

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION

Date and Time:- Tuesday 28 April 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 - 13)

To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17th March, 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. Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Update

To receive a verbal update from the Vice-Chair on the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board following the meeting held on 24 March, 2026.

7. Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report (Pages 14 - 54)

To consider the progress made by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board in 2025 and to note the areas of focus for 2026.

8. Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29 (Pages 55 - 74)

To receive the report and to note the progress made against the Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29.

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

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

10. Urgent Business

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

**The next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission
will be held on Tuesday 9 June 2026
commencing at 10.00 a.m.
in Rotherham Town Hall.**



John Edwards,
Chief Executive.

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 17 March 2026

Present:- Councillor Monk (in the Chair); Councillors Adair, Blackham, Brent, Clarke, T. Collingham, Elliott, Garnett, Harper, Hughes, Ismail, Pitchley, Ryalls, Sutton, along with Ms. L. Hickey, Mr. M. Hemmingway and Mr. J. Newman (Co-opted Members).

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Bower and Fisher.

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

38. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 10th February, 2026 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

40. 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.

41. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

42. COMMUNITY RECOVERY FUND - CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Consideration was given to the report as submitted and the Chair welcomed Councillor Cusworth - Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader, Rachel Jackson - Early Help Outreach and Engagement Co-ordinator, Amanda Needham - Service Manager, Fiona Radford - Manager and Ann Foxley-Johnson to the meeting.

Councillor Cusworth introduced the report and provided an update on the delivery of the Community Recovery Fund projects in Children and Young People's Services over the past twelve months following how in late July and early August 2024, a wave of violent anti-immigration riots occurred across the UK, including a public disturbance in Manvers, Rotherham. These events had significant personal, professional, and community impacts across Rotherham.

In response, the Government created a £15 million Community Recovery Fund (CRF) to help affected areas recover. Rotherham received funding

from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support community cohesion and assist communities impacted by the disorder.

As part of this programme, two Children's Services projects were approved and delivered: Building Bridges and Together for Tomorrow.

Reference was made to the report which provided in-depth information about the projects, their success and progress.

The Chair invited Fiona Radford, Manager and Ann Foxley-Johnson to begin the first half of the presentation which highlighted:-

- Community Recovery Fund CYPS Projects.
- Project 1 - Together for Tomorrow.
- Why Together for Tomorrow.
- Strand 1 – Conversations about Faith.
- Strand 2 – Picture Trail.
- Strand 3 – Ambassadors.
- Strand 4 – Curriculum Links.
- Strand 5 – Together for Tomorrow Song.
- Strand 6 – Places of Worship.
- Strand 7 – Online Safety.
- Project 8 – Schools Linking Project.

A discussion and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Inclusion of faiths and way of life within the project including Humanism.

The Cabinet Member confirmed all faiths and ways of life were represented on the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and were included as part of the consultation.

- Was there a good spread of schools and had the project captured the right schools.
There was a good spread of schools and at this stage no school had been particularly targeted. However, there were some hotspots that would receive a targeted approach from September.
- Were current participation levels such as 43% of schools involved and the numbers of young people engaged sufficient to achieve expected outcomes and what plans existed to widen reach?

It was noted that it was 43% of schools and not 43% of pupils and whilst not all schools were involved there were some of the majority of academy trusts. It was hoped this information would then get disseminated accordingly.

- How was the project delivered across year groups and did it target a specific year group.

The project covered Early Years into KS3 and it was hoped that the project would become embedded to ensure sustainability even once the funding was exhausted. It was hoped the good work would not stop. In addition this now formed part of SACRE and this would help to maintain longevity.

The Chair invited Rachel Jackson, Early Help Outreach & Engagement Co-ordinator, to continue with the presentation which covered:-

- Project 2 – Building Bridges Together.
- Purpose of the Project.
- The Offer.
- Consultation.
- Key Milestones 2025/26.
- Engagement To Date.
- Young People's Feedback.
- Cohesion Celebration Event – 21st March at Coleridge School.
- Final Project Evaluation.
- Community Cohesion Workshop.

A discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Information sharing from children to parents to counteract misinformation.

