

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION

Date and Time:- Tuesday 17 March 2026 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 (Pages 3 - 24)

To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th February, 2026 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.

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. Community Recovery Fund - Children's Services (Pages 25 - 44)

To receive and note the update on the delivery of the Community Recovery Fund projects in Children and Young People's Services over the past twelve months.

7. Children Not Accessing Their Full Educational Entitlement At School (Pages 45 - 65)

To receive and note the information and assurance regarding activity in relation to Children Not in School in Rotherham.

8. Annual Report of the Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) 2024-2025 (Pages 66 - 93)

To receive and note the Annual Report of the Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for the academic year 2024–2025.

9. Work Programme (Pages 94 - 96)

To consider and approve the Commission's Work Programme.

10. 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.

11. 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 28 April 2026
commencing at 10.00 a.m.
in Rotherham Town Hall.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Edwards', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Edwards,
Chief Executive.

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 10 February 2026

Present:- Councillor Monk (in the Chair); Councillors Adair, Bower, Brent, Clarke, T. Collingham, Elliott, Fisher, Harper, Steele, Ms. L. Hickey, Mr. M. Hemmingway and Mr. J. Newman.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Blackham, Garnett, Hughes, Ismail, Pitchley and Sutton.

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

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

28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 2ND DECEMBER, 2025

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 2nd December, 2025 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30. 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.

31. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

32. CORPORATE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP BOARD UPDATE

Councillor Brent, Vice-Chair, provided an overview following the last two meetings of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board held on 9th December, 2025 and 3rd February, 2026.

In December the Board received an update following the Ofsted inspection of Children and Young People's Services. Although the formal judgement could not be shared at the time, the judgement had since been published.

Young people from the Children in Care Council presented their views on what made a good home, aligning with Priority Six of the work plan. Their input, supported by preparatory discussions with the Fostering Champion and Assistant Director, emphasised the importance of stable relationships, commitment and everyday essentials that contributed to a

sense of safety and belonging. Officers provided a complimentary presentation on the qualities required from carers, showing strong alignment between service priorities and young people's lived experiences.

Further updates included a progress report on the action plan, headline performance indicators for children in care, and a joint presentation from the ICB and RDaSH on emotional and physical wellbeing. This highlighted ongoing work within the wellbeing group, new health priorities and improvements in areas such as dental and health check recording. Annual reports from Voice and Influence and the Independent Reviewing Officer were also shared for Board review.

At the February meeting, alongside a previously reviewed Ofsted update, the Board received a powerful and candid account from a young person in care. He described the impact of housing, financial pressures, loneliness, and unsafe environments on his wellbeing, stressing the importance of supportive relationships. His testimony prompted immediate responses from leaders in Social Care and Housing, who acknowledged the challenges raised and outlined opportunities to strengthen support for young people. Owing to the significance of his contribution, the agenda was adjusted to give it proper consideration and then went on for Board Members to provide further feedback to the Service Director for Social Care regarding the draft Corporate Parenting annual report.

Resolved:- That the updates from the Corporate Parenting Board be received and the contents noted.

33. OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES SHORT INSPECTION NOVEMBER 2025

Consideration was given to the report which advised the Improving Lives Select Commission of the outcome of the Inspection of Children's Services by Ofsted in November 2025. This was a judgement Short Inspection and the Local Authority received an Overall Effectiveness grade of Outstanding. All sub-categories also received a grade of Outstanding with the exception of 'the experiences and progress of Care Leavers', which received a Good. There were two improvement actions, both related to Care Leavers.

In inviting introductions to the report the Chair wished to place on record her congratulations and thanks and appreciation for all the hard work involved by all in this result. This was also endorsed by the Select Commission.

Councillor Cusworth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, introduced the report which provided an overview of the recent Ofsted inspection and summarised the key findings, areas of strength and priorities for improvement identified during the visit.

It also outlined the actions already underway in response to the inspection, as well as the next steps required to ensure continued progress. Bringing this to Scrutiny supported transparent oversight, enabled constructive challenge and helped to ensure the Council remained focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families.

Moving forward there was no sense of complacency. Activity within Children's Services had not slowed down and all involved would continue to work hard to maintain high standards and to address the areas identified for improvement, particularly in relation to care leavers and the few specific actions highlighted by Ofsted.

The Chair invited the Executive Director to deliver her presentation which covered:-

- Background to the ILACS Short Inspection.
- Judgement Criteria.
- Outcomes:-
 - ❖ Children who need help and protection – Outstanding.
 - ❖ Children in care – Outstanding.
 - ❖ Care leavers – Good.
 - ❖ Impact of leaders – Outstanding.
 - ❖ Overall Effectiveness – Outstanding.
- National context – Top 10.
- Overall Assessment.
- Detail of the Judgement – Help and Protection.
- Detail of the Judgement – Experiences and Progress of Children in Care.
- Detail of the Judgement – Care Leavers.
- Detail of the Judgement – Impact of Leaders.
- Impact on Staff.
- Actions that were needed.
- Final Words.

Councillor Cusworth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, emphasised the importance of staff stability in Rotherham and the significant difference it made to the work taking place. Rotherham had low agency staffing rates which meant the authority was in a strong position regarding locality vacancies. That stability was essential to achieve "Outstanding".

Furthermore, the senior leadership team had been stable for some time and remained very strong.

One area that remained strong was the Virtual School. Many places only had one head of Virtual School; Rotherham had two, one for primary and one for secondary and both worked tirelessly to ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were completed from birth, meaning babies'

development was now fully captured.

Rotherham also had one of the strongest youth voices through the Care Leavers' Forum and the Children in Care Council. Young people also sat on the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, which fed into the Rotherham Together Partnership Plan. Young people were helping to shape priorities, including those of the Health and Wellbeing Board clearly showing how joined-up the system had become.

The Commission were encouraged to visit The Journey to view first-hand the events that were run to support young people.

Finally the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member wished to place on record her own thanks to the Executive Director and her team for their hard work and to all who had contributed to this journey.

The Chair invited questions from the Commission and a discussion and answer session ensued from officers with the following issues raised and clarified:-

- Care leavers in Rotherham benefitted from Council Tax exemption so were officers engaging with other regional areas to improve reciprocal arrangements so that young people who lived out of the borough had the same rights and entitlements.

It was confirmed regional discussions were ongoing across Yorkshire and the Humber about improving support for care leavers. Rotherham had gathered a list of possible "quick wins" to explore with other Councils and conversations were taking place with Directors of Children's Services across the region. The Government had encouraged Councils to consider care leavers' needs, but there was no new legal duty. Locally, Councillor Cusworth was leading work on what could be offered region-wide such as leisure passes and transport support.

Most Councils, including Rotherham, already provided council tax exemption for care leavers. The main challenge was housing priority. Rotherham gave all care leavers priority one status, meaning they could access accommodation immediately. Many other Councils used priority two, reserving priority one for emergencies like domestic abuse. The aim was to negotiate a consistent priority one offer across the region, although this required agreement from housing teams, which could vary in flexibility. Some Councils, such as Barnsley, already reciprocated Rotherham's approach. Overall, the regional work was progressing and Rotherham was ahead of many areas.

- Following a visit to The Journey were there any plans to develop the offer for young people further. For example, what about engaging with young people more around financial planning as they become

increasingly independent or on the health side were there any initiatives being created that encouraged young people to adopt healthier lifestyles.

The Council were committed to building on the offer at The Journey, which, as a large house, had lots of different facilities such as places to wash, cook, study and support to applying for employment.

The Journey was also a place young people could come if they were feeling a bit low or had a difficult day. Emotional support was offered. An example was shared about a young person who was comfortable enough to come into The Journey to rest on an informal basis.

Regular drop-ins were also available and the DWP were regulars as was the named nurse who provided advice on a wide range of health issues. There were links with the Prison Service to support work with young people who have been in and out of custody and to reintegrate into society and reduce the risk of them returning.

- Looking at the toolbox, the service had been graded 'good'. Officers were asked how long it would take to address the areas for improvement and would Ofsted be returning to inspect those specific elements.

The report by Ofsted was considered realistic and a genuine reflection of the work happening in Rotherham. This evidence-based 'good' had clear areas to improve and the service were confident that the two actions identified could be addressed in a short space of time.

One issue was linked to the case management system, which was in the process of being upgraded. Necessary changes could not be made until that upgrade was complete accounting for a short delay. The work on health histories was also a specific and manageable task.

By September it was anticipated all actions would be fully completed and embedded. There were also some broader developments needed within the Leaving Care Service and this would be ongoing.

Ofsted would not return to Rotherham for another full judgement for three years so a further inspection was not expected until 2028 at the earliest.

Additionally, Ofsted were currently consulting on changes to their inspection framework, including the removal of overall grades and mirrored recent changes in school inspections.

The Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report would also be presented to Improving Lives shortly. Elected Members on

the Board championed a specific area and attendance was popular. A significant amount of work was, therefore, happening between meetings with clear commitments to corporate parenting responsibilities.

- With the changes and upgrade required to the software would this allow for a more responsive case management system that operated in real time.

The current case management system, Liquid Logic, was widely used by local authorities but was often slow. Although an upgrade was underway replacing older parts of the system, it still would not be instantly responsive or modern like consumer apps.

The Council did have staff who could make changes within the system, but implementing upgrades could cause delays and create a backlog of requested tweaks. A key issue was that pathway plans sat at the very end of a long chain of processes in the system. This meant that making changes to pathway plans often required changes earlier in the workflow, making the process more complicated than expected.

Overall, the upgrade would help, but improvements would still take time. This was a wider issue across local authorities and not specific to Rotherham.

- What access was there to physical and mental health support for care leavers?

All care leavers have access to general health services. Once they become adults and citizens of Rotherham they could use all services available to any other resident. They also received some additional support, such as subsidies for schemes like Rothercard.

There was also a specific health offer in place and a service had been commissioned from RDaSH, which originally provided support for children and young people aged 0 to 19, including those who had been in care or were care leavers. However, because care leaver legislation extended support up to age of 25, this left a gap. Following a review of the contract this now included mental health and emotional wellbeing services for care leavers up to the age of 25.

Care leavers also have access to the Council's employee wellbeing service.

Additionally there was now also a panel that considered individual requests from young people if they had an additional need or required something specific when funding could then be granted.

Discussions have also taken place in Overview and Scrutiny Management Board about discounted swimming for people over 65. Places for Leisure who run Rotherham's leisure centres already offer free swimming for all children in care and care leavers, a scheme that had been running for two to three years. This included free swimming lessons for those who were unable to swim.

Places for Leisure have also been offering free six-month gym memberships for care-experienced young people. These offers reflected the commitment to support young people.

- Did the Council have adequate projection for Personal Advisers for the number of children preparing to leave care?

Rotherham experienced a sharp rise in the number of children entering care around five to six years ago due to serious safeguarding concerns at the time. This led to a temporary surge, which now meant there was a corresponding spike in the number of young people reaching eighteen and becoming care leavers. Although this peak was challenging, numbers were expected to decrease again as the system had since stabilised and returned to more proportionate care entry levels.

The service had planned for this spike, carrying out detailed workforce analysis and ensuring there were enough Personal Advisers including specialist roles. Leadership was proactive in securing extra staffing when needed and resources could be shifted or increased to maintain support. Ofsted had praised the Personal Advisers as the backbone of the service, recognising their strong performance. While there was still some work to do on longer-term strategic infrastructure, the overall position was strong and well-managed.

- Were the roles of Personal Advisers temporary given that the number of care leavers was going to change or were the current numbers being maintained.

The Council currently had no temporary appointments for Personal Advisers as the existing staffing levels were considered appropriate for the foreseeable future. Although the number of care leavers was expected to peak, those young people would remain in the service for a long period, meaning staffing needs would stay relatively stable.

The turnover among this group of staff was low and no staffing challenges were anticipated. The Council also had a strong and developing offer for 16–18 year olds, especially around supported accommodation. If needed, staff could potentially be redeployed into that area in the future, but there were no current plans to do so. Overall, there were no concerns about staffing capacity.

- Whilst talking to young people down at The Journey discussion took place on how they accessed services. They suggested that having something like an app would make it much easier for them to navigate Council departments and contact the right people. Was this something the Council might consider developing in the future, especially in terms of improving access to health and other public services. Currently young people were already navigating the NHS app to access all their information, but accessing Council services may be a little harder in comparison.

Whilst the Council used messaging and other modern communication tools, these methods were not always reliable. Traditional telephone calls often remained the most effective way to reach young people.

Young people did have access to the NHS app and work was underway to improve how digital tools supported them. The Council was also continually reviewing how it interacted with Rotherham residents, including care leavers. Although digital engagement was being explored, there was currently no dedicated Council app for young people.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member believed this to be a good idea and suggested the Service Director Customer for Information and Digital Services be invited to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board to look at future digital options.

In addition, perhaps it would add value to invite Julie Warren Sykes, ICB Representative, to the same meeting and extend an invitation to her when the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report was presented to Scrutiny to answer some of the health-related questions.

- Paragraph 23 of the report referenced unregistered care homes so were these identified in Rotherham and overseen.

The national care placement market could not meet the complex needs of all children and young people, particularly those with high-level needs such as significant mental health issues, exploitation risks, frequent missing episodes etc. These young people often could not be placed in foster care or typical residential homes, especially when placements broke down and homes could only accept planned admissions.

As a result, Councils sometimes had to use unregistered provisions which were staffed homes not regulated by Ofsted. Quality varied and although these arrangements were not ideal, they were sometimes unavoidable. Rotherham typically had around five young people in such placements at any given time, usually for no longer

than a couple of weeks.

To ensure safety and accountability, commissioners would review each setting, social workers would visit weekly and senior managers would hold weekly oversight meetings. A monthly report tracked all young people in unregistered placements and progress in moving them on. Persistent cases received extra attention. This situation was common across Councils, and Ofsted, though unhappy with the existence of unregistered settings, acknowledged the reality. They were impressed with Rotherham's strong oversight and the safety of the young people involved.

Ofsted acknowledged that because the provision was unregistered, it technically did not meet the expected regulatory standard. However, due to the small number of children involved, Ofsted had reviewed all case files for those in unregistered placements. They were satisfied with what they found and the files showed strong oversight. In addition, the child's voice was clearly recorded with visits being documented appropriately.

Ofsted Inspectors met with the Head of Service who was overseeing the weekly review meetings, went through the processes in detail and were pleased with the outcomes. However, Ofsted did not visit the properties themselves as part of this review.

The Chair thanked all involved for the informative discussion.

Resolved:- (1) That the outcome of the inspection regarding the effectiveness of children's services in Rotherham and endorse the priorities identified for continued focus be noted.

