

## **IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION**

**Date and Time:-** Tuesday 2 December 2025 at 10.00 a.m.

**Venue:-** Rotherham Town Hall, The Crofts, Moorgate Street, Rotherham. S60 2TH

**Membership:-** Councillors Monk (Chair), Brent (Vice-Chair), Adair, Blackham, Bower, Clarke, T. Collingham, Elliott, Fisher, Garnett, Harper, Hughes, Ismail, Pitchley, Reynolds, Ryalls, Sutton, Ms. L. Hickey, Mr. M. Hemmingway and Mr. J. Newman.

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

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

### **AGENDA**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

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

#### **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 4th November, 2025 (Pages 4 - 20)**

To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2025 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. 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 and whether any items should be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended 2006) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for:-

Agenda Item 6 (Fostering Transformation Programme – Appendix 4) on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information Paragraph 6b (Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any enactment) and (Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any enactment) and Paragraph 2 (Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual).

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

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

**6. Fostering Transformation Programme (incorporating Prevention of Future Deaths Report) (Pages 21 - 62)**

This report addresses the need to review the current Fostering Programme in the light of changing sufficiency needs for children and young people in care in Rotherham. This will incorporate 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.

**7. The Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2024-2025 (Pages 63 - 96)**

The RSCP report for 2024/25 provides an update on the key partnership activity during the year, based on the strategic priorities. The impact of the work against these priorities will be demonstrated alongside a summary of any activity by the key partner agencies.

This item also covers what the partnership has done as a result of the arrangements, including Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR), and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

**8. Work Programme (Pages 97 - 99)**

To consider and approve the Commission's Work Programme.

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

For the Chair/Project Group Leads to provide an update on the activity regarding sub and project groups of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

## **10. Urgent Business**

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

**The next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission  
will be held on Tuesday 10 February 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, flowing script.

John Edwards,  
**Chief Executive.**

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION**  
**Tuesday 4 November 2025**

Present:- Councillor Brent (in the Chair); Councillors Ismail, Adair, Blackham, Clarke, T. Collingham, Elliott, Fisher, Harper, Hughes, Pitchley, Sutton. n

Apologies for Absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Bower, Garnett and Monk.

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

**10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 4 November 2025, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

**11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

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

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

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

**14. THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2023-2027 UPDATE**

This item provided an update on the delivery of the Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027, over the past twelve months.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Cusworth, the Cabinet Member for Children's and Young Peoples Services, Helen Sweatton, Joint Assistant Director for Commissioning and Performance and Mark Cummins, SEND Transformation Project Lead.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member to introduce the report, during which the following was noted:-



- The Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy focused on what was known about Rotherham's children and young people, including their voices and information about local homes for children.
- The strategy provided the latest data trends and what the priorities were on the delivery plan. The strategy set out how Children and Young People Services would fulfil its role as a corporate parent and meet its Statutory Sufficiency Duty, by providing good quality care, effective parenting, and supporting children and young people in care and when they left care.
- The report and presentation would provide an update on the delivery of the strategy over the past 12 months, including the transformation programmes, such as foster care recruitment and residential children's homes.

The Chair invited the SEND Transformation Project Lead to present the PowerPoint, during which the following was noted:-

### Strategy Overview and Priorities-

- The Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027, was approved at Cabinet in October 2022.
- The Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy was developed in-line with the duty to provide or procure placements for children looked after by the Local Authority. The duty of 'sufficiency' required Local Authorities and Children's Trust Partners to ensure that there was a range of sufficient placements which would meet the needs of children and young people in care. This included fostering placements, residential placements and accommodation for care leavers.

### Key Priorities 2023-2027-

- More young people would be able to be cared for safely in their families and communities within Rotherham and achieve independence successfully.
- Children and young people would have access to a range of homes, both internal and external options, that would meet their needs and improve their outcomes.
- All services would take the Rotherham Family Approach to ensure all Rotherham children and young people would be "resilient, successful and safe", this would be evidenced by quality assurance activity.
- Children and young people would be able to access the support they needed when they needed it, because Health, Education and Care Services would share a joint understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and would use this to inform commissioning and service delivery.
- Children, Young People, their families and carers would be able to access Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

assessments and interventions when needed.

- Children, young people, families and carers would benefit from additional social value in Rotherham, for example more employment opportunities.
- More children, young people and families would benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and to access employment.

### Children In Care Trends-

- The numbers of children in care had reduced from 505 to 464. This followed a steady downward trend over the past two years.
- The number of in-house placements across all types of available provisions, predominantly in-house fostering, residential and sixteen plus had stayed consistent across the period measured, however it was increasing as an overall percentage, as the overall number of children in care reduced.
- Placement stability was strong, with 60% of placements being consistent.
- Placement moves had reduced, this suggested that the plan that was in place was working.

### Leaving Care Trends-

- Leaving care would be a focus area for the service over the next year, specifically reviewing sufficiency arrangements, including the in-house offer to foster carers.
- The number of care leavers had stayed consistent with a slight reduction. There was a larger number of children aged 11-15 who would enter leaving care over the next few years and would require leaving care accommodation.
- There had been continued development of the in-house residential homes provision. The service currently operated seven homes, with a further four expected to become operational shortly.

### Residential Case Study-

- The case study was from a short stay home single occupancy home. The home was used in situations where a young person required accommodation quickly and where other options were not available at that time.
- Background information was obtained through the initial referral form and gathered further by a matching meeting. The Service Manager met child D at their Children in Care Review.
- The service was sensitive to their experiences and their life chances. The remit was to create a secure base where workers could further explore their risks and prepare them for independence as part of their step-down plan.
- Positive relationships were formed and evidenced by the following:-

- Sharing sensitive information including past experiences and their hopes for the future.
  - Decreased frequency of going missing and when they were missing, they would stay in contact with the team.
  - Increased family time.
  - Engaged with numerous direct work sessions a month.
- The service supported their transition into a further placement outside of Rotherham, in line with their Step-down and Safety Plan.
- D visited this placement since leaving and expressed that it was the only place that they felt safe and cared for.

### Children's Home One and Two-

- The service opened several residential homes over recent years and were keen to highlight the high quality of the homes. Young people were involved in the development of the residential homes, examples were provided of how young people were involved in the naming of the homes, interviewing senior employees within the residential service and had helped to pick the furniture and bedroom colours.

### Fostering Rotherham-

- Fostering Rotherham was a collaboration of digital on-line marketing and place based foster carer recruitment, support and retention of local foster carers. The marketing and brand was more prominent due to the work completed over recent years; this included the support from elected members. The aim of the marketing campaign was to grow the in-house offer, to ensure that more children in care would be in family-based settings, and that there would be an in-house provision delivering better value for placements.
- Fostering Rotherham worked with local foster carer heroes who offered up their homes and hearts to young people in and around the community. The service worked with over 120 fostering families from across Rotherham and South Yorkshire, to improve the lives of local children and young people.
- Every day, the Fostering Team and carers lived the Rotherham Council values that were at the core of the local authority. These were honesty, accountability and always being respectful. The service was ambitious and aimed to make a real change for all of Rotherham's looked after children and were proud of what they did.

### Foster Carer Retention-

- Building a stronger, connected community.
- Providing regular opportunities for carers to connect, learn and feel valued all year round.
- Monthly activities for carers included the following:

- Coffee afternoons, which offered informal peer support and connection.
- Foster carer breakfasts, which recognised and celebrated carers.
- Quarterly forums, which offered opportunities to learn and strengthen relationships across the fostering community.
- Quarterly wellbeing Sessions, which promoted foster carer wellbeing through activities like 'paint a pot', pamper sessions, wreath making, jewellery workshops and walking with Alpacas.
- Partnerships activities, for example working with local organisations such as the Arc Cinema, Wentworth Woodhouse, Grimm and Co and Rotherham United, to offer free or discounted experiences for families. There were also businesses that had financially supported some of the services activities.

### Celebrating the Foster Carer Community-

- Highlights from the last 12 months included the following:
  - The launch of a short fostering film called 'Everything', which was shown at the Arc Cinema in October 2024.
  - Free tickets provided for Wentworth Woodhouse to see 'T'was The Night Before Christmas' and free tickets for a Christmas Pantomime for fostering families in December 2024.
  - An Easter Egg Hunt and 50 Years of Fostering Celebration in April 2025.
  - The first Fostering Rotherham Festival and a fostering trip to Bridlington in May 2025.
  - The first Fostering Rotherham Olympics and Colour Dash in July 2025.
  - A story making workshop for children in care in August 2025.
  - Afternoon Tea with the Mayor of Rotherham and a celebration of foster carers in October 2025.
  - The varied programme of celebrations recognised commitment, built communities and ensured every foster carer would feel part of the Rotherham Family.

### Challenges-

- There were recruitment challenges for the residential workforce, as the recruitment remained extremely competitive. As more in-house residential homes became operational, more employees were required, recruiting employees was a national challenge. This would be an area of focus to increase marketing in this area.
- Recruitment and retention of foster carers remained an ongoing challenge due to the competitive nature of the market. There was

also an ageing foster carer population in Rotherham, this mirrored a national challenge.

- An emerging area of focus and priority was the shortage of available, externally commissioned placements across fostering, residential and sixteen plus accommodation. There was a cohort of children in care who would soon become care leavers, therefore the service was reviewing their local offer for care leavers and assessing the sufficiency of placements, to see what options were available to develop further in-house provision to support care leavers.

### Opportunities-

- Ensuring continued and improved awareness and local support for looked after children, especially when developing new provision.
- Developing place-based marketing to increase recruitment and complement the online presence.
- Continuing to promote what's working well and share good new stories.

The Chair thanked the relevant officers for the update and opened the meeting up to questions, during which the following was noted and discussed:

- CAMHS generic waiting lists for services such as Getting Advice, Getting Help and Psychological Therapies, were at four to six weeks and children in care were not waiting a significant period for CAMHS support. The service reorganised the way in which they provided in-house therapeutic support to children in care, therefore in situations where children required additional support and before they reached the threshold for CAMHS support, the service Empower would assist. Empower aimed to support children in situations where either the trauma they had experienced or the emotional wellbeing needs they had were impacting on the home that they were living in, risking placement breakdown. CAMHS services supported the Empower service delivered by the local authority with clinical supervisions. More information on the Empower would be shared with the Commission in writing.
- The latest figures showed that there were 45 children in care on the waiting list for neurodevelopmental assessments. It was advised that being a child in care did not necessarily require prioritisation over another child. However, in situations where an assessment of needs would help the service to identify the right home for the child or would help provide support, this would be prioritised.
- In relation to page 42, the current 344 care leavers and the target of 98.2%, it was clarified that there were seven children and young people who were not in appropriate accommodation, this was because any care leaver in custody could not be classed as being in appropriate accommodation.
- There was a Service Multi-Agency Protocol in place to support children in care and care leavers, the policy ensured children and

young people in care would not be criminalised for behaviour such as criminal damage in residential homes.

- The support offered to care leavers was detailed within the Care Leavers Local Offer. The support for care leavers would not begin later than age sixteen, this was dependent on the young person. They would be consistently asked what support they would need in terms of preparation for adulthood. There were many programmes delivered by CYPS and other services such as housing and Employment Solutions, to transition a care leaver into independence. Personal Advisors offered support which covered anything that would be expected of a parent or carer offer, up until the age of twenty-five. Rotherham had a Care Leavers Covenant, a Care Leaver Offer and Care Leavers Charter.
- In-house residential homes were spread out in different wards across the borough. The main considerations when the service looked at purchasing a property were whether the home would be a good one for children, whether it had the right facilities and was in the right neighbourhood. A full list of the geographic location of in-house residential homes by ward basis would be provided to members of the Commission in writing. The Cabinet Member urged all elected members to support any applications at Planning Board which proposed an in-house residential home.
- The services ambition and aspiration were to have sufficient homes across the borough, including foster homes, residential homes and post sixteen supported accommodation, to be able to match each individual child to the right home. However, it was noted that was not the position the service was in. Since 2021, the service had not been in a position where there were too many suitable properties available for children and young people. When identifying suitable properties, the service looked at the size of the property and whether it would be big enough to house two children comfortably, alongside a staff team, whilst replicating a home environment. Outside space for the children and young people was also considered, alongside whether the property was in a reasonable distance from education provisions. The properties also needed to be within an area that the police would recommend and be priced within an allocated budget.
- At times the service struggled to find appropriate properties which would meet all the relevant criteria, however, the service had purchased a range of property types. Examples were provided of properties purchased from the open market, council homes and existing council assets, such as caretaker properties that were refurbished to ensure the right standards. The service worked well with Strategic Housing and Asset Management to look at accommodation requirements and utilising properties that the council already had.
- The service received significant investment from Cabinet into services such as the in-house residential and in-house fostering services, this had enabled the service to continue to grow in-house provisions.
- Private sector providers were leading the market, in 2024 the top ten

private providers made a combined profit of three hundred million pounds in profit alone.

- In relation to fostering, although the service had not managed to significantly increase the number of foster carers, the council had maintained their number of foster carers, whilst regional and statistical neighbours had seen a significant reduction in numbers. The maintenance was attributed to a very clear marketing strategy and good level of investment to provide support and recruit good foster carers in Rotherham.
- The Commissioning Team worked hard to develop and grow relationships with private providers such as Independent Fostering Agencies and residential providers. This enabled the service to access available places when required.
- Additional investment for the services residential workforce was agreed to enable good quality, supportive homes for children. This also contributed to ensuring the right homes were available for children within Rotherham. 70% of children were placed within twenty miles of their home.
- On a monthly basis, the Joint Assistant Director for Commissioning and Performance chaired the Children and Care Sufficiency Board, which fed into the Children's and Young People's Services Change Management Board, chaired by the Strategic Director of Children's and Young People's Services. There was an action plan which aimed to increase the places and homes available for children to live in, to promote fostering and encourage more in-house foster carers to work with the Council to grow the in-house residential service, and to explore what in-house supported accommodation was required for care leavers aged sixteen plus.
- There was a cohort of foster carers who were ready to retire and often positive foster care endings. Examples were provided of foster carers who decided to adopt their foster child or agree to a Special Guardianship Order, which was a positive ending for the child, but the loss of a foster carer for the service. The service agreed to share a profile with members of the number of newly approved foster carers and the number of de-registrations over the last two years. Some foster carers had a break from fostering for many reasons such as a placement end, a child returning to their birth family or a baby moving onto adoption.
- The service would provide members with additional information on the financial support available for children on Special Guardianship Orders, specifically any financial support available for higher education.

