-term sickness, compared to two years earlier. The national changes to encourage more people back into the labour market will help to address local labour market challenges and barriers to work in Rotherham.

The Modern Industrial Strategy outlines eight growth sectors which have been identified as key drivers for boosting the UK economy and providing good employment, including advanced manufacturing and clean energy, where Rotherham has both existing and emerging strengths including the borough's strategic position at the heart of the **Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District (AMID)** and the **South Yorkshire Investment Zone**.

At a sub-regional level, **South Yorkshire's Plan for Good Growth** outlines the importance of ensuring that the region has a strong pipeline of talent to take up secure, high paid jobs and encourage greater investment. **South Yorkshire's Skills Strategy** provides the framework within which Rotherham's Employment and Skills Strategy will be delivered and prioritises moving those far from the labour market into or ready for work, raising attainment of core knowledge and skills, and increasing the supply of a high-skilled workforce. The Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy will inform, and be informed by, the local **Get Britain Working Plan for South Yorkshire**.



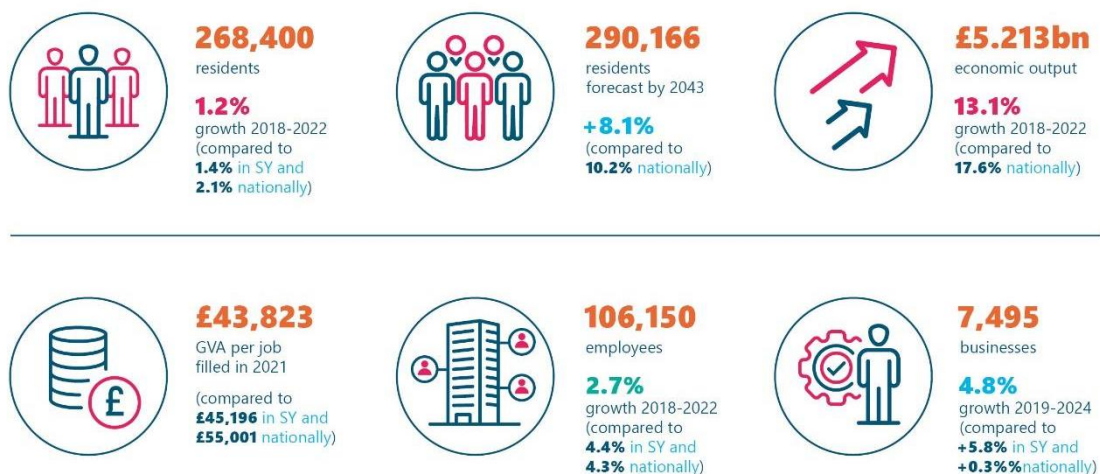
## Local Landscape and Drivers of Change

### Socio-Economic Context

Like many industrial towns, Rotherham has undergone significant economic changes over the past 50 years. The decline of traditional industries such as steel, coal, and manufacturing led to a loss of employment opportunities and economic output, and contributed to a rise in long-term economic inactivity, lower incomes and poorer health outcomes.

However, Rotherham's economy has since recovered, diversified, and grown. Rotherham is strategically located in South Yorkshire and plays a leading role in the growth of the region as a key player in the Don Valley Growth Corridor. The town has successfully attracted significant investment and is now home to global players like Rolls-Royce, McLaren and the UK Atomic Energy Authority. Key assets driving this growth include the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District (AMID) located within the borough.

### Rotherham Employment and Skills Context



Today, Rotherham is home to 268,400 residents (19.2% of the South Yorkshire regional population). Population growth has been slow, with only 1.2% growth between 2018-2022 relative to 5.9% nationally over the same period. The working age population is slightly under-represented at 61.2% of the total population, compared to 62.9% nationally. Attracting and retaining working age residents will provide a talent pool to fuel economic growth. Significant population growth is forecast in Rotherham, with 290,166 residents projected by 2043, an increase of 8.1% from the current position.

There are 106,150 employees in employment in Rotherham, with 74.1% being Rotherham residents. Employment has grown 2.7% over the past five years. This growth in employment opportunities is positive but lags behind the national rate of growth over the same period (4.3%), and the employment rate – at 69.5% – is considerably below the Government's long-term target of 80%. Large employment sectors in Rotherham include health, manufacturing, retail, business administration and support services, education, and construction.

<sup>1</sup> Estimated using origin-destination data from the Census 2021.

Employment opportunities in Rotherham are forecast to grow by 3% by 2033 (+3,645 jobs). Aligning skills with those sectors and occupations projected to grow will help to align need and opportunity.

There are 7,495 businesses in Rotherham and this number has grown by 4.8% since 2019. Business base density is low at 286 businesses per 10,000 residents, relative to 422 in England. Growing and diversifying the business base and securing investment will support growth and employment opportunities in the borough.

### Drivers of Change

The labour market in Rotherham is evolving, with new sectors emerging, and drivers and disruptors at play, changing the shape of skill requirements and new ways of working. These drivers include:

- **Technological change including AI and automation.** Technological change is transforming job roles and skill requirements. The demand for digital skills is increasing across all sectors and occupations and contributing to job displacement in those areas most exposed to the effects of automation. Digital exclusion is an increased risk to those lacking digital skills and access to digital tools.
- **Changing work practices.** Remote work, flexible work hours and hybrid working; growth in the 'gig economy' providing flexibility but more precarious conditions; reskilling and upskilling to meet changing market demands; and longer working lives require new, equitable and inclusive working practices to support access to talent.
- **Net Zero agenda.** The Net Zero agenda is driving the demand for green skills and new ways of working. Whilst new opportunities and markets are being created, there is a need to support a just transition in those industries that are more carbon intensive to mitigate the potential loss of jobs as the economy becomes greener.
- **Demographic change.** This includes an ageing population with many residents/workers moving into retirement, contributing to a tightening labour pool. In Rotherham, 20% of the population is aged 65 and over, a figure expected to rise to 23% in 2043. Additionally, 13% of the working age population is already economically inactive due to retirement, the highest proportion among comparator areas. Encouraging people to remain in work for longer requires inclusive and accessible work practices and improved support for people facing barriers.
- **Pandemic recovery.** Continued support for those affected by physical and mental health conditions, and young people whose education was disrupted.
- **Global instability and political change.** Changes in migration impact on the availability of talent, and changes to trade policy influence investment decisions, supply chain development, and the provision of employment opportunities.
- **Social Value** refers to the positive impact that a business has on its community. Rotherham's Social Value Policy states that suppliers must seek to raise living standards, support young people to find employment, strengthen the VCSE sector, showcase environmental sustainability and provide equal opportunities to people from disadvantaged communities.

### Major capital investments

Demand for employment and skills in Rotherham will be shaped by the investments being made in Rotherham's economy, place and communities. Major investments within the strategically important Don Valley Corridor will drive employment and skills needs in future years, including:



- 
- Continued development of **AMID**. This will build on the success of the **Advanced Manufacturing Park (AMP)** which is already home to leading global manufacturers including Boeing, McLaren, and Rolls-Royce, as well as further development of the **Templeborough corridor** which is a focus for industrial economic growth in Rotherham. AMID harnesses the world-leading research expertise within South Yorkshire's Universities and research organisations to attract inward investment, accelerate innovation and create high-value employment and training opportunities. It is a key part of **South Yorkshire's Investment Zone** which is expected to deliver 8,000 new jobs and attract £1.2bn in private investment by the end of the decade.
  - Further regeneration of **Rotherham town centre**, building on the success of the Forge Island leisure scheme and continuing the diversification away from retail. Strengthening the cultural and creative offer, including building on the opportunities created through Rotherham's role as the **Children's Capital of Culture 2025 (CCoC)** which is expected to bring approximately £14m of investment into the borough, will create new employment opportunities. Further town centre residential investment will also create jobs in the construction sector.
  - Major housing development at **Bassingthorpe**, as well as the development of business space and a new local centre and community services, will create significant opportunities within the construction sector, as well as jobs in the businesses that occupy the new commercial space.
  - The **Rotherham Gateway** scheme will provide space for new jobs and businesses, create a new living quarter offering high quality canal-side living, and will transform Rotherham's rail connectivity as well as strengthening the local tram / train network. The plans include the development of a new Innovation Campus alongside the mainline station, providing space for increased employment in high-quality jobs and giving Rotherham a new offer for inward investors and expanding local businesses.

## Strategic Framework

The strategic framework sets out the shared, long-term vision for employment and skills in Rotherham and the missions through which this will be achieved. It provides clarity for all partners around Rotherham's employment and skills priorities, ensuring resources and capacity are allocated where they can have the greatest impact.

### Our Vision

The Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy vision for 2026-2031 is:

*Rotherham has a thriving and inclusive economy, where residents and businesses are nurtured, inspired and empowered to flourish, prosper and progress to realise their potential.*

### Our Missions

The Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy Missions closely align with the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy Missions, whilst reflecting Rotherham's particular opportunities and challenges.

#### Mission 1 – Supporting people into work

Rotherham partners will work together to create more opportunities for good work and support more residents to participate in the labour market, so people can prosper and realise their potential. This mission focuses on addressing disparities in the labour market to ensure that residents in all communities have the opportunities and support they need to progress *towards* work, *into* work and remain *within* work.

#### Mission 2 –Improving core skills for employment

Together, Rotherham supports residents to access lifelong learning opportunities and advance within their chosen careers through equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need to enter and progress in work. This mission seeks to ensure that everyone can access the education, training and competencies they need to prosper and grow.

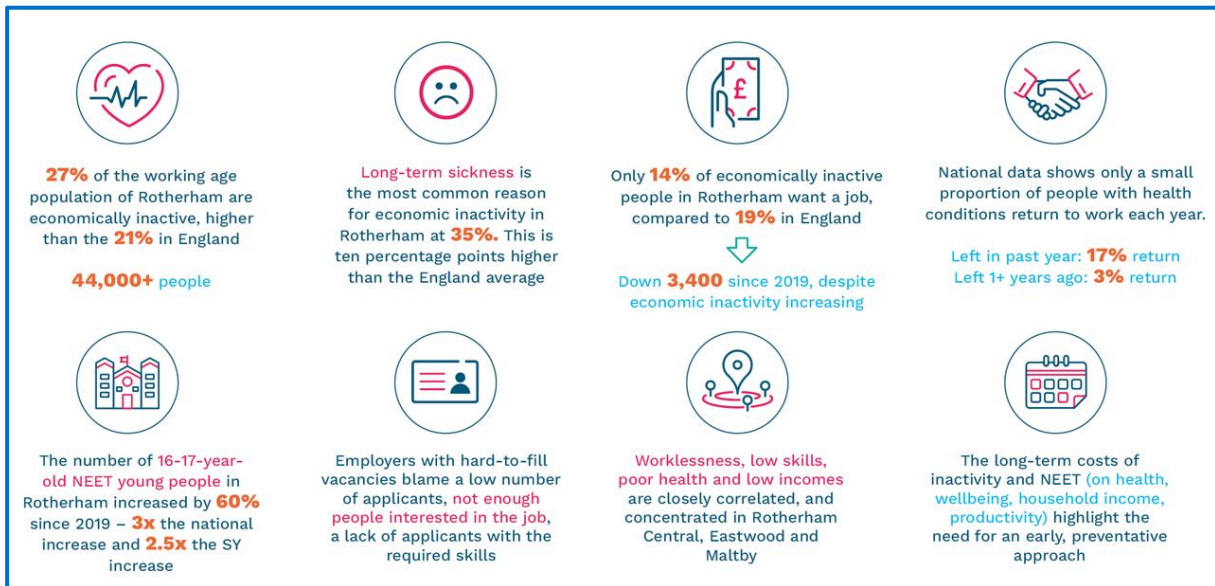
#### Mission 3 – Delivering a workforce for sustainable economic growth

In partnership, Rotherham is committed to developing, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to create a thriving, inclusive economy, enabling Rotherham's employers to effectively compete and grow. This mission seeks to ensure that Rotherham's workforce has the skills they need to respond to the needs of a changing economy and seize opportunities as they arise, whilst also responding to the needs of business.