(2) That consideration be given to inviting Julie Warren-Sykes, ICB Representative, to the 28th April, 2026 meeting of Improving Lives when the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report 2024-2025 was presented.

(3) That the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board consider inviting the Service Director for Customer, Information and Digital Services to a future meeting to look at future digital options.

34. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report which provided a comprehensive overview of Education and Inclusion performance in Rotherham for the 2024/25 academic year. It built on the detailed Education Performance Outcomes briefing to present the information in a format tailored and highlighted where outcomes were improving and where concerted action was required. It framed performance through the lens of improving life chances, tackling inequalities (disadvantage, SEND and ethnicity) and strengthened inclusion across the system.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member introduced the report and highlighted how over the past year schools, early years settings and post-16 providers have been working hard to raise standards and support every child to succeed.

Encouraging improvements across key areas was continuing, including attainment and attendance and the progress made by most vulnerable learners was noted.

This report set out the challenges that remained and highlighted the focused work already underway to ensure that all learners, regardless of background or need, could thrive and reach their full potential.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member was also pleased to be attending a meeting of the Rotherham Education Partnership, where Head Teachers from across the borough would come together to share best practice and drive further improvements in attainment.

The Chair invited the Service Director for Education to deliver his presentation which covered:-

- Overview of:-
 - Educational Performance.
 - Key Successes and Challenges.
 - Focus on Inclusion and Equity.
 - Strategic Priorities and Collaboration.
- School Landscape and Governance.
- School and early years inspections (end of summer term 2025).
- Strengths.
- Areas of Focus.
- The Next Twelve Months.

The Chair invited questions from the Commission and a discussion and answer session from officers ensued with the following issues raised and clarified:-

- There was continued focus on disadvantaged and SEND gaps for gypsy and Roma outcomes so were these children being tracked.

The performance of all children were tracked including children who were identified as having disabilities.

- Detail on the Grade 4 mathematics outcome recognised that with academies this accountability sat mostly at a central level, but what specific work was being done to improve this benchmark, particularly because Grade 4 was key for pathways into apprenticeships, education, and employment. Was the gap compared with national

statistics influenced by staffing vacancies, and if so, was there anything the Council could do to help address or influence that work.

Communication had been established with the regional Maths Hubs identified by the DfE. After meeting with the local hub lead, it became clear that while primary schools engaged strongly, secondary engagement was much lower. To address this, secondary engagement with the Maths Hubs was made a focus area for the Rotherham Education and Strategic Partnership Board, working with attending leaders to encourage increased participation.

Evidence from the hubs showed that schools that engaged tended to improve their performance, so strengthening this link was a priority. In addition, the Council and ROSIS already bought in specialist maths support and exploration was taking place to better align and expand these resources to increase the amount of specialist time available to Rotherham schools.

Regular CPD sessions at the Rockingham Centre were also run, open to all schools and focused on improving maths teaching. Overall, the strategy involved boosting CPD, strengthening partnerships with maths hub providers and co-ordinating local maths expertise. The issue was not a shortage of maths teachers, but rather levels of engagement and support.

- Early years take-up in Rotherham had fluctuated since 2017–18, reaching a high of 89% but was currently sitting at 83%, which the report still described as a strong position. The national, regional, and statistical neighbour figures have all declined over the same period and were now lower than their starting point, unlike Rotherham's. The pandemic may explain some of the variation, but what was Rotherham doing differently in early education take-up that had allowed it to maintain comparatively higher performance and the reasons behind this trend?

The recent slight decline in nursery place take-up was partly due to the Government widening eligibility from three year-olds to two year-olds, which had made it more challenging to recruit families, though this was a national pattern.

Despite this, Rotherham had benefited from a very stable and experienced Head of Service and team, who have worked effectively with private, voluntary, and school-based nursery providers to maintain strong provision. Their strong relationships, communication, and sector knowledge attracted positive attention from the DfE, with officials visiting to learn from Rotherham's approach. At one point last year, the area was ranked sixth nationally for take-up of nursery places among disadvantaged families. Overall, this achievement was credited to experienced, trusted staff and long-standing partnerships with local nurseries.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member credited the Head of Service, who was recognised as an exceptional officer whose work had significantly strengthened early years support. For example a few years ago there were pupils in Years 10 and 11 who were disengaging from school because their needs had not been identified or met early enough. After researching other authorities, it was apparent the Council had strategies for childcare sufficiency and early years health, but no dedicated Early Years Education Strategy that picked up children's needs at the earliest possible point.

The Head of Service devised a standalone Early Years Education Strategy, which had been guiding the Council's work since. The Strategy had gained national recognition, being used by the Local Government Association as a case study and featured in First magazine.

The early adoption of this approach meant Rotherham was ahead of recent Government focus on the 0–5 age range. The success had also been supported by strong relationships with early years providers and the creativity and dedication of the team, particularly after the pandemic. To re-engage families who were reluctant to return to buildings, staff even visited communities dressed as Paw Patrol characters and used virtual tours to showcase settings. Overall, the work had created a much stronger, earlier system of identifying and supporting children and families.

- Reference was made to RISE and the performance figures in the report. Looking at those numbers were they about small percentages of pupils in every school across Rotherham who have reached those outcomes or was the data analysed at a school-by-school level. Perhaps by removing a small number of underperforming schools from the dataset would mean the overall average exceeded the national average? RISE would be focusing on the specific schools who were contributing most to lowering the overall figures.

Rotherham had access to exceptionally rich education data, more than many other Councils. Previously, the Council held this data internally and allowed schools to access it only if they paid a subscription. Starting from September 2025, a trial was taking place making this data freely available to all schools to support evidence-based improvement.

The Council was working to engage all schools using this shared data. However, independent academy trusts could be harder to involve as they have developed their own systems and operated more independently. Positive engagement efforts included the Cabinet Member writing to schools to congratulate them on strong Ofsted outcomes, which had helped build relationships.

The DfE had also begun recognising schools performing particularly well for pupils with disabilities, with local examples including Kimberworth and Wales Primary Schools.

The Council used data actively for performance discussions, modelling scenarios such as the impact of removing certain schools' results. This helped identify where local performance sat compared to national benchmarks and where individual schools significantly influenced overall outcomes.

- On the presentation slide for Strengths, there was no national average figure for the GLD SEND support, but for Rotherham it indicated it was 3% above the national average. What was the national average figure?

Details of the national average figure would be provided in writing after the meeting.

- Reference was made to the work on phonics in the ten schools with the lowest outcomes. It appeared the findings and improvements from those ten would then be shared more widely with schools that were just outside that group. For those schools not in the bottom ten would they still be supported as it appeared this would only happen after the initial work was completed with the ten identified schools Was this correct when the work commenced in February, the arranging of a Spring Conference and then by summer the team expecting to be in a position to share and roll out what they have learned.

Barnsley, Sheffield and Rotherham were currently involved in the DfE project. Local authority maintained schools were included in the group of ten, particularly those in areas of high social deprivation, so they could share and apply learning with their peers.

Since September, the collaboration had been strengthened across Local Authority maintained schools by developing a shared memorandum of understanding, clarifying collective and individual decision-making. The schools were now meeting termly, sharing training and expertise and offered peer support between Head Teachers.

In addition, a Local Authority-led school improvement partner was working with all schools to support them and share learning. Insights gained would be shared across the group. Wider learning from the project would be developed with the DfE and used for national and local rollout through training and support for schools that needed it.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member highlighted the forthcoming all member seminar planned for March to help Elected Members understand how to engage more effectively with schools in their

wards through neighbourhood working. Martin Hughes and Paul Carney would be leading the session. Members were, therefore, encouraged to attend and then build active relationships with local schools.

Furthermore, it was particularly noted that recent DfE guidance recommended that primary schools should have a library, as some had lost dedicated reading spaces over time. Elected Members could support this through their Community Leadership Fund, capital funding, or other resources to help provide books and improve facilities.

Neighbourhood officers would assist Members after the seminar, which would also cover what would be involved in becoming a school governor. Overall, the aim of the seminar was to strengthen Member engagement with schools and help provide resources where needed.

- Looking again at the Early Years figures there was a drop last year across the board. It was reassuring that Rotherham's decline was around half of elsewhere, but to what extent was this linked to the increased eligibility and how was the ongoing work to expand capacity progressing?

The situation was driven by several factors, including the cost of living, changes in employment patterns creating greater demand for childcare and the expanded eligibility for Early Years places. The Early Years Team was responsible for ensuring there was sufficient childcare capacity across all wards and current reports to the DfE confirmed that capacity was adequate.

Capacity was monitored through annual sufficiency reports and termly census returns submitted to the DfE. The team worked closely with providers to address any gaps. This sometimes involved discussions with primary schools about offering places for younger children and with PVI providers about expanding baby and under-two provision.

Overall, managing sufficiency was a constant challenge and a significant ongoing area of work for the Early Years Team.

- Were there sufficient placements across the borough for those eligible for the traditional two-year places that were identified as particularly benefiting from that early education?

An example was provided on where Coleridge Primary School in Eastwood previously had a local-authority-run nursery, but numbers fell so low that it became unviable. With upcoming changes to early education entitlements and anticipated rising demand, discussions took place with the school's trust about taking over the provision.

After some time, the nursery was successfully re-established within the primary school, creating a strong early years offer that supported children as they moved into Reception and Year 1.

This was an example of the kind of negotiation and collaborative work needed to maintain sufficiency, especially during periods of change. Although there were initial concerns when the new entitlements were announced, there was now confidence that sufficient provision was in place, as reflected in the annual Childcare Sufficiency Report. However, while the Council had long reported on sufficiency, it previously lacked a dedicated Early Years Education Strategy. Given the increased Government focus on Early Years, this was now a priority area. Getting Early Years provision right was essential, as it supported children's engagement and outcomes throughout their later schooling.

- Could you elaborate more on the work involving gypsy/Roma communities.

A discussion with the regional RISE lead from the DfE explored potential projects for the Yorkshire and Humber region, highlighting the significant number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children attending Ferham Primary. With end-of-year DfE funding available and Ferham already involved in RISE, it was agreed to develop a regional project.

The academy trust was approached and agreed to support the bid, enabling partnership work between local authority leads, gypsy, Roma and traveller community representatives, and the DfE. This collaboration had now led to the organisation of a major regional conference for all local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber, to be held in Leeds (venue currently being finalised).

The planned programme included a national keynote speaker, input from the DfE, and a national gypsy, Roma and traveller education lead. Delegates would take part in workshop sessions that would feed into a position paper focused on improving school inclusivity for gypsy, Roma and traveller children and narrowing the attainment gap. Inclusion leads and parent engagement leads from Rotherham and Sheffield schools would participate, helping shape practical recommendations for more supportive and welcoming school environments.

- What were the performance variation between high performing schools and those below average?

Several factors influenced school performance, but one of the most significant was the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Recent analysis shared with secondary Head Teachers showed no meaningful correlation between GCSE outcomes and the proportion

of pupils with SEND. However, there was a strong correlation between average GCSE grades and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, indicating this status was the strongest predictor of attainment.

Importantly, some schools bucked this trend. Despite high levels of disadvantage, they still achieved above-average GCSE results. These schools typically demonstrated strong, stable leadership, a commitment to high-quality professional development, effective identification and intervention strategies and a strong ethos of belonging for all pupils.

These schools were also particularly good at recognising and removing “invisible barriers” associated with disadvantage. For example, avoiding practices that drew attention to poverty, being mindful of requirements like costly PE kits or access to home technology and ensuring expectations were equitable and inclusive.

While free school meal eligibility was the most influential factor, effective leadership, high-quality teaching, and an inclusive school culture could significantly mitigate its impact.

A programme was introduced to help schools become “attachment friendly,” recognising the importance of secure attachment between a child and a trusted adult. This approach was initially targeted where looked-after children were attending, but feedback from schools showed that the training benefited all pupils, not just those with care experience.

This highlighted the value of wider trauma-informed practice and the need for whole-school cultural change to support inclusion. Some schools, even in highly deprived areas with many languages spoken, demonstrated outstanding practice proving that inclusive, attachment-aware cultures were achievable. However, teachers were under significant pressure and often supported children dealing with complex social issues. When the Government eventually published its White Paper, it would be essential that schools were given the necessary resources to continue this work and deliver the inclusive, high-quality support their pupils needed.

Some of the most effective schools supported pupils by meeting basic needs and removing day-to-day barriers. This included providing free breakfast clubs, offering spare uniform at short notice, and ensuring no child was singled out due to poverty.

Broader work across the borough such as improving job opportunities through the Inclusive Economy Board and addressing housing quality also played a vital role, as secure housing and stable family income gave children a better start in life.

Within schools, the key drivers of success remained strong leadership, high-quality teaching and actively identifying and removing the “invisible barriers” that came with deprivation.

- Housing conditions and the home environment could also directly affect a young person’s ability to study, especially in more deprived areas. From experience there were not often places young people could have space to study, so the local library became essential for education. Was it recognised that where young people did not have a quiet place to study, were there any “homework hubs” to compensate for that gap particularly in deprived communities in say libraries. Could the extended hours at some libraries be used strategically to support those who needed a safe, quiet study space outside the home as there could be some links between poor housing conditions, limited study space at home, and the role of libraries as accessible, supportive learning environments.

This was considered a strong point. For example the library in Swinton had explored ideas like homework mentors and bringing in volunteers, but co-ordinating may be more of a challenge.

Through the family hubs programme stronger links were already being built. One of the original Government requirements for family hubs was to focus on improving the home learning environment for pre-school children. This had led to a lot of joint work with libraries including rhyme time sessions and activities that promoted learning through play.

This suggestion was worth exploring further, but it was about having a set of collective key messages that could be used when working with families. One of the things currently being explored was identifying four core messages that would help ensure very young children were as well prepared as possible for starting school.

These messages would be shared consistently by outreach and engagement workers, those running stay-and-play sessions, baby massage and by family support workers who were having conversations with families in their homes.

The focus was on promoting things like reducing screen time, increasing face-to-face interaction and highlighting the benefits of reading to children. Many working parents were not read to themselves, so reading aloud did not always come naturally. This linked well with library engagement as part of the Family Hub programme.

Beyond the Hub work, the Family Health Steering Group also had health colleagues around the table. Sharing these messages with health visitors could be reinforced during home visits so that it became a collective, consistent approach.

The aim was a small set of short, punchy messages that could be used across the whole partnership, to work with families in their homes and support early school readiness. The work was still very much in progress, but for now it was being shaped and prepared to embed across the workforce and wider partnership.

- Children were still within the education system that were impacted by the pandemic, the closures and the disruption so what real term impacts were being seen and how was data being interpreted based on how that impacted students.