As part of the consultation staff were attempting to work with children so they could make informed choices about their beliefs and it was hoped this would then transgress into educational conversations with parents.

The Restorative Youth Justice Team were also doing some work with parents and children and whilst some were not making a connection to the unrest, the significance was important.

It was further important for the key narratives were drip fed through Early Years to forge strong beliefs and eradicate fear and ignorance.

- Was the work of Building Bridges Together ongoing or was it done in cycles and what key points were provided for pupils and parents.

The reach of this project was extensive with the inclusion of a number of partners, the voluntary and community sector and workshops being held for hard to reach children.

A pilot project was also being held on Community Cohesion in special schools tailoring programmes for need and engagement.

- How as community awareness and understanding of the project measured.

The impact was measured via a number of workshops and outreach sessions which highlighted greater awareness of hate crime in young people and significantly strengthened understanding of what hate crime was, where to seek help and report incidents.

- Evaluation questionnaire and feedback from 118 young people.

Feedback indicated strong positive outcomes across key cohesion, extremism awareness and hate crime. Participants agreed that people from different backgrounds could live together peacefully with more young people indicating an increased understanding of extremist narratives and greater confidence in reporting extremist views.

- Could other Community Groups be involved in the work of this project.

The involvement of other groups was welcomed and it was suggested groups leaders make contact.

The Chair thanked those present for their informative presentations.

Resolved:- That the progress made against the delivery plan for the Community Recovery Fund be received and noted.

43. CHILDREN NOT ACCESSING THEIR FULL EDUCATIONAL ENTITLEMENT AT SCHOOL

Consideration was given to the report and associated appendices which were introduced by Councillor Cusworth as they provided 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, therefore, provided a breakdown of the characteristics of the respective cohorts to enable scrutiny by the Commission and provide assurance to the commission on processes for children who did not access a school setting on a full-time basis. This included 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,

The Chair welcomed Niall Devlin, Service Director, and Sarah Whitby, Head of Access to Education, to the meeting.

By way of a presentation delivered by the Head of Access to Education, a copy of which was included in the agenda pack, the following was highlighted:-

- Interventions already in place for children not in school:-
 - ❖ Early Intervention for Elective Home Education.
 - ❖ Support of a return to school in line with family's wishes.
 - ❖ Support to schools to explore alternatives to exclusion.
 - ❖ Scrutiny of exclusions paperwork and challenge.
- Service Developments:-
 - ❖ Revised Elective Home Education Policy.
 - ❖ Appointment of two Elective Home Education Officers and a Service Support Assistant.
 - ❖ School Attendance Team embedded in Access to Education.
 - ❖ Appointment of three School Attendance Monitors.
 - ❖ Review of Training Offer.
- Partnership Working:-
 - ❖ Working with Secondary Schools to support inclusion.
 - ❖ Oversight by the School Governance Group.
 - ❖ Termly sharing of exclusions and suspensions.
 - ❖ Participation in Inclusive Leadership Programme.
 - ❖ Work with Outreach and Engagement.
 - ❖ Key Stage 2 "Step Out" at Rotherham Aspire.
 - ❖ Exclusions Working Group support.
- Key Areas of Focus:-
 - ❖ Further development of Rotherham's shared vision.
 - ❖ Reducing exclusion and suspension of children with SEND and FSM.
 - ❖ Supporting children to remain in school in Years 10 and 11.
 - ❖ Working towards provision of Key Stage 3 "Step Out" at Rotherham Aspire.

A discussion and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- The right to elective home educate by parents.

The Education Act 1996 placed a duty on every parent of a child of compulsory school age to ensure they received an efficient, full-time education. Parents have the legal right to remove their children from a school roll and provide their education and the Council must ensure that children who were home educated were in receipt of a suitable and efficient full-time education.

- What could the Council do when parents were ill equipped to provide education leading to the increase in numbers returning to education in Year 11.

Often parents did not realise they had to pay for examinations where children were elective home educated and there were a small number of young people returning to be educated in school in Year 11. Every effort was made to ensure this transition provided the least disruption as possible for all concerned and appropriate steps were taken in collaboration with professionals and schools.

- Did the Elective Home Education Team only work term time and what provision was available if support was required during the summer.