**Resolved:-** That the Improving Lives Select Commission:-

- 1) Considered the progress made against the delivery plan for the Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy.
- 2) Requested that additional information be provided to the Commission on the Empower Service.
- 3) Requested that additional information be provided by a ward basis,

on the locations of residential homes across the borough.

- 4) Requested that the specific data be provided on how many children are in care currently and the comparison to the number of places available for allocation.
- 5) Requested that specific data be provided relating to the current number of newly approved foster carers, the current number of fostering de-registrations and the comparison data to other local authorities.
- 6) Requested that additional information be provided on whether there is any financial support available for higher education, for young people in a Special Guardianship Order arrangement.

**15. DRAFT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2026-2029 UPDATE**

This item provided a high-level overview of the draft Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy via a PowerPoint presentation, for pre-decision, ahead of it being presented to Cabinet.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Cusworth, the Cabinet Member for Children's and Young Peoples Services, Helen Sweaton, Joint Assistant Director for Commissioning and Performance, Cary- Anne Sykes, Head of Service for SEND, Mark Cummins, SEND Transformation Project Lead and Jayne Fitzgerald, Strategic Director of Rotherham Parent Carers Forum, who was in attendance to represent and share the voice of Rotherham Parent Carers.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member to introduce the report, during which the following was noted:

- The update would share the progress made on the planning for a new SEND Sufficiency Strategy and would include the current position, future needs analysis and the outcome of stakeholder engagement. The current SEND Sufficiency Strategy was detailed as part of the Safety Valve Agreement and Implementation Plan, and had been in operation since 2021.
- The new SEND Sufficiency Strategy would be presented to Cabinet for consideration and/or approval in February 2026, ahead of a proposed implementation from April 2026 onwards. The proposed Strategy was underpinned by the Four Cornerstones of Co-production, which were welcome and care, value and include, communicate and work in partnership.
- Through seven core aspirations, the strategy would seek to ensure more pupils could be educated within Rotherham beside their peers, utilising a range of locally available education provision.
- Local authorities were waiting for the outcome of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill which had been delayed until 2026. It was recognised nationally that the SEND system required improvement, however, it was noted that Rotherham were doing well in the area of SEND.



The Chair invited the SEND Transformation Project Lead to present the PowerPoint, during which the following was noted:

## Background-

- The current SEND Sufficiency Strategy which was detailed as part of the Safety Valve Agreement and Implementation Plan, had been in operation since 2021 and would run until the end of 2025-2026.
- A longer-term strategy was required to identify sufficiency requirements beyond the Safety Valve from April 2026.

## Engagement-

- As part of the preparation of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, stakeholder discussion and feedback was completed with mainstream schools, special schools, post 16 providers, health colleagues, parents and carers and young people.
- SEND Sufficiency discussion's took place with education leaders at the Schools Forum, wider education and school improvement partners and at SENCO network events.
- Discussions focused on what was working well and on areas for improvement across core areas including SEND provision, graduated approach and Outreach Services.
- Alongside engagement completed specifically for the development of the new SEND Sufficiency Strategy, young people's and parent and/or carers views were captured as part of established quality assurance processes across all the SEND provision.
- The Rotherham Parent Carers Forum were heavily involved in the stakeholder discussions and had led on some of the engagement in this area.
- The aim of the engagement was to understand the progress that had been made during the Safety Valve period and identify future priorities for a longer term SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- The service also engaged with a variety of governance groups, such as the SEND Executive and SEND Partnership. The service often spoke to young people to gather their feedback on the current provisions, sought the views of teachers and employee's and parents and carers.

## Introduction-

- The Council had a responsibility to create enough education provision to meet the needs of all pupils, this was called sufficiency.
- This included support to mainstream schools to meet a wider level of SEND need and providing sufficiency of education where it was determined specialist provision was required.
- The SEND Sufficiency Strategy identified local needs and provision requirements so that all pupils across the SEND continuum would

be able to access appropriate education provision.

- The focus of the Safety Valve Agreement was to grow the in-borough provision, to provide a range of different education options which moved towards mainstream education via a graduated response, this mirrored the national position and priorities.

### Vision-

- The service had a strong clear vision, Rotherham were just as ambitious for children and young people with SEND, as they were for every other child. The clear vision would ensure consistency and ambition.
- It was noted that the SEND Sufficiency Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Rotherham SEND Strategy, My Life My Rights 2024-2028, the two documents worked closely together and included several shared priorities on education and sufficiency.

### The Four Cornerstones-

- Everything in Rotherham was underpinned by the Four Cornerstones of Co-production, which were welcome and care, value and include, communicate and work in partnership. The key focus of the service was how they worked and engaged with all partners in relation to SEND.

### Progress Since the Last SEND Sufficiency Strategy (Safety Valve)-

- More children were supported to access education within or close to their local community.
- Additional good and outstanding local provision was created, this increased the amount of young people educated locally and reduced reliance on the private sector, such as independent non-maintained and ISP providers.
- The Graduated Response in Rotherham.
- The development of a SEND School Improvement Offer and Quality Assurance, this ensured consistency across mainstream settings.
- The Specialist Inclusion Team (SIT) were created to increase the amount of time that they provided outreach services, this increased the support available to all schools within Rotherham.
- Continuing to create good and outstanding local provision was an aim for the service, alongside continuing to implement a consistent graduated response and continuing to look at the outreach offer, to provide more support to schools as and when they required it.

### Rotherham Data-

- This data was taken from the census and highlighted the range of young people accessing a variety of education provisions at

different key stages. Overall, the data mirrored national data and highlighted an increase in demand for specialist provision, which was attributed to an increase in requests for Education, Health and Care Plans and assessments each year (EHCP's).

- In relation to children in Rotherham Schools, Rotherham had 57,453 children aged under eighteen that represented 21.7% of the local population. There were 45,763 children and young people attending Rotherham's schools as at the January 2024 School Census. There were 465 children in a maintained nursery school, 24,661 pupils in primary schools, 19,303 pupils in secondary schools, 1,194 pupils in special schools and 140 pupils in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).
- There was a growing number of requests for Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessment each year. Half of the special schools in Rotherham were regularly full or over their commissioned number, and the alternative provision places at the Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) were close to capacity since January 2024.

#### The National Position and Comparison-

- Slide ten detailed the national position against the Rotherham position, across all different education provision types. This included resource provision and special schools. A resource provision would be situated on a mainstream school site and provided the opportunity for young people who could access mainstream education, alongside some additional support. The slide also detailed mainstream schools, independent non-maintained and ISP's. Independent specialist provision was predominantly post sixteen and independent non-maintained was for the pre-sixteen age range.
- The difference between the local and national position guided the services thinking and planning for the next SEND Sufficiency Strategy. Rotherham provided more special school places than national averages by approximately 7%, some of that was attributed to the work completed to date which had reduced the independent non-maintained population to sit 2% below the national level. This was a result of the growth of special school places and resource provision places. In terms of mainstream schools, less children were educated there compared to national levels; however, work had been completed to improve the figure such as increased training, recruitment of employees and increased support.

#### Needs Analysis-

- Key Documents considered were as follows:
  - Safety Valve Monitoring Dashboard, this was included within the quarterly returns and looked at the data in further detail.
  - SEND statutory returns information which identified current demand and place planning. The service focused heavily on

place planning to plan directly on a case-by-case basis for young people, this included what their destination looked like and their next step into education, to identify the right provision and any gaps.

- Local SEND provision map.
  - Performance monitoring analysis for the Outreach Services.
  - EHCP trends and the comparison to the national picture.
  - National Strategy links where appropriate.
  - SEND Strategy and KPI dashboard.
  - Partnership data, such as from Health Partners and the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum (RPCF). The RPCF provided data and feedback from parents and carers, the Strategic Director of RPCF also sat on the SEND Executive and SEND Sufficiency Board.
- Key Areas identified were as follows:
    - EHCP Growth, the projects and forecasting for EHCPs were based on a needs change basis. The service was slightly ahead of the forecast at the time; the forecast would be renewed ahead of the strategy seeking approval at Cabinet.
    - Primary need understanding, this provided a breakdown of primary need types. The most prevalent primary needs related to autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health, these were the two areas with the most growth in Rotherham. There was also growth within speech, language and communication needs.
    - Place planning forecasting, if the demand continued to grow, this would require a number of additional places, including up to 380 more places needed in mainstream schools by 2028, this mirrored the national picture and was the equivalent of 40% of the cohort of mainstream by 2030. 161 additional places within special schools would be required by 2028, which would continue to grow to 300 more by 2030. 78 more places within the ISP settings would be required by 2028, growing up to 128 by 2030.

#### Aspirations-

1. More young people would be able to be educated locally, in their communities with mainstream peers.
2. More young people would be able to start their education journey successfully with a plan for their next phase of education.
3. The service would work with the network of special schools to identify gaps in current provision and make best use of the places available across our special schools.
4. Mainstream Schools would be able to access a range of support and best practice guidance to create a more consistent offer to SEND pupils.
5. The mainstream and special schools would be more accessible places for SEND learners.

6. More young people would benefit from additional support to improve outcomes at post-16 and access employment.
7. The service would ensure that the network of local specialist provision would be utilised to its fullest and would continue to deliver good outcomes.

#### Measuring Success-

- There was a combination of output measures relating to activity completion, and impact measures relating to the outcomes for children and young people.
- Progress would be monitored through the SEND Sufficiency Board and SEND Executive Partnership Board.
- There would be an annual scrutiny update and a Cabinet update.
- A separate session would be arranged to provide an update to the Commission on the Thresholds of Needs document.

#### The Rotherham Parent Carers Forum Update-

- The RPCF was commissioned by the local authority to gather voice of parent carers and young people and had just under 3000 members across all wards in Rotherham, although they engaged with up to 6000 families online who were not full members.
- The RPCF completed a survey to all families on an annual basis in March, the survey asked the families what their priorities were at that point in time. In March 2025, SEND Sufficiency and supporting education were the fourth priority identified, and number two was EHCP's. Access to therapies and SEND transport were also priorities for families. The survey was a snapshot in time and the priorities of families changed frequently.
- The RPCF worked in partnership with the local authority to deliver the priorities identified.
- The survey captured positive experiences relating to being listened to and treated with respect, clear and honest communication from schools and practitioners, early intervention and timely support and employees understand my children's needs and genuinely care.
- The survey captured barriers and challenges, these were inconsistent support between schools and settings, delays in appropriate placements or support, support plans or EHCPs not being fully implemented, this was felt to be inconsistent between schools and education settings.

The Chair thanked the relevant officers for the update and opened the meeting up to questions, during which the following was noted and discussed:

- There had been significant innovation in health over the past twenty years, which had increased the number of children with very complex needs who were likely to continue to survive into

adulthood and require an education that would nurture them. The number of children with SEND requirements had disproportionately increased to the population increase.

- There was a bold increase in EHCPs for years nine, ten and eleven, this was attributed to a direct impact of the pandemic. The Element Two funding provided to schools was attributed to the rise in EHCP's, the funding hadn't changed its core value in monetary terms since 2014, which was currently £6,000 for SEND support, if this had risen with inflation this would be at £12,000. Although there was no direct evidence of this, the service advised that they felt that the financial impact of this impacted on schools being unable to provide the support needed for some young people which the service felt was driving the need for EHCP's.
- The Threshold of Needs Document was a key driver in ensuring consistency of allocation, decision making around thresholds and levels of need and expectations of a graduated response across every school. This assisted with driving down the demand of EHCP's.
- The secondary curriculum was felt to be a driver in EHCP's as schools lived in a battle between data, Ofsted and the curriculum against reasonable adjustments, equality and SEND Support.
- A core part of the Safety Valve was around growing the local authorities resource provision, moving towards the mainstream and delivering an additional 100 places combined across primary and secondary education. There was an element that required provisions to be created quickly to meet the demand. The next phase which has been worked on over the last two years has focused on the consistency of support across resource provisions. The provisions were registered with the Department of Education and went through a significant change process and a formal registration.
- The service had strengthened contracting; service level agreements were in place with all resource provision which set overarching requirements. There was a commissioning model in place, all resource provisions were provided by multi-academy trust partners, these were supplemented with quality assurance. Good practise was also shared with schools who were wanting to learn, and additional support was provided by the Specialist Inclusion Team to new resource provisions.
- Places in resource provisions were offered on an individual pupil basis and could not be shared across pupils, this was because the space and requirement were individualised to that specific young person. An example was provided of how a young person may be fine in a mainstream provision for 70% of the week but may need to be withdrawn at any point in time. Although places could not be split between pupils, schools did use the spaces flexibly and managed and co-ordinated them well.
- Every school in Rotherham would have a strategic plan in the next year, which would focus on what their SEND offer was, this would include their whole school special needs offer, classroom offer, and

individual pupil offer around every area of need. Support was being provided by SENDCO's to each school for this. The Specialist Inclusion Teachers were an important presence in schools to ensure a clear understanding of the system and the young people moving through the system.

- Funding for private nurseries was included within Childcare Sufficiency, historically this included three levels of funding, this was anticipated to change. A written update would be provided to the Commission on the funding available for nurseries.
- The SEND Service were working with the Early Years Team to complete a data tracking exercise and place planning from the age of 0. This would provide a trajectory for children at a younger age and allow for better planning and support through the system. There was also a Specialist Inclusion Team that worked within the early years provision to join up the system and enable better transitions from a younger age. The Thresholds of Needs document also included a lot of information for nurseries and childminders.