## Mission 1: Supporting People into Work

Rotherham partners will work together to create more opportunities for good work and support more residents to participate in the labour market, to prosper and realise their potential.

### The Case for Change



A whole-system approach is needed to support Rotherham's residents to participate in the labour market, engaging with partners across government, health, education, and employers. Economic inactivity is a major policy priority, driven by concerns over both labour shortages in key sectors and rising numbers of people unable to work. This issue is highly complex, involving diverse groups with varied and overlapping barriers to work. The data tells us that:

- Unemployment (4.2%) and economic inactivity (27%) in Rotherham is higher than comparator areas<sup>2</sup>.
- Key contributors towards rising inactivity include long-term sickness (35%). Higher rates of inactivity are found amongst women, residents aged 50-64, and ethnic minorities.
- Barriers to work are numerous, including health (21% of Rotherham's population has a disability) and employment rates for disabled people are low (44%); skills (11% of the working age population have no qualifications); and transport (homeworking rates in Rotherham are low and over a third of commuters travel more than 10km to work, with long commutes posing a barrier to accessing job opportunities, particularly for those with transport challenges).
- 19% of children aged under 16 in Rotherham are living in absolute poverty and Rotherham performs poorly on childhood conditions for social mobility.

<sup>2</sup> Comparator areas include the South Yorkshire average, and a Statistical Neighbours average based on Dudley, Telford and Wrekin, Wakefield, Kirklees, Calderdale, Rotherham, Doncaster, Barnsley, St. Helens, Wigan, Tameside, Rochdale, Bury, Bolton, Gateshead and Darlington.

- There are 313 young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), accounting for 5% of the 16–17-year-old population—above all comparator areas. This has increased from 3% in 2019 (195 young people), when Rotherham performed relatively well—below comparator areas and in line with the national average. Males are more likely to be NEET than females.
- Employers in Rotherham report difficulties in filling vacancies, with 58% of vacancies identified as hard to fill, below comparator areas but slightly above the national average (57%). Causes include a low number of applicants generally, not enough people interested in the role, poor terms and conditions, and low number of applicants with the required skills.
- 35% of LSOAs in Rotherham fall within the 10% most deprived areas in England, with high levels of deprivation in the domains of employment (43%), education, skills and training (39%) and income (35%). There is a close relationship between areas with high levels of ill-health, deprivation, and economic inactivity.

This evidence highlights the need for person-centred, tailored, and integrated support to help Rotherham's residents to progress into positive destinations such as education, training and employment. Demand side interventions, working with employers to facilitate the provision of quality opportunities to enable residents to access 'good work' that is fairly rewarded and supports progression and work satisfaction, are required in tandem. Actions are required that will encourage economic activity, provide quality employment opportunities and improve life chances.

### Building on Existing and Planned Activity

The Rotherham partners work closely together to support people who are disadvantaged in the labour market and have had success in increasing access to employment for people with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities), adapting provision for young people who are NEET and integrating support for those who have health issues which limit their participation in the labour market. Significant additional investment is being made in this area through the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer (£10m allocation in year one) and the Health and Growth Accelerator (£8m investment in year one). This will provide a dedicated new service working with residents and employers to support people with health conditions and other barriers towards work and will be underpinned by a new "triage" system to make it quicker and easier to connect people to employment, health, and skills support.

This mission will build on existing and planned Pathways to Work activity in Rotherham supporting residents to progress towards and into work, including:

- RMBC's **Employment Solutions** team provide support for people who are unemployed through the Elevate programme, also providing support to economically inactive residents through the Pathways to Work Economic Inactivity Trailblazer, in collaboration with the VCS, focusing particularly on those residents who are socially excluded or experience barriers accessing employment or training. Employment Solutions provides support tailored to individual needs including employment and training support, and access to education, work experience and volunteering opportunities. Over 300 people have participated since 2020, with 66% going into work or training.

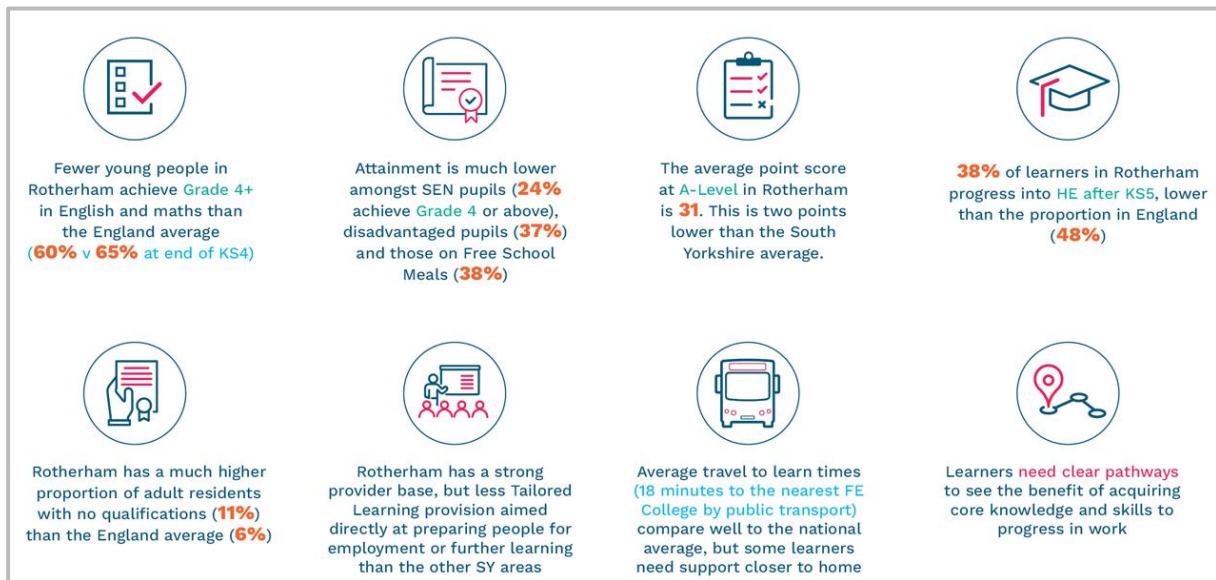
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- Alongside this, the **Connect to Work** programme commenced in 2025. This follows on from Working Win, which supported 6,500 people across South Yorkshire. The DWP-funded programme will support those who are furthest away from the job market, requiring more intensive support due to specific more complex barriers, such as long-term ill health or a disability. Delivery will follow both the Supported Employment Quality Framework and Individual Placement Support Models. This programme is expected to support 620 people in Rotherham to find suitable employment over five years.
  - Support focused on **young people** who are struggling in the labour market. This includes the **Ambition** project which supports young people to access employment, education or training, with half of these participants moving into the labour market. A traineeship programme linked to the **Children's Capital of Culture, Creative Skills**, provides young people with the opportunity to gain valuable, paid work experience in Rotherham resulting in increased employability and interpersonal skills. Seventy percent of economically inactive young people who engaged during the first cohort of delivery entered employment or training following the end of their traineeship. There is also tailored support for **young people leaving care** in Rotherham, including access to a Personal Advisor and a personalised Pathway Plan highlighting goals, plans and support needs.
  - There are many **community-based projects and programmes** providing support. **Open Arms Rotherham** enables those both in and out of the labour market to access provision regarding a variety of challenges including digital inclusion and job search support. It is expected that 400 people will engage in 1-2-1 support over the coming year and a further 2,200 residents will engage in at least one support session.

Existing projects and programmes have supported many Rotherham residents to take steps towards employment and connect employers to those facing disadvantage in the labour market. However, the additional investment which will be forthcoming through Pathways to Work is recognition of the continuing challenges which need to be addressed.

## Mission 2: Improving core skills for employment

In Rotherham, we will support residents to access lifelong learning opportunities and advance within their chosen careers through equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need to enter and progress in work. Investing in knowledge and skills will support social mobility, productivity and wellbeing.

### The Case for Change



Rotherham has a growing economy with major investment and regeneration activity underway, and planned, that will deliver opportunities which Rotherham's residents and businesses can access. To achieve this, we must align the current and future demand for skills with the supply of skills to support community wealth building and inclusive growth. The data tells us that:

- Education attainment in English and Maths (and more broadly at GCSE and A-Level) is low relative to the England average, and this can limit progression options.
- SEND pupil numbers are increasing in Rotherham and SEN pupils are less likely to attain grades 4+ in English and Maths GCSE, and more likely to be NEET compared to non-SEN pupils. Indicating a need to raise attainment at KS4 and KS5, including targeted support for disadvantaged and SEND pupils, to provide a platform for progression.
- 91% of KS4 leavers progress to sustained education, employment or apprenticeship destinations, broadly in line with the national average (93%). However, this decreases as the 16-18 cohort move through KS5, and the gap with comparator areas widens.
- The proportion of pupils leaving 16 to 18 education and progressing to higher education stands at 30%, eight percentage points below the England average. While Rotherham students are slightly more likely to take up apprenticeships (8%) than the national average (7%), overall progression to advanced qualifications—higher education or higher/degree-level apprenticeships—remains 8 percentage points below the national average.
- 11% of adults have no qualifications, significantly above the national average (6%).

- 36% of working age residents hold a Level 4+ qualification, but this is significantly below the national average (47%).
- Rotherham has a strong intermediate skills base, with 44% of working age residents holding L2 and L3 qualifications.

Brokering an effective relationship between the demand for skills and the supply of skills requires a responsive skills system that can equip residents with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

Raising awareness of further learning and employment options, alongside providing exposure to work through experience and encounters, can support progression to positive destinations. Research suggests that young people who have four or more employer encounters before leaving school are 86% less likely to become NEET<sup>3</sup>. Rotherham has a breadth of quality further education provision and a growing higher education offer. There is also a community-based learning offer that learners are accessing to build confidence, improve health and wellbeing and support children's learning. This provision provides a foundation upon which to build.

Actions are required that will provide pathways to positive destinations, secure basic and core skills, and deliver a responsive skills system which meets the needs of learners and employers and enable Rotherham to effectively compete and grow an inclusive economy.