The majority of children who were elective home educated preferred visits in term time and often followed holiday periods.

The newly recruited Support Assistant was able to triage and offer support to families. Two Elective Home Education Officers had been recruited to provide dedicated support, but this focused on term time only.

- Page 54 of the report stated "Suspensions continue on an upward trend year on year and there was work ongoing to understand and respond to this." Was this work particularly in relation to white males and in Year 9, and how was the success of this intervention measured?

A number of initiatives were signposted and included funding support to primary and secondary schools to deliver training, behaviour management, alternative provisions for young people at risk of exclusion or suspension, use of Fair Access and training specialists. Work was also taking place with outside agencies to make a real difference.

For young people where there were particular trends direct support would be offered and work was also taking place with Aspire with a view to increasing the "Step Up" support in Key Stage 3.

An approach to how males, particularly those in receipt of free school meals, may learn was being targeted with the intention of increasing the target to 73.3% by 2028. Whilst this was hovering around the 68% area, there was more work to do.

Engagement was key with emphasis in early years to avoid disengagement by Years 10 and 11. A whole suite of interventions were strengthening reception/foundation years giving all young people the best start in their education.

- Pupils in receipt of medical tuition and out of school, where did the responsibility lay to ensure they were educated.

The Local Authority would tailor an offer to meet the needs of the young person who could not attend school due a medical condition and this was kept under regular review by a named Officer.

- The report indicated an increase in the number of pupils supported by medical tuition, what was the reason for this leap.

The increase in numbers was quite small and the medical reasons differed. A more detailed response would be provided.

- Children excluded from school contributed to the numbers of children electively home educated, but what were the other reasons.

The reasons for children being removed from school by their parents varied. Only 2% of children at risk of exclusion were removed to be elective home educated and numbers were higher where parents were dissatisfied with the educational provision offered.

It was noted multi-academy trusts had their own policies in place with a complaints process should a parent be dissatisfied with their educational provision. On the positive side work was ongoing and this had resulted in 248 children kept in school rather than them being removed.

- Did the data reflect the same children/families experiencing disruptive education at the beginning of Terms 1 and 2 when they may have received support or integrated back into education in Term 3. Numbers indicated a drop and then an increase in number, were these the same children.

Only a small number of children were reflected and may be subject to a School Attendance Order.

There was some evidence of children moving in and out of school and this made following the curriculum very difficult resulting in chunks of missed education. As parents had a choice of how their

child was educated there were various reasons as to why elective home educating was chosen, as mentioned previously with the highest reason being dissatisfaction.

- Was the use of part-time timetables compliant with expectations.

The use of part-time timetables was strengthened by robust guidance and were tailored specifically for wellbeing and risk. Support and challenge was offered in line with school provision. This temporary provision had clear expectations with moving towards reintegration/intervention.

It was the Local Authority's view that part-time timetables were used as a short-term measure with a move to involving the child in a full-time education as soon as possible.

- There appeared to be a large spike in Year 10 of children, mainly boys, of moving to being elective home educated. Was this systemic and what consultation was being done to drive this down.

This was being monitored by the DfE Round Table which included a collection of Chief Education Officers in the region and an action plan with RISE. Research showed this to be across the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 and this was being worked upon from early years upwards to give a good education foundation.

Research also showed that it was often some of the rigidity of education moving into secondary education that was often the barrier for boys moving forward, such as uniform. A meeting with the LGA was looking at giving children the best start within a local plan.

- Transitions were important and often it was the culture shift that had an impact, particularly on the behavioural approach. Uniform was a good example so was there more support that could be provided to not create bumps in the system.

The Local Authority were acutely aware of the need to provide support where it was required.

- What options were there available to exclusion.

Locality Panels were able to explore a range of options on a partnership basis with various schools represented. Initiatives like managed moves or off-site provision were considered. Every effort was made to working effectively with young people to promote positive changes.

Schools would be supported to ensure they were not working in isolation.

- Many young people moving from primary to secondary school were simply not ready for the transition, especially those with additional needs or who become overwhelmed easily. Often this then left the option to elective home educate, There needed to be a window of opportunity to effectively prepare children to avoid them not being in an educational setting.