**Resolved:-** That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- 1) Considered the update on the development of the draft SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2026-2029.
- 2) Requested that a separate session be arranged to provide an update on the Thresholds of Needs document.
- 3) Requested that a further update be provided in writing on childcare sufficiency and the funding available for nurseries.

## **16. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Commission considered its Work Programme, and the following was noted:

- The work programme was included within the agenda pack, for information and discussions.
- There was the following suggested changes to the work programme for members consideration:
  - Children's and Young People's Services requested that the Response to the Prevention of Future Deaths Report be delayed from today's meeting and be presented to December's meeting.
  - It was requested that the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report be presented to December's meeting.
  - As a result, it was suggested that the Community Cohesion Projects Update scheduled for December's meeting, be moved to March 2026.

**Resolved: -** That the Work Programme for 2025/2026 be approved.

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

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activity.

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

**18. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.



Public Report with Exempt Appendices  
Improving Lives Select Commission

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Lives Select Commission – 02 December 2025

**Report Title**

Fostering Transformation Programme

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

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

**Report Author(s)**

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services  
Nicola.curley@rotherham.gov.uk

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

This report addresses the need to review the current Fostering Programme in the light of changing sufficiency needs for children and young people in care in Rotherham. This will incorporate 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.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- Note the Preventing Futures Deaths' response sent to the Assistant Coroner
- Endorse the Fostering Transformation Action Plan created in response to the wider issues in relation to fostering sufficiency and actions required from the Preventing Future Deaths' report

**List of Appendices Included**

- Appendix 1 REGULATION 28: REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS  
3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025

- Appendix 2 Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths Response by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council into the Matters of Concern in respect of the death of Marcia Grant
- Appendix 3 Fostering Transformation Board Terms of Reference
- EXEMPT - Appendix 4 Fostering Transformation Board Action Plan

**Background Papers**

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023- 2028  
Addendum to the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy

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

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

Yes or No? If yes, use text below.

Yes

*An exemption is sought for Appendix 4 under Paragraph 6b (Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any enactment) and (Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any enactment and Paragraph 2 (Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.)) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 is requested, as this report contains detailed information which identifies individuals and will inform the development of new strategy and/ or the procurement of new activity.*

*It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption would outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information because a summary of the information is provided in the report, and the public identification of individuals would impact significantly on the workforce. In addition, the disclosure could adversely affect the Council's commercial interests and undermine the Council's ability to negotiate successfully for business in the future.*

## Fostering Transformation Programme

### 1. Background

- 1.1 On 5.4.23., Marcia Grant, an approved RMBC foster carer, was tragically killed. She had been caring for a 12-year-old boy, known as Child X. On the day, he removed the car keys from the home, entered Mrs Grant's car which was parked in the driveway. The vehicle made several erratic movements when Mrs Grant positioned herself behind the vehicle. The vehicle reversed twice, which caused Mrs Grant to fall and sustain life ending injuries.
- 1.2 Child X had been placed with Mrs Grant for 6 days at the time of the incident and had been the responsibility of the Local Authority since 14.3.23. There was limited information available about him, but it was known that he had received a caution for carrying a knife and had run away from one previous foster placement at the time that he was placed with Mrs Grant. Child X was convicted of death by dangerous driving in November 2023 and given a 2 year custodial sentence.

An inquest held in June and July this year made findings that the Council had contributed to the death of Mrs Grant due to a failure *to have "appropriate systems and processes in place when placing foster children, including but not limited to the lack of accurate and complete documentation, failure to communicate risks and concerns appropriately, [and] failure to conduct appropriate risk assessments..."*.

A Preventing Future Deaths report issued on 3.9.25. asked the Council to comment on the following:

- (1) Lack of placements. The lack of foster placements placed significant strain on the Local Authority to consider creative solutions to try and avoid an unauthorised placement. This led to an unsuitable placement being accepted. I was informed the shortage of placements is a both a local and a national issue and therefore both Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Minister for the Department for Education are asked to consider this concern.*
- (2) Documentation and communication. Both the lack of documentation recording all the relevant risks, failure to complete forms and the lack of adequate communication of the risks in this matter led to a child being placed with a family where numerous individuals considered this was an inappropriate placement. Senior decision making was not based on all the appropriate information identifying there are inadequate systems and processes.*
- (3) Risk Assessment. Evidence was heard about the risks posed by the Child but no evidence that the risk to the foster carers or the other child in their care had been considered or assessed. Again, there was lack of documentation and no formal risk assessment document or collated risk profile for all individuals to allow proper consideration of risks.*

### 2. Key Issues

## 2.1 Sufficiency Issues

The Council recognises that there is a significant challenge in securing sufficient provision for our children and young people in care. This is a national issue and has been worsening for last five years. In 2020, Cabinet confirmed Rotherham's strategic intention to ensure more Rotherham children in care are placed within the Borough, close to their family and community networks. There has been significant investment since that time in both the residential and fostering programme, which has shown real success.

The four phases of residential development will deliver 20 residential beds and 2 emergency beds across 11 registered settings by March 2027. So far, the programme has delivered 13 residential beds and 1 emergency bed across 7 registered settings.

In relation to fostering, RMBC has successfully sustained a positive recruitment and retention rate with foster carers in the Borough and comparatively with local and national statistics have been very successful in this area. Despite a national reduction of LA approvals of approximately 32% since 2021, Rotherham's performance shows a 54.44% increase from 11 approvals in 22/23 to 17 approvals in 2023/2024. Rotherham performed well above the average approvals according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) data.

Regionally, Rotherham's approval performance (based on rounded-up numbers) increased from Rotherham having the 3rd highest number of approvals to having the second highest numbers in the region. This reflects a sharp decline across 2 other Local Authorities. Rotherham is the highest performing LA in the region when it comes to approvals as a percentage of population, for both actuals and rounded figures.

Rotherham has maintained a cohort of experienced foster carers in the Borough and continues to recruit new foster carers with a range of skills. The Service seeks continual feedback from foster carers and utilise this to improve services and support for the fostering community. It has also invested in creative marketing strategies to target a range of local prospective foster carers. The assessment and review process for foster carers is stringent, ensuring that foster carers have the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience to undertake the role.

### Need for Review

Following a report to the Children in Care Sufficiency Board in May 2025 reviewing the current fostering recruitment strategy, it was agreed a time limited Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board should be established.

The purpose of the Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board is to provide a forum for enhanced scrutiny around the Sufficiency Strategy, to ensure a continued focus on recruitment and retention of foster carers and

to adopt recommendations from the national agenda, with a specific focus on Fostering. This will now include the response to the recommendations from the Regulation 28 Report. It is anticipated that this bespoke Board will have completed its work by May 2026.

### Response to the Preventing Future Deaths Report

In relation to the three Matters of Concern outlined in the report, the Council has responded to them as follows:

#### Lack of Placements

- detailing its sufficiency activity as set out in 2.1. to 2.7 above.

#### Documentation and Communication

- Creating a specific Fostering Duty post and ensuring much closer joint working with the Placements Team. The Scheme of delegation in relation to authorisation of placements has been updated and is authorised at a senior manager level. Our policy in terms of Placement Referral Forms for children has changed and they are now saved on files in a different way. There are also clear expectations around the completion of risk analysis sections on those forms and other documents in relation to children being placed with carers. This was all put in place in 2023 and reviewed again after the Inquest.

#### Risk Assessment

- Since the inquest, the Service has also put in place a review of standalone risk assessment forms and the threshold for using these and in which circumstances; there is also ongoing updating of other forms. The Rotherham Children and Young People's Learning Academy is also reviewing the training offer around risk assessment and management (including recording) for all staff and will roll out training in the New Year.

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

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Improving Lives Select Commission endorse the progress of the Fostering Transformation Board and await the outcome of the development work undertaken.

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

- 4.1 Foster carers have been consulted in response to the inquest findings and asked for feedback about what improvements could be made. This was constructive and proposed: a structure chart of the organisation; graduated information sharing about children at the stage foster carers have expressed an interest in offering a placement; and a contribution to the structure of placement referral forms.

Rotherham foster carers will continue be consulted as the new proposals develop and have been asked to co-produce practice guidance on matching and information sharing.

- 4.2 If significant change is recommended at the conclusion of the Review, appropriate reports will be provided for Cabinet and Scrutiny.

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

- 5.1 The Fostering Transformation Board is planned to conclude in May 2026. Any substantive proposals will be outlined by the end of the 2026/2027 financial year.

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

- 6.1 There are no financial and procurement implications relating to the contents of this report.

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

- 7.1 Under section 22G of the Children Act 1989, the Local Authority is under a duty to take steps to ensure that they are able to provide sufficient accommodation for children in care. This is supplemented by the statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation which aims to improve the outcomes of children in care, that so far as reasonably practicable, the council secures sufficient accommodation within its area, meeting the needs of the child, consistent with their welfare. Such duty is referred to as, “the sufficient duty.” The council’s approach to that duty is set out in its strategy referred to above, which is published and has been reviewed, which is in accordance with statutory guidance.
- 7.2 The council is also required to adhere to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 when carrying out the full range of responsibilities towards children in care in relation to care planning, placement and reviews for looked after children. In addition, the National Minimum Standards for fostering services, underpinned by the Fostering Services (England) Regulation 2011 also form the basis of the legal framework that upholds a set of values in relation to the “child’s welfare, safety and needs” including “the foster carers right to have full information about the child”. The values also include having a “genuine partnership between all those involved in foster children.” The council’s approach to the recruitment, training and retention of foster cares is captured in this paper. Details of the consultation with foster cares at paragraph 4 is noted and the enhanced scrutiny provided by the Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board reaffirms that these values are addressed.
- 7.3 Following the Inquest concerning the tragic death of Mrs Grant that considered the circumstances around the placement of child X in her care, the Assistant Coroner made findings that “*Mrs Grant’s decision that she could provide child X with a short-term placement was made without her full knowledge of child X’s risks including the Youth Justice Caution and recent*

*absconsion.*” Furthermore, by the Assistant Coroner finding that, “*This was not an informed decision because of the failings of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to have in place systems and processes to ensure full details are included and up to date forms were used.*”, meant that the statutory duty to make a report to those who can take action to prevent future deaths arose. This duty arises from Regulation 28 and 29 of the coroners (Investigation) Regulations 2009, hence the reference to the Regulation 28 report which sets out the matters of concerns quoted above. In response to these findings and matters of concern raised, the council has fulfilled its duty to reply to this report. Such duty to respond arises under paragraph 7 of Schedule 5 of Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

- 7.4 Under Regulation 29 (3) of 2009 Regulations, the response must contain “(a) details of any action that has been taken or which it is proposed will be taken by the person giving the response or any other person whether in response to the report or otherwise and set out a timetable of the action taken or proposed to be taken; or (b) an explanation as to why no action is proposed”. This legal criterion has been met within the council’s response and therefore in following the progress of the actions set out and by having the scrutiny of newly established Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board, there are no legal implications arising from this report.

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

- 8.1 There are no HR implications relating to the contents of this report.

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

- 9.1 The implications for children and young people, and the adults who care for them are included within the report.

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

- 10.1 Children and young people in care are disproportionately represented across a range of health and education measures. The Fostering Transformation plan aims to increase the number of children in care who can access high quality, family based homes with opportunities and support in order that all children and young people have the strongest possible preparation for Adulthood.

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

- 11.1 This report will not impact on the Council’s or area-wide emissions, or otherwise effect progress towards these goals.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 There are no implications for partners in this report.

### 13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The risk register and associated mitigation is overseen by the Fostering Transformation Board.
- 13.2 Regular updates are provided to the Fostering Transformation Board to ensure that potential barriers to the delivery of these objectives are identified and addressed in advance. This will ensure that resources are directed to areas of most need, including areas of innovation and efficiency.

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

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley, Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service	13/11/25
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Children & Young Peoples Service, Cllr Cusworth	14/11/25

*Report Author: Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young  
People's Services*

*Nicola.curley@rotherham.gov.uk*

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



**Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths Response by  
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council into the Matters of  
Concern in respect of the death of:**

**Marcia Grant**

**Introduction**

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) wishes to express condolences to Mrs Grant's family and acknowledge the important matters raised in the Prevention of Future Deaths Report. We are committed to ensuring that action is taken to mitigate future risks when placing our children and to support decision making by the dedicated carers, who ensure that some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our society have a loving home where their needs can be met.

RMBC acknowledges its responsibilities to children and to foster carers and strives to achieve the highest standards when placing children outside of their family homes. RMBC takes the matters raised in the Regulation 28 Report seriously and offers assurance that processes are continually developed to ensure that they are robust, identify and mitigate risk and ensure that children are placed in appropriate placements and provisions.

**1. Matter of Concern:**

**Lack of placements. The lack of foster placements placed significant strain on the Local Authority to consider creative solutions to try and avoid an unauthorised placement. This led to an unsuitable placement being accepted. I was informed the shortage of placements is both a local and a national issue and therefore both Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Minister for the Department for Education are asked to consider this concern.**

**Current Situation**

The Local Authority recognises the challenges set out by the Assistant Coroner and agrees that the picture both nationally and consequently in Rotherham is that the "lack of foster placements placed significant strain on the Local Authority to consider creative solutions to try and avoid an unauthorised placement."

The Inquest noted in the evidence provided that consideration of this issue has been subject to discussion by sector leaders nationally. The challenges have led to children with particular needs being placed in ways which are outside of the relevant legislation and placements that are sub-optimal, including placements far from the local area.

The Local Authority has repeatedly made the point in regional and national forums about the difficulty that this creates in managing such cases and in managing the associated risks. This burden falls across the entire system and creates scenarios where children can be placed in provisions which do not always meet their needs.

### **Sufficiency Strategies and Development**

In 2020 Cabinet confirmed Rotherham's strategic intention to ensure more Rotherham Children in Care are placed within the Borough, close to their family and community networks.

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

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

### **Action:**

The Fostering Rotherham In-House Plan 2023-2028 details the plans to develop the Fostering Service to increase sufficiency, focusing on marketing and recruitment, valuing our foster carers, service developments and innovation, training, quality assurance and performance and family and friends as foster carers.