There have been many reports on the potential impacts of the pandemic, but no definitive assessment. This was largely because it was impossible to draw clear comparisons between groups of children who did and did not experience lockdown. However, some impacts were very visible.

One of the clearest issues was that more children were starting school without being “school ready.” Schools were reporting higher numbers of children who were not toilet trained, who have delays in speech, language and communication, and who presented with emotional well-being and mental health difficulties. These trends were not unique to Rotherham they were being seen nationally.

More children were likely to be home educated. Until around two years ago, permanent exclusions were increasing year on year. After significant re-engagement work and nearly £1 million invested in behaviour outreach support, the numbers have been stabilised, although there was still much more work to do.

Academic progress was only now returning to pre-pandemic levels. Robust data showed the outcomes and it was clear the pandemic accelerated existing issues rather than creating new ones. For example, even before the pandemic, teachers were reporting children entering school without basic self-care skills, but these problems have become more widespread since.

To address this, investment has been put in to support hubs and direct work with families to improve school readiness. This was also why the Government’s statutory targets for a Good Level of Development have been strengthened along with the early years workforce, and looked to invest further in early years provision. Understanding children’s early development and curriculum experience before they arrived at school were essential.

Until last summer, all Rotherham’s early years providers were rated Outstanding. One childminder experienced a temporary issue that affected their Ofsted judgement, but this had now been resolved, although they would not be reinspected for some time. Work would

continue with all providers to ensure strong early years practice that supported children and families effectively.

A key part of driving improvement was understanding how the education system measured itself. Secondary schools judged progress by comparing GCSE outcomes with pupils' SATs results at age eleven. Similarly, primary schools measured progress from age seven and through assessments like the phonics check. By strengthening early-years and Key Stage 1 outcomes, a positive ripple effect could be created throughout the entire system.

Ultimately, the strategy was to intervene earlier, providing targeted support in early years and primary settings so that children achieved better outcomes at every stage. This helped schools track progress more positively and ensured children were better prepared academically, socially and emotionally as they moved through their education.

- There was a significant projected increase in GLD so what were the implications if the target was not met. The increase seemed quite large and was there likely to be a leap because of children not having that sort of lockdown experience.

The DfE had been contacted to clarify the consequences of not meeting the GLD target who confirmed that there would be no penalties for local authorities failing to reach the target up to at least 2028.

It was recognised that the required 9% uplift was based on aiming to move all areas towards the mid-70s nationally. This had caused frustration among high-performing authorities who already exceeded the national average as well as concern for areas like Rotherham, where the expected improvement represented a significant shift.

To respond to this challenge a two-strand approach was being taken:-

Improved Individual Child Tracking

- Strengthening progress-tracking systems for individual children.
- Working more closely with midwives and health services to align with the two-year check.
- Securing better data from private, voluntary, and independent nursery providers.
- Conducting research into outcomes for children who entered nursery at different ages, including those cared for at home until starting formal provision.
- Using data systems to identify which nurseries children attended, enabling targeted support for settings where outcomes were weaker.

Area-Level Targeting Based on Deprivation

- Collaborating with public health colleagues to analyse deprivation “heat maps”.
- Mapping the postcodes and wards of children who did not achieve GLD to identify geographical patterns.
- Developing plans to increase support and intervention in the most affected neighbourhoods, rather than focusing solely on individual cases across mixed-performance areas.

Overall, child-level insight was being combined with community-level targeting to make meaningful, data-driven improvements in early development outcomes.

After the pandemic, life still had not returned to “normal” for many families. What began as a cost-of-living crisis had lasted so long that it was now an ongoing, prolonged challenge. Rising inflation and everyday expenses continued to place significant pressure on households. As a result, activities that assumed access to devices like computers or tablets could be difficult for families who were already struggling. This long-term financial strain was an important factor to keep in mind.

The Chair thanked officers for their support and input.

Resolved:- (1) That the Education and Inclusion Annual Performance Report for 2024/2025 be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the areas for continued focus (phonics; KS2 reading/GPS; KS4 Attainment 8 and grade 5+; disadvantage and SEND gaps; Gypsy/Roma outcomes) be noted.

(3) That details of the national average figure be shared in relation to SEND Support achievement for a GLD which was 3% above.

(4) That consideration be given to how homework clubs in Libraries could be encouraged.

35. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair drew attention to the Commission’s current Work Programme.

Currently a workshop was scheduled for 2 March, 2026 at 2:30 p.m. This session was intended to focus on support for vulnerable women in pregnancy, following the cessation of the PAUSE Project.

Due to the low attendance at the previous two workshops the Commission were asked to consider whether they preferred to receive a more detailed written briefing on this topic instead of attending a workshop. Feedback

could then be provided via email and picked up accordingly.

The Commission fully supported an off agenda briefing note and this would be prepared and circulated in due course.

Resolved:- That the Work Programme, with the revisions to the workshop as detailed above, be received and the contents noted.

36. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

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

Consideration had been given to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences/Abuse Strategy 2026–2029 as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. This was undertaken by way of a dedicated workshop on Monday, 26th January, 2026 allowing for review, challenge and input into the proposed Cabinet decision before being presented for formal adoption.

The Select Commission welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the Strategy refresh at an early stage and to consider in detail of the recommended review which reaffirmed the Strategy’s vision and a streamlining of previous priorities. It was clear this enabled a more focused driven, co-ordinated and effective response to key areas of need.

Taking into account the key aims and the partnership action plan the Strategy should provide a consistent, survivor and family centred approach to tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences/Abuse, including tackling violence against women and girls.

The following recommendations were made by Members who participated in the workshop:-

- That the Strategy was clear in its inclusivity of all those at risk of Domestic Abuse throughout.
- To ensure the capture of reporting and victim data were included.
- A specific identification of “more vulnerable” people when there was a risk to the public.
- The colour scheme used in the Strategy made sections difficult to read and perhaps could be improved to enhance accessibility and clarity.
- Consideration of the language used on the title page to ensure it was clear and appropriate.

In addition there was also a Joint Workshop on Threshold of Need Document and RPCF Impact Report 2024/2025 with visit to Eric Manns Building

This was undertaken by way of a dedicated workshop on Thursday, 29th January, 2026 and hosted by the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum in

the Eric Manns Building.

The aim of the session was to share details of the Threshold of Needs Document that relates to the SEND Sufficiency Strategy which was about ensuring good quality school places for children with SEND.

In addition, Jayne Fitzgerald and other officers shared detail on last year's impact report 2024/2025 and provided a brief outline of next steps following the opening up of groups and workshops.

This report celebrated the milestones achieved and shared stories, experiences and evidence of the difference that partnership and living experience could make.

Rotherham Parent Carers Forum were committed to making Rotherham a better place for families of children and young people with SEND and Neurodivergent people across Rotherham.

Members that did attend welcomed the excellent information that was shared. A copy of the presentation that was delivered would be circulated to Members of Improving Lives along with a link to the website to allow Members to sign up for the newsletter.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

37. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 17 March 2026

Report Title

Community Recovery Fund – Children's Services

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

No

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

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

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report provides an update on the delivery of the Community Recovery Fund projects in Children and Young People's Services over the past 12 months.

Recommendations

That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- 1) Consider the progress made against the delivery plan for the Community Recovery Fund.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Community Recovery Fund – Children’s Services

1. Background

- 1.1 The public disturbances of August 2024 were a series of violent, anti-immigration riots that took place from late July through early August 2024, with peak activity in the first week of August. This included public disturbance at Manvers, Rotherham, on 4th August 2024. The impact of this was far reaching, affecting those involved personally, professionally, as well as impacting on the local community and wider Rotherham community.
- 1.2 Following the public disorder, the Government announced the formation of a £15 million Community Recovery Fund (CRF). Rotherham was awarded funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Community Recovery Fund programme to deliver a range of community cohesion activities and to support those communities impacted by the public disorder.
- 1.3 As part of this programme, 2 projects were endorsed and delivered through Children’s services. These were Building Bridges and Together for Tomorrow.
- 1.4 Eligible expenditure for the use of this fund included:
 - Immediate action to safeguard life or property.
 - To prevent suffering or severe inconvenience.
 - To reduce the risk of further disorder in the future.
 - To rebuild social trust and promote cohesion between communities.
- 1.5 The programme has been delivered by a range of organisations including direct delivery by Rotherham Council services, direct delivery by the voluntary sector, and a grants budget which will allow for further solutions to be co-created and co-designed with community groups and prioritised as part of an overall coordinated approach.
- 1.6 Children and Young People’s Services were awarded monies to fund two projects, which included:
 1. Together for Tomorrow
 2. Building Bridges Together

2. Key Issues

2.1 Together for Tomorrow

- 2.1.1 This project has been delivered by Rotherham School Improvement Service (RoSIS) in partnership with The Anti-Bullying Company and Forge CPD. It is a multi-faceted educational initiative designed to address the social and emotional impacts of the recent violent disorder in Rotherham.

- 2.1.2 Grounded in the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education and Religious Education (RE) curriculum, the project has focused on rebuilding trust, enhancing resilience, and promoting cohesion across diverse communities. The project has supported schools to tailor their PSHE/RSE and RE curriculum to reflect the needs of their pupils to equip them with a sound understanding of risk and provide knowledge and skills necessary to make safe and informed decisions.
- 2.1.3 Online content has been built to support training, sharing of resources and best practice via Forge CPD, ensuring sustainability of the project and continuing success. It is expected that students will be equipped with conflict resolution skills and strategies to manage stress and emotional responses.
- 2.1.4 Schools have been encouraged to conduct community events and youth-focused initiatives that bridge cultural divides and build connections. This in turn emphasises the importance of civic engagement, community support, and shared responsibility in maintaining peaceful communities. A borough-wide celebration event and art installation in local schools/communities is being finalised to celebrate the end of the project.
- 2.1.5 To date 43% of schools have engaged with the project. All strands of the project are on track to deliver initial outputs with some more enhanced than others.
- 2.1.6 The Together for Tomorrow ambassadors training was very successful at Skills Street, where over 130 young people learned to recognise bullying, practise conflict resolution, and build empathy.
- 2.1.7 Check-ins with ambassadors have been held in December, January and the next one is planned for April 20th. These have been a great opportunity for ambassadors to connect and share good practice. Maltby Lily Hall ran a whole school 'Kindness Challenge' as well as mini assemblies. Rosehill Junior School have held regular Friday 'Community Day' which includes litter picks and a 'lost & found' school uniform initiative.
- 2.1.8 Safer Internet Day resources have been created and shared for ambassadors to deliver online safety assemblies in their schools. Ambassadors are now rolling out their training in school to their peers.

2.2 **Building Bridges Together**

- 2.2.1 The funding enabled recruitment of a small, dedicated team of Outreach and Engagement Workers to develop a set of tools and resources to work with young people in the community via an established network of young people's groups, both local authority and led by the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS), plus street-based work where needed.
- 2.2.2 The aim of the project was to deliver targeted engagement activities with young people, particularly those in Rotherham's least diverse communities, aimed at strengthening community cohesion following the disorder.

- 2.2.3 The team has developed and delivered a structured programme of community cohesion engagement with young people across priority areas. Early work focused on establishing the project foundations and resources with initial consultation activities taking place with young people.
- 2.2.4 Delivery has taken place through a combination of outreach sessions, youth-led discussions, and collaborative projects, creating safe spaces for young people to reflect on the events, explore underlying tensions, and build constructive relationships. These activities have supported early intervention by addressing feelings of fear, frustration, and disconnection but have also played a significant role in rebuilding trust, promoting shared understanding, and fostering a sense of belonging within communities.
- 2.2.5 As of 16th February 2026, the project has delivered 15 workshops, engaging 214 young people. Seven events have been attended during this time, including but not exclusive to Maltby Community Festival, Rotherham Show, and Rotherham Christmas Light Switch On, engaging 124 young people. Detached sessions ran in Maltby and Swinton between August and December 2025, where 43 young people were engaged with.
- 2.2.6 118 young people completed workshop feedback, indicating strong positive outcomes across key cohesion, extremism-awareness, and hate-crime indicators. Most participants agreed that people from different backgrounds can live together peacefully (86 agreeing or strongly agreeing), and the majority reported an increased understanding of extremist narratives (78) and greater confidence in responding to extremist views (81).
- 2.2.7 Awareness of hate crime was also significantly strengthened, with 98 young people stating they better understood what hate crime is and 95 feeling more confident about where to seek help or report incidents.
- 2.2.8 Detached and outreach sessions further reinforced these themes: of the 21 young people who provided feedback, 13 felt more aware of extremist narratives, 12 better understood hate crime and available support, and 8 felt more informed about misinformation and disinformation.
- 2.2.9 Overall, the workshops and outreach activity demonstrate clear, measurable impact in improving community cohesion, increasing resilience to extremist influences, and enhancing knowledge of hate crime and reporting pathways among young people.
- 2.2.10 A celebration event is scheduled before the end of the programme, bringing together groups involved in the project to participate in sports, art, and dance activities designed to strengthen community cohesion. This event also forms a key part of the project's legacy work by showcasing the achievements of participating groups, fostering ongoing connections, and reinforcing learning from the workshops.
- 2.2.11 Legacy activity is further supported through group leaders who attended sessions to enable future delivery, the distribution of handouts to extend

awareness on hate crime, misinformation, and support pathways, and the creation of photographic documentation and a case study to evidence impact and capture key learning for sustained future use.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Not applicable.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct legal implications in this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct HR implications.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 There are no direct implications.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no direct implications.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 There are no direct implications.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Not applicable.

Accountable Officer(s)

Kelly White, Service Director Family Help

Niall Devlin, Service Director Education and Inclusion

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

| | Name | Date |
|--|--|-------------|
| The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report | Kelly White – Service Director Family Help – on behalf of: Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services | 27/02/26 |
| Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member | Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth | 04/03/26 |

Report Author: Kirsty Woodhead
Kirsty Woodhead
Head of Service Family Help
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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

Our Children – Resilient Successful Safe

Community Recovery Fund
CYPS Projects:
Together for Tomorrow &
Building Bridges Together



Why Together for Tomorrow?



- In partnership with the Anti Bullying Company and Forge CPD, Together for Tomorrow is a multi-faceted educational project designed to address the social and emotional impacts of the recent violent disorder in Rotherham.
- The project is aimed at rebuilding trust, enhancing resilience, and promoting cohesion across the diverse communities of Rotherham.
- There are 8 strands to the project.

Strand 1 & Strand 2:



Strand 1: Conversations about faith

Structured Interfaith Dialogue

Focus on deepening understanding of diverse faith experiences among students and staff.

Accessible Learning Resources

Recorded sessions and materials are accessible via the Forge CPD platform, enhancing reach for educators. This ensures legacy.