### Building on Existing and Planned Activity

Rotherham has many good quality FE and skills providers who deliver a range of education, skills and training programmes at all qualification levels to young people and adults across the borough. Existing and planned activity underway in Rotherham supporting residents to acquire knowledge and skills will be built upon, including:

- **Core 16-19 and Further Education provision** – Rotherham is home to a range of further education and independent training providers that support both adults and young people to obtain new qualifications, designed in conjunction with local employers and providing a range of accredited qualifications to enable young people to get on in work or progress to higher education. Effort is being made to diversify provision to ensure that it caters to more diverse needs and continues to respond to demand. Over 13,500 Rotherham residents aged 19+ were enrolled on education and training (including community learning) in 2023/24.
- **Adult Skills Fund** – The Adult Skills Fund provides opportunities for adults to upskill and reskill, and from 2024/25, the primary aim of which is to support learners into employment and to progress to further learning. In Rotherham, a high proportion of tailored learning has focussed on engaging and / or building confidence, equipping people to support children's learning and health and wellbeing. In comparison to other parts of South Yorkshire, a relatively small proportion is focussed on improving essential skills or work-specific learning. Over £5m of Adult Skills Fund is available in Rotherham in 2025/26.
- A new **Core Skills** programme will build on the success of **Multiply** – a national programme which sought to increase the number of adults achieving a maths qualification, enabling them to move towards the labour market or progress in their career. 85% of Rotherham residents participating in the final year of Multiply support progressed to a longer course. The new Core Skills programme delivers community-based courses in areas of high economic inactivity, focussing on the essential skills needed for work, including Maths, English and digital competency.

<sup>3</sup> [Work visits result in fewer young 'Neets' - BBC News](#)

- Rotherham MBC also delivers the **Advance** programme which supports employees to upskill and gain new qualifications, allowing them to progress in their career or enter into a new role.

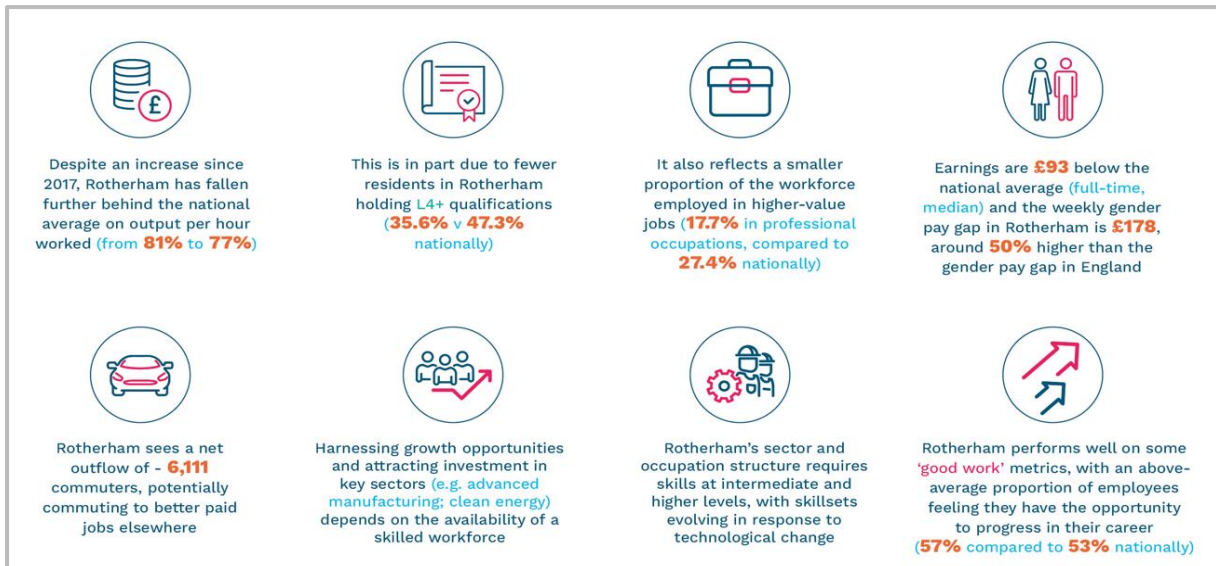
Whilst this existing provision equips many Rotherham residents with the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in work, the data highlights that there are still significant skills gaps compared to the national average, and there is an opportunity to more closely align education, skills and training provision with the needs of employers to allow a seamless transition from education into work.



## Mission 3: Delivering a workforce for sustainable economic growth

Rotherham needs to develop, attract and retain a skilled workforce to create a thriving inclusive economy and enable Rotherham's employers to effectively compete and grow.

### The Case for Change



Rotherham has a diverse and innovative economy, providing a significant contribution to growth for the regional and national economies, driven by sectoral strengths and major investment providing opportunities for future growth. Securing the benefits of this investment depends on Rotherham's ability to attract and retain a higher skilled workforce to the area, and strengthening the skills and employment offer available to residents and workers. The data tells us that:

- Rotherham has experienced sluggish growth in the working age population (+1% in the last five years) and the proportion of residents of working age is below average at 61%, compared to 63% nationally.
- There is an ageing workforce, which is contributing to the number of working people experiencing limiting health conditions. Encouraging people to work longer within supportive work environments can help to reduce the number of people leaving the workforce.
- Rotherham has a lower proportion of KS4 pupils becoming graduates relative to the national median (24% compared to 30%) but graduates who grew up in Rotherham are more likely to return to Rotherham, with 64% of graduates still living there after achieving their qualifications, well above the national median (55%).
- Rotherham has a below average proportion of workers in highly skilled occupations (39%) compared to 55% in England. In contrast, elementary and skilled trade occupations are over-represented relative to comparators. While some manual and skilled trades may be more resilient to automation than certain mid-level administrative and clerical roles, lower-skilled occupations involving routine, predictable tasks tend to be more easily automated. This underlines the need to support reskilling and upskilling to provide resilience to disruptors of change.

- Rotherham has a productivity gap, with output (GVA) per job filled below average (20% below England). Productivity levels have increased over the past five years (3%) but at a slower rate than the national growth rate (5%).
- Rotherham has an entrepreneurial and innovative economy; however, businesses need to be supported to survive, grow and diversify to open up opportunities for employment and drive the retention and attraction of talent.
- Employment is increasing in Rotherham, with a 3% uplift in employment over the past five years, in line with comparable areas. Health, manufacturing and retail are key employment sectors in Rotherham, with growing and specialised sectors including transport and storage, construction and motor trades. Rotherham provides a valuable contribution to regional sector strengths in technology, green energy, health, advanced manufacturing and creative industries.
- Major investments such as the AMID are expected to create 2,000 jobs and represents a major growth opportunity.

Developing targeted employment and skills interventions focused on the growth opportunities ahead of Rotherham will support inclusive economic growth. Actions are required that help to attract, retain and develop the talent pool needed to support and grow new and existing businesses and fuel economic growth; to realise the potential of the workforce by equipping them with the skills needed for current and future roles; and to ensure that growth opportunities are aligned with local talent to support an inclusive and sustainable economy.

### Building on Existing and Planned Activity

Existing and planned activity underway in Rotherham supporting the workforce will be built upon, including:

- **Apprenticeships** are a key mechanism for developing a skilled workforce in Rotherham, with 1,225 starts and 580 achievements in 2022/23. South Yorkshire's **Apprenticeship Hub** is supporting partners in Rotherham to widen access to apprenticeships amongst both residents and employers, by providing information, advice and guidance to apprentices, parents and employers, and helping smaller employers access apprenticeship levy funds to support their training activity.
- Since opening in 2018, **University Centre Rotherham** has worked closely with large employers such as the NHS, AESSEAL and Premier Foods to offer higher level qualifications and degrees. The University Centre has supported people into medium and high skilled work and scores above the national average on metrics such as teaching support, wellbeing and assessments.
- Employers can access support to upskill their workforce through the **South Yorkshire Skills Bank**. The Skills Bank provides funding to employers to support them to invest in training for their workforce. Over 5,000 learners have been supported since 2016, with the aim being to increase productivity in the sub-region.
- Rotherham's **strategic growth locations such as the Don Valley Corridor**, and the strategy for **inward investment** will generate demand for workers at all skills levels, but with a concentration on higher-level and technical skills. Securing the investment required to bring forward Rotherham's growth ambitions requires investment in talent retention and skills development, particularly in advanced manufacturing, clean energy and defence.

## Realising the Missions

The Employment and Skills Strategy is underpinned by the three interconnected missions, detailed above, that collectively aim to improve employment outcomes, enhance workforce capabilities, and drive economic growth.

There are multiple activities and interventions already underway, and planned, in Rotherham that will contribute to realising our missions. These interventions have been grouped under three overarching themes to describe a structured and coherent approach to delivery. This thematic grouping ensures that actions are logically connected, mutually reinforcing, and collectively address systemic challenges. Each theme represents a critical layer of the strategy:

The interventions are grouped into three themes:

- Capacity Building and Coordination – laying the foundations for effective delivery through joined-up provision and employer engagement by strengthening systems, partnerships and processes.
- Developing Interventions and Strategy – focuses on designing targeted, evidence-based solutions informed by research and stakeholder insight.
- Delivering Bespoke Solutions – translates groundwork into tailored, high impact responses to local challenges and opportunities.

By structuring interventions in this way, the strategy recognises the complementarity, and cross cutting nature, of interventions and ensures that each theme contributes to multiple missions, creating synergy and amplifying impact.

## Monitoring Progress and Impact

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been identified for the Strategy, one under each mission. The KPIs and outcomes align closely with both Rotherham's Employment and Skills Strategy missions and the wider, regional Skills Strategy. Progress will be monitored against the following indicators:

Mission	Indicators
Supporting people into work	<p><b>Overarching KPI:</b> Increase the employment rate of working age residents</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the number of 16–18-year-old and 18–24-year-old residents categorised as NEET.</li> <li>• Reduce the number of residents economically inactive due to long-term sickness.</li> <li>• Narrow the disability employment gap.</li> <li>• Increase the number of individuals with SEND engaging with education and employment support interventions.</li> <li>• Increase the median weekly wage in Rotherham for both males and females.</li> <li>• Increase the number of Disability Confident employers in Rotherham.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase the number of businesses offering work placements to Rotherham residents</li> </ul>
Improving core skills for employment	<p><b>Overarching KPI:</b> Increase the proportion of residents holding qualifications at Level 2+ and Level 3+</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase the proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by age 19.</li> <li>● Increase the number of young people engaging with Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG).</li> <li>● Increase engagement with digital skills support provision, especially within neighbourhoods that experience the highest levels of digital poverty.</li> <li>● Increase the number of intermediate and advanced apprenticeships offered in Rotherham, providing opportunities for progression.</li> <li>● Increase the number of residents receiving job-related training in the past 13 weeks.</li> <li>● Narrow the gap with the national average with regard to the number of residents with no qualifications.</li> </ul>
Deliver a workforce for sustainable economic growth	<p><b>Overarching KPI:</b> Increase the number of employers who are able to recruit skilled workers they need in Rotherham</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase the percentage of the working-age population holding qualifications at Level 3+ and Level 4+.</li> <li>● Increase the number of apprenticeships, higher-level apprenticeships and apprenticeships within growth sectors offered within Rotherham.</li> <li>● Increase the number of employers collaborating with local providers to develop courses and shape provision.</li> <li>● Reduce the proportion of employers facing skills mismatches.</li> <li>● Increase median earnings in Rotherham</li> </ul>

Rotherham MBC will be responsible for the overall monitoring of progress made against each of the actions, missions, outcomes and KPIs, using data publicly available and supplied by partners and businesses. Regular monitoring of progress will be reported through the RTP's Boards, and an annual progress report will track where KPIs are being met and identify any areas where additional focus is required. The Implementation Plan will be revised annually in response to emerging priorities and focus areas.