The Children in Care Sufficiency Board was established in January 2023 to deliver the Sufficiency Strategy.

The children's residential development programme responds directly to Rotherham Children and Young People's Services' (CYPS) strategic intention to reduce the number of external residential placements for children and ensure more Rotherham Children in Care are placed within Borough, close to their family and community networks. The Council has demonstrated their commitment with a multi-million pound capital programme as well as a more recent increase in the revenue budget to ensure an enhanced offer to children and young people.

The four phases of residential development will deliver 20 residential beds and 2 emergency beds across 11 registered settings by March 2027. So far, the programme has delivered 13 residential beds and 1 emergency bed across 7 registered settings.

In August 2024 a 16+ Sufficiency Transformation Board was established to provide overall direction to the project setting out what is required, authorising work and

monitoring progress against the delivery of the proposals approved by the Children and Young People's Services' Directorate Leadership Team in relation to the needs of older children in care and care leavers. This led to a clear and agreed cross Council working protocol to support developing further sufficiency in the system.

In November 2024 Cabinet approved an addendum to the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy detailing the needs analysis, commissioning intentions and development programme for supported accommodation for care leavers.

### **Fostering Current Position**

RMBC has successfully sustained a positive recruitment and retention rate with foster carers in the Borough and comparatively with local and national statistics have been very successful in this area. Despite a national reduction of LA approvals of approximately 32% since 2021, Rotherham's performance shows a 54.44% increase from 11 approvals in 22/23 to 17 approvals in 2023/2024. In 2023/24 the average number of approvals for all LAs returning data in England was 12.3, an increase of 9% year on year. As such, Rotherham performed well above the average approvals according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) data.

When comparing performance between LAs nationally expressing number of approvals as a percentage of the total population size of their areas, Rotherham ranked 22nd (of 152 LAs) in 2022/2023 and were 5th out of 152 LAs based on the ONS rounded up figures.

Regionally, Rotherham's approval performance (based on rounded-up numbers) increased from Rotherham having the 3rd highest number of approvals to having the second highest numbers in the region. This reflects a sharp decline across 2 other Local Authorities. Rotherham is the highest performing LA in the region when it comes to approvals as a percentage of population, for both actuals and rounded figures.

RMBC have maintained a cohort of experienced foster carers in the Borough and continue to recruit new foster carers with a range of skills.

RMBC seek continual feedback from foster carers and utilise this to improve services and support for the fostering community.

### **Action:**

Foster carers have been consulted in response to the inquest findings and asked for feedback about what improvements could be made. This was constructive and proposed: a structure chart of the organisation; graduated information sharing about children at the stage foster carers have expressed an interest in offering a placement; and a contribution to the structure of placement referral forms.

RMBC have invested in creative marketing strategies to target a range of local prospective foster carers. The assessment and review process for foster carers is

stringent, ensuring that RMBC foster carers have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to undertake the role.

Following a report to the Children in Care Sufficiency Board in May 2025 reviewing the current fostering recruitment strategy, it was agreed a time limited Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board should be established.

The purpose of the Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board is to provide a forum for enhanced scrutiny around the Sufficiency Strategy, to ensure a continued focus on recruitment and retention of foster carers and to adopt recommendations from the national agenda, with a specific focus on Fostering. This will now include the response to the recommendations from the Regulation 28 Report. It is anticipated that this bespoke Board will have completed its work by May 2026.

### **Placements for Young People**

Young people over primary school age are particularly challenging to find suitable foster placements for; the DfE reporting figures for 2023 highlight that 64% of all children in care were over the age of 10 years old and 57% of children in care at that time were male. The Children's Commissioner analyses research into adolescents entering care and emphasises that these children are more likely to have experienced instability and adversity for sustained periods, to have additional special educational needs and are less likely to get the support they need. This leaves young people vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and at higher risk of developing social, emotional and mental health needs. This then results in young people not being considered for foster placements, which would actually be the best, most stable option for most.

#### **Action:**

It is for this reason that RMBC works tirelessly to recruit and train foster carers with a variety of skills and from diverse backgrounds. It is almost always preferable for children and young people to be placed in appropriate, family-based settings where possible and we will continue to focus on this destination for our children in care.

### **Kinship Placement Options**

Kinship care has been a continuing focus for the Local Authority, to support placement sufficiency and to ensure that children can live with family members where possible.

#### **Action:**

RMBC, in response to the DfE's Families First Programme, has appointed a senior leader as a Kinship Lead for the local authority and has also recruited Kinship Navigators to focus on the support offered to Kinship Carers. RMBC has also reviewed and updated Kinship Practice Guidance and financial support to Kinship carers. This has been in place since January 2025 and the fully updated Kinship Local offer was launched in October 2025.

## **2. Matter of Concern:**

**Documentation and communication. Both the lack of documentation recording all the relevant risks, failure to complete forms and the lack of adequate communication of the risks in this matter led to a child being placed with a family where numerous individuals considered this was an inappropriate placement. Senior decision making was not based on all the appropriate information identifying there are inadequate systems and processes.**

At the time of the initial placement being required for Child X, limited information was known about his background and needs. The initial placement referral form was brief and did not contain all relevant information. While the placement referral form was repeatedly updated over the short period Child X was in care with RMBC, we could not determine which placement referral form had been shared with Mrs Grant during the initial matching discussions due to the version control of documents. There were however a number of conversations with Mrs Grant about Child X. Mrs Grant had also taken steps to ensure that she knew where Child X was at all times and that she had locked away knives to ensure he could not access these. RMBC acknowledge that the storage and version control of documents required improvement and had already taken steps to address this. Further immediate changes were made during the course of the Inquest, and we are satisfied that the correct version of the placement referral form is now used. This ensures that the most relevant and up to date information, including on risks, is shared with foster carers during matching discussions.

### **Action:**

In 2023, a dedicated fostering duty worker was appointed to manage and share information with in-house foster carers about children needing a placement. This process ensures that information is held in one place and the duty worker has in depth knowledge of available carers and their skill set, to promote effective matching with children. The duty role co-ordinates matching discussions and information sharing between fostering supervising social workers, foster carers themselves and allocated social workers for children to ensure a comprehensive overview of each child requiring a placement. RMBC has ensured that all social workers within the service understand and follow the process.

Schemes of delegation and approval processes were also revised during 2023 to ensure that information about children requiring a placement is approved by a senior manager to ensure quality and consistency. Mitigation of risk and relevant history is considered and shared with prospective carers and providers prior to matching discussions taking place.

The Commissioning and Placements Service has also implemented a process, which ensures that placement approvals are given at the correct senior management level, depending on the child and the nature of the placement. Placement referral forms, which contain all relevant information, are signed by decision makers and saved to the child's file prior to placements commencing.

There have been challenges around pre-populated forms, within the children's case management system, which RMBC acknowledge can be lengthy and cumbersome. Sections within certain forms were repetitive and led to social workers only completing relevant sections of forms, which leaves many sections blank. A dedicated Systems User Group within RMBC meets monthly to focus on work required to update and revise forms within the children's case management system.

### **3. Matter of Concern:**

**Risk Assessment. Evidence was heard about the risks posed by the Child but no evidence that the risk to the foster carers or the other child in their care had been considered or assessed. Again, there was lack of documentation and no formal risk assessment document or collated risk profile for all individuals to allow proper consideration of risks.**

RMBC acknowledge the importance of a coordinated and risk-based approach to identifying and mitigating foreseeable risks in caring for children, both for their carers' and their own benefit.

At the time of Child X's placement, the Local Authority had worked on the premise that risks, when these are determined to be high, are considered within a more in-depth assessment. When placed, Child X was not deemed to pose a high risk of harm to himself, or others and no evidence was presented which indicated that the risks identified would increase and so a stand-alone risk assessment had not been completed. As acknowledged above, the initial placement referral form did not contain all the known risks about Child X. As concerns developed about the other young person in placement, this was considered and acted upon by RMBC, including the provision of a significant support package to help mitigate risk to him and an acceptance by the whole professional network that Child X's placement could only be of very short duration.

### **Action**

Following Mrs Grant's tragic death, various specific changes have been made to ensure that the Council delivers the best possible services to foster carers and children and young people.

Since 2023, explicit sections for risk analysis have been populated within Placement Referral Forms and Matching Approval documents to ensure that this is routinely

considered for every child requiring a placement. Risk is also considered within child and family assessments.

The authorisation levels of placement referral forms and placement agreements ensure that Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring all matters of risk have been considered, alongside mitigation of these risks.

Standalone risk assessment forms have been maintained and refined for children and young people who may present with high risks, and guidance has been revisited since the inquest to ensure that the threshold for standalone risk assessments is clear and that this practice is routinely implemented where children are deemed to pose a risk to themselves or others.

It is important to note that risk management is incorporated into everyday practice within children's social care. It remains impossible to anticipate all potential future risks, particularly for children who are not known well to the service.

Foster carers will also continue to be consulted around their experience of risk when children have been placed to ensure that the Local Authority learns via the lived experience of carers and children. RMBC has recently revised the foster carer communication plan to ensure that this is embedded within practice.

## **Conclusion**

RMBC is a reflective organisation and continually strives to improve practice, processes and procedures. It is recognised that improvement is a continual process and RMBC takes its corporate parenting responsibilities seriously. In summary of the points above, we will:

- Continue to pursue our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028 with its emphasis on residential, fostering and kinship provision
- Continue to make improvements to documentation, recording and approval processes and co-produce matching guidance with our foster carers
- Continue to enhance risk assessment processes and ensure criteria for standalone risk assessments for placements are clear to all involved.

The Council trusts that the above addresses the matters of concern raised during the course of the Inquest. As stated at the outset, the Council is committed to ensuring that action is taken to mitigate risks in placing our children and to support decision making by the dedicated foster carers who ensure that children and young people have a loving home that can care for them and meet their needs.

The complexity of these placements remains one of the most difficult decision-making processes that the Council is involved in. We will continue to work with our staff, children and foster carers to deliver these services as effectively as possible to meet the needs of all involved. We will also continue to advocate for appropriate national

placement sufficiency that meets the needs of all our children and young people and will continue to engage with Government around this critical issue.

Nicola Curley

**Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services**

**Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council**

**11.11.25.**



## ANNEX A

## REGULATION 28: REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS (1)

*NOTE: This form is to be used **after** an inquest.*

	<p><b>REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS</b></p> <p><b>THIS REPORT IS BEING SENT TO:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Chief Executive, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Riverside House, Main St, Rotherham S60 1AE</b></li> <li><b>2. Secretary of State for Education, Department for Education, 20 Great Smith St, London SW1P 3BT</b></li> </ol>
1	<p><b>CORONER</b></p> <p>I am Marilyn Whittle, Assistant Coroner, for the coroner area of South Yorkshire (West)</p>
2	<p><b>CORONER'S LEGAL POWERS</b></p> <p>I make this report under paragraph 7, Schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and Regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013.</p>
3	<p><b>INVESTIGATION and INQUEST</b></p> <p>On 20 April 2023 I commenced an investigation into the death of Marcia Grant age 60 years old. The investigation concluded at the end of the inquest on 2 June. The cause of death was chest injuries. The inquest conclusion was that Marcia Grant died on 5 April 2023 on Hemper Lane in Sheffield after suffering significant injuries sustained from a collision with a motor vehicle driven by her foster child. The circumstances which led to this incident were contributed to by the failings of the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to have appropriate systems and processes in place when placing foster children, including but not limited to the lack of accurate and complete documentation, failure to communicate risks and concerns appropriately, failure to conduct appropriate risk assessments and failing to safeguard those in their care.</p>
4	<p><b>CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH</b></p> <p>Mrs Grant was a foster carer for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC). She was very skilled at fostering, well thought after and there were no concerns about her abilities to care for children.</p> <p>In March 2023 the Grant family were caring for Child Y, who was a complex child. They were under a 1 foster child category due to previous placement breakdowns. The last breakdown ended after the young person had entered a gang and weapons were found in the bedroom. The plan was for Child Y to have a pre established relationship with anyone else coming into the home in future.</p>

On 14<sup>th</sup> March Child x and sibling were transferred from Doncaster to RMBC. The child's social worker attended the transfer in conference and was aware of all information shared at that meeting. Child X had a long history of social care involvement across different Local Authority's. The Social Worker was made aware of youth caution for having possession of a knife. It was identified that Child X had at times talked about wanting to be part of gang culture and people were worried he was vulnerable to criminal exploitation.

The placement referral form, which should be completed by the Child's Social Worker, was sent to both the placements team and the fostering team for joint searches of in-house and independent fostering agencies to be undertaken. This did not contain all the relevant risks and information. Further forms contained more information regarding the risks but it could not be confirmed which form was being used for which searches.

Due to difficulties in finding a placement the placement team sent out a text message on 30 March to all in house foster carers, including the Grants who had been ruled out by the in-house team as an unsuitable match, for an emergency placement. Mrs Grant responded to offer a placement. The social worker who discussed the information included on the placement form with Mrs Grant would not have been able to discuss all the risks identified because they were not included on the form and they were not present at the transfer in conference. Mrs Grant's decision that she could provide Child X with a short term placement was made without her full knowledge of Child X's risks.

On 30 March the family's social worker received a call to discuss the placement. He was not given a great deal of information and not provided with Child X's risks. However, even without this information, he did not consider this to be a match. Had he known the other information about knives and gangs he would have categorically said that was not a match as there were too many risks.

There had been apprehension from all professionals in regard to placing Child X with the Grants and these conversations were reported to the Fostering Service Manager. The Head of Service in Children in Care approved the placement of Child X with the Grant family for 6 days over their category of approval. He had a verbal conversation and was not told about all the risks or reasons for the Grants previous breakdowns. He was told the Social Workers considered this to be a good match which was not correct. The Head of Service should have completed a decision making record form at the time. This form was completed by someone else on the 23 June 2023, some 3 months following the decision made.

On the 31 March there was a strategy meeting held about the absconding incident from the previous placement. The record of discussion states the that they were going to do that a safety plan. There was no record of any safety planning or any safety conversations.