Encouraging Respectful Curiosity

Students are encouraged to ask thoughtful questions to foster empathy and reduce misconceptions about faith diversity.

Next Steps

Part 2 planned later this year with some young people in the 'audience'. We are seeking wider participation to broaden representation, if you know of anyone who may wish to contribute, please let us know via rosis@rotherham.gov.uk. We are particularly interested in representation from the Muslim, Hinduism & Sikhism faiths.

Strand 2: Picture Trail

Creative Visual Artworks

Students create visual artworks reflecting themes of belonging, community, and shared values.

Cross-Curricular Integration

Teachers integrate art, citizenship, and literacy skills to deepen student engagement and reflections on community themes.

Collaborative Exhibitions

Completed artworks may be displayed online or at local exhibitions, promoting inter-school collaboration and wider community engagement. Content created for "Our Rotherham" via [Our Rotherham \(List\) | Forge CPD](#).

Rotary Art Competition

The competition offers students a platform to showcase talent while contributing to a regional celebration of creativity.



Strand 3 & Strand 4:



Strand 3: Ambassadors

Ambassador Training Completion

130 students have completed training, gaining skills in communication, teamwork, and project planning.

Leadership in School Initiatives

Ambassadors lead peer-support, anti-bullying, and fundraising initiatives to apply their skills effectively.

Recognition and Role Modelling

Schools recognise ambassadors' efforts through events and media, inspiring younger students to join.

Flexible Program Impact

The ambassador program adapts to each school's needs, promoting respect, collaboration, and lasting impact.

Next Steps

Ambassadors will be invited to share good practice at the celebration event in June.

Strand 4: Curriculum Links

Curriculum Alignment Support

Ensures Together for Tomorrow resources support PSHE, RE, and Citizenship teaching effectively within curricula.

Focus on RSHE 2026 Changes

Meetings with PSHE and RE leaders centred on upcoming RSHE 2026 curriculum changes and integration strategies.

Enhancing Key Skills

Discussions addressed diversity education, misogyny, oracy development, and critical thinking enhancement in lessons.

Supporting Teacher Workload

Facilitators encourage integrating activities into medium-term plans to improve coherence and reduce teacher workload.



Strand 5 & Strand 6:



Strand 5: Together for Tomorrow Song

Music Unites Students

The song promotes unity, hope, and kindness, connecting students from diverse backgrounds through music.

Community Impact

Performed at a Holocaust memorial, the song added emotional depth and resonated with the community.

Educational Integration

Teachers are encouraged to explore the song's composition and themes through music lessons and art projects.

Future Collaborative Events

Plans include mass singing and collaborative performances to strengthen collective identity among youth.

Strand 6: Places of Worship

Virtual and In-Person Tours

Virtual and physical tours provide students access to diverse places of worship, enhancing cultural and religious understanding.

Equitable Access to Resources

Expanded virtual tours ensure schools with logistical or financial challenges can access rich cultural and religious content.

Future Development Plans

Plans include curated videos, teaching resources and collaborations with faith leaders for tailored content.

Encouraging Reflective Learning

Tours serve as stimuli for reflective writing, comparative studies, and creative projects like model design of worship places.



Strand 7 & Strand 8:



Strand 7: Online Safety

Strengthening Digital Resilience

Offers guidance and assemblies to build students' skills against online misinformation and disinformation.

Updated Resources and Tools

Resources like fact-checking checklists and critical-thinking prompts are regularly updated to stay relevant with digital trends.

Integrating Online Safety in Curriculum

Schools incorporate online safety into computing, PSHE, and tutor sessions to reinforce important safety messages.

Empowering Informed Digital Citizens

The strand empowers young people to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly, supporting long-term safeguarding.

Strand 8: Schools Linking Project

School Connections and Collaboration

Eight schools have linked successfully, engaging in shared writing, virtual meet-ups, and cultural exchange projects.

Advisory Group Formation

An advisory group consisting of teachers, community members, and project leads is being formed to guide the project's sustainable development.

Structured Support for Schools

Schools receive lesson templates, communication guides, and safeguarding advice to ensure smooth and safe partnerships.

Broadening Perspectives and Cohesion

The project fosters understanding, reduces social barriers, and builds cohesion across communities through school linkages.



Building Bridges Together



Purpose of the project:

- To delivery a range of engagement and outreach activities with young people across the borough
- Delivering community cohesions workshops to youth groups and street-based detached sessions to raise awareness of hate crime and extremism
- Provide advice, guidance and support
- Break down barriers and misconceptions to help young people feel safe

The Offer:

- Consultation
- Detached Outreach sessions
- Community Cohesion Workshops



Examples include:

- Maltby Community Festival
- Maltby and Swinton detached youth work
- Rotherham show
- Dinnington Together event
- Manvers residents' association summer fayre
- Uplift festival
- Refugee week drop in session

See appendix 1 for examples of consultation work completed with various groups



Key Milestones 25/26:

| Quarter 1 (Apr-Jun) | Quarter 2 (Jul-Sep) | Quarter 3 (Oct – Dec 25) | Quarter 4 (Jan – Mar 26) |
|--|--|---|---|
| Staff recruitment | Real Direction Workshop | Community Cohesion workshop expansion | Workshops to support to community group leaders |
| Training and development of the programme | Consultation at: Manvers Residents Association Summer fayre, Uplift festival, Rotherham Show and a drop-in during Refugee Week | Outreach delivery at Parkgate AstroTurf – Kicks Tournament & South Yorkshire Performance Academy (SYPA) | Legacy Building – rolling programme devised content; Community Cohesion, Keeping Safe and Healthy Relationships |
| First groups and consultation sessions delivered | Expansion of the Outreach programme in Maltby, Herringthorpe, and Kimberworth park | Staff training – Hate crime awareness, Right wing extremism | Group visit to SELF exhibition Clifton Park Museum and a celebration event |

Engagement - to date

| | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Detached | 26 | 17 | 43 |
| Community events | 48 | 76 | 124 |
| Workshops | 133 | 81 | 214 |
| | | | |

Combined total: 381

Young People's feedback

You can learn about their culture and make them feel comfortable around people they're not really used to. You can hang out with them so they don't feel left out - Young person, Clifton Learning Partnership

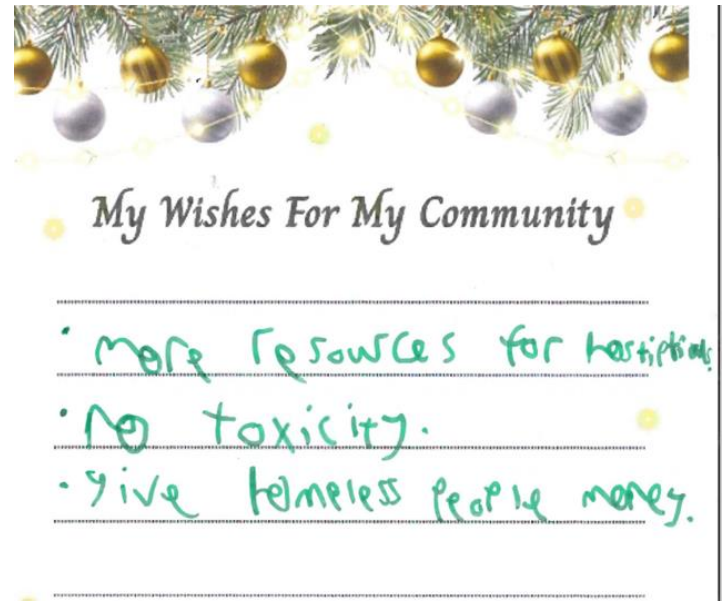
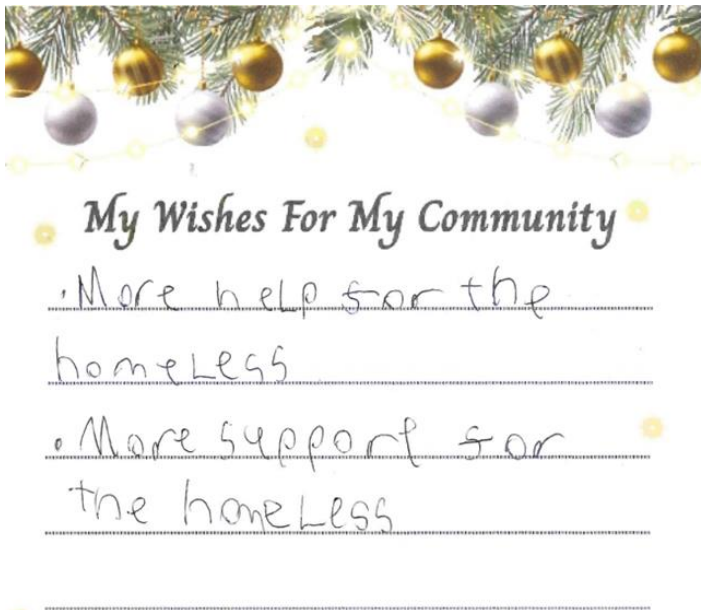
Just be kind to everyone you meet. Respect their beliefs and views and try to understand their views as well. - Young person, South Yorkshire Performance Academy

If you fight fire with fire the whole world would be in flames- Young person, Breakout Arts

Coming up next ...

- Cohesion celebration event – March 21st at Coleridge School.
- Final project evaluation.
- Community Cohesion Workshop incorporated into the core offer of support for young people.

Wishes for our Community



Consultation with young people to further understand their aspiration for Rotherham and its communities.

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 17 March 2026

Report Title

Children not accessing their full educational entitlement at school

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

No

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

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

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report and associated appendices provide information and assurance regarding activity in relation to Children Not in School in Rotherham to enable the Commission to receive an update regarding this area of work. The Elective Home Education, and Exclusions dashboard provide a breakdown of the characteristics of the respective cohorts to enable scrutiny by the Commission.

Recommendations

1. That the content of this report be noted

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Exclusions Dashboard 2024-25
Appendix 2 Elective Home Education Dashboard 2024-25

Background Papers

[Elective home education: departmental guidance for local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[Education Act 1996](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Children not accessing their full educational entitlement at school

1. Background

- 1.1 Providing appropriate oversight and support in relation to Children Not in School remains a key area of focus for Council teams. Many groups of children sit within this remit; those who are electively home educated where parents have taken responsibility for the provision of education otherwise, those who are Children Missing Education and those on a school roll but not in receipt of their full educational entitlement.
- 1.2 The Education Act 1996 places a duty on every parent of a child of compulsory school age to ensure that he/she receives an efficient, full-time education, suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs that he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Parents have the legal right to remove their child(ren) from a school roll and provide their education. The Education Act 1996 and non-statutory guidance EHE Departmental guidance for local authorities (2019) places a duty on the Council to ensure that children who are home educated are in receipt of a suitable and efficient full-time education and act if this is not the case.
- 1.3 The Council has statutory duties in relation to Children Missing Education as set out in [Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools - GOV.UK](#), this includes children out of school due to exclusion, illness or other reasons. Duties in relation to School Attendance are outlined in [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 This report seeks to update and provide assurance to the commission on processes for children who do not access a school setting on a full-time basis. This includes children in the following groups:
 - In receipt of local authority commissioned provision (Section 19 provision - provision set out in Section 19 of the 1996 Education Act) as they are medically unable to attend school, have been permanently excluded from school or have an Education Health Care Plan and are Educated Otherwise than at School,
 - children experiencing suspension,
 - in receipt of part time school provision,
 - accessing school commissioned alternative provision,
 - experiencing poor school attendance,
 - who are known to be electively home educated,
 - Children Missing Education.
- 2.2 Internally, assurance regarding children in groups specified above is provided through service and CYPS performance clinics and through the Children Not in School Governance Group. This is a multi-agency group that

meets termly with the remit of scrutinising process and policy as well as identifying key actions to ensure support is timely and appropriate.

2.3 External oversight is provided through both SEND and ILACS inspection, where there is a key focus on the groups of children identified at 2.1.

2.4 **Section 19 provision**

2.4.1 The local authority must be informed without delay of all school exclusions regardless of the length of the exclusion. In line with statutory duty provision is made on day six at Aspire Pupil Referral Unit for every Rotherham resident of statutory school age who is permanently excluded. Where appropriate following a first permanent exclusion a placement is agreed in an alternative mainstream school through Rotherham’s Fair Access Protocol.

2.4.2 Where children receive a suspension from school the duty to provide education from day six sits with the school. Support is offered from the Local Authority Exclusion and/ or Outreach team on request, or where children are identified by teams as receiving repeat suspensions.

2.4.3 Consultation with school leaders was undertaken in 2023-24 with the intention of reviewing the Fair Access Protocol and strengthening local inclusion systems. There was a 10.6% reduction in permanent exclusions from schools in the borough in 2024-25 when compared with the previous academic year. This reduction is significant and is testament to the commitment of school leaders in working collaboratively to ensure exclusion is used proportionately within Rotherham.

2.4.4 Further information in relation to exclusions and suspensions is included in *Appendix 1: Exclusions Dashboard*.

2.4.5 When the Local Authority receives a notification that a child is unable to attend school due to illness, provision of medical tuition is considered. In 2024-25, 53 pupils were supported throughout the academic year by medical tuition. This is through an offer tailored to the needs of the young person and kept under regular review by a named Officer. 13 (25%) of these pupils reintegrated to their ‘home’ school during the academic year following a period of medical tuition. The number of pupils supported by medical tuition is rising year on year in Rotherham.

| | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | 2021-22 |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| No of pupils | 53 | 32 | 29 | 18 |

2.4.6 A very small number of children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan accesses EOTAS (Education Otherwise Than At School) provision where this is named in their plan. These young people have a highly bespoke education offer that is tailored to their needs, monitored by a dedicated Officer, that is regularly reviewed in line with their plan.

2.5 Children on a school roll who are not accessing full time school-based provision

2.5.1 The Council requests that schools complete a return of all pupils being offered part time provision in school or school commissioned alternative provision. These returns are monitored by the Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Alternative Provision and advice and guidance offered to schools where needed. It is expected that where a pupil is offered a part time timetable that this is in line with parental agreement and is part of a short-term intervention to support them back to full time education.

2.5.2 In 2024-25, 499 pupils were reported by schools to be in receipt of a part time offer at some point during the school year.

2.5.3 School attendance continues to be an area of focus in Rotherham, with a clear shared expectation that parents ensure their child’s attendance at school on a regular basis. School attendance in 2024-25 academic year rose by 0.7% across all phases compared to the previous academic year. This improvement represents significant progress in ensuring pupils are present in school and benefiting from the education they are entitled to.

2.5.4 Rotherham Primary attendance for the academic year was 94.6%, 0.2% below national, whilst Secondary attendance was 90.9%, 0.7% below national. Persistent absence decreased by 2.2% in both phases compared to 2023-24.