The interventions are summarised below alongside identification of key actions. The actions were tested, refined and prioritised through two stakeholder workshops. A priority action has been identified under each intervention theme to highlight areas of additional focus and attention. Each action contributes to one or more of the three missions as illustrated by a short summary table.

The organisations that will be best placed to deliver each action are identified. A proposed lead partner is identified, but collaboration is key, with multiple partners having a valuable role to play in delivering the actions. Timescale has been categorised into **short (2026/2027)** and **medium (2027/2028)**. Longer-term actions (beyond 2028) are not in the scope of this Implementation Plan. Similarly, the resource implication for each action has been categorised as **low (under £100,000)**, **medium (between £100,000 and £499,000)** or **high (above £500,000)**.

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## Intervention Theme One – Capacity Building and Coordination

These actions will support capacity building and coordination of employment and skills activity in Rotherham, laying the foundations for delivery.

### Priority Action: (1.1) Joined Up and Tailored Provision for 16–24 Year Olds

This action will map current provision influencing employability and skills for 16–24-year-olds to inform an effective triage and guidance service across initiatives in Rotherham. It will facilitate personalised approaches to match young people to opportunities and requires close employer engagement and demand stimulation to provide opportunities.

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<b>1.1: Priority Action: Joined Up and Tailored Provision for 16–24-year-olds</b> Map current provision of employability and skills for 16–24-year-olds to inform an effective triage and guidance service across the various initiatives and provision in Rotherham  <b>Deliver a programme of personalised, tailored support for 16-24 year olds, focussing specifically on those young people who are NEET and identified as being at risk of falling into long-term worklessness..</b>	Ambition Children's Capital of Culture Creative Skills Rotherham Leaving Care Local Offer The Really NEET Project Pathways to Work	Rotherham MBC (PtW, Ambition) Education providers Jobcentre Plus South Yorkshire Careers Hub Children and Young People's Partnership Board	Short	Medium/High	Searchable provision directory / database Identification of gaps in support Improved referral and keyworkers support mechanisms for Rotherham's 16-24 year olds Development and launch of personalised and tailored support for young people in the borough (including employer engagement), building on past successful approaches.
<b>1.2: Coordinated and Accessible Careers Education</b>	RMBC Employment Solutions	South Yorkshire Careers Hub	Short	Low	Strategy to enhance current CEIAG approach agreed.

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<p>Ensure a clear coordinated and accessible Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) offer is in place to support residents of all ages and at any point within their career.</p> <p>Showcase the breadth of career opportunities and pathways within Rotherham, to support progression, attraction and retention of talent.</p> <p>Develop a best in class careers workforce in Rotherham, by offering training and CPD to careers leads to the appropriate standard</p>	<p>South Yorkshire Skills Bank</p> <p>Post-16 provision</p> <p>Rotherham University Centre</p>	<p>Education providers</p> <p>Training providers</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus</p>			<p>Careers advisors / employment and skills advisors upskilled.</p> <p>Sector-focused case studies produced highlighting opportunities to develop a career in key sectors in Rotherham.</p> <p>An increase in the number of Rotherham residents aged 16-64 accessing careers advice.</p>
<p><b>1.3: Identifying and Responding to Employer Skill Needs and encouraging 'Good Work'.</b></p> <p>Establish an "HR Director Network" of the largest employers in Rotherham to support identification of employer needs, gather their views on workforce challenges/gaps, and showcase good practice in employer engagement and delivery</p> <p>Coordinate and centralise the approach to employer engagement across Rotherham to support effectiveness and reach and minimise duplication.</p>	<p>South Yorkshire LSIP</p> <p>South Yorkshire Skills Bank</p> <p>Access to Work</p> <p>Pathways to Work: Economic Inactivity Trailblazer / Health and Growth Accelerator/ Connect to Work</p>	<p><b>Chamber of Commerce</b></p> <p>Business Growth Board</p> <p>Employment and Skills Board</p> <p>Rotherham MBC</p> <p>Training providers</p>	Short	Low	<p>HR Director Network established.</p> <p>Coordinated approach to employer engagement established.</p> <p>Employers engaged in discussions and activities related to 'good work'.</p>



Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<p>Promote 'good' work principles to employers to make them aware of the benefits of supportive and inclusive work environments, in recruiting and retaining staff. This could include raising awareness of schemes like Access to Work and Disability Confident.</p> <p>Encourage more supportive and inclusive work environments, including the provision of volunteering and supported internships</p>					
<p><b>1.4: Utilise the potential of the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.</b></p> <p>Build capacity and capabilities of the VCSE sector to engage and support target groups, through delivery of new and existing activity within their communities.</p> <p>Build on the VCSE sector's key role in delivering support and activity within communities, across a wide range of issues and challenges.</p>	<p>Open Arms Rotherham</p> <p>Core Skills/Multiply</p> <p>Pathways to Work; Economic Inactivity Trailblazer/Connect to Work</p> <p>Access to Work</p>	<p><b>VCSE sector</b></p> <p>Rotherham MBC</p> <p>South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority</p>	Medium	High	<p>Number of VCSE organisations involved in delivering employment and skills support within local communities</p> <p>Identification of increased opportunities to deliver employment and skills support through VCSE organisations, including funding mechanisms.</p>

Capacity building and coordination actions – contribution to KPIs and outcomes		1.1: Joined up and tailored provision for 16-24 year olds	1.2: Coordinated and Accessible Careers Education	1.3: Identifying / Responding to Employer Skill Needs and encouraging 'Good Work'	1.4: Utilise the potential of the VCSE sector
Mission 1	Increase employment rate of working age residents	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	Reduce 16—24-year-old NEET number	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	Reduce economic inactivity due to long-term sickness	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
	Narrow disability employment gap with UK figure	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
	Increase number of individuals with SEND accessing support	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
	Narrow gap with UK figure for the median wage in Rotherham (males/females)		✓	✓	
	Increase the number of Disability Confident employers	✓		✓✓	
	Increase number of businesses offering work placements to Rotherham residents	✓		✓✓	
Mission 2	Increase proportion of residents holding qualifications at Level 2+ and Level 3+	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
	Increase proportion of young people achieving L2 and L3 by age 19	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		✓
	Increase number of young people engaging with CEIAG	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓
	Increase digital skills engagement, especially in areas experiencing digital poverty	✓	✓		✓✓✓
	Increase number of intermediate / advanced apprenticeships	✓✓		✓✓	
	Increase the number of residents receiving job-related training	✓		✓✓	
	Narrow gap with the national average for % of residents with no qualifications	✓✓			
Mission 3	Increase number of employers able to recruit the skilled workers they need	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	
	Increase % of working-age population holding qualifications at L3+ and L4+	✓✓			
	Increase number of apprenticeships (inc. higher-level and in growth sectors)			✓✓	
	Increase employer collaboration with local providers to develop courses / shape provision			✓✓	✓✓
	Reduce proportion of employers facing skills mismatches		✓✓	✓✓	
	Increase median earnings		✓✓	✓	

## Intervention Theme Two – Developing Interventions and Strategy

These actions will inform the development of employment and skills interventions and strategy to ensure they are effectively targeted to respond to identified need and opportunity.

**Priority Action: (2.4) Develop a borough wide workforce investment plan.**

This action focuses on identifying employer demand for sufficient numbers of suitably skilled and qualified staff and supporting employers to provide quality and sustainable employment opportunities, which offer the chance of progression.

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<b>2.1: Articulating the Employability and Skills Offer to Learners and Employers.</b> Map the current picture of employability and post-16 skills provision support in Rotherham to support coordination, simplification and minimise duplication and to support understanding of the current skills offer to provide a strategic overview of gaps. Review the RMBC Employment Solutions Service and wider RMBC employment and skills activity to ensure it aligns with local/regional policy, responds to identified need and opportunity and can provide a sustainable offer Drawing on mapping and review insight (action 1.2), develop resources to	Pathways to Work: RMBC Employment Solutions South Yorkshire Skills Bank South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub Advance South Yorkshire Skills Platform	Rotherham MBC Employment and Skills Board South Yorkshire Combined Authority Training providers Education providers	Medium	Medium	Searchable provision directory / database (via South Yorkshire Skills Platform) Agreement of any proposed changes to RMBC employment and skills support to deliver strategic missions. Development of new Rotherham-focussed resources to articulate the employability and skills offer.

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<p>support CEIAG, promote the employability and skills offer, help learners and employers to engage with the skills system and support effective case making for investment in skills provision to meet diverse learner and employer requirements.</p> <p>Provide a local response through the South Yorkshire Skills Platform</p>					
<p><b>2.2: Deep Dive Research into Economic Inactivity in Rotherham.</b></p> <p>Generate a deeper understanding of economic inactivity in Rotherham, the reasons behind why people are economically inactive, and to provide recommendations to tackle the issue. This will require quantitative and qualitative research, including surveys, interviews and focus groups to secure insight on the inactive cohort, their situation and their needs. The research will identify the economic cost of inactivity to Rotherham to support understanding of the case for intervention. Groups at risk of economic exclusion will be identified alongside the support mechanisms in place to mitigate this.</p>	<p>Pathways to Work: Economic Inactivity Trailblazer/Connect to Work</p> <p>Access to Work</p>	<p>Rotherham MBC Jobcentre Plus</p>	Short	Low	<p>Shared understanding of key causes of economic inactivity</p> <p>Clear recommendations for re-shaping support to address barriers identified</p> <p>Production of resources that highlight different pathways to work including apprenticeships, self-employment and internships.</p>

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
Priorities and recommendations will be developed to enable partners to trial, shape and implement new and improved approaches to tackling economic inactivity. It will also inform how partners can convey the benefits and expectations of work to those at risk of economic exclusion, including raising awareness of the different options available to progress into work, including self-employment, apprenticeships, internships, volunteering etc					
<b>2.3: Develop targeted, person-centred interventions for young people at risk of becoming Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)</b> This includes appropriate triaging and guidance; engaging schools, employers and parents/guardians; addressing barriers to work through 1-1 coaching and personalised support; and matching young people to opportunities for work and training.	Talent Match The Really NEET Project Rotherham Leaving Care Local Offer Young Futures Hubs/Youth Access Children's Capital of Culture Creative Skills	<b>Education providers</b> VCFSE sector Children and Young People's Partnership Board Rotherham MBC	Medium	Medium	New interventions developed. Number of 16–24-year-old residents at risk of NEET supported. Number of school / employers / parents and guardians engaged.