The placement plan was not completed fully for Child X. Only a few parts were completed. It was accepted that this document should be completed and updated at a 72 hour meeting with relevant professionals and the foster carers. This did not take place.

	<p>Residential homes were not included in the searches. The last resort would be an unregulated placement but as this was unlawful they would have had to have exhausted all other possible options. They did not consider a residential setting. Because of the lack of placements RMBC have opened more residential settings in the local area in order to place children who they cannot find foster carers for.</p> <p>The placement with the Grants continued to 4<sup>th</sup> April. On 4<sup>th</sup> April Mrs Grant received a visit from the Independent Reviewing Officer who discussed the placement with Mrs Grant. The concerns raised by the IRO were relayed to the fostering team manager. Child X was removed from Mrs Grant's care on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup> and taken out by a social worker for the day whilst they arranged another placement. Due to the mix up in dates there was a phone call on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup> after Child X had left to ask Mrs Grant if she could keep Child X till the next day. This call was made despite the concerns that had been raised on the 4<sup>th</sup> by the IRO.</p> <p>Mrs Grant was then asked to keep Child X for a longer period. This further placement was not supported by others as the Fostering Service Manager emailed at back end of day when came to realise that potentially asking to go beyond the 6 working days. Sent email to say just want it noting not in agreement with that.</p> <p>Sadly on 5<sup>th</sup> April there was an incident where Child X took the Grants vehicle and when Mrs Grant positioned herself behind this to prevent him from leaving he reversed into her. She suffered significant chest injuries and was pronounced deceased at the scene.</p>
5	<p><b><u>CORONER'S CONCERNS</u></b></p> <p>During the course of the inquest the evidence revealed matters giving rise to concern. In my opinion there is a risk that future deaths could occur unless action is taken. In the circumstances it is my statutory duty to report to you.</p> <p>The <b>MATTERS OF CONCERN</b> are as follows. –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Lack of placements. The lack of foster placements placed significant strain on the Local Authority to consider creative solutions to try and avoid an unauthorised placement. This led to an unsuitable placement being accepted. I was informed the shortage of placements is a both a local and a national issue and therefore both Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Minister for the Department for Education are asked to consider this concern.</li> <li>(2) Documentation and communication. Both the lack of documentation recording all the relevant risks, failure to complete forms and the lack of adequate communication of the risks in this matter led to a child being placed with a family where numerous individuals considered this was an inappropriate placement. Senior decision making was not based on all the appropriate information identifying there are inadequate systems and processes.</li> <li>(3) Risk Assessment. Evidence was heard about the risks posed by the Child but no evidence that the risk to the foster carers or the other</li> </ol>

	<p>child in their care had been considered or assessed. Again there was lack of documentation and no formal risk assessment document or collated risk profile for all individuals to allow proper consideration of risks.</p>
6	<p><b>ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN</b></p> <p>In my opinion action should be taken to prevent future deaths and I believe you and your organisations have the power to take such action.</p>
7	<p><b>YOUR RESPONSE</b></p> <p>You are under a duty to respond to this report within 56 days of the date of this report, namely by 28 October 2025. I, the coroner, may extend the period.</p> <p>Your response must contain details of action taken or proposed to be taken, setting out the timetable for action. Otherwise you must explain why no action is proposed.</p>
8	<p><b>COPIES and PUBLICATION</b></p> <p>I have sent a copy of my report to the Chief Coroner and to the following Interested Persons: the family of Marcia Grant</p> <p>I am also under a duty to send the Chief Coroner a copy of your response.</p> <p>The Chief Coroner may publish either or both in a complete or redacted or summary form. He may send a copy of this report to any person who he believes may find it useful or of interest. You may make representations to me, the coroner, at the time of your response, about the release or the publication of your response by the Chief Coroner.</p>
9	<p><b>03 September 2025 Marilyn Whittle HMAC</b></p>

## Fostering Transformation Project Board Terms of Reference (ToR)

### Background:

The Fostering Transformation Board seeks to ensure the following outcomes within the Placement (Fostering) Transformation Plan are delivered:

Key aspects of the Placement (Fostering) Transformation Plan include:

- **Placement Sufficiency – Fostering:** Review placement sufficiency strategy, continued focus on fostering recruitment and retention, utilising a number of different initiatives to attract foster carers from differing backgrounds and for multiple purposes, continued focus on recruitment and retention in fostering to ensure carers and staff are well supported, with manageable work spans and develop and implement a training and assessment programme for carers to include the needs and potential benefits of offering homes to older children and young people
- **Engagement and Co-production:** Co-produce practice guidance re matching and info sharing, review communication and foster carers newsletter, develop DCS/Cabinet Member foster carer engagement and training for fostering team
- **Improving Practice:** Enhance and develop how we assess and articulate risk  
**Improve recording:** Ensure a robust digital infrastructure to support effective information sharing and version control including the review of processes, referral, matching and approval forms and placement manual
- **Improved information sharing between agencies to safeguard children and young people and foster carers:** Development of communication plan with foster carers and internal escalation processes.

Separate steering groups will drive delivery of the programme. Strategic oversight would be provided through the Fostering Transformation Board. Over arching governance of the wider corporate parenting sufficiency work is fed through to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

The workstream steering groups will take responsibility for overseeing the improvements from the action plan, the review process and refresh of the threshold document and associated practice guidance and protocols.

*Fostering & Commissioning Steering Group will take responsibility for overseeing the improved practice and recording improved information sharing between agencies to safeguard children and young people and foster carers and the review of placement sufficiency.*

*Ensure that the ICT development group encompasses information-sharing, development of changes to processes for the use of ICT systems to underpin placement process including referral pathways and commissioning processes*

Assistant Director Children's Social Care will also provide regular updates to and from the Working together group and the ICT development Group

**Membership:**

Strategic Director Children & Young Peoples Services (Chair)

Assistant Director – Children's Social Care

Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Quality and Performance

Head of Service, Children in Care

Head of Commissioning, CYPS

Strategic Commissioning Officer

Commissioning Officer (Project Support)

Principal Social Worker

Service Manager Fostering

Business partners will be invited to the meeting on an ad hoc basis to address specific issues when required

**Strategic Aim:**

The strategic aim of the meeting is to evidence progress in the following areas:

- improve fostering sufficiency
- improve coproduction and codesign of services with foster carers
- address questions about the fostering model/programme in the future
- address the issue from the preventive future deaths report
- provides corporate assurance around fostering and placement sufficiency for children and young people

**Meeting Schedule/Timescale:**

Wednesday 22nd October, 2:30 – 4:30

Monday 24th November, 3:00 – 5:00

Monday 8th December, 2:30 – 4:30

Monday 12th January, 2:30 – 4:30

Monday 9th February, 2:30 – 4:30

Monday 9th March, 2:30 – 4:30

**Review:**

The terms of reference will be updated at least once a year or more frequently if required e.g. in response to national or local directives.

**Document last updated:** 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025

By virtue of paragraph(s) 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted



# Fostering Transformation Programme

Improving Lives Select Commission  
December 2025

# Fostering Overview

- Strong Fostering service – includes Brightsparks marketing provision, Mockingbird model, experienced managers and team
- High recruitment levels compared to regional and national
- Challenge with numbers of retiring carers
- Changing model of how people want to care
- Children and young people with different needs

# Fostering Transformation Board

- Significant sufficiency programme underway in relation to residential, 16+ and kinship
- Agreed need for a review through a new time limited Board that would link to the overarching Children in Care Sufficiency Board in May 25
- Inquest outcome due in June 25, so agreed a delay so that it could also consider the actions arising from the Inquest.

# Incident of Concern

- On 5.4.23. Marcia Grant, an RMBC foster carer, was killed when a car driven by her 12-year foster child ran her over. He had been placed with her for 6 days at the time.
- There were two relevant risk factors included going missing on one occasion from foster care and receiving a caution for carrying a knife.
- Child X was convicted in November 2023 of death by dangerous driving. He received a two year sentence.
- Inquest was planned for June 2025, focused on the placement decision making by the LA. This was adjourned on the 4<sup>th</sup> day due to the Assistant Coroner requesting more documents from the LA and was ultimately concluded on 2.7.25.

# Findings and PFD report

- The Assistant Coroner found that RMBC had:  
*contributed to [the death of Marcia Grant] by the failings of the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to have appropriate systems and processes in place when placing foster children, including but not limited to the lack of accurate and complete documentation, failure to communicate risks and concerns appropriately, failure to conduct appropriate risk assessments and failing to safeguard those in their care.*
- There were 3 actions from the Preventing Future Deaths Report which followed:
  - *Lack of placements*
  - *Documentation and communication*
  - *Risk assessment*

# Action Taken

In 2023:

- Meetings with Foster Carer community
- Support to staff
- New Head of Service – full review
- Fostering Duty post created
- Much closer joint working with the Placements Team
- Scheme of delegation updated and sign off of forms set at a senior manager level
- Placement referral forms (PRFs) are saved to children's files
- Risk analysis section populated on PRFs and Matching Approval documents

# Action Taken

Following the PFD report received on 3.9.25:

- Fostering Transformation Board commenced
- Meetings with foster carers and agreement to co- produce practice guidance on matching and information sharing
- Review of standalone risk assessment forms and threshold for using these; updating of other forms
- Learning Academy reviewing the training offer around risk assessment and management (including recording)
- Development of kinship offer and practice as part of the Families First programme

# Next Steps

- Ofsted ILACS Inspection outcome
- Development of Family Help through the Families First Transformation programme
- Fostering review recommendations taken forward.



# ROTHERHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

## Annual Assurance Report 2024/25



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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the annual assurance report from the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP). The RSCP report for 2024/25 will provide an update on the key partnership activity during the year, based on the strategic priorities. The impact of the work against these priorities will be demonstrated alongside a summary of any activity by the key partner agencies.

It will also cover what the partnership has done as a result of the arrangements, including Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR), and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

In addition, the report will include:

- The contribution of each safeguarding partner to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)
- Any themes identified from scrutiny and audit processes
- Evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies
- Analysis of areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- Analysis of learning from serious incidents
- Key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle
- How safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families
- Financial arrangements for the period
- How safeguarding partners ensure adequate representation and education at both operational and strategic levels
- How data is being used to encourage learning, and how information sharing has improved practice

- The learning identified from independent scrutiny
- Any updates to the published arrangements
- Evidence that national reforms have been implemented.

The RSCP priorities have been renewed for 2024-2025 and are themed under three key delivery objectives:

- **Child Exploitation**
- **Neglect**
- **Safeguarding in Education**

The above priorities were also informed by the below key principles, which underpinned all activity undertaken by the RSCP to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Rotherham:

- **Safe at Home**
- **Safe in the Community**
- **Safe Safeguarding Systems**

The Safeguarding Partners for the 2024-2025 were:

**Chris Edwards**, Chief Officer, NHS Rotherham Integrated Care Board.

**Sharon Kemp**, Chief Executive, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

**Hayley Barnett**, Deputy Chief Constable, South Yorkshire Police



# FOREWORD

## from the RSCP Independent Scrutineer – Darren Downs

It is a great pleasure to not only contribute to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) annual report but also to be the independent chair and scrutineer, having taken on the role in early 2023. The partnership has excellent engagement from all the key partners and a culture of challenge, driving what has been a journey of continuous improvement. The partnership has strong foundations, and it continues to grow and improve the services that are delivered and strives to challenge itself to be the best.

The Annual Report for 2024-25 reflects our continued commitment and passion to deliver the best we can for the children and young people of Rotherham. The report evidences the good work that has been delivered and identifies the areas where we are still looking to make improvements. Since becoming the independent chair and scrutineer, I continue to be impressed by the strength and level of engagement across the partnership and the drive to safeguard our children, giving them the best start in life. The partnership has seen some new members arrive and some changes to the executive team, and it is an ideal opportunity to thank those who have left the partnership for their work and tireless efforts in recent years. The partnership is in a strong position as a result of their commitment, and it is testament to the strength of the partnership that changes are seamless and almost unnoticed. Despite these changes, I am confident that the partnership will continue to push forward and see further improvements.

The year has seen more statutory inspections, and excellent performance across organisations, which, given the pressures on finances and resources, is

pleasing and reassuring to see. We look forward to further inspections in the coming year, learning from the processes and continuing to drive to be the best and deliver the best for the children and young people of Rotherham.

The data within the report will evidence that we are delivering excellent S47 conclusions, and that decisions around risk of harm are largely robust. The number of Looked after Children (LAC) has reduced further and well below those of our statistical neighbours. Child in Need (CiN) assessments are lower than the national average, indicating that we are working well at Early Help, but we need to do further work this year to fully understand this. Finally, the areas around education are similar to the national picture, with more children in Elective Home Education (EHE) than previous years, but the work around this is robust and effective, with many children returned to educational settings and work in the Safeguarding in Education group managing the concerns this raises.

As we move into the next year and plans are refreshed for the 2025-2026 activities, I look forward to continuing to push the partnership to make positive improvements and give children the best start in life. Much of the current work will continue and strengthen the activities they deliver, such as EVOLVE and MACE. We will also push forward on new work, and a major area of work will be to implement and embed the Families First Programme, ensuring it delivers what is expected and required, and work is actively ongoing in this area.

# WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM



Rotherham is a large minster town in South Yorkshire, England which along with its nearby settlements form the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham, with a population of 268,354 (ONS, 2022). There are 61,636 0–19-year-old children living in the Borough (22.9% of the local population – ONS, 2022).

23% of children living in Rotherham are in low-income families (England 19.8% - 2023). Our Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement rate is above national average, 26.6% compared to 24.3% at Primary phase and 27.9% compared to 24.1% at Secondary phase (DfE 2023/24).

22.8% of our school age population is from BME background (England 38.7%) (DfE 2023/24).

## Inspections of Statutory Partners

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council received a focused visit and full SEND inspection in 2024-25, other partners were not inspected during the year but have had recent inspections with details below.

# WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

## Summary of Inspection Findings

Organisation	Inspection Body and Date	Overall Rating	Key Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<b>Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC)</b>	Ofsted (2022)	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong safeguarding</li> <li>• Effective multi-agency work (Evolve service)</li> <li>• Good progress for children in care</li> <li>• Child-centred decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve response to initial contacts</li> <li>• Better identity needs assessment</li> <li>• Raise ambition for care leavers</li> <li>• Improve quality of case audits</li> </ul>
<b>Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC)</b>	Ofsted Focused Visit (July 2024)	N/A (Positive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective child protection planning</li> <li>• Strong leadership and corporate support</li> </ul>	N/A
<b>Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC)</b>	Inspection (Oct 2024)	1 (highest rating)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive outcomes for children with SEND</li> <li>• Active improvement efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the quality of EHC plans</li> <li>• Reduce wait times for assessment</li> </ul>



# WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

## Summary of Inspection Findings - continued

Organisation	Inspection Body and Date	Overall Rating	Key Strengths	Areas for Improvement
South Yorkshire Police	HMICFRS PEEL (2022)	Outstanding (Protecting Vulnerable People)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong governance and strategy</li> <li>• Effective multi-agency collaboration</li> <li>• High-quality assurance and victim feedback</li> <li>• Strong domestic abuse response</li> <li>• Mental health support access</li> <li>• Officer well-being prioritised</li> </ul>	None in respect of safeguarding
The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT)	CQC (2021)	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved inter-agency collaboration</li> <li>• Clear injury documentation guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low safeguarding training compliance</li> <li>• Staff uncertainty in reporting abuse</li> <li>• Uneven safeguarding referral workload</li> <li>• Need to embed safeguarding improvements</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress made in all areas as shared with RSCP</b></p>

# WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

## Rotherham in numbers - Core data by statutory Partner

The vast majority of child-centred data is held by Rotherham Council. The Neglect and Child Exploitation delivery groups have introduced increased multi agency data into the scorecards for 2025-26 and this will be reported on next year.

Intervention	RMBC 2024-25	RMBC 2023-24	Statistical Neighbour Average	National Average
Referrals	2964	2780		
Section 47 completions (individual children)	1572	1406		
S47s per 10k	221	194	229	187
Child in Need per 10k	310		398	332
Child protection Plans per 10k	54	45	54	41
Children looked after per 10k	83	88	109	60

All partner data is subject to scrutiny and oversight within the Performance, Practice and Learning (PPL) Delivery Group. These numbers tell us that referrals are fairly consistent in the borough. Over 95% of children subject of a s47 investigation are found to have harm substantiated, which suggests a robust process in the strategy meetings held and that the right children

are taken through this process.

Child Protection numbers are historically higher than the national average and this remains the case, alongside a reduction in the numbers of children looked after. This number is in line with statistical neighbours and does not suggest an issue of concern.



# WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

## Early Help

1,266 Early Help Assessments were completed in year, with 32% of these completed by partners, up from 28% in 2023-24. Partners are supported by Integrated Working Leads and this increased engagement gives a positive foundation upon which to support the launch of the Rotherham Neglect pathway in 2025-26. Rotherham's commitment to prevention and community working is evidenced with 98% of children aged under 5 registered with a children's centre and 82% accessing children's centre activities.

## Education

The Safeguarding in Education Group has been overseeing the development of policy to address the potential risks to a minority of children Electively Home Educated (EHE). In the borough at present there are 747 children EHE at 31 March 2025, with a significant increase from 501 in 23/24. Of these 35 arrangements were considered unsuitable.

The links between exclusions and safeguarding are well established and have been supported by RSCP audit activity this year. There have been 6 primary and 56 secondary exclusions in 2024-25 with 6 rescinded. This represents a positive reduction from 13 and 94 respectively in 23/24. Positively, persistent absence is below the national and neighbour average for the year.

## Youth Justice Service (YJS)

Intervention	RMBC	Neighbour	National
1st time entrants	171	179	161
Use of custody	0.04	0.13	0.07

The above highlights the positive efforts to avoid custody for young people in Rotherham, with roughly a third of children in custody compared to statistical neighbours and also below the national average. This is alongside a 13% reoffending rate compared to 35% for statistical neighbours' average and 20% nationally.

## Missing from Home and Return Home Interviews

There were 1,016 missing episodes in 2024-25, with 46 children missing 3 or more times. 43% of these were children in care. Return home interviews were offered on 932 or 91.5% of occasions. 335 of the children missing were known for CCE risks and 39 for CSE – demonstrating the prevalence of CCE for vulnerable children in the borough.

## Secure Units

There are no secure children's establishments located within the Rotherham local authority area. As such, there have been no incidents of restraint requiring review under the Youth Justice Board, Youth Custody Service, or His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons reporting framework. The RSCP continues to monitor any placements of Rotherham children in secure settings outside the borough and ensures appropriate safeguarding oversight is maintained.

# PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE



## Governance and Structure of the RSCP

The RSCP was established in September 2019 in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (WT18).

The new legislation enshrined in Working Together 2023 (WT23) has reaffirmed the role of the three statutory safeguarding partners, and has further defined the remit of chief officers, leaders and managers within the governance. The partnership has reviewed and published an updated MASA in line with the WT23 guidance, and the governance structures have remained the same as the previous year.

The Executive Group continues to set the

direction and priorities of the Partnership. The priorities are aligned with those of the other key partnership boards, Health & Wellbeing, Rotherham Safer Partnership and the Safeguarding Adults Board. The three main statutory partners, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire ICB continue to work collaboratively with the wider partnership and Voluntary Consortium to deliver a safer Rotherham.

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership continues to have Delivery Groups alongside the strategic priorities for 2023-2026. A safeguarding education group (SEDG) was created last year in anticipation of the enhanced role of education services in safeguarding and in response to emerging themes around the importance of education in safeguarding. In addition, a delivery group



# PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE

focusing solely on Neglect (NeDG) has made progress in setting the groundwork to deliver in the complex and challenging context that exists around neglect. The Practice Performance and Learning (PPL) delivery group focuses on the areas of quality assurance, training and learning from practice. This includes the oversight and management of all safeguarding practice reviews. Finally, the Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG) has remained and is focused on the exploitation of children and young people and the delivery of the new Child Exploitation Strategy. The partnership has maintained strong links with the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) throughout 2024/25; this process transferred to the Health and Wellbeing Board for oversight in mid-2024/25, and this arrangement will continue into 2025/26 and beyond.

The delivery groups have a nominated chair and representatives from across the different multi-agencies that make up the partnership, ensuring everyone has accountability in the partnership, and that accountability and challenge are maximised. These groups meet every two months and progress activity, before reporting progress into the bi-monthly Executive Board, providing reassurance on activity to executive members, and having their work scrutinised.

## RSCP Budget

- The RSCP budget has an underspend of £36,413 for the year 2024/25. This is due to a carry forward from 2023/24 of just over £12k and slippage for the period April to October due to a staffing vacancy. In addition, the £5k Budget for Safeguarding Practice Reviews was not required 2024/25, creating an in-year saving. This underspend will carry forward into 2025/26 to relieve any funding pressures.
- The eCDOP Licence costs for 2024/25 and beyond have been transferred over to Public Health.
- Contributions from partners are at the same rate as 2023/24 since the proposed budget for 2024/25 with partner contributions for 25/26 yet to be agreed. LSPs will meet in September 2025 to agree on new funding arrangements following findings from a report completed by the sub-regional scrutineers.



# PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE

Safeguarding Budget 2024/25				
Course	Budget	Actual	Forecast	Variance
RMBC Contribution	-115,352	-115,352	-115,352	0
RCCG Contribution	-115,352	-115,352	-115,352	0
SYPCC Contribution	-44,475	-44,475	-44,475	0
Probation Service	0	-2,049	-2,049	-2,049
Total for Expenditure	275,179	252,839	252,839	-22,340
Total for Income	-275,179	-277,228	-227,228	-2,049
Total	0	-24,389	-24,389	-24,389
c/f from 2023/24	0	-12,024	-12,024	-12,024
Grand Total	0	-36,413	-36,413	-36,413

The small underspend will also support activity within the delivery groups to generate a direct impact on reducing abuse in our borough through the following activity:

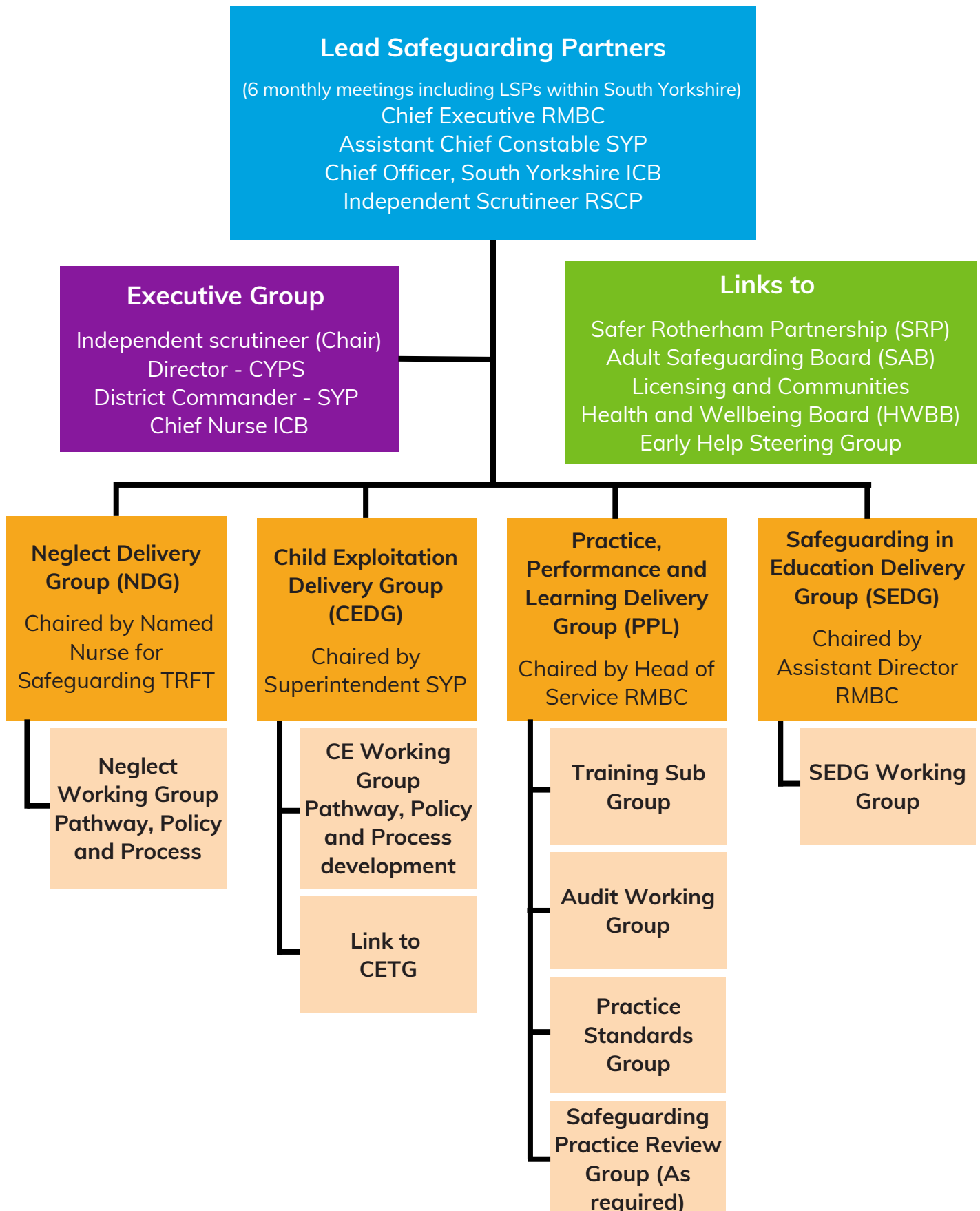
- A Neglect Conference to include representatives from all partners and key third sector partners, the intent would be to raise awareness of neglect across the borough with a supporting media campaign
- Increased provision of neglect training to increase the confidence of all practitioners in addressing neglect at the earliest stages, working alongside families and their networks in line with the Families First Partnership

Programme guidance.

- An enhanced website and digital offer, which will enable greater public access to key information and support.
- Targeted specialist training in respect of Intra Familial Child Sexual Abuse, following the recommendations from the National Panel.

# PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE

## RSCP Structure





# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## Neglect

### **What is working well at present, and what are the success stories for the group?**

The Neglect Delivery Group has positive and consistent engagement from all partners. Our focus for 2024-25 has been on developing a clear pathway to assist with the recognition and prevention of neglect. Key achievements this year have been in delivering training in the completion of the Graded Care Profile 2, with an increase in colleagues completing the training from social work and health. Increased trainer capacity will enable the training offer to be upscale across Rotherham in 2025-26 and beyond.

To achieve consistency, a pathway for children in need and children on child protection plans has been launched, with guidance on the timely completion of the GCP2 in order to scale the level of neglect and to target intervention.

Alongside this a screening tool (RESHHAPED) for neglect has been approved for use by the NSPCC and a pilot is underway in a selection of schools. This will then be evaluated and launched across all schools over the summer of 2025. South Yorkshire Police continue to use the SHARED tool to identify factors of neglect when attending homes, supporting the recognition of neglect across the partnership.

# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Neglect Strategy was formally launched this year as part of Safeguarding Awareness week, supported by facilitated sessions from the Chair of the Neglect Delivery Group and the LSCP Business Manager.

## **What needs to improve, and what areas of work are we concentrating on at present?**

The data in relation to neglect in Rotherham has been developed this year and is being refined currently with the aim of understanding the impact of the Neglect Strategy and workplan. The impending launch of the Neglect screening tool will support early identification of neglect in universal services and should enable greater targeted support as part of the Team around the Family Approach.