2.5.5 The School Attendance Team continue to offer support to schools through a graduated targeting support offer, the continued use of data to drive interventions and the recent agreement of three attendance mentor posts across the borough to support attendance for children who may be facing the greatest challenges in attending school.

2.6 Elective Home Education (EHE) and Children Missing Education (CME)

2.6.1 Nationally, numbers of children in EHE continues to rise, [Elective home education, Autumn term 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#) The rate of children who are EHE in Rotherham has previously been just below the national rate but is now in line with both regional and national in the last published data set (2024/25 Autumn Term).

| | 2024/25 Autumn term | 2023/24 Summer term | 2023/24 Spring term | 2023/24 Autumn term |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| England | 1.4% | 1.4% | 1.3% | 1.1% |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 1.4% | 1.3% | 1.2% | 1.0% |
| Rotherham | 1.4% | 1.4% | 1.2% | 1.0% |

2.6.2 The Council’s EHE team continues to offer a home visit to all home educators as part of standard working practice and proactively engages with

parents and carers who are considering home education. In 2024-25, there were 219 instances where contact with the team resulted in children remaining on a school roll.

- 2.6.3 Partnership working in respect of EHE in Rotherham remains strong, with the majority of parents working collaboratively with the Council to provide assurance that their child is in receipt of suitable education. Where assurance is not provided and children are believed to be missing from education then a formal process is followed to return them to suitable full-time education.
- 2.6.4 The Rotherham Elective Home Education Policy was reviewed and a revised Policy agreed by Cabinet in October 2025. This is intended to be easier to navigate and provide relevant information about roles and responsibilities to parents and carers considering home education.
- 2.6.5 *Appendix 2: Elective Home Education Dashboard* provides further information in respect of EHE in Rotherham during 2024-25 academic year.
- 2.6.6 Duties in relation to Children Missing Education continue to be discharged in line with statutory guidance and Rotherham's Policy. 613 referrals were received by the CME Officer for children who were known to be leaving school roll due to a house move within or out of Rotherham or who were without a school place having moved into Rotherham. These children are robustly tracked in and out of the borough and onto school roll, with 563 instances being closed by the end of the academic year and the remainder being tracked into 2025-26.
- 2.7 Children not in School remain a key area of local and national focus. Rotherham policy and process is regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that we do everything possible to ensure that children access their full-time educational entitlement, supporting them in achieving good outcomes and preparing them for adulthood.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 There are no options to consider, discharge of duties in respect of children not accessing their full-time educational entitlement at school remain statutory Local Authority functions, it is therefore recommended that members note the content of the report.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 There is no proposal to consider, this report is for update only. Where changes to Policy or process are being considered consultation takes place to inform this.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 There is no decision to implement, this report is for update only.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct Legal implications.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no HR implications contain within the report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The report outlines how the Council will continue to discharge statutory duty to ensure that all children receive the education to which they are entitled.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The functions reported upon support the right to education, as set out in the Human Rights Act and support the Public Sector Equality Duty.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no implications contained within the report

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 There are no implications contained within the report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There is a risk to staffing capacity if numbers of children who are not in school continue to rise. This will be closely monitored and planned for accordingly.

13.2 There is potential risk to process and local policy, should any changes in Government policy be announced. As yet, there is no definitive timeline for these. Once this is known, local policy will be reviewed accordingly.

Accountable Officer(s)

Sarah Whitby, Head of Service Access to Education

Rebecca Braitwait, EHE and CME Co-ordinator

Kelly Robinson, Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Alternative Provision

Kate Pollard, School Attendance Co-ordinator

Julie Dawson, Principal Officer Exclusions

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

| | | Date |
|--|---|-------------|
| The Executive Director with responsibility for this report | Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services | 17/02/26 |
| Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member | Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth | 05/03/26 |

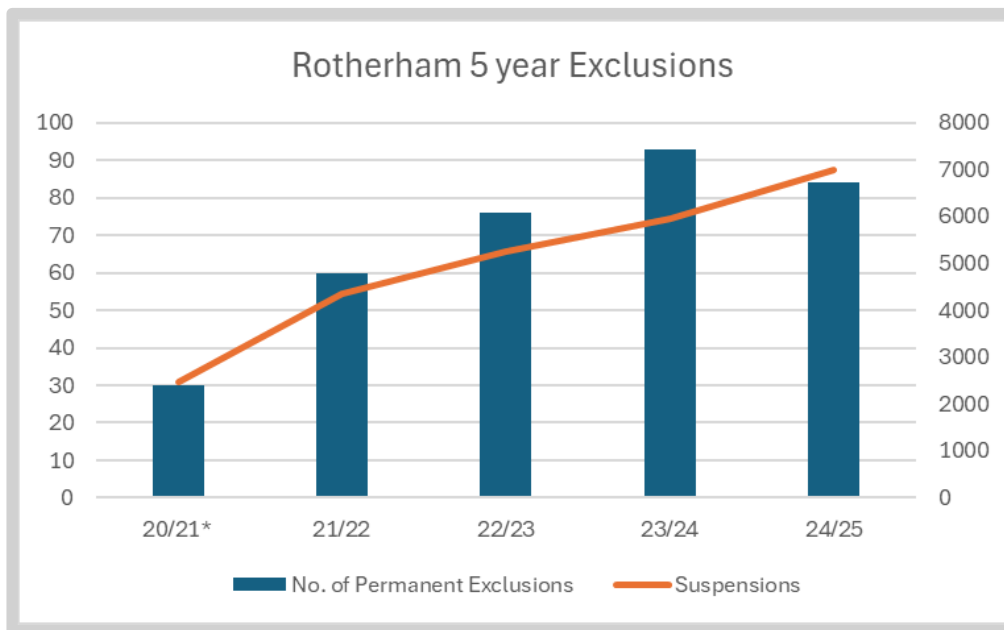
Report Author:

Sarah Whitby, Head of Service Access to Education

01709 255097 sarah.whitby@rotherham.gov.uk

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

Appendix 1: Exclusions Dashboard 2024-25



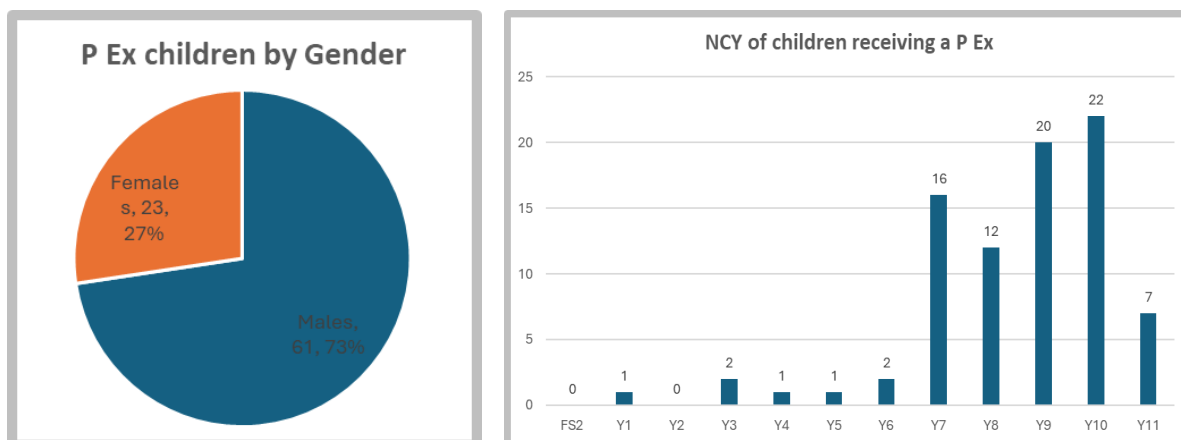
- 5-year trending for suspensions and exclusions in Rotherham shows a rise in both (*note 2020-21 impact of national lockdown and school closures)
- Whilst Permanent Exclusions rose to a peak in 2023-24, they declined by 10.6% in 2024-25. An emerging commitment across the system to consider alternatives to exclusion is evident.
- Suspensions continue on an upward trend year on year and there is work is ongoing to understand and respond to this.

| | Rotherham | Regional | Stat Neighbours | National |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| Fixed Term Suspension | 12.78% | 16.50% | 19.73% | 11.31% |
| Permanent Exclusion | 0.15% | 0.14% | 0.21% | 0.13% |

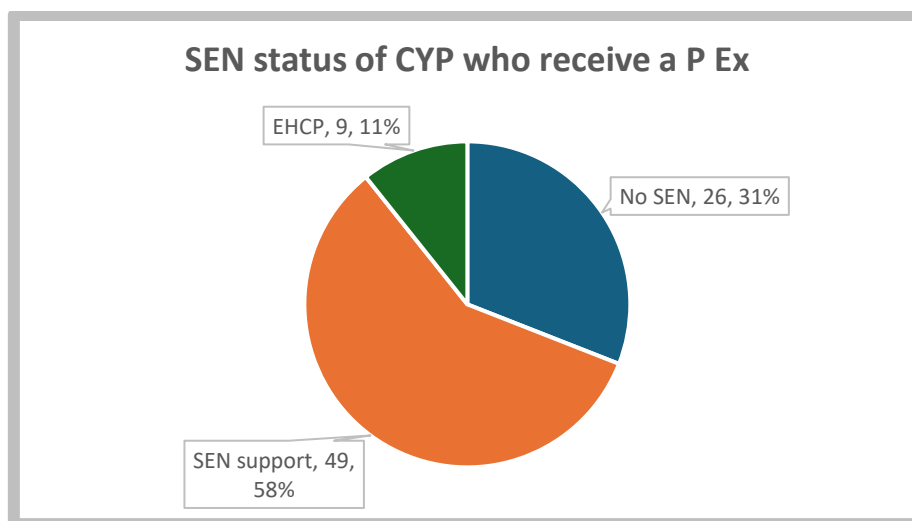
- The last centrally published data is 2023-24 academic year is shown in the table above.
- Comparison with National shows Rotherham has a slightly higher rate of both suspensions and permanent exclusions.
- Rotherham has a significantly lower rate of both when compared to statistical neighbours.

Permanent Exclusions

The data below relates to the 84 Permanent Exclusions that were issued to completion from Rotherham schools in the academic year 2024-25.



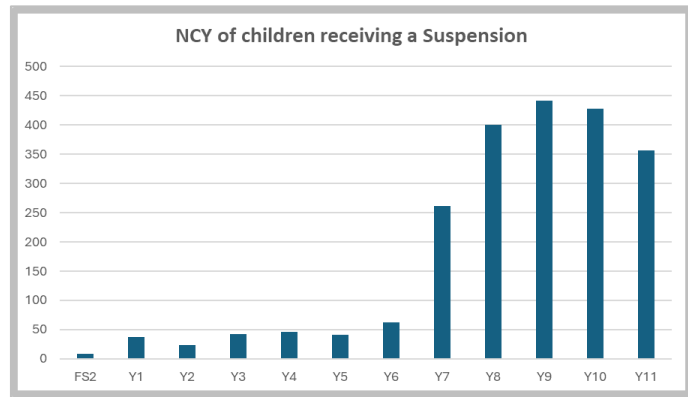
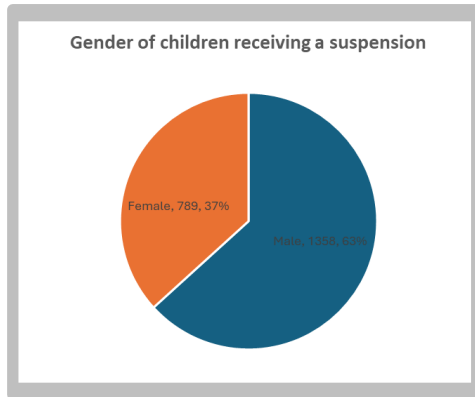
- There are more boys Permanently Excluded from school than girls in Rotherham. This correlates with national data [Step 6: Explore data - Create your own tables on suspensions and permanent exclusions in England](#)
- Permanent Exclusions remain low in primary, with a rise in Secondary and peak at year 10. This is broadly in line with national data, except for year 7 where an unusual number of Permanent Exclusions were seen in Rotherham 2024-25. In response to this, transition support from the Outreach Team has been strengthened, alongside improvements in information sharing between key services supporting transition. Careful monitoring in 2025-26 will identify whether this trend continues or is an anomaly.



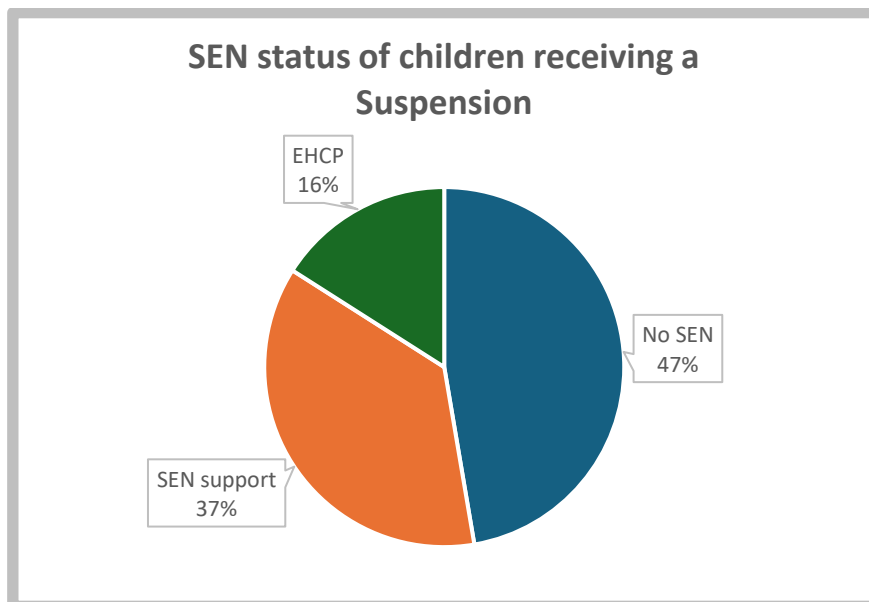
- Just over two thirds (69%) of children receiving a Permanent Exclusion have SEND needs recorded at the point of exclusion. This compares to 23.5% of the whole Rotherham school age population who are identified with a SEND need (SEN support or EHCP).
- The rate of Permanent Exclusion for children with an EHCP mirrors the National data, whereas the number of children who are SEND support and receiving a Permanent Exclusion from a Rotherham school is above national.

Suspensions

The data below relates to the 6980 Suspensions that were issued by Rotherham schools in the academic year 2024-25. These suspensions were issued for 2147 individual children, and the data below provides further information about the characteristics of these children.