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<p>2.4: Priority Action: Develop a borough wide workforce investment plan.</p> <p>Work with employers to produce a borough wide workforce development plan, which delivers sufficient numbers of suitably skilled and qualified staff, and which supports employers to provide quality and sustainable employment, with progression opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the major investment opportunities and priority sectors for economic growth in the Rotherham economy</li> <li>Coordinate contributions from employers, intermediaries, investors and providers aligned to these opportunities and sectors, to identify common and specific skill requirements required now and in the future.</li> <li>Articulate the scale of opportunity and need in Rotherham to support the investment in skills infrastructure to meet current and future demand</li> <li>Showcase the breadth of career opportunities in Rotherham presented by major investments and priority sectors to attract and retain talent.</li> </ul>	<p>University Centre Rotherham</p> <p>South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub</p> <p>South Yorkshire Skills Bank</p> <p>South Yorkshire Investment Zone</p> <p>Templebrough Corridor</p> <p>Rotherham Gateway</p>	<p>Rotherham MBC</p> <p>Business Growth Board</p> <p>Chambers of Commerce</p>	Short	Low	<p>Employers and intermediaries engaged in workforce skills discussions and planning.</p> <p>Series of tailored employment and skills plans produced, for specific investment areas / sectors in Rotherham.</p> <p>Gaps in skills provision identified and approach agreed to making case for further investment where required.</p> <p>Content / materials produced and disseminated to showcase career opportunities (link to action 1.2).</p>

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop recommendations to align demand and supply of skills to meet current and future workforce requirements to realise this investment and growth potential.</li> </ul>					

Developing interventions and strategy actions – contribution to KPIs and outcomes		2.1 Articulating the Employability and Skills Offer to Learners and Employers	2.2: Deep Dive Research re. Economic Inactivity in Rotherham	2.3: Develop targeted, person-centred interventions for young people at risk of becoming NEET	2.4: Develop a borough wide workforce investment plan
Mission 1	Increase employment rate of working age residents	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	Reduce 16–18 and 18–24-year-old NEETs	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	
	Reduce economic inactivity due to LT sickness	✓	✓✓✓	✓	
	Narrow disability employment gap	✓	✓✓	✓✓	
	Increase individuals with SEND engaging with support	✓	✓✓	✓✓	
	Increase median wage in Rotherham (males/females)	✓			✓✓
	Increase the number of Disability Confident employers	✓		✓✓	
	Increase number of businesses offering work placements to Rotherham residents	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓
Mission 2	Increase proportion of residents holding qualifications at Level 2+ and Level 3+	✓✓		✓	✓✓
	Increase proportion of young people achieving L2 and L3 by age 19	✓✓		✓✓	
	Increase number of young people engaging with CEIAG	✓✓		✓✓	
	Increase digital skills engagement, especially in areas experiencing digital poverty	✓			
	Increase number of intermediate / advanced apprenticeships	✓✓			✓✓
	Increase the number of residents receiving job-related training	✓✓			✓✓
	Narrow gap with the national average for % of residents with no qualifications	✓✓		✓	✓
Mission 3	Increase number of employers able to recruit the skilled workers they need	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓✓
	Increase % of working-age population holding qualifications at L3+ and L4+	✓		✓	✓✓
	Increase number of apprenticeships (inc. higher-level and in growth sectors)	✓✓		✓	✓✓
	Increase employer collaboration with local providers to develop courses / shape provision	✓✓	✓		✓✓
	Reduce proportion of employers facing skills mismatches	✓✓✓		✓	✓✓✓
	Increase median earnings	✓			✓✓



## Intervention Theme Three – Delivering Bespoke Solutions

The groundwork laid in the preceding intervention themes will enable the development of bespoke, Rotherham-focussed solutions to meet identified needs.

Priority Action: (3.1) Work Ready Placement Programme.

Design and deliver employer led short, sharp sector specific training courses linked directly to work placements to support out-of-work people secure employment in industries where there are high numbers of vacancies, and for key cohorts facing specific barriers, such as NEETs.

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<p>3:1: Priority Action: Work Ready Placement Programme</p> <p>Design and deliver employer led short, sharp sector specific training courses linked directly to work placements to support out-of-work people secure employment in industries where there are high numbers of vacancies, and for key cohorts facing specific barriers, such as NEETs.</p> <p>Intensive sector-based training “Bootcamps” to improve work readiness and confidence</p> <p>Sector-specific training to address skills gaps in key industries;</p>	<p>Pathways to Work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Inactivity Trailblazer</li> <li>• Elevate Connect to Work</li> <li>• SYMCA Skills Bootcamps</li> </ul>	<p>RMBC</p> <p>VAR</p> <p>Local training delivery partners</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce: Employers</p>	Short	Medium	<p>Reduce the number of 16–18-year-old and 18–24-year-old residents categorised as NEET.</p> <p>Reduce the number of residents economically inactive due to long-term sickness.</p> <p>Narrow the disability employment gap.</p> <p>Increase the number of businesses offering work placements to Rotherham residents</p> <p>Increase the number of residents receiving job-related training in the past 13 weeks</p>

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<p>Local delivery ensuring accessibility and relevance</p> <p>Salary subsidy/funded placements scheme to support alternative recruitment processes, incentivise employer engagement and provide real-world of work experience with local small to medium employers</p> <p>Employer-led design to ensure alignment with job market needs.</p>					<p>Increase the number of employers collaborating with local providers to develop courses and shape provision. Reduce the proportion of employers facing skills mismatches.</p>
<p><b>3.2: Increase employer engagement in schools and colleges.</b></p> <p>Increased investment in career provision to facilitate joined-up provision for 16-24-year-olds and to help schools and colleges meet the Gatsby Benchmarks.</p> <p>Highlight realistic opportunities and positive role models and expand the internships and multiple encounters offer to provide a breadth of career inspiration across sectors, raise ambition and aspiration to those at transition points (Years 9-13).</p>	<p>Careers Hub</p> <p>Children's Capital of Culture Creative Skills</p> <p>South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub</p> <p>Rotherham Leaving Care Local Offer</p>	<p><b>Education providers</b></p> <p>Employers</p> <p>South Yorkshire Careers Hub</p> <p>South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub</p>	Medium	High	<p>Increase in the number of employer encounters taking place in schools.</p> <p>Increased number of under 18s engaging in at least one day of workplace visits or work experience.</p> <p>Development of school-focussed materials that provide up to date information regarding how to navigate the labour market, including information regarding CVs,</p>

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
					interviews and employer expectations (link to action 1.2 and 2.4).
<b>3.3: Develop extra-curricular and enrichment activity for children and young people.</b> Provide a more strategic approach to nurturing children and young people to realise their potential by equipping them with the skills, aptitude, expectations and knowledge they need to progress into positive destinations. This could also include raising awareness of the benefits of work and changing the perception of employment, especially for those at risk of disengaging with the labour market.  Deliver an enhanced enrichment offer to support the development of essential skills in young people to help prepare them for work through securing investment and support from anchor institutions, employers and providers	Children's Capital of Culture Creative Skills 16-19 provision  South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub  South Yorkshire Careers Hub  Rotherham Family Hubs and Giving Your Child the Best Start in Life	VCFSE  Education providers  Rotherham MBC  South Yorkshire Careers Hub  South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub	Medium	Medium	Coherent and curated extra-curricular offer made available to Rotherham's young people.  Increase in the number of young people participating in extra-curricular activities.
<b>3.4: Tailor Community Learning Opportunities to Identified Need including Digital Upskilling</b> Continue to offer learning opportunities that support upskilling and workforce participation. Aimed towards adults with lower-level qualifications and through	Multiply/Core Skills  Adult Skills Fund  Open Arms Rotherham	VCFSE  Rotherham MBC  Training providers	Short	Medium	Re-focussed community learning programme linked to employment and core skills for work.

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
<p>promoting the importance of basic and core skills provision to residents.</p> <p>Provision of digital confidence and skills training to support workforce participation, targeted on neighbourhoods and cohorts with high levels of digital exclusions.</p> <p>Provision of support that will enable residents to access digital resources, such as technology loans and hardware to support those experiencing digital poverty and exclusion.</p>					<p>Digital skills and inclusion programme developed and rolled out.</p> <p>Number of residents benefiting from community learning and digital upskilling.</p>
<p><b>3.5: Develop employment and skills plans for regeneration areas.</b></p> <p>Develop area-based employment and skills plans to provide local hyper-local delivery of engagement activities, tailored community learning and employment support. Linking with businesses to identify their workforce needs and provide local employment.</p> <p>Secure social value contributions from major investment to support local workforce development</p> <p>Coordinate the strategic planning of interventions and major investments with enabling infrastructure providers to mitigate barriers to work. This includes transport and childcare.</p>	<p>Inward Investment Strategy</p> <p>South Yorkshire Investment Zone</p> <p>Rotherham Gateway development</p> <p>The Rotherham Town Centre Masterplan outlines the new leisure, domestic and business opportunities in and around Forge Island, identifying a number of opportunities for growth and</p>	<p>Rotherham MBC</p> <p>VCSE</p> <p>Employers</p> <p>Business Growth Board</p> <p>RNN</p> <p>Infrastructure providers</p>	Short	High	<p>Employment and skills plans developed in partnership with employers and communities.</p> <p>Funding invested in resident upskilling and employment support.</p> <p>Number of residents benefitting from work experience, placements and internship opportunities.</p> <p>Number of residents supported to overcome wider barriers to employment e.g. childcare and transport barriers.</p>

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
	regeneration. Building on this Masterplan and developing similar pieces that highlight the benefits of other developments in Rotherham would increase the attractiveness of the area.				
<b>3.6: Support employers to identify and horizon scan their current and future skill needs and provide supportive workplace environments.</b> Undertake skills needs diagnostic assessments and developing workforce development plans for SMEs Simplify and extend the current offer to ensure employers are supported with advice and guidance to develop their workforce and facilitate access to skills provision. This includes championing apprenticeships and supporting employers to access the apprenticeship levy. Provide advice and support to employers to offer supportive, inclusive and accessible workplaces, including occupational health	Advance Rotherham South Yorkshire Growth Hub South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub Through the LSIP, Chamber of Commerce and Growth Hub, businesses are supported to share their skills gaps and access upskilling opportunities for their workforce.	<b>Training providers</b> Rotherham MBC South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Business Growth Board	Long	Medium	Number of employers engaged in future skills needs discussions and planning. Number of employers implementing new approaches to create a supportive workplace. Number of employers introducing apprenticeships / increasing number of apprenticeships offered, including within the key growth sectors in Rotherham.

Action	Alignment with provision	Lead/Partners	Timescale	Resource Implication	Outputs ( <i>contribution to outcomes shown at end of this section</i> )
support provision for SMEs, inclusive recruitment practice advice					

Developing bespoke solutions actions – contribution to KPIs and outcomes		3.1: Work ready Placement Programme	3.2: Increase employer engagement in schools and colleges	3.3: Develop extracurricular and enrichment activity for children & young people	3.4: Tailor community learning opportunities to identified need including digital upskilling	3.5: Develop employment and skills plans for regeneration areas	3.6: Support employers to identify and horizon scan their current and future skills needs and provide supportive workplace environments
Mission 1	Increase employment rate of working age residents	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
	Reduce 16–18 and 18–24-year-old NEETs	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓			
	Reduce economic inactivity due to LT sickness	✓✓			✓✓	✓	
	Narrow disability employment gap	✓✓			✓✓		
	Increase individuals with SEND engaging with support	✓	✓	✓✓	✓		
	Increase median wage in Rotherham (males/females)	✓✓✓				✓✓	✓
	Increase the number of Disability Confident employers					✓	✓✓
	Increase number of businesses offering work placements to Rotherham residents	✓	✓✓	✓		✓✓	✓
Mission 2	Increase proportion of residents holding qualifications at Level 2+ and Level 3+	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
	Increase proportion of young people achieving L2 and L3 by age 19	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓			
	Increase number of young people engaging with CEIAG	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓			
	Increase digital skills engagement, especially in areas experiencing digital poverty			✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	
	Increase number of intermediate / advanced apprenticeships	✓✓					✓✓
	Increase the number of residents receiving job-related training	✓✓			✓✓		✓✓
	Narrow gap with the national average for % of residents with no qualifications			✓	✓✓		✓
Mission 3	Increase number of employers able to recruit the skilled workers they need	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
	Increase % of working-age population holding qualifications at L3+ and L4+	✓	✓	✓			✓✓
	Increase number of apprenticeships (inc. higher-level and in growth sectors)	✓✓	✓				✓✓
	Increase employer/local provider collaboration to develop courses/shape provision	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓
	Reduce proportion of employers facing skills mismatches	✓✓✓	✓		✓✓		✓✓✓

Developing bespoke solutions actions – contribution to KPIs and outcomes		3.1: Work ready Placement Programme	3.2: Increase employer engagement in schools and colleges	3.3: Develop extracurricular and enrichment activity for children & young people	3.4: Tailor community learning opportunities to identified need including digital upskilling	3.5: Develop employment and skills plans for regeneration areas	3.6: Support employers to identify and horizon scan their current and future skills needs and provide supportive workplace environments
	Increase median earnings	✓✓			✓✓		✓✓



## Delivering the Employment and Skills Strategy

### Partnership and Governance

The Employment and Skills Strategy is part of the framework of projects and initiatives that benefit local people and places provided by the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP). The RTP brings together a range of partners, including Council, NHS, College, Chamber of Commerce and the private and voluntary sector to oversee progress towards the shared priorities set out in the Rotherham Plan. There are a number of thematic partnerships with RTP, all seeking to improve the quality of life for residents in Rotherham.