A further focus will be to increase community engagement and awareness of neglect, working alongside partners across the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB), RSCP and Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) to identify opportunities where messages can be shared that will help the community to identify neglect. This will be supported by the Rotherham Family Hubs and the Rotherham Family Approach – which emphasises the key role that wider families can play in keeping their network safe.

## **What is the current performance picture and how does this fit with this priority?**

Rotherham has high levels of dental caries in children. Due to the way data is collated, it is difficult to understand the true picture of this. We are working with colleagues at The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT), the Integrated Care Board (ICB), and public health to develop this work further,

particularly in relation to under 5s and communities in Rotherham that may struggle to access dental care.

## **What are the priorities for 2025-26?**

To further enhance and embed the data scorecard with detail on children not brought to medical appointments, dental extractions, and to further audit to better understand the 'issues/themes' behind neglect, enabling more focused interventions to take place.

## **Child Exploitation**

### **What is working well at present and what are the success stories for the group?**

Prevention, education and training continues to be a focus for the group. There is good work ongoing around licensing, and a new Fearless campaign will be launched early in 2025-2026.

The use of digital and online technology, including the sharing of images, continues to pose significant risk to young children and people. Education and training have been provided, including a video, to reach more children and parents/ carers. Social media is one aspect that has been used to support this expansion.

Child Exploitation Task Group (CETG) currently brings together partners from South Yorkshire Police, Youth Justice, Housing, Health, Education, Licensing and Social Care. The forum meets weekly and highlights intelligence linked to child exploitation that has been compiled by the local intelligence teams. The range of this intelligence is incredibly broad, encompassing reports ranging from locations known for child drug use, all the

# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

way to children being routinely exploited or targeted by specific individuals. The most important aspect of this forum is the eclectic nature of the discussions surrounding the intelligence; in many cases, the intelligence comes readily developed by our intelligence teams but is lacking in enough corroboration to be acted upon. In the meeting this corroboration is supported by partner agencies who can add extra intelligence or highlight certain risks which were not immediately apparent to police. This enables the group to eliminate blind spots and hold each other to account around our plans to tackle exploitation.

Successes within the CETG forum are numerous. A recent example involves a nightclub in Rotherham, where intelligence suggested it was being attended by young females who were being served alcohol and potentially exploited. Within one meeting licensing staff were tasked with attending alongside SYP Exploitation teams to investigate the venue, consequently, the venue's license was revoked. SYP were able to retrieve CCTV footage within the venue and this is now being reviewed to support victims and apprehend suspects.

Another example demonstrates positive information sharing across the partnership which has supported the serving of child abduction warning notices (CAWN) and subsequent victim testimony. Without the CETG forum, it is clear that this offending would not have been highlighted as quickly, and the information held by partners would not have been available to act upon.

## **What needs to improve, and what areas of work are we concentrating on at present?**

Joint working across the partnership around disruptions of organised crime groups is important, especially those who are linked to CSE/CCE. We are focused on improving intelligence submissions, which will help us to disrupt the behaviour of exploitative adults as a partnership. We are refreshing the intelligence drive across the partnership, including delivering presentations to partners. We will continue to monitor this to ensure that no matter how small, we are sharing the information and intelligence. We are introducing a monthly disruption document across the partnerships to capture this work.

Appreciative case studies allow us to understand what went well, identify any gaps and look to address them as partnership. This brings good discussions from the group.

We are looking to introduce a children's panel to help understand the voice of the child and engage young people, gaining their perspectives on how we can offer any further support for people who may be at risk of CSE/CCE.

We have also introduced input from the Child Exploitation Tactical Group into the agenda of the meeting. This provides us with reassurance around the work ongoing, intelligence development across the partnership, and also to support this group to ensure they have the relevant support and attendance.

The RSCP recognises the national issue of taxis being licenced to other local authorities. This was raised as a concern in the recent report to government by Dame



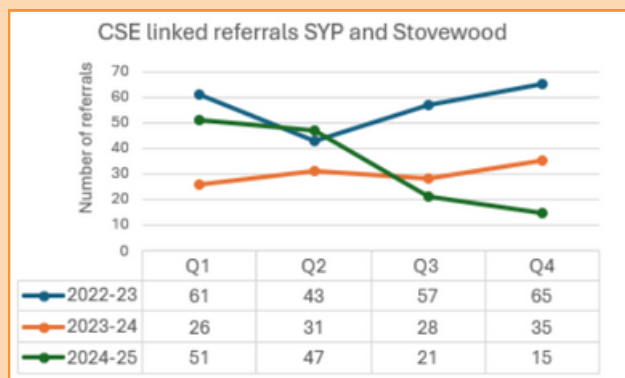
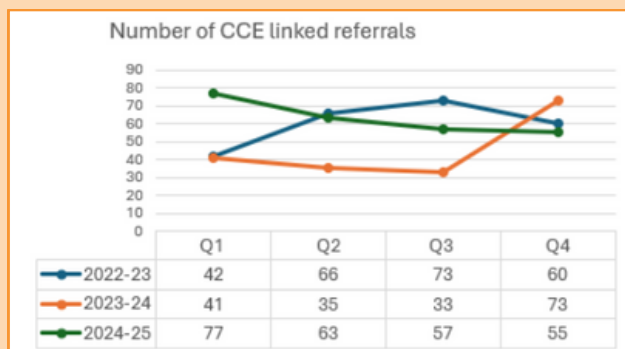
# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Louise Casey. Alongside further clarity from central government the RSCP is working to ensure that Uber drivers and Taxi drivers from other authorities are aware of relevant safeguarding issues and practices, and that they deliver their services to Rotherham residents in a safe manner.

## What is the current performance picture, including any gaps in data?

The data demonstrates a consistent picture in relation to exploitation in that we have seen CSE numbers and activity continue to stabilise whilst criminal exploitation continues to represent the greater proportion of exploitation in Rotherham. In addition, we are seeing a significant increase in online offences in line with the national picture.

This is demonstrated in the graphs below:

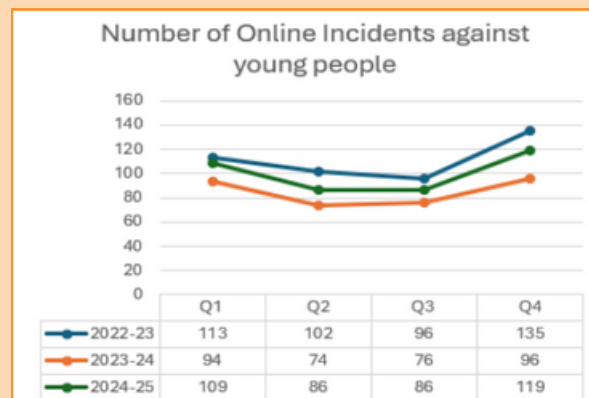


The CE workplan highlights the preventative measures that can be taken in educating children and young people about the risks in relation to online abuse. The graph above shows a correlation across the past three years in terms of the numbers, with a steep rise in Q4. This may be due to more young people have internet-enabled devices after Christmas. The CEDG is planning to understand this data to a greater extent in 25/26.

Alongside the data, our audit activity has confirmed the link between exploitation and engagement in school. With the Safeguarding in Education priority well established, CEDG and SEDG will work closely together to ensure that children are given sufficient support to remain in education and benefit from the broad positives of school life.

## Transitional Safeguarding

The RSCP recognises the importance of transitional safeguarding for young people moving from children's to adults' services. While this remains an emerging area of focus, the partnership is committed to strengthening pathways that ensure continuity of care and protection. In 2025–26, the RSCP will work with the Rotherham



# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB) and other partners to develop a joint approach to transitional safeguarding, with particular attention to care leavers, young people with SEND, and those at risk of exploitation or mental health challenges. This will include mapping current transition protocols, identifying gaps, and co-producing solutions with young people.

## **What is the impact on children?**

We continue to see effective and meaningful engagement with young people at risk from exploitation in the borough from a variety of professionals, the numbers of children scaled at high risk and therefore receiving a service from the multi-agency EVOLVE team has reduced from last year and year on year.

## **What are the priorities for 2025-26?**

The launch of the Harm Outside The Home (HOTH) pathway in May 2025 will improve our ability to enhance community safety to ensure that young people enjoy Rotherham as much as possible without fear of abuse. This will require the RSCP to engage across the public sector and with non-traditional partners in formulating preventative and responsive solutions for young people at risk of exploitation. We will continue to work and develop awareness across the online space, ensuring risks are understood and that we do all we can to mitigate that risk to children by raising awareness to parent's, professionals and the local community. We will further develop information and intelligence sharing across the partnership so we can divert young people from exploitation and identify and target individuals and groups that may present a risk to the children of Rotherham.

## **Safeguarding in Education**

### **What is working well at present, and what are the success stories for the group?**

The group has successfully developed and updated the Safeguarding in Education Work Plan, which is key for implementing the strategic intent of the group. The workplan focuses on Understand, Protect and Include, similar to the "4 Ps" used for the Child Exploitation Delivery Group. There has been a positive increase in group membership, ensuring broader representation across different phases of education and all settings. The group now includes representatives from Early Years, Primary, Secondary, College, Special, and Nursery settings, alongside other professional groups outside education. The process for Section 175 returns has been well-received following the cessation of the Virtual College reporting mechanism, with return rates at 95%. There has also been positive engagement and follow up meetings held with schools to offer challenge and scrutiny. The area Designated Safeguarding Leads meeting continues to be very successful, with the majority of schools represented. This group provides the RSCP with the opportunity to share learning and plans with education colleagues to engage them in RSCP activity.

### **What needs to improve, and what areas of work are we concentrating on at present?**

The education scorecard will support the group's ability to track key indicators of risk and will identify areas for improvement. The current scorecard has been refined and requires further development in 2025-

# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

26.

A heavy focus going forward will be to understand and respond to child on child abuse, including, harmful sexual behaviour, online bullying and the sharing of indecent images. We will deliver guidance to schools in relation to their safeguarding practice in this area.

There also is increasing evidence of the harm caused by illicit vapes, which can often be used by young people, and whilst not specific to the education arena, the RSCP recognises the crucial role that school and education settings can play in delivering key messages to young people.

The number of children Electively Home Educated (EHE) continues to rise in line with national data. Recent research from the National Panel clearly demonstrates the complexities in addressing harm where children are also educated at home. In response the EHE services will build on their success in reducing children being taken off roll by their families with additional capacity in 2025-26.

## **What is the impact on children?**

The s175 process gave assurance that schools are well equipped to meet their safeguarding requirements, and an increase in Early Help Assessment completion from education partners suggests that confidence in managing arising concerns has increased.

## **What are the priorities for 2025-26?**

Publication of the Safeguarding in Education Strategy will crystallise the intent in bringing Education partners clearly into the business of the RSCP and in line with the national agenda. The strategy and further planning will be influenced by

the views of young people, and work has commenced to gain children's views and to drive safety for children in schools and alternative education settings.

The benefit of this group being at a strategic level is that it can influence the activity in other areas and gain from shared expertise across the partnership. The strategic priorities in relation to Neglect and Child Exploitation have a significant bearing on safeguarding practice in the education sector, and these relationships will be enhanced further in 2025-26.

The new Education Working Group will be developing a guide for intervention and knowledge regarding Child on Child abuse to sit alongside the s175 process, enabling schools to assess their needs in this emerging area of practice.

In relation to EHE, the group will oversee the governance and safeguarding practice of children at risk and home educated.



# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## Practice, Performance and Learning

The Practice, Performance and Learning (PPL) Delivery Group oversees the quality assurance and training offer from the RSCP. In addition, the group has responsibility for coordination the learning from case reviews and escalations. Four subgroups sit under the PPL Delivery Group.

- **The Audit Working Group** – coordinates all audit activity
- **The Practice Standards Group** – resolution of partner dispute/escalation and oversight of policy
- **The Training and Learning subgroup** – coordination of training activity and implementation of learning
- **The Safeguarding Practice Review Group** – meets when required to discuss any children potentially requiring a rapid review.

### Audit activity 2024-25

This year RSCP has completed five audits.

- March 2024: The JTAI Serious Youth Violence
- July 2024: The Partnership Response to Neglect
- September 2024: Electively Home Educated Children
- November 2024: The JTAI Domestic Abuse
- February 2025: The Partnership Response to Child Exploitation

Colleagues across the multi-agency partnership completed comprehensive audits, analysing the detail of records and available documents, to assess the impact for children and families of professionals'

practice. The scrutiny and challenge enabled good practice to be identified alongside learning and opportunities for further training in areas such as neglect, child sexual abuse.

Learning for practice was identified in the following areas, which have informed the learning and development action plan for 2025-26, which will be coordinated by the PPL Delivery Group and reported to the Executive.

### Key learning themes

- Cross-border information sharing processes could be more collaborative, effective and timely to protect children and families from risk and harm.
- Improving the routine completion by all partners of GCP2 to understand the impact of neglect and cumulative harm.
- MASA and MAIS processes continue to effectively identify risk and provide immediate protection for children and families.
- Assessments and plans need to routinely include consultation with fathers and absent carers.
- Where family networks are identified, they are routinely supported by partners and provided with clear expectations for them to support children.
- Education review and challenge processes are in place and robust in scrutinising and challenging alternative education provision, including subsequent modified timetables.
- Evidence of the improvement in consistent recording of children's voices and the impact of diversity, intersectionality and unique characteristics.



# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Evidence that genograms and chronologies are consistently initiated at MASH and are subsequently reviewed and updated.

## Actions so far

- GCP2 pathway and screening tool agreed and launching in April 2025. The impact of this will be reviewed in August 2025.
- Harm Outside the Home Pathway agreed and launched in May 2025.
- SEDG to receive six monthly updates in respect of Elective Home Education and review processes for alternative education and modified timetables.
- In addition to increased GCP2 training, a Partnership neglect training proposal to be approved, and training delivered to partners by March 2026.

## Planned Audit Activity for 2025/26

- Quarter 1: Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse
- Quarter 2: Child Protection Medicals
- Quarter 3: Evidence of Impact - RSCP Delivery Groups
- Quarter 4: TBC

## Practice Standards

For vetoes 2024-25, there were 5. The group supported the Chair's veto for 3 and did not support for 2.