- The Suspensions data follows similar trending to the Permanent Exclusions data, with boys being suspended at a greater rate than girls.
- Suspensions remain low in Primary, with a rise in Secondary peaking at year 9 and gradual fall into year 11.



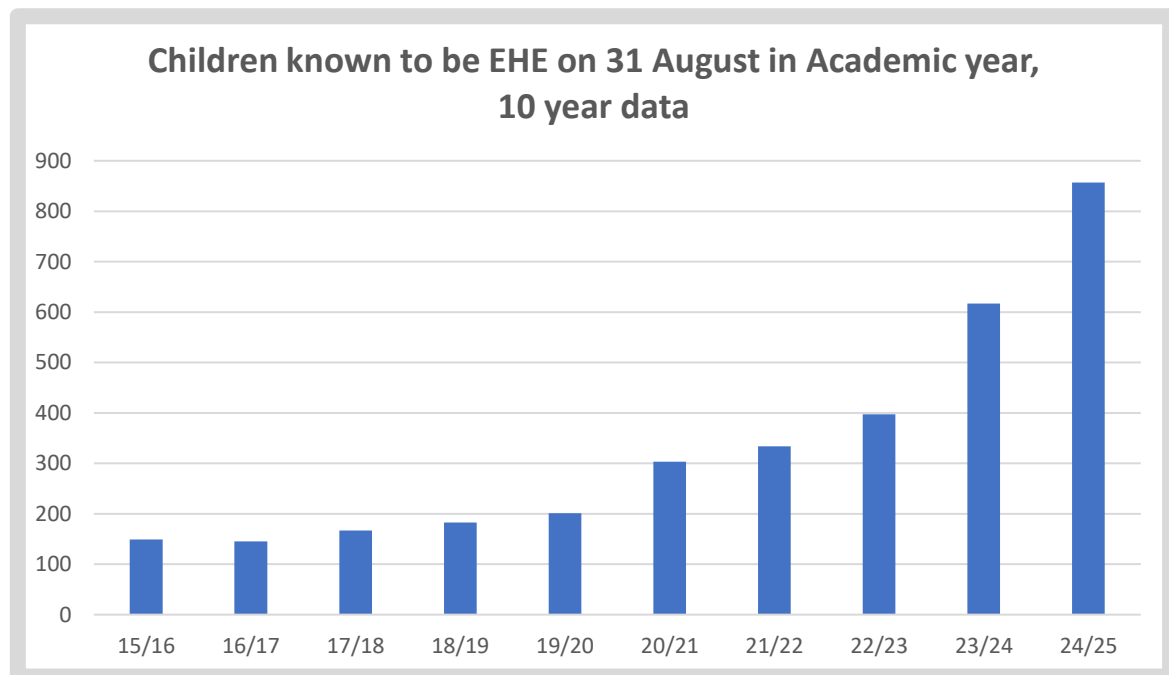
- 53% of children receiving a suspension have SEND (either EHCP or SEN support). Suspensions in Rotherham for children with SEND mirror the National trend.
- Suspensions are monitored on a regular basis through a working group, where support through the Specialist Inclusion Team and Outreach team universal offer is identified and agreed.

| Ethnicity | No of suspensions | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Pakistani | 140 | 2.005156 |
| Black African | 67 | 0.95961 |
| Any Oth Mixed b'ground | 50 | 0.716127 |
| White and Asian | 113 | 1.618447 |
| White and Black African | 74 | 1.059868 |
| White & Black Caribbean | 129 | 1.847608 |
| Not Obtained | 257 | 3.680894 |
| White British | 5617 | 80.44973 |
| White European | 53 | 0.759095 |
| White Other | 58 | 0.830708 |
| Gypsy/Roma | 355 | 5.084503 |
| Other | 69 | 0.988256 |

- The majority of suspensions are for young people recorded as being of White British ethnicity.
- The category of 'other' encompasses any recorded ethnicities where numbers were too low to report individually.

Appendix 2: Elective Home Education Dashboard 2024-25

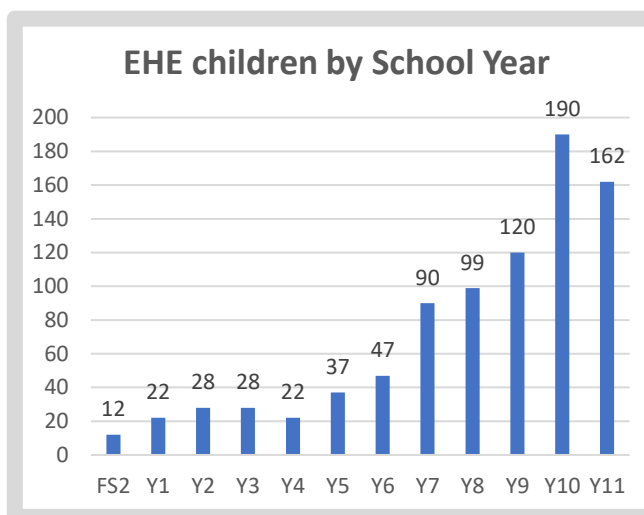
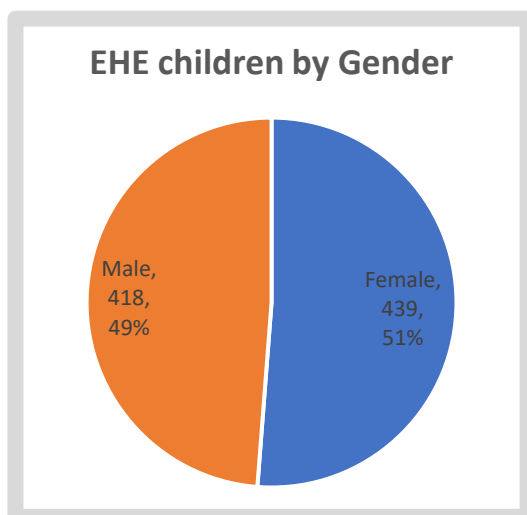
Unless otherwise indicated, data relates to Rotherham Children and Young People (CYP) who were known to be Electively Home Educated (EHE) on 31 August 2025. Although the year 11 children reported on had reached statutory school leaving age by this point, they are still included in the breakdown for completeness as they had been supported by the service during the preceding academic year.



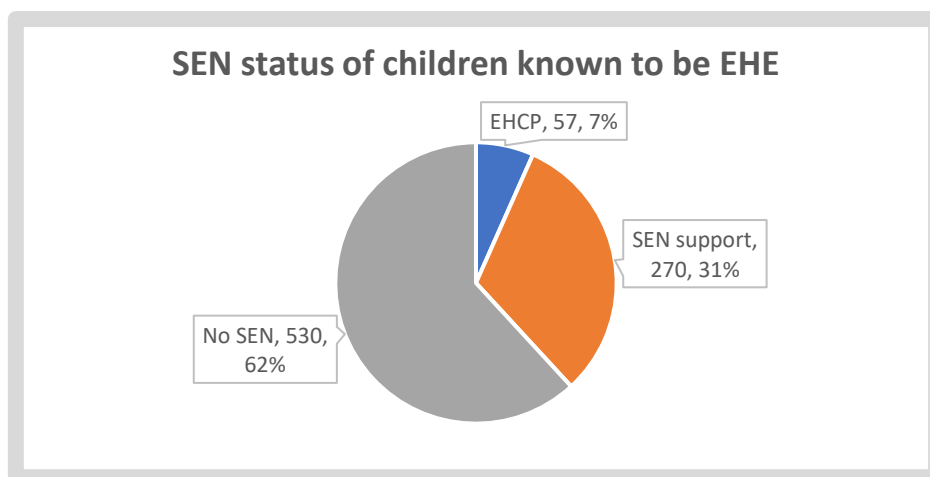
- Following a steady picture, there has been a year-on-year rise in the number of CYP who are known to be EHE over the last 5 years. This is in line with national trending.
- Focus continues to be placed on early intervention by the team to ensure that decisions to EHE are informed, proportionate and in the interests of the child(ren) at the centre of them.

Elective Home Education in Rotherham on 31 August 2025

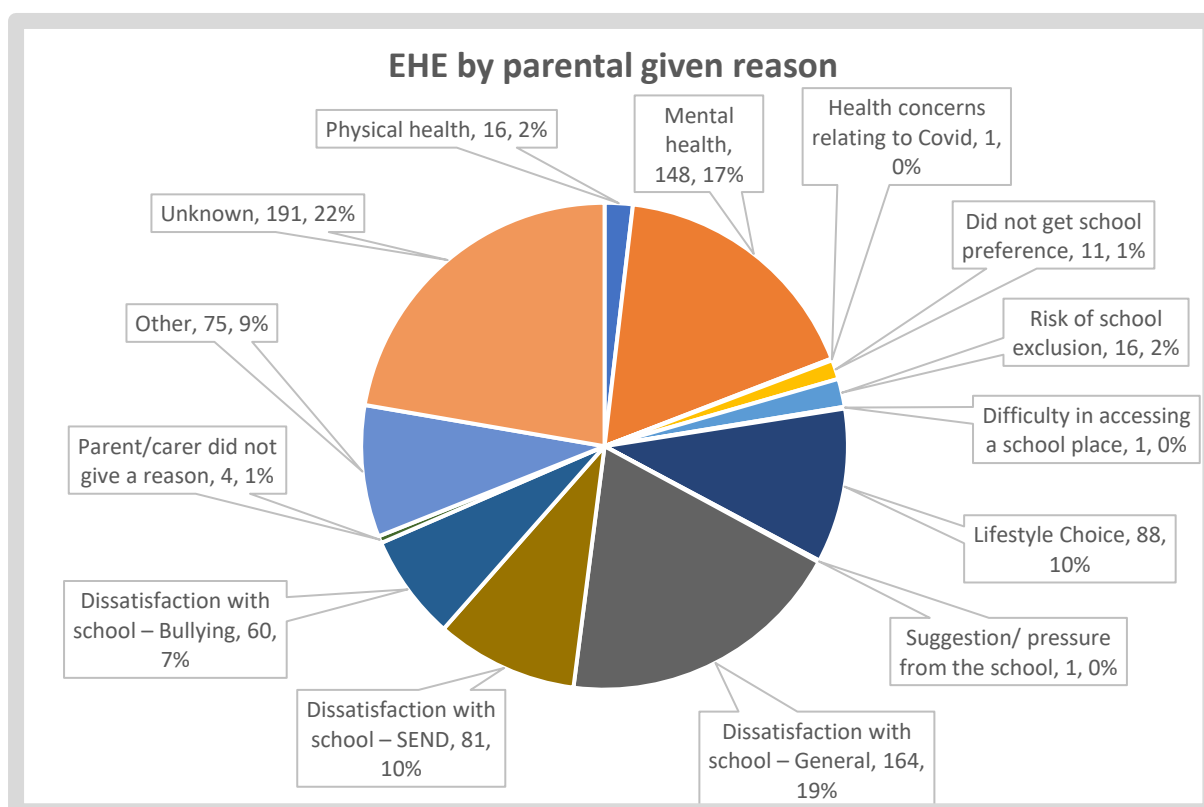
| | |
|---|-------------|
| Total children known to be EHE on 31 August | 857 |
| Child Protection | 2 |
| Child in Need | 14 |
| Early Help involvement | 34 |
| Total known to be EHE at some point during the academic year | 1299 |



- There is a relatively even split of boys and girls who are EHE in Rotherham.
- EHE numbers rise through primary and into secondary, with a peak at year 10. This is in line with national reported trend. Numbers rise year on year as parents make decisions to withdraw children at different points in their educational journey and they continue to remain EHE. Increasingly parents report that children cannot cope with the emotional demands placed on them as they progress through school, including the rigour of a KS4 curriculum and GCSE study.
- Primary numbers have remained relatively stable in comparison with 2023/24 figures, the increase in the cohort has been predominantly in Secondary.
- There is ongoing work with Secondary Schools to support them around EHE, through training, direct conversation and Locality Partnership Panels.

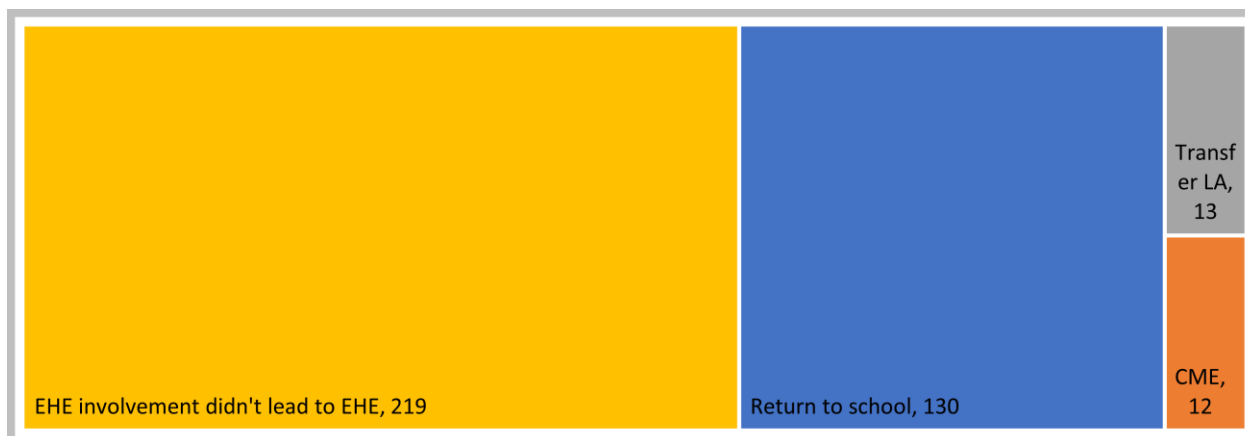


- The majority of children EHE in Rotherham do not have SEN needs recorded at the point they are deregistered from the school roll. Just over a third are recorded as having SEN needs, and are in receipt of either SEN support or have an EHCP. This mirrors the pattern seen during the previous academic year.



- Significant progress has been made by the EHE team over the past year in recording the reasons for EHE for a greater percentage of the cohort with only 29% reasons other/ unknown compared to 39% in the previous academic year. The descriptors used in Rotherham are in line with those used by the Department for Education in their termly collection.
- This refinement in recording has seen the highest recorded parental reason remain as dissatisfaction with school- general (19%), followed by mental health (17%).
- A slightly greater percentage of parents (10%) are reporting EHE as being a philosophical or lifestyle choice than in the previous year (9%)

Whole year analysis 2024-25



- Most of the service output remains working in a supportive way to ensure that LA statutory duty is discharged in respect of children who are known to be EHE.
- Performance in the area of early intervention remained good and 219 children remained on school roll as a result of intervention from the team- this is typically where a parent indicates to school that they intend to EHE and following a supportive conversation or meeting with a member of the team they go on to decide it isn't the most appropriate pathway for their child. Although this work does not form part of the core LA duty in relation to EHE the experience of the team is that this prevents children becoming EHE and then parents realising quickly that they wish for their child to return to school.
- 130 children (an increase from 82 in 2023/24) returned to school either because parents chose this or because EHE was no longer suitable. Where children return to school support is offered from the EHE team in respect of transition planning.