Overall governance for, and oversight of, the Strategy will sit with the Employment and Skills Board of the Partnership, with annual updates on the progress and impact of the Strategy being reported to the RTP Chief Executive Officer's Group.

### Strategy Delivery

Delivering the Strategy will require the support and engagement of a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including the VCSE sector, education and skills providers, the Council, South Yorkshire MCA, DWP, and employers and residents of Rotherham.

Rotherham MBC will play a key role as convener, responsible for bringing together the most appropriate partners and bodies needed to address an issue or deliver an activity. The Council will play an active role in connecting employment and skills activity to wider initiatives being delivered in Rotherham such as through the Place-Based Investment Strategy and Digital Inclusion Strategy. Rotherham MBC will also ensure that delivery aligns with regional initiatives such as the inactivity trailblazer and regional policies including the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy, LSIP and the Get Britain Working Plan.

With an increasing focus on health and employment, both in terms of stemming the flow into inactivity and supporting those who are inactive to find good work, the NHS will play a key role in identifying common barriers to work and working with employers to support employees living with a long-term health condition or disability. This could include the provision of occupational therapy, mental health support for those in receipt of a sick note and early intervention for those with at risk of leaving work due to a new diagnosis.

Employers will play an integral part in the delivery of the Strategy. Businesses drive demand for skills and create employment opportunities for local people – and it is their choices and constraints that determine the quality of the jobs on offer in Rotherham. Through the Strategy, employers will be encouraged and supported to enable them to work with young people, apprentices, hire and retain residents with a health condition and upskill their current employees. They will receive more education as to how adopting inclusive workplace practices could boost their productivity and support their workforce. Businesses will also be supported to form new connections with education providers, ensuring that young people can develop an idea of the workplace possibilities within Rotherham.

VCSE organisations will be supported to strengthen their current work within local communities and support community-based and hyper-local delivery of activities linked to the Employment and Skills Strategy, such as Core Skills. The VCSE sector is well-placed to tailor engagement approaches and marketing to the needs of their local community.

Education and skills providers will deliver activity at a range of levels to ensure that all of Rotherham's residents are able to access training and development that is appropriate to their aims and circumstances. This could include developing their core skills and work readiness offer, their higher-level apprenticeship offer and their in-work upskilling offer.

Rotherham MBC will ensure the Strategy and Missions are embedded into future policy and activity, continuing to facilitate positive collaboration between partners and across the wider region.

## 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 Employment and Skills strategy 2026-31**

**Directorate: R&E**

**Service area: RiDO**

**Lead person: Simeon Leach**

**Contact:**  
[Simeon.leach@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Simeon.leach@rotherham.gov.uk)

Is this a:

☒ **Strategy / Policy**
☐ **Service / Function**
☐ **Other**

**If other, please specify**

### 2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

A strategy to set out the framework for employment and skills development and delivery in Rotherham over the next 5 years.

This will link closely to the SY Skills Strategy (published late 2024), whose 3 “missions” are:

1. Move those far from the labour market into work or ready for work
2. Raise attainment of core knowledge and skills
3. Increase the supply of a high-skilled workforce

## Appendix 2

While also setting out local priorities and interventions specific to Rotherham, many of which will be focusing on those residents facing multiple barriers to accessing and retaining employment.

### 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? <i>(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)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect service users? <i>(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)</i>	x	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? <i>(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)</i>	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? <i>(It is important that the Council is transparent, and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)</i>	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?**

The Employment and Skills Strategy will aim to assist all residents of Rotherham in gaining the skills, qualifications and experience to enable them to access sustainable employment and to progress within their chosen career when they do.

Mission 1 from the South Yorkshire Strategy (Move those far from the labour market into work or ready for work) will focus specific support on that cohort of residents who are typically disadvantaged and caught in a cycle of low income, poor access to services, poor health and low aspiration.

The Strategy will target economically inactive residents across a range of sub-cohorts, including, those with disabilities and health conditions (who are significantly less likely to work), ethnic minority groups (who are over-represented among economically inactive people), young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), to include care leavers, carers and those from households experiencing inter-generational inactivity or unemployment.

Work with Rotherham employers will ensure that there is an available pool of local labour, able to support the sustainable growth of these businesses. The locality of the work will make it more accessible to those residents who do not own a vehicle and are dependent on public transport.

- **Key findings**

Around 1 in 4 individuals in the UK are not working. In Rotherham the number is 46,600 (ONS March 2024) which is nearer to 1 in 3 of the working age population.

The current system supporting people back into work is fragmented, making it complex and confusing for individuals and employers

Economically inactive people are concentrated in the borough's poorest communities and among minority groups

There is no one experience of 'economic inactivity'.

The term 'economic inactivity' simplifies the diversity of experiences and people, and the blurred lines between health, care and other barriers.

## Appendix 2

The severity of the impacts of experiencing 'economic inactivity' is connected to individual's resource, situation, and support networks.

Employment has been shown to have a major impact on the mental and physical health of certain individuals.

- **Actions**

Identify potential support for disadvantaged and under-serviced residents to ensure that they have the skills, experience and confidence to start the journey towards employment and training. This will require personalised support to ensure that the very different number and types of barriers these individuals face can be tackled.

Activity must take a targeted hyper local approach, where possible using trusted VCS partners with lived experience to capture the needs of priority cohorts. One of the identified outcomes of the Pathways to Work model, being using to tackle entrenched economic inactivity, is to build up the activity of the Rotherham VCS to deliver this activity.

Explore opportunities to strengthen data and information flows to ensure resources are deployed in line with available evidence and support effective interventions through data sharing.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2025
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2025
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Simeon Leach Economic Strategy and Partnerships Manager

## 5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Simeon Leach	Economic Strategy and Partnerships Manager	
Tim O'Connell	Head of Economic Development	
Simon Moss	Assistant Director Planning, Regen and Transport	

## 6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

## Appendix 2

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](mailto: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.

<b>Date screening completed</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2025
<b>Report title and date</b>	Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31  Cabinet 15 December 2025
<b>If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication</b>	15 December 2025
<b>Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement</b> <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a>	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2025

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## 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 Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 10 September 2025	
Directorate: Regeneration and Environment	Service area: Planning Regeneration and Transport
Lead Manager: Simeon Leach	Contact number: 0794 990 1043 <a href="mailto:Simeon.leach@rotherham.gov.uk">Simeon.leach@rotherham.gov.uk</a>
Is this a:	
<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function
<input type="checkbox"/> 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)
Simeon Leach	Rotherham MBC	Service Specialist
Tim O'Connell	Rotherham MBC	Manager
Simon Moss	Rotherham MBC	Assistant Director

## 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 Strategy will look to assist all Rotherham residents in identifying and obtaining the skills and qualification needed to move towards and access employment, and once in employment to remain their and progress their careers

There will be target groups that are prioritised for specific support, these include:

- people who are not in education or training who are aged 16-24 years old
- People with learning difficulties & disabilities
- people with Physical Disabilities
- people who are ex-offenders
- people who are refugees & asylum Seekers
- ethnic minority groups
- care leavers
- carers and single parents
- older people

As part of the work on the Strategy a dashboard has been produced providing baseline information. This can be accessed at the following link [Rotherham Skills Data Dashboard](#)

Data included comes under 3 headings:

- People and Society
- Education and Skills
- Economy

Each of these then has a number of sub-headings, which in the case of People and Society, includes:

- Deprivation
- Population by Characteristics
- Low income families
- Economic inactivity
- Social mobility

## Appendix 3

Figures for all of the above a broken down to Ward level and will allow targeted delivery of the activity that comes out of the Strategy.

Regular reviews will be undertaken of the data, and additional data sourced to fill any identified gaps, including other characteristics.

**Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?**

We are unaware of any gaps in data at the current time, but if any gaps are identified the scope of the dashboard can be amended.

There are plans to establish triage and arrangements for tracking longitudinal data on employment outcomes as mentioned in the action list below.

**What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?**

The Strategy has a range of key indicators that will be monitored on a regular basis, depending on when updates are available. These will be used to monitor progress and identify where to target activity to ensure that all groups within the borough receive, and benefit

**Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)**

**Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)**

The strategy has been consulted on with a wide range of stakeholders, all through the development stage (February – April). Mainly in boards and workshops but also some 1-2-1 meetings:

- Rotherham Together Partnership
- Business Growth Board
- Employment and Skills Board
- Humanitarian and Communities Group
- Voluntary Action Rotherham and wider VCSE sector
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local Businesses
- RNN

There was support for the proposed Strategy and actions, with partners feeding back suggested input. The need for local delivery of activity and a focus on the need to identify the barriers to employment for different groups/characteristics, came across strongly.

**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.)

## Appendix 3

Age - the strategy includes targeted support for residents of all ages, including young people and older individuals, to enter and sustain employment. There will be an initial focus on young people aged 16-24

Disability – The strategy acknowledges the barriers disabled residents facing in accessing and retaining employment and will identify what support can be targeted to tackle this issue

Race/ethnicity – promotes tailored outreach, to groups with higher economic inactivity rate rates. And acknowledges the importance of delivering support to residents in the areas where they live.

Gender - recognising and tackling gender barriers, such as childcare responsibilities, which are affecting employment.

Carers - Specific support for those balancing caring duties and work readiness

Socio-economic Status - Addressing financial barriers such as the “benefit trap,” transport issues and low digital literacy

The implementation of the Strategy identifies a range of priorities and potential actions across the 3 themes, including all of the above. These will be looked at by Stakeholders, led by the Employment and Skills Board, and the detail of the delivery and how the impact can be monitored, will be agreed

**Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups?**

**Potential barrier** - low engagement from some hard to reach groups due to trust issues or systemic barriers

**Mitigation** local outreach through trusted VCS partners and personalised trauma informed support

**Potential barrier** employer reluctance to hire individuals with complex needs

**Mitigation** employer incentives and in work support to facilitate sustained employment

**Potential Barrier** – individuals struggling on a return to work.

**Mitigation** – personalised support, will continue in the early part of a person’s employment, with support available as required after that period.

**Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers?**

Yes by

- providing locally delivered skills training, employment support and jobs

Appendix 3

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhancing employer engagement and awareness of the benefits that can be achieved by employed from protected characteristics</li> <li>• improving referral pathways to health and social support services</li> <li>• Offering flexible support projects to address individual needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations?</b> (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another)</p> <p>The service is expected to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve social mobility and economic inclusion</li> <li>• foster stronger collaboration between the council, businesses and community groups.</li> <li>• reduce long term dependency on benefits improving overall economic resilience.</li> </ul>

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 T 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

<b>Title of analysis: Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31</b>
<b>Directorate and service area: Regeneration and Environment, Rotherham Investment and Development Office</b>
<b>Lead Manager: Simeon Leach</b>
<b>Summary of findings:</b>
<p>The Strategy will look to assist all Rotherham residents in identifying and obtaining the skills and qualification needed to move towards and access employment, and once in employment to remain their and progress their careers. There are a wide range target groups that are prioritised for specific support.</p> <p>The strategy has been consulted on with a wide range of stakeholders, all through the development stage (February – April). Mainly in boards and workshops but also some 1-2-1 meetings. There was support for the proposed Strategy and actions, with partners feeding back suggested input. The need for local delivery of activity and a focus on the need to identify the barriers to employment for different groups/characteristics, came across strongly.</p> <p>Positive impacts of the Strategy will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing locally delivered skills training, employment support and jobs</li> <li>enhancing employer engagement and awareness of the benefits that can be achieved by employed from protected characteristics</li> </ul>

- improving referral pathways to health and social support services
- Offering flexible support projects to address individual needs

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
<b>Start delivery of the Strategy</b>	<b>all</b>	<b>11/25</b>
Identify and agree initial priority actions for first 2 years. These will include a focus on supporting young people (16-24) at risk of worklessness and provision of local based "Work and Skills Plans," focussing on those areas of greatest deprivation	<b>all</b>	<b>11/25</b>
Establish triage and arrangements for tracking longitudinal data on employment outcomes for programme participants.	<b>all</b>	<b>09/25</b>

**\*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
Simon Moss	Assistant Director Planning Regeneration and Transport.	19/11/2025
Cllr Williams	Cabinet member Jobs and the Economy	

7. Publishing	
<p>The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.</p> <p>If this Equality Analysis relates to a <b>Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision</b> a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.</p> <p>A copy should also be sent to <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a> For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.</p>	
<b>Date Equality Analysis completed</b>	19/09/25
<b>Report title and date</b>	Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31
<b>Date report sent for publication</b>	
<b>Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement</b> <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a>	11/09/25



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 the Borough 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?	Increase	Moderate impact from potential increased employment which could increase office-based activities and contribute to higher emissions.	An increase in rates of economic activity is likely to result in economic growth which has the potential to increase CO <sub>2</sub> emissions.	This will be in part mitigated by a focus on green jobs, identified as a sector with growth potential.	Monitoring will not take place as a specific part of delivery of the Strategy.
Emissions from transport?	Increase	Moderate impact from the expansion of employment which could increase staff travel and contribute to higher emissions	<p>The Strategy will look to provide local jobs for people, but due to the nature of the combined economy across South Yorkshire, this will not always be the case.</p> <p>An increase in rates of economic activity will result in economic growth which is likely to generate more transport movements and thereby increase emissions.</p> <p>An increase in the production of goods and services locally may have a beneficial impact on local supply chains and help reduce the number</p>	Scope to mitigate within the Strategy itself is relatively low. To mitigate negative impact, it will be necessary to work in tandem with a range of other policies to promote environmentally sustainable economic growth and the potential of job growth in the "Green Sector."	Monitoring will not take place as part of the work on the Strategy.

			of transport movements both in the production process and consumption.		
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	Increase		An increase in economic growth which has the potential to increase waste production	Scope to mitigate within the strategy is minimal. To mitigate negative impact, it will be necessary to work in tandem with a range of other policies to promote environmentally sustainable economic growth and encourage employers to adopt sustainable waste management practices	Monitoring will not take place as part of the work on the Strategy.
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	Increase		An increase in rates of economic activity is likely to result in economic growth. This has the potential to increase household incomes resulting in greater consumption which may have an impact on emissions.	Scope to mitigate within the Strategy is minimal. To mitigate negative impact, it will be necessary to work in tandem with a range of other policies to promote environmentally sustainable behaviours.	Monitoring will not take place as part of the work on the Strategy.
Emissions from construction and/or development?	Increase		An increase in rates of economic activity is likely to result in economic growth. This has the potential to increase construction and development in the Borough.	Scope to mitigate within the Strategy is minimal. Planning policy, development control and enforcement of Part L of the Building Regulations are best placed to	Monitoring will not take place as part of the work on the Strategy.

				mitigate the carbon impact of construction. A local labour supply with green skills in sustainable construction could mitigate the carbon impact of development.	
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None				
Identify any emissions impacts associated with this decision which have not been covered by the above fields: <i>None identified</i>					

Will the proposal affect Council services' resilience to climate change, or the capacity of people living in the Borough to adapt to climate change?

The climate in Rotherham is already changing, with visible impacts throughout the Borough. Hotter summers are increasing the risk of extreme temperatures such as those experienced in July 2022, as wetter winters and more intense rainfall are increasing the risk of floods such as those in 2007, 2019 and 2023. More information on climate change impacts in Rotherham is available from:

<https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/b8eb3cee8f764147a2cfd69cf36238f/E08000018>

Delivery of the Strategy should include consideration of how economic inclusion may increase people's capacity to adapt to climate change.. For example, people with alcohol or drug dependence, people who work in jobs that require manual labour or extensive time outside and people experiencing homelessness are all target groups for the strategy and also identified as at-risk groups, in [Government guidance on hot weather and health](#). Education and income are both proposed as determinants of 'adaptive capacity', in a recent study climate change vulnerability at the local-authority level ([Mapping vulnerability to climate-related hazards to inform local authority action in adaptation: A feasibility study](#). Howkins et al., 2024).

Provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

Direct carbon impact is expected to be moderate due to increased building energy use and transport emissions associated with staff and service users.

Impact is primarily indirect as a result of the programme increasing levels of economic activity and as a result delivering broader economic growth. Managing and mitigating the carbon impact of growth is outside the scope of this programme and will be reliant on wider policies and measures in place.

Supporting information:	
Climate Impact Assessment Author	Simeon Leach Economic Strategy and Partnerships Manager RiDO Regeneration and Environment
Please outline any research, data or information used to complete this Climate Impact Assessment.	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
Validation	Tracking Reference: CIA 454  Arthur King Principal Climate Change Officer

**Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – Work Programme 2025-26**

**Chair: Councillor Brian Steele**  
**Governance Manager: Barbel Gale**

**Vice-Chair: Cllr Joshua Bacon**  
**Link Officer: Phil Horsfield**

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

**Establish as a starting point:**

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

**Agree principles for longlisting:**

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

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

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

Meeting Date	Responsible Officer	Agenda Item
Wednesday 7 May 2025	Sharon Kemp / Jo Brown	Council Plan 2025 - 2028 & New Year Ahead Delivery Plan - Pre-decision
	Ian Spicer	Review of the Non-Residential Charging Policy - Pre-decision
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
Wednesday 4 June 2025	Judith Badger / Rob Mahon	Finance Update - June 2025 - Pre-decision
	Sharon Kemp / Jo Brown	Social Value Annual Report - Pre-decision
	Ian Spicer / John Holman	Employment Solutions 2025-26 - Pre-decision
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
Wednesday 2 July 2025	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
	John Edwards / Jo Brown	Council Plan 2022-2025 and Year Ahead Delivery Plan Progress Update 2024-25 - Pre-decision
	Judith Badger	Ethical Procurement Policy - Pre-decision
	Judith Badger / Rob Mahon	Financial Outturn 2024- 25 - Pre-decision
	Judith Badger / Rob Mahon	Treasury Management Outturn 2024-25 - Pre-decision
	Judith Badger / Rob Mahon	May 2025-26 Financial Monitoring Report - Pre-decision
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
Tuesday 9 September 2025	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
	Andrew Bramidge / Simon Moss / Fiona Fletcher	Progress update on the implementation Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme
	Barbel Gale	Scrutiny Annual Report 2024-2025
	Judith Badger / Rob Mahon	July 2025-26 Financial Monitoring Report - Pre-decision scrutiny
	Andrew Bramidge / Emma Ellis	Community Safety Strategy 2025-2028 - Pre-decision scrutiny
	Judith Badger / Kevin Fisher	Investing in our Community Facilities - Pre-decision scrutiny
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
Wednesday 8 October 2025	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
	Andrew Bramidge	Rotherham Employment & Skills Strategy - Pre-decision scrutiny
	Andrew Bramidge	Selective Licensing Policy - Pre-decision scrutiny - joint with IPSC
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
Wednesday 12 November 2025	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
	Judith Badger & Rob Mahon	Medium Term Financial Strategy Update - Pre-decision scrutiny.
	Craig Cornwall, Lewis Coates & Andrew Bramidge	General Enforcement Policy - Pre-decision scrutiny
	Andrew Bramidge/Sam Barstow	Call-In - Selective Licensing
	Fiona Boden	Complaints Annual Report
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Wednesday 10 December 2025	Lindsay Wynn & Rob Mahon	2026/27 HRA Business Plan & Rent Setting - Pre-decision scrutiny
	Judith Badger	Inclusion Strategy and Annual Report – Pre-decision scrutiny
	Andrew Bramidge	Library Strategy – Pre-decision scrutiny
	Simeon Leach & Andrew Bramidge	Rotherham Employment & Skills Strategy - Pre-decision scrutiny
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
Tuesday 13 January 2026	John Edwards	Council Plan 2025 - 2028 & New Year Ahead Delivery Plan - Pre-decision
	Judith Badger & Rob Mahon	Leader Q&A - to be scheduled after Council plan on the agenda.
	MTFS Presentation (TBC)	
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
Wednesday 4 February 2026		Question and answer session, Mayor Coppard, South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority.
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
Wednesday 11 March 2026	Sam Barstow	Modern Slavery Transparency Statement - Annual Refresh
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
Wednesday 8 April 2026	Andrew Bramidge / Simon Moss / Fiona Fletcher	Progress update on the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme
	Barbel Gale	Work Programme
	Each Governance Advisor	Work in progress from Select Commissions
	Barbel Gale	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
<b>Substantive Items for Scheduling</b>		
January 2026 & July 2026	Barbel Gale	Leader Q&A - to be scheduled after Council plan on the agenda.
Feb-26	Barbel Gale	Question and answer session, Mayor Coppard, South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority.
Jul-26	John Edwards	Council Plan 2025 - 2028 & New Year Ahead Delivery Plan - Pre-decision
Completed	Andrew Bramidge	Selective Licensing - Joint with IPSC
Sep-26	Kevin Fisher & Judith Badger	Investing in our Community Facilities - An update report be provided in 12 months to include the updated condition survey results, where available.
Nov-26	Fiona Fletcher	Progress update on the implementation of the Pathways to Work Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme
TBC	Joanne Hacking & Mat Dyson	Children's Commissioners Takeover Challenge
<b>Reviews for Scheduling</b>		
In progress	Sam Barstow	A spotlight review - Life-saving equipment and related byelaws
Off agenda briefing provided	Lynsey Linton	Spotlight Review - Agency Staff - A briefing has been provided with other aspects being picked up as part of other tasks on this work programme. Nothing further to be done at this time.
Completed	Sam Barstow	Spotlight Review - Grass Cutting / Ground Maintenance
<b>Items to be Considered by Other Means (e.g. off-agenda briefing, workshop etc)</b>		
Completed	Ian Spicer / Sarah Clyde / Paul Elliott	A report be provided to OSMB within three months detailing the performance information for the Employment Solutions Team.
TBC	Lynsey Linton	A briefing to be provided to OSMB detailing information on the number of vacancies where recruitment to those vacancies was held for a period of time, listed by directorate and the potential impacts of delaying that recruitment process.
Apr-26	Andrew Bramidge	An update on progress following the implementation of Waste Service Route Optimisation programme be brought back to OSMB within twelve months via an off-agenda briefing.
Apr-26	Andrew Bramidge	An update on the progress following the implementation of the Street Safe Team programme be brought back to OSMB within twelve months via an off-agenda briefing.
TBC	Andrew Bramidge	Replacement of refuse vehicles:  Off-agenda briefings to be provided to give an update on the procurement of the new refuse vehicles and progress against the target for renewal of the fleet. These briefings should be split to represent the different phases of the programme.