There were 3 appraisals referred. These were returned to the referrer for direct discussion between managers.

## Safeguarding Practice Reviews

This year has seen no SPRs undertaken although a review from last year has been completed, with actions being tackled through the PPL Delivery Group.

## Training Group

The training subgroup launched in 2024 and is focused on developing the RSCP learning offer for 25/26 and beyond. At present, it is acknowledged that our learning offer is smaller than similar safeguarding partnerships and that this has not changed much over the last several years.

The RSCP has continued to provide a core offer of training for colleagues in 2024-25. In this time, 856 staff have attended courses as detailed in the table below:

Course	Sessions	Staff attended
Abianda (Girls in Gangs and Groups) Training	8	102
Child Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding	4	45
Complexity and Curiosity in the Context of Child Exploitation	6	87
Cumulative Harm and Child Neglect	2	10
The Role of Designated Safeguarding Leads and Processes within Rotherham CYPS and MASH	3	59
Education Safeguarding Forum	3	330
LADO and Allegations Management	1	21
Level 3 Safeguarding Children	2	57
Multiagency Level 3 Safeguarding Training	7	145

# PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In November 2024, the RSCP held Safeguarding Awareness Week in conjunction with RSAB. The theme was neglect, and over 100 colleagues and senior leaders attended both the local and regional launch.

Over the course of the week, 20 further sessions were delivered to colleagues, and covered themes such as professional curiosity, modern slavery and online risks for young people. Professionals attending gave the following feedback:

- More detailed background information regarding far-right extremist groups and how to identify.
- More information about the Graded Care Profile and how this can inform practice.
- Legislation around dogs, data around dog attacks and their frequency with specific reference to South Yorkshire.
- The content was very informative, helpful guidance regarding the apps young people are using and the language they use.
- The cultural discourse that dominates perspectives on domestic abuse and those involved and affected by it, and the resistant discourse. What constitutes coercive control and how the signs can be overlooked by professionals and not recognised by the victims.
- Safer sleeping advice provided.

## What is the impact on children?

The group oversees all activity regarding child reviews and audits and as such informs the development of procedures and practice. This year we have seen guidance on assessing dangerous dogs and follow up regarding inter agency working.

## Planning for 2025-26 includes

- The refreshed RSCP prospectus, completed March 2025.
- A review of course content for Child Exploitation and Harm Outside the Home to reflect the Contextual Pathway.
- Increasing the cohort of GCP2 trainers, bringing GCP2 training into the partnership rather than through the LA learning and development service in order to reflect the access by all safeguarding partners. Development of a shorter briefing/training around neglect/GCP2/screening tool and working with resistance.
- Enhanced collation of course feedback, to be produced in a report back to the training subgroup
- Closer ties with RSAB training and potential for joint training in areas such as self-neglect, trafficking and mental health.
- Development of our use of Eventbrite/Microsoft forms to enhance the booking experience.
- Training alongside health partners for safer sleeping and safeguarding children around dogs
- To develop professional curiosity training alongside delivery to DSL forum.





# THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY



Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership has an Independent Chair and Scrutineer, who deliver two main roles within the partnership that are essential to its running. The chair and scrutineer coordinate the activity across the partnership on behalf of both the DSPs and LSPs.

The key roles that the chair and scrutineer ensure are delivered are:

- The functions required under the MASA and WT23 are complied with by all the relevant agencies and partners.
- The relevant organisations are delivering to the expectations of the partnership and are actively contributing.
- The governance is functioning, and there is a culture of accountability, through high support and high challenge.
- The approach to safeguarding is collaborative and expands beyond the partnership to other statutory boards such as the RSAB and SRP.
- That local learning and learning from National reviews and work is embedded into core practice.
- The wider partnership and other relevant stakeholders are contributing to safeguarding across Rotherham
- The audit schedule is effective, including the management of Section 11 and Section 175 audits.



# THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY

- There is an effective scorecard that provides reassurance to the communities and professionals alike.

The chair and scrutineer also engages in direct scrutiny with organisations and professionals to provide reassurance over the findings of audits, such as school visits and mock inspections. This helps validate that services are delivering as expected, and impact is being seen within the communities.

The key guiding principles of scrutiny that the partnership adheres to are that the role will:

- Provide constructive “critical friend” challenges to all areas of activity.
- Ensure the voice and concerns of children and young people are addressed.
- Drive an improvement in public services across the partnership.
- Be aware of the local, regional and national pressures and best practice.

During the last year, the chair and scrutineer has:

- Reviewed performance information and enhanced the scorecard across the partnership.
- Delivered a joint Section 11 event with RSAB and is progressing the subsequent improvement plan.
- Developed a programme of scrutiny and audits to reassure professionals and children and young people.
- Delivered wider partnership events focused on themes of “Unseen Children” and the challenges connected to EHE.
- Worked with other scrutineers across the region, providing assistance, learning and identification of best practice.

- Assisted with the development and launch of a number of new strategies
- Obtained reassurance from other areas for the executive, such as CDOP, LADO and the Rotherham Together Partnership.

During the next year, and 2025 to 2026, the chair and scrutineer will:

- Review and develop the audit schedule for activity against the priorities
- Continue to embed and enhance the scorecard
- Enhance the voice of the children in the executive and work of the partnership
- Continue to deliver wider partnership themed events
- Continue to build relationships with relevant stakeholders and the voluntary community
- Refresh the funding principles across the sub-region in collaboration with other Children partnerships
- Work with partners to implement the Families First Programme.





# CONCLUSION



The RSCP has enjoyed a productive year with many of the strategic priorities seeing significant progress and activity. This period has consolidated our efforts, and in 2025-26, it is expected that we will see increased positive impact on the children of Rotherham. Examples of this are in relation to the Neglect pathway, which should target increased recognition and earlier intervention, reducing negative outcomes for children, and also with regard to the Harm Outside the Home pathway which takes the Child Exploitation offer in Rotherham further by refocusing on risk which is contextual to communities and individuals who may pose risk to our young people.

It is anticipated that our data suite will continue to support our ability to collate the evidence of our impact across the partnership, including information from non-statutory partners.

The Families First Partnership Programme will bring exciting and comprehensive changes to the field of child protection in

the next year and is an exciting opportunity to continue our journey of improvements. The RSCP will be at the forefront of this delivery in supporting our partners to deliver against the set timescales and objectives. We are confident that the Safeguarding in Education (SiE) priority and the supporting Delivery Group put us ahead of the curve in relation to working alongside education partners and achieving strategic oversight at the heart of the partnership. The SiE strategy will be launched in late 2025 and will reaffirm this commitment.

As always, the RSCP continues to rely on the strength of its relationships, partners remain honestly robust and collaborative, supported by a small but highly stable and experienced business unit. Child Protection practice in the first quarter of this century continues to evolve to deliver in complex and changing times, and this partnership is steadfast in its flexibility and determination in order to meet these challenges head on.



w: [www.rscp.org.uk](http://www.rscp.org.uk)  
e: [RSCP@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:RSCP@rotherham.gov.uk)

# Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2024/25

Improving Lives Select Commission  
October 2025

# Local Safeguarding Children's Partnerships

- LSCPs replaced Local Safeguarding Children's Boards.
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) state how the three statutory safeguarding partners (Local Authority, Integrated Care Board and Police) should work in partnership to discharge their responsibilities to safeguard children as part of the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP).
- The Rotherham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements were endorsed at Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

# Statutory Safeguarding Partners

Under the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, the Lead Safeguarding Partners are:

1. The Chief Executive of Rotherham MBC
2. The Chief Executive of South Yorkshire ICB
3. The Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police

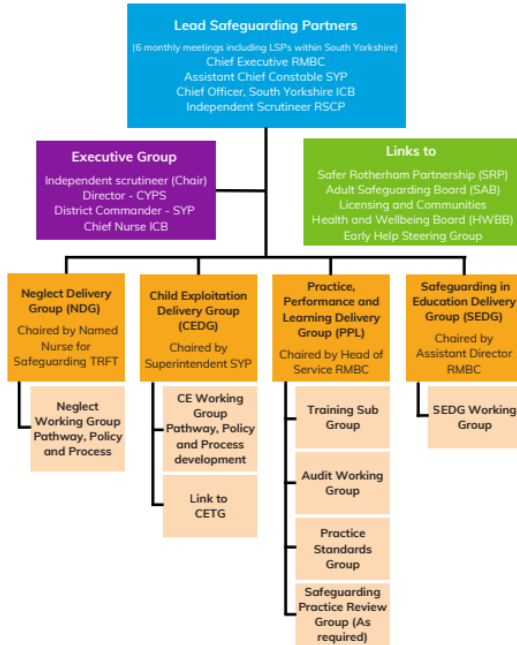
The Delegated Safeguarding Partners are:

1. Strategic Director, Children's Services, Rotherham MBC
2. Director of Nursing, South Yorkshire ICB
3. Chief Superintendent for Rotherham, South Yorkshire Police

There is also an Independent Chair and Scrutineer for RSCP, Darren Downs.

# Rotherham SCP Governance

RSCP Structure



There are four delivery groups which report into the Executive Group.

There are working groups which report into each delivery group.

# Rotherham SCP Governance

- Each Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership must publish an annual report by end September each year.
- Working Together 2023 statutory guidance sets out what the report must cover.
- RSCP's Annual Assurance Report was approved by the Lead Safeguarding Partners prior to publication.
- The Annual Report will be noted at Cabinet in November 2025.



# Inspections of partner agencies

- There were no inspections of TRFT or South Yorkshire Police in the relevant window April 2024 to March 2025.
- An Ofsted focused visit of Children's Services in July 2024 found effective work with children in need of protection and strong leadership.
- An Area SEND Inspection in October 2024 found our local SEND arrangements 'typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed'.



# Progress against strategic priorities

- Developed the Neglect Pathway for earlier recognition and intervention, using the RESHAPED tool and the Graded Care Profile 2 tool.
- Established the Harm Outside The Home Pathway to respond to risk to children and young people outside their family environment.
- Safeguarding in Education delivery group involves education as a close fourth partner in safeguarding children.

# Progress against strategic priorities

- Five multi-agency audits completed.
- Training reaching 856 staff across a range of safeguarding topics.
- Over 100 attendees at Safeguarding Awareness Week 2024.
- 95% completion rate for 2024 s175 returns.
- Broadening membership of the delivery groups.
- Continued success with the Designated Safeguarding Lead forums.

### Appendix 3: Improving Lives Select Commission –Summary Work Programme 2025/26

**Chair: Councillor Monk**  
**Governance Advisor: Natasha Aucott/ Debbie Pons**

**Vice-Chair: Councillor Brent**  
**Link Officer: Kelly White**

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
17-Jun-25	Monica Green/ Chris Macdonald	Draft Kinship Local Offer (pre-decision scrutiny)
	N/A	Closed session following meeting to discuss and draft 2025-2026 work programme
22-Jul-25	Helen Sweaton/ Anne Hawke	CYPS Performance Report 2024-2025
	Niall Devlin/Sarah Whitby	Elective Home Education Revised Policy (pre-decision scrutiny)
16-Sep-25		CAMHS Update including:

1 substantive agenda item	Helen Sweaton	<p>□ <b>Annual update</b> on children's social, emotional and mental health- updates on all provision for children with SEMH needs, CAMHS services including pathways, interventions and waiting lists, and support children are able to access from wider provisions such as the education and voluntary sector.</p> <p>□ <b>Neurodiversity Update</b>- service update, Choice and the Peer Support Service.</p>
04-Nov-25	Stuart Williams	Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028 Update
	Niall Devlin/ Cary-Anne Sykes	Revised SEND Sufficiency Strategy- pre-decision scrutiny (Cabinet in February 2026)- will also include a progress update on the SEND Inspection areas for improvement.
28-Nov-25	Scott Matthewman/ Jacqueline Clarke	Unpaid Carers Strategy Revision Workshop (HSC Workshop with ILSC invited due to young carers aspect)
02-Dec-25	Nicola Curley	Fostering Transformation Programme incorporating the update on the Response to the Prevention of Future Deaths Report
	Chris Macdonald/ Darren Downs	Rotherham Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2024-2025
10-Feb-26	Niall Devlin	SACRE Annual Report 2024-2025 (for information)
	Niall Devlin	Children Not in School Update (including EHE, CME, exclusions, attendance and part time provision).
	Niall Devlin	Educational Attainment Update
17-Mar-26	Kelly White	Community Cohesion Projects Update- Building Bridges Together Project and the Together for Tomorrow Project Update

28-Apr-26	Sam Barstow & Niall Devlin	Safeguarding Children From Radicalisation (Prevent Programme Update and Keeping Children Safe in Education Update)
	TBC	Child Exploitation Strategy Update

### Substantive Items for Scheduling

Date TBC	TBC	Revised Neglect Strategy- For Information only (2026 onwards)
Date TBC (waiting service response)	Stuart Williams	Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report 2024-2025

### Reviews for Scheduling/ on-going

on-going	N/A	Reviewing the impact of secondary school policies on school attendance levels and ensuring an education for vulnerable children and/or trauma experienced children
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### Items to be Considered by Other Means (e.g. off-agenda briefing, workshop etc)

Visit/ workshop- Early 2026	RPCF- Jayne Fitzgerald	Rotherham Parent Carers Forum Update- RPCF vision and plans, voice of the community and the impact of the work completed with partners.
SEND Threshold of Needs Document Update	Cary- Anne Sykes	TBC- Potentially a workshop
Potential workshop- early 2026	TBC	Support available for women who have had one or more child removed, following cessation of PAUSE Project.
Workshop in March/April 2026	Polly Hamilton	Childrens Capital of Culture Workshop- Impact and Legacy for Children and Young People

### Items for Future Consideration

Date TBC (awaiting inspection)	TBC	Ofsted Inspection Outcome (including any action plans/ improvements)
Date TBC (awaiting inspection)	TBC	Youth Justice Service update/ HMIP Inspection Outcome (including any action plans/ improvements)