Statutory intervention following request to return a child to school

| | |
|---|----|
| Referral to FAP to identify school place (parent has not applied when asked to do so) | 51 |
| Referral to LASAP and subsequent School Attendance Order issued | 12 |
| School Attendance Order breached | 0 |

- The service always seeks to work in collaboration with parents where it is identified that children may not be in receipt of a suitable education. Where parents are unable to rectify this and decline to apply for a return to school, the EHE team is obliged to follow the Rotherham School Attendance Matters Pathway to ensure that this happens.
- During the academic year 2024-25 there was a further increase (51 in 2024-25, 33 in 2023-24) in the number of referrals made through the FAP pathway when children need to return to school. The team have a robust referral and escalation route where needed and have a mature understanding of when and how to implement it.
- Most parents work collaboratively with the EHE team following the initiation of a statutory pathway, with only twelve referrals to the Local Authority School Attendance Panel required to progress to an SAO.

Children Not in School Update

Sarah Whitby

Head of Service Access to Education

March 2026

What is already in place?

- Early intervention for Elective Home Education
- Supporting a return to school where this is needed or is in line with family's wishes
- Support to schools to explore alternatives to exclusion
- Scrutiny of exclusions paperwork and appropriate questioning where required

Service developments

- Revised Rotherham Elective Home Education Policy agreed by Cabinet October 2025
- Appointment of 2 additional Elective Home Education Officers (Term Time only) and 0.5 Service Support Assistant
- School Attendance Team now embedded in Access to Education
- Appointment of 3 School Attendance Mentors as part of Families First programme
- Review of training offer for colleagues within the wider Access to Education Service to ensure that colleagues continue to be equipped to meet Children's unique needs

Partnership Working

- Locality working with Secondary Schools to support inclusion
- Children Not in School Governance Group providing multi agency oversight and planning
- Exclusions and Suspensions briefing shared with all schools (by phase) termly
- Participation in Inclusive Leadership Programme alongside two Rotherham Secondaries
- Work with Outreach and Engagement to support positive destinations for children who are leaving Elective Home Education at 16
- Key Stage 2 'step out' at Rotherham Aspire as a supportive intervention
- Exclusions working group, including Specialist Inclusion Team and Outreach team to inform both targeted and whole school support

Key Areas of Focus

- Further development of Rotherham's shared vision for inclusion and ongoing partnership working with schools to support them in achieving this
- Reducing exclusion and suspension of children with SEND and those in receipt of Free School Meals
- Supporting children to stay in school rather than becoming EHE in year 10 and 11, where this is more appropriate for them
- Working towards provision of KS3 'step out' placement at Rotherham Aspire to mirror KS2 offer

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 17 March 2026

Report Title

Annual Report of the Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) 2024–2025

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

No

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

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

Report Author(s)

Niall Devlin – Service Director, Education & Inclusion
Niall.devlin@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report presents the Annual Report of the Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for the academic year 2024–2025. It summarises advice to statutory bodies, the standards and quality of Religious Education (RE) and collective worship in Rotherham schools, the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC), and SACRE's contribution to wider council priorities.

The report highlights strengthened membership (notably secondary RE specialists), successful CPD and interfaith engagement, progress towards reviewing the local Agreed Syllabus, and one determination (Thornhill Primary School). Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission are asked to note the Annual Report and endorse the forward actions for 2025–2026, including enhanced subject leader support, the South Yorkshire RE Conference, and development of school visits/visitors' guidance.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members of ILSC:

- Note the Rotherham SACRE Annual Report for 2024–2025 and its key findings; and
- Endorse SACRE's forward plan priorities for 2025–2026, including continued CPD, annual RE conference, RE awards, and development of educational visits/visitors guidance.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Annual Report of the Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) 2024–2025

1. Background

- 1.1 Rotherham's SACRE is a statutory body that advises the Local Authority (LA) on matters related to RE and collective worship. This Annual Report covers activity carried out by SACRE from September 2024 to July 2025, including advice to the LA and schools, CPD delivery, interfaith engagement, and determinations.
- 1.2 SACRE's work supports council objectives around inclusion, cohesion and educational outcomes, and aligns with national expectations set out in legislation governing RE and collective worship.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 In England, RE is a compulsory, non-national curriculum subject for all pupils in state-funded schools, including academies and free schools, from reception to age 19. While mandatory, parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from all or part of RE lessons, a right that transfers to students at age 16. State-funded schools are also legally required to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, as mandated by the Education Act 1996 and School Standards and Framework Act 1998. This act must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.
- 2.2 The key roles and responsibilities of a SACRE include:
 - Advising the LA: Providing advice on matters related to RE and collective worship, particularly in community and foundation schools.
 - Agreed Syllabus Conference: Monitoring and reviewing the locally agreed syllabus for RE to ensure that it remains relevant to the demographic of the area. A full review of the locally agreed syllabus must be carried out at least every five years
 - Collective Worship Determinations: Considering applications from schools to alter the requirement for collective worship to be broadly Christian in nature.
 - Supporting Schools: Offering guidance and support to teachers and schools on improving the quality of RE teaching and supporting community cohesion.
 - Monitoring Standards: Reviewing the quality and provision of RE in schools and publishing an annual report on its work.
- 2.3 Rotherham's SACRE is composed of representatives from local faith communities, teachers' associations, and the LA.

2.4 SACRE had identified issues in relation both to SACRE's statutory responsibilities and to the wider needs of schools, pupils, and communities in Rotherham, which are set out below.

2.4.1 **1. The need to strengthen SACRE's membership and improve governance**

SACRE identified that its membership lacked sufficient breadth of expertise, particularly in relation to secondary religious education and representation from local faith communities. This limited the group's ability to give well-rounded advice to the LA and meant that some meetings struggled to be quorate. Stronger governance arrangements and wider participation were needed to ensure SACRE could fulfil its statutory duties effectively.

2.4.2 **2. Schools required more support to deliver high-quality RE and improve teachers' subject knowledge.**

Nationally, RE is a compulsory subject, but it is not part of the national curriculum. This means local guidance and professional development are especially important. Feedback from schools showed that teachers needed greater confidence, access to reliable resources, and opportunities to deepen their understanding of different faiths and world views. Without this support, the quality of RE across the borough risked becoming inconsistent and less engaging for pupils.

2.4.3 **3. The locally agreed syllabus required review to remain up to date and fit for purpose**

Every LA must have an agreed syllabus for RE, reviewed at least every five years. Rotherham's syllabus had reached the point where an update was needed to reflect current national guidance, local priorities, and the increasingly diverse religious landscape. Without initiating this review, the borough risked having a syllabus that no longer fully supported teachers or met statutory expectations.

2.4.4 **4. SACRE needed to meet its statutory responsibilities in relation to collective worship**

All state-funded schools are legally required to provide daily collective worship that is "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character," unless they apply for a determination to lift or vary this requirement. SACRE must consider these applications and also respond to any complaints about collective worship. The issue identified was ensuring that determinations were managed appropriately and that SACRE remained vigilant in monitoring compliance and concerns, even though complaints are rare.

2.4.5 **5. There was a need for stronger community cohesion work, especially following the 2024 unrest.**

Events in 2024 highlighted the importance of strengthening relationships between communities and improving understanding between people of

different backgrounds. SACRE recognised that RE, inter-faith activity, and collaboration with schools could play a significant role in supporting cohesion. However, the scale of need meant that SACRE had to expand its involvement in wider initiatives and ensure its work aligned with local priorities for inclusion and harmony.

2.5 **Actions being taken:**

2.5.1 **1. Strengthening SACRE's membership and improving governance.**

To address the need for a broader and more knowledgeable membership, SACRE successfully recruited three new members, including specialists with experience in secondary-phase Religious Education. This wider representation has ensured that discussions and decisions are informed by a richer range of professional and faith perspectives. In addition, SACRE introduced hybrid meeting arrangements, allowing members to attend either in person or online. This has made participation easier, improved attendance from across the membership groups, and ensured that meetings are now consistently quorate, strengthening governance and decision-making.

2.5.2 **2. Enhancing support to schools and improving teachers' subject knowledge in RE.**

In response to the clear need for stronger support for teachers and RE subject leaders, SACRE established regular subject leader network meetings to enable professional dialogue, sharing of good practice, and peer support. To deepen teachers' understanding of different faiths, SACRE organised question-and-answer panels with representatives from Buddhist, Bahá'í, Muslim, and Jewish communities, giving teachers direct access to lived-faith perspectives. SACRE also maintained and promoted the local RE artefact resource, which provides schools with hands-on materials to enrich classroom learning. Feedback from teachers indicates that these initiatives have significantly increased their confidence and improved the quality of RE teaching across the borough.

2.5.3 **3. Reviewing and updating the locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education**

Recognising the need to bring the agreed syllabus up to date, SACRE formally convened the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) in September 2025. This marked the beginning of a structured review process involving consultation, drafting, and evaluation. The work is progressing towards a clear target of launching the revised syllabus in September 2026. This timeline enables schools to prepare for implementation and ensures the syllabus reflects both national guidance and local priorities, including promoting inclusion and community cohesion.

2.5.4 **4. Fulfilling statutory duties relating to collective worship**

To ensure it met its legal responsibilities under the Education Act 1996 and School Standards and Framework Act 1998, SACRE processed and approved

the renewal of a determination for Thornhill Primary School. This determination allows the school to modify the requirement for broadly Christian collective worship so that it better reflects the needs of its community. SACRE continued to monitor statutory requirements and remained prepared to respond to concerns, but no complaints about collective worship were received during the period, indicating that schools were managing their duties appropriately.

2.5.5 **5. Supporting wider cohesion and inter-faith initiatives across Rotherham**

In response to the need for stronger community cohesion, particularly following the unrest in 2024, SACRE played an active role in several major initiatives. SACRE contributed to the South Yorkshire RE Conference held on 29 January 2024, led by nationally recognised RE adviser Lat Blaylock, helping to raise regional standards and visibility for RE. SACRE also led the implementation of the *Together for Tomorrow* project, designed to strengthen relationships and understanding between communities. The principles of this project have been built into the draft of the new Agreed Syllabus to ensure cohesion is embedded in curriculum expectations. Additionally, SACRE coordinated activities for Inter-Faith Week, which received strong positive feedback and demonstrated the value of bringing communities together through dialogue and shared learning.

3. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

3.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from noting the Annual Report. Any costs associated with ASC meetings, CPD/events, or syllabus materials will be contained within existing approved CYPs budgets or subject to separate approval where required. No procurement activity is proposed in this decision; any future procurement will follow the Council's rules.

4. Legal Advice and Implications

4.1 SACRE operates under statutory provisions within the Education Acts and related guidance. The decision to note the Annual Report and endorse SACRE's forward plan raises no direct legal implications. Determinations are undertaken in line with statutory requirements, and the ASC will be convened in accordance with regulations.

5. Human Resources Advice and Implications

5.1 There are no direct HR implications in this report.

6. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

6.1 The work of SACRE supports inclusive, high-quality RE and Collective Worship, contributing to pupils' knowledge, cultural understanding and preparedness for life in modern Britain. SACRE's projects (e.g., *Together for Tomorrow*) promote cohesion and understanding across communities

7. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

7.1 SACRE’s activity promotes equality, diversity and inclusion through representation of multiple faiths and worldviews and interfaith engagement in schools. No adverse equalities impacts are identified. An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for noting the Annual Report; equalities will be considered for any future policy decisions.

8. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

8.1 There are no direct implications.

9. Implications for Partners

9.1 Positive implications for partners including schools, faith groups, and local community organisations through continued collaboration and shared resources.

10. Risks and Mitigation

10.1 Key Risks:

- Limited capacity in schools to engage
- Potential delays to ASC timetable
- Funding constraints.

10.2 Mitigation Measures:

- Clear timetable and ownership will mitigate the risk of delays in the ASC
- Use of hybrid meetings will ensure that meeting are quorate
- Improved financial management and oversight will ensure that funding constraints are well managed.

11. Accountable Officer(s)

Niall Devlin – Service Director, Education & Inclusion

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

| | Name | Date |
|----------------------------|---|-------------|
| Name of Strategic Director | Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services | 19/02/26 |

| | | |
|--|--|----------|
| Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member | Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth | 05/03/26 |
|--|--|----------|

Report Author:

Niall Devlin – Service Director, Education & Inclusion
Niall.devlin@rotherham.gov.uk

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

Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report



Academic Year 2024-2025

Rotherham SACRE Annual Report

1. Chair's Introduction and Context

This report outlines the work of the Rotherham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) from September 2024 to July 2025. It reflects on the advice given to statutory bodies, the support provided to schools, and the collaborative efforts to improve the quality of Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship across the borough.

On behalf of Rotherham SACRE, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all schools, teachers, RE subject leaders, support staff, and volunteers from our diverse faith communities. Your dedication and hard work over the past year have played a vital role in raising the standard of Religious Education across Rotherham.

Rotherham SACRE continues to benefit from a committed and expanding membership. We remain focused on supporting schools, educators, and subject leaders in delivering high-quality and inclusive RE. Our meetings, typically held four times a year, provide a valuable forum for collaboration and strategic planning. While one meeting this year was not quorate and therefore cancelled, the remaining meetings were fully quorate and productive.

We are particularly pleased to have strengthened Group 3 membership, welcoming a number of highly skilled secondary RE specialists. This has significantly enhanced our collective expertise and capacity to support schools.

Our hybrid meetings, held at Rotherham Town Hall, have improved accessibility and participation, enabling broader engagement from members. Our development plan remains a dynamic and evolving document, regularly reviewed to ensure it aligns with the needs of our schools and the wider local authority.

Looking ahead, our priorities include enhanced training and support for subject leaders, the continuation of our annual RE conference, the introduction of an RE awards ceremony, and the development of a recommended list of educational visits and visitors.

Thank you once again for your continued commitment to Religious Education in Rotherham.

Hannah Lambert

Chair of Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

July 2025

2. Advice to Statutory Bodies

a) Local Authority

SACRE advised the Local Authority on the importance of supporting RE through CPD, interfaith engagement, and curriculum development. The LA responded positively by facilitating CPD events and supporting the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

b) Schools

Advice was given to schools on enhancing RE through interfaith Q&A sessions, resource sharing, and curriculum alignment. Schools responded with positive feedback and increased participation in SACRE-led initiatives.

c) Government or Other Statutory Bodies

SACRE contributed to national discussions through NASACRE and advocated for ring-fenced funding and curriculum standards.

d) Response to the Advice Given

The advice was acted upon by the LA and schools, leading to improved engagement and resource development. No advice was ignored.