TBC	Andrew Bramidge / Sam Barstow	Public on street bin collections:  Off-agenda briefing to be provided regarding the emptying of public bins. This information should include details of how overflowing bins can be reported, how often collections are scheduled for and how those are monitored, what join arrangements are in place with Parish Council's, if any, and a list of the locations of bins under RMBC management, if available.
TBC	Luke Sayers	IT Systems:  Workshop to be arranged for members of OSMB to understand what IT systems the Council is using, what the purpose of those systems is, are those systems as up to date as possible, how updates to those systems are managed, how the Council is using artificial intelligence (AI), is the Council using outdated technology, and was the Council spending too much or too little in this area.
TBC	Lynsey Linton	Recruitment:  Initially an off-agenda briefing has been requested to understand how recruitment is carried out across the Council, indicating if the same processes were used across all directorates, detailing if recruitment was centralised, was there a reliance on agency staff to cover staff vacancies. After consideration of the off-agenda briefing Members of OSMB will then consider if a workshop needs to be held to discuss this in more detail.
TBC	Fiona Fletcher	Pathways to Work Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme:  Agreed that an off-agenda briefing be provided to share the details of the commissioned VCSE organisations and their geographic reach with members of OSMB.
<b>Items for Future Consideration</b>		
Apr-26	TBC	Future Rothercare Model
<b>Cross Commission scrutiny opportunities</b>		
Poss 10 December 2025	Andrew Bramidge	Town Centre Developments (Forge Island, Markets & Library Redevelopments:  An initial site visit to be arranged to consider a midterm evaluation of the Market's redevelopment including a briefing detailing information on construction costs, the retention of market traders along with information on the plan for encouraging new businesses. The site visit is to involve Councillor Williams, Councillor Steele, Councillor Bacon, Councillor McKiernan, Councillor Tinsley, Councillor Jones, Councillor Sheppard, and Andrew Bramidge.  Then to be followed by an off-agenda briefing providing a progress update for these projects, indicating if slippages had occurred, if there was underspend or overspend on any of the schemes and the proposed mitigates, if any.
TBC	Andrew Bramidge	Energy Efficiency:  An off-agenda briefing to be provided to members of OSMB and IPSC to provide information on the energy efficiency retrofits in social housing. This should cover aspects such as the feasibility and prioritisation of upgrades to heating systems and insulation across the borough. It would include details on how these retrofits align with the Council's net-zero goals, what potential funding was available to support this and timescales for implementation.

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## Health Select Commission (HSC) Chair's Briefing: for Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 10 December 2025

### Items covered since the last meeting:

At the HSC meeting on 20 November 2025 the following items were considered:

#### 1) **Draft Adult Social Care Mental Health Strategy 2026-29 (Pre-decision scrutiny)**

Members had the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Strategy. There were detailed discussions which considered the increased incidence of depression in Rotherham, improvements to transition pathways, approach to integration with housing, the voluntary and community sector and health partners, alignment with other Council Strategies, the role of the proposed Mental Health Partnership Board, support for under-represented minority groups, loneliness and isolation including demographic and geographical factors and considerations, male suicide rates and the Strategy's success measures.

#### **The following recommendation was agreed during the meeting:**

That the Health Select Commission:

1. Supported the recommendation to Cabinet to approve the publication of the Adult Social Care Mental Health Strategy 2026-2029.

Additional Select Commission actions included:

- Provision a copy of any delivery/action plan including any specific measurable targets or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), against which progress would be assessed.
- Provision of mid-point update on the delivery of the 2026-2029 Strategy (likely to take place in mid to late 2027).
- Early involvement in consultation/co-production of the replacement Strategy when this iteration approaches conclusion.
- Contact between Rotherham Speak Up and Service in respect of Autism lived experience.
- Provision of detailed data that underpinned the headline loneliness statistics.
- Provision of specific figures in respect of male suicide rates in Rotherham compared with the national average.

#### 2) **Rotherham Place Partners Winter Plan 2025-26**

This item is considered annually by HSC in relation to preparedness for Winter Pressures affecting Rotherham residents' health and wellbeing. Members scrutinised the Place

Partners Plan for 2025-26 and discussions centred on technicality of content and the need to increase accessibility for non subject experts, the expected impact of changes to the GP contract on Winter pressures, expected impact and mitigation for industrial action and sickness, ambulance response and handover targets, the impact of early flu peak, scenario testing and escalation processes, community pathways capacity and enablement services role in reducing discharge delays and dispensing delays.

Members made requests around the content of the presentation of the Place Partners Winter Plan in 2025-26 to improve accessibility and enhance understanding of key considerations, including risks and mitigations, and agreed to share details of research referred to by a HSC member which demonstrated links between mealtime changes and reductions in slips and trips in care settings with the ICB at their request.

#### **Work programme 2025-26 updates:**

- **Access to Contraception Review**

Following the final evidence gathering session in October 2025, the working group have formulated a number of draft recommendations and production of the draft report is underway.

- **Draft All Age Carers Strategy 2026-31 Workshop (Joint pre-decision scrutiny with the Improving Lives Select Commission)**

A workshop was held on 28 November 2025 for HSC and ILSC members to scrutinise the draft All Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031. Detailed discussions took place which considered challenges for young carers in relation to absence from education, challenges in the consistent identification of young carers, the long-term disadvantages and for young carers not identified and supported appropriately, inconsistencies in information sharing and carer-centric co-ordination across delivery partners such as health, including mental health, education and social care, systemic barriers and how to address these, financial support including limitations and means testing and development of an underpinning action plan and key performance indicators/success measures.

**The following recommendations were made by Members who participated in the workshop:**

That they:

1. Supported the recommendation to Cabinet to approve the publication of the All Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031, with the request that the following amendments are made:
  - a) Specific local data, where possible, is added to page 6 of the Strategy.
  - b) Under the 'Identification and Early Intervention' commitment on page 11, include specific reference to improving the partnership approach and associated processes to identifying young carers, given the acknowledged existing shortcomings and challenges in the context of the potential lifelong implications of failing to provide timely and appropriate support.

Additional Select Commission actions included:

- Consideration of the Action Plan associated with the delivery of the All Age Carers Strategy 2026-31 upon development, likely to take place early in the 2026/27 municipal year.

- Mid-point delivery update in relation to the All Age Carers Strategy 2026-31, expected at some point in the 2028/29 municipal year.
- Early involvement in consultation/co-production of the next All Age Carers Strategy when the 2026-31 strategy is refreshed/replaced.

- **SDEC (Same Day Emergency Care) Centre Site Visit**

The Governance Advisor is in the process of arranging a site visit for Health Select Commission Members to the SDEC at The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust (TRFT) ahead of receiving an update of its performance and impact since implementation being presented to the Commission in March 2026. The site visit is expected to take place in late January or February 2026.

**Items to be discussed at the next meeting:**

At the HSC meeting on 22 January 2026 the following items are due to be considered:

- Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report and Strategic Plan 2025-28.
- Adult Social Care CQC Inspection.

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## Improving Lives Select Commission Chair's Briefing for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2025

### Items covered since the last update meeting:-

- At the Improving Lives meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2025 the following items were considered:-
  1. **Fostering Transformation Programme incorporating the Children and Young People's Services Prevention of Future Death Reports** – Members had the opportunity to review the current Fostering Programme in the light of changing sufficiency needs for children and young people in care in Rotherham. Also incorporated was the response of the Council to the tragic death of Marcia Grant, and the formal Prevention of Future Deaths' report following the inquest in July 2025.
  2. **The Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2024-2025** – Members received the RSCP report for 2024/25 which provided an update on the key partnership activity during the year, based on the strategic priorities. The impact of the work against these priorities was also demonstrated alongside a summary of any activity by the key partner agencies.

The report also covered what the partnership had done as a result of the arrangements, including Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR), and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

### Work programme 2025-26 updates:-

- **Threshold of Need (part of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy)**  
A dedicated dual workshop session is being arranged, which will include a visit to the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum at the Eric Manns Building. The session will focus on reviewing the vision and plans, amplifying the voice of the community and assessing the impact of collaborative work with partners.
- **PAUSE Project**  
A workshop is in the process of being arranged for late February/early March looking at support available for women who have had one or more child removed, following cessation of the PAUSE Project.
- **Children's Capital of Culture Workshop - Impact and Legacy for Children and Young People**  
A workshop is in the process of being arranged for late March/early April looking at Impact and Legacy for Children and Young People.
- **Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan/Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report**  
This is included on the agenda for the Health Select Commission on 22nd January, 2026. An invitation has been extended to include any interested Improving Lives Select Commission Members.

- **Trauma and Children Missing Education Scrutiny Review**

The scope of this review received further consideration on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2025 and will now be taken forward and scheduled.

**Items to be discussed at the next and future meetings:-**

**10 February 2026**

- Ofsted Inspection Outcome
- Educational Attainment Update

**28 April 2026**

- SACRE Annual Report (for information)
- Children Not in School Update
- Community Cohesion Projects Update

## IPSC Chair's Briefing: for OSMB meeting on 10 December 2025

### Items covered since the last update meeting:

There hasn't been a further IPSC meeting since OSMB last met. The next scheduled meeting is on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025 where IPSC will be considering the following items:

- 1) Bereavement Services Annual Report; and
- 2) Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report

### Work programme 2025-26 updates:

- **School Road Safety Review**  
The review sub-group has recently met with Marc Hill, Engagement & Technical Support Manager in Highways at RMBC and an officer from Sheffield City Council who was involved in the School Streets scheme there. The group will be moving on to look at crossing patrol and enforcement.
- **ASB Workshop**  
The Anti-Social Behaviour workshop is due to take place on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025 and feedback will be provided to OSMB on this session.
- **Market/Library Redevelopment Site Visit**  
This planned joint visit for certain members of OSMB and IPSC was scheduled for mid-December but will now be rescheduled for early 2026 due to the timetable of works on site in December and inaccessibility for visitors during this time.

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