A range of initiatives were in place to support children at the time of transition including:-

- Secondary Head Teachers meeting three times a year to work together for an agreed provision.
- Learn days for a positive transition with a seven-minute guide prepared for schools providing an enhanced transition.
- Transition trials/sessions. Lunchtimes were often areas that could cause disruption with timings and the numbers of pupils.

The Chair wished to thank everyone involved in this item and suggested that if any Member had any further questions to forward them to the Clerk to seek a response.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That further details be provided on the reasons for the increase in medical tuition and what may have led to this leap.

44. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROTHERHAM STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) 2024-2025

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Annual Report of the Rotherham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for the academic year 2024–2025. It summarised 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.

Councillor Cusworth described how the report highlighted strengthened membership (notably secondary RE specialists), successful CPD and interfaith engagement, progress towards reviewing the local Agreed Syllabus, and one determination (Thornhill Primary School).

The Commission were 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.

The Chair welcomed Niall Devlin, Service Director, and Hannah Lambert, Chair of SACRE, to the meeting and invited them to deliver the presentation.

The presentation highlighted:-

- Purpose and Assurance to Improving Lives Select Commission.
- Key Headlines from the Annual Report.
- SACRE as a statutory body mandated to the Local Authority.
- Areas for Development.
- Publication of the Annual Report.
- Content of the Annual Report.
- Financial Position.
- Forward Plan 2025-26.
- Recommendations to Improving Lives.

A discussion and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Inclusive membership and the basis of a good foundation.

SACRE now had a broader and more knowledgeable membership ensuring that discussions are informed and professional.

- Collective worship and fulfilling statutory duties.

Collective worship was not actively monitored due to the collaboration of academy trusts, but maintained schools were unless they applied for a determination.

Broad definitions of Christian assemblies still continued to reflect collective workshop.

Resolved:- (1) That Rotherham's SACRE Annual Report for 2024–2025 and its key findings be received and noted.

(2) That SACRE's forward plan priorities for 2025–2026, including continued CPD, annual RE conference, RE awards and the development of educational visits/visitors guidance be supported and endorsed.

45. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2025/26 and the remaining items scheduled for the last meeting of Improving Lives for this municipal year.

The Chair also drew attention to a suggestion which required volunteers meeting with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board made up of young people who have reviewed their programme of work. The

young people were developing a strategy to underpin their agreed priorities going forward and the rationale, the potential impact and outcome measures and the presentation of the strategy itself much the same way pre-decision scrutiny had worked before.

The session was scheduled to take place at the next meeting of the Children and Young People's Partnership meeting on Tuesday, 28th April, 2026 at 4.00 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Resolved:- (1) That the Work Programme be approved.

(2) That volunteers meet with the Children and Young People's Partnership at their next meeting on Tuesday, 28th April, 2026 at 4.00 p.m. and that an invite be extended to Councillors Brent, Clarke, Harper and Sutton, along with co-opted members, Mr. M. Hemmingway and Mr. J. Newman.

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

The Chair provided a progress report on the ongoing review about the impact of secondary school policies on school attendance levels and ensuring an education for vulnerable children and/or trauma experienced children, and how this impacts the Council's broader duties of safeguarding and school attendance.

In January 2026 a questionnaire was sent to all secondary schools in the borough to seek background information relating to how they supported children who were vulnerable or have experienced trauma. Despite repeated attempts by officers only a small number of responses were received.

The Chair wished to place on record her thanks to the schools that did respond and the information provided was extremely useful, and in some cases very detailed, providing a high level of assurance that those schools were operating in a trauma-informed way. The schools were to be written to directly to thank them for their responses and congratulate them on their work.

The lack of engagement did mean that continuing with the review was not possible at this time. However, a Cabinet Member working group was being explored with a range of partners and if this proceeded then members of Improving Lives and Health would be invited to join.

Resolved:- That the update be received and the contents noted.

47. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 28 April 2026

Report Title

Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report

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

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

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

Report Author(s)

Stuart Williams, Service Director, Children's Social Care

stuart.williams@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report accompanies the first annual report of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in relation to the work of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board 2025. It showcases the work completed to deliver our duty as a Corporate Parent. The