3. Standards and Quality of Provision of RE

a) Public Examinations

No data available for this reporting period.

b) Attainment in RE Not Covered by Public Examination

Anecdotal evidence from CPD sessions suggests improved teacher confidence and student engagement.

c) The Quality of RE Provision in Schools

Schools are actively engaging with SACRE resources and interfaith initiatives.

d) Withdrawal from RE

No formal data collected.

e) Complaints about RE

No complaints were received during this period.

4. Agreed Syllabus

a) Review of the Syllabus

An Agreed Syllabus Conference was convened and progress was made toward a revised syllabus.

b) Next Review

The next review is scheduled for the 2025–2026 academic year.

5. Collective Worship

a) Compliance with the Statutory Requirement

Schools are reminded of their statutory duties through SACRE communications.

b) Quality of Collective Worship

No formal monitoring conducted; anecdotal reports suggest varied practice.

c) Determinations

A determination was granted to Thornhill Primary School.

d) Complaints about Collective Worship

No complaints were received.

6. Management of SACRE

a) Attendance at SACRE, by Committee

Attendance records are maintained and available upon request. Rotherham SACRE met on four occasions during the 2024/2025 academic year. Details of venues and attendance are provided in the table below:

| Date | Venue | Numbers in attendance from each group | | | | | Other Attendees |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D | Co-opted Members | |
| 19 September 2024 | Rotherham Town Hall | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 (Specialist SACRE RE Advisor) |
| 5 December 2024 | Rotherham Town Hall | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 (Specialist SACRE RE Advisor) |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27 March 2025 | Rotherham Town Hall | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 June 2025 | Rotherham Town Hall | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

b) Membership and Training

The table below highlights the current membership levels for each group in Rotherham SACRE. There has been 1 new member representation Hinduism was added to Group A during the 2024-2025 academic year.

| Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 5 | 1 | 6 | 6 |

c) Complaints about RE and Collective Worship

No complaints were received.

7. Contribution of SACRE to the Wider Local Authority Agenda

a) Contribution to Other Agendas

SACRE contributed to interfaith dialogue and curriculum development.

b) Public Sector Equality Duty

SACRE promoted inclusivity through its interfaith initiatives.

c) Support to Schools

Provided CPD, resource lists, and interfaith engagement opportunities.

d) Community Initiatives

Collaborated with Rotherham Faith Leaders Group and other SACREs.

8. Finance - Annual Budget

The SACRE budget for the financial year 2024/25 was fully balanced. Total expenditure amounted to £6,000, which was entirely funded through DSG income. This resulted in no net overspend or underspend at year-end.

Rotherham - SACRE Budget

2024/25 Income & Expenditure Statement

| SACRE | Actuals 24-25 |
|---|---------------|
| | (£) |
| NASACRE Annual Subscription | 115 |
| Travel to Rotherham & Return | 67 |
| Accommodation | 89 |
| CPD Training | 1,000 |
| SACRE Management Time - H Lambert | 850 |
| SACRE Support - V Gregory | 1,750 |
| RE awards | 0 |
| Subject Leader Facilitation and coordination time – H Lambert | 2,200 |
| Council contribution to SACRE | -71 |
| Total Expenditure | 6,000 |
| Total Income (DSG funding) | -6,000 |
| Net Expenditure | 0 |

9. Summary

SACRE has made significant contributions to RE and Collective Worship in Rotherham. While formal monitoring and attendance data could be improved, the engagement with schools and the LA has been positive. SACRE continues to advocate for adequate funding and support.

The following items were discussed at the meetings held during the academic year of 2024-2025:

- **Artefacts Update**

The Specialist RE Advisor to SACRE provided regular updates to SACRE on the artefact resource boxes that were purchased via the SACRE budget, for schools to outsource via a borrowing system. Discussions included how to further promote the artefacts to ensure maximum engagement and usage of them.

- **Continuous Professional Development Update**

Regular updates were provided to each SACRE meeting on the opportunities for CPD, via the SACRE Specialist RE Advisor. Regular Subject Leader meetings were held, including one in the form of a question-and-answer panel arranged by SACRE and the SACRE Specialist RE Advisor.

The question-and-answer panel included a Buddhist representative, a Bahai representative, a Muslim representative and a Jewish representative.

Participation in the meeting was smaller than expected, however all who attended were enthusiastic and open and transparent of the struggles they were facing relating to the required knowledge and resources relating to each faith. SACRE members present offered attendees the option to approach Rotherham SACRE for SACRE's resource list. Teachers provided positive feedback from the meeting and advised that it was helpful for them to be able to think about personal world views

- **Development Plan update**

At every SACRE meeting, members received a progress update for each action on the development plan and the proposed next steps by the Chair of SACRE.

- **South Yorkshire RE Conference Update**

A South Yorkshire RE Conference was held on 29 January 2024. The Conference was added as an action on the SACRE Development Plan and was funded by local authority funding. The Conference was attended by thirty people and the feedback from the Conference was very positive. The Conference was hosted by Lat Blaylock, who was a primary and secondary Religious Education (RE) Specialist and Consultant. Lat was also the Editor of RE Today. Lat had been paid via the SACRE budget to deliver the conference. The conference provided the context to the Ofsted Research Review and how Rotherham SACRE could promote aspects raised within the report that related to areas that Ofsted found were not strong enough. Lat provided SACRE members who attended the course with good practical ideas for the classroom.

- **GCSE Results Update**

SACRE members requested an update on GCSE and A-Level results for the academic year, the GCSE and A-Level results were anonymised and shared

with the Committee members. SACRE members requested the data with specific school's names, local authority officers within the Childrens and Young People's Services sought advice and advised members that the Council's school ISA was not explicit enough to share the school's names with the associated data.

- **Secondary Networking Session Update**

An update was provided to members of SACRE on the Secondary Networking Session that was held.

- **The Together for Tomorrow Project**

The Local Authority was successful in a funding bid to support the delivery of projects and education within the borough, following on from the unrest and disorder in Rotherham, during the summer of 2024. The funding was used to develop the Together for Tomorrow Project, which focused on bringing together PHSE and the RE Curriculum. The funding was used to raise awareness of different cultures and beliefs and bring the communities of Rotherham together through schools and the curriculum. It was also a good project to raise the profile of religious education. The project was available to all schools in Rotherham and content would be recorded and hosted on www.forgecpd.com. The Chair of SACRE and the SACRE CYPS officer in attendance at the meeting were part of the Steering Group which progressed the project. At the end of the project there would be a celebration of the work completed throughout the project and an art exhibition would be held. It was suggested that the art exhibition could be linked to the Children's Capital of Culture which Rotherham was hosting for 2025.

Once the funding would be over, it was anticipated that the project would be sustainable and would be progressed through the curriculum.

- **Rotherham SACRE Terms of Reference and Constitution Updates**

Regular updates were provided to SACRE, via the Governance Advisor on the planned revision of the SACRE Terms of Reference and Constitution. SACRE were involved in drafting the document and then considered and approved the draft document. A briefing note was provided to SACRE members which highlighted the main changes to the Terms of Reference.

- **SACRE Membership Updates**

Regular updates relating to SACRE membership levels were provided to SACRE, this included any new membership for consideration and any current vacancies.

- **Feedback from Interfaith Week**

An update on Inter Faith Week 2024 was provided to the Committee. Three Primary Schools and one Secondary School requested attendance from faith members for Inter Faith Week. The groups were led in pairs of two, representing two different faiths. The attendees used the Inter Faith website

poster which covered a lot of different faiths. A general introduction was completed and both attendees read out their own individual faith quotation from the poster and asked each other questions on how they applied it to their everyday lives. The feedback from the participating schools was very positive, although there wasn't much interaction from pupils during the session, on-going discussions took place in classes after the session. A parent had approached one attendee to provide positive feedback and advise that their child enjoyed the session at school. It was agreed that this would be repeated on an annual basis, the event would be planned earlier next year to ensure wider involvement.

- **Local RE Agreed Syllabus Updates**

The local authority was due to review the Local RE Agreed Syllabus in conjunction with SACRE. SACRE members were reminded of the requirement to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). An ASC may also be known as a sub-group or working group, which would lead on the review of the Agreed Syllabus. The ASC was a statutory body and would entail between 3-6 meetings, which would include separate published agendas and minutes. SACRE was asked to agree to convene the ASC and to volunteer members to par-take in the ASC. ASC meetings to review the Local RE Agreed Syllabus will begin in September 2025, with the intention of the new Local RE Agreed Syllabus being launched by September 2026.

- **SACRE Determinations**

SACRE completed one determination in the academic year of 2024-2025. A determination was a legal process that RSACRE 8 allowed a school to deviate from the statutory requirement that collective worship be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character". Thornhill Primary School requested that a member of SACRE complete a determination, and a SACRE member had completed that determination and brought the findings to SACRE at a meeting. The overall findings of the determination were very positive. The RE leads were knowledgeable and enthusiastic and all class teachers demonstrated subject knowledge. There were multiple examples of good practice across the school. The outcome of the determination recommended that the determination for Thornhill Primary School be renewed.

- **Membership of SACRE and Support**

SACRE is supported by a clerk and an RE adviser. Membership includes representatives from faith groups, teachers, and the local authority

10. Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education Constitution

The current Rotherham SACRE Constitution and Terms of Reference 2025, are attached as Appendix 1.

During the 2024-2025 academic year, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in conjunction with the Chair of SACRE, SACRE members, the Monitoring Officer and the Governance Advisor, reviewed and updated the Rotherham SACRE Constitution and Terms of Reference.

The revised document has been drafted in conjunction with the guidance published by National SACRE and the relevant legislation such as the Education Act 1944 and the Education Act 1988, to ensure the revised Constitution and Terms of Reference will be compliant with all relevant statutory requirements.

Rotherham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report 2024–2025

ILSC Presentation

Niall Devlin – Service Director, Education & Inclusion

Purpose & Assurance

- Provide statutory annual update on Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) work
- Assure ILSC that RE, collective worship and governance duties are met
- Highlight progress, risk and next steps

It is recommended that Members of ILSC:

- Note the Rotherham SACRE Annual Report for 2024–2025 and its key findings; and
- Endorse SACRE's forward plan priorities for 2025–2026, including continued CPD, annual RE conference, RE awards, and development of educational visits/visitors' guidance.

Key Headlines

- Stronger membership including secondary RE specialists
- CPD programme strengthened with interfaith Q&A sessions
- South Yorkshire Conference delivered with positive feedback
- Artefact library improved and actively used
- Re-launched the Religious Education Awards

A Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Statutory body mandated for every Local Authority to advise on RE and collective worship in schools. SACRE:

- Advises the LA on matters relating to religious education
- Establish the agreed syllabus conference and writing the agreed syllabus.
- Considering applications to alter requirement for collective worship to be of a Christian nature.
- Providing advice and support to schools and teachers
- Monitor the quality of RE provision and publish an annual report

The areas for development

Issues:

- Breath of membership
- Professional development
- Refresh the agreed syllabus
- Collective worship
- Stronger community cohesion

Response:

- 3 new members (including specialists) and hybrid meetings
- Establish regular subject specialist networks and Q&A sessions
- Reviewing the agreed syllabus and organised the Agreed Syllabus Conference
- Review schools' applications
- Together for Tomorrow project and working across the region (South Yorkshire Conference)

The Annual Report

- SACREs have a duty to publish an annual report. This report has to be sent to the Secretary of State for Education as well as to key partners, including schools, teacher training institutions, libraries and councillors. The main purpose of the annual report is to hold the LA to account

The Annual Report

- Introduction
- Advice given to statutory bodies (LA, Schools, etc)
- View on the quality of provision of RE
- Collective worship contribution to the wider community agenda

Financial Position

- Total expenditure £6,000
- Fully funded through DSG
- No overspend or underspend

Forward Plan 2025–26

- Enhanced subject leader support offer
- Annual RE conference maintained
- Introduction of RE awards framework
- Visits/visitors guidance produced for all schools

ILSC – What is Required Today

- Note the statutory annual report
- Endorse forward plan priorities
- Provide any additional steer on syllabus review or cohesion work

**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 th June 2025 | Monica Green/Chris Macdonald N/A | Draft Kinship Local Offer (pre-decision scrutiny) Closed session following meeting to discuss and draft 2025-2026 work programme |
| 22 nd July, 2025 | Helen Sweaton/ Anne Hawke Niall Devlin/ Sarah Whitby | CYPS Performance Report 2024/25 Elective Home Education Revised Policy (pre-decision scrutiny) |
| 16 th September, 2025 One substantive agenda item | Helen Sweaton | CAHMS Update including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual update 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. • Neurodiversity Update- service update, Choice and the Peer Support Service. |
| 4 th November, 2025 | 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 for Cabinet in February, 2026) – also includes a progress update on the SEND Inspection areas for improvement. |
| 28 th November, 2025 | Scott Matthewman/ Jacqueline Clarke | Unpaid Carers Strategy Revision Workshop (HSC Workshop with ILSC invited due to young carers aspect). |
| 2 nd December, 2025 | Nicola Curley Chris Macdonald/ Darren Downs | Fostering Transformation Programme incorporating the update on the Response to the Prevention of Future Deaths Report. Rotherham Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2024/25. |
| 10 th February, 2026 | Vice-Chair Nicola Curley Niall Devlin | Update from Corporate Parenting Partnership Board. Ofsted Inspection Outcome. Educational Attainment Update. |
| 17 th March, 2026 | Kelly White Niall Devlin Niall Devlin | Community Cohesion Projects Update - Building Bridges Together Project and the Together for Tomorrow Project Update. Children Not in School Update (including EHE, CME, exclusions, attendance and part-time provision). SACRE Annual Report 2024/25 (for information only). |
| 28 th April, 2026 | TBC Stuart Williams | Child Exploitation Strategy Update. Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report 2024/25. |

Ongoing Review

| | | |
|----------|-----|--|
| 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 |
|----------|-----|--|

Items to be Considered by Other Means (e.g. off-agenda briefing, workshop etc.)

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| <p>Off agenda briefing note</p> | <p>Kelly White</p> | <p>Support available for vulnerable women in pregnancy following cessation of PAUSE Project.</p> |
| <p>21st April 2026 10.00 a.m. Town Hall</p> | <p>Polly Hamilton</p> | <p>Children’s Capital of Culture Workshop Impact and Legacy for Children and Young People</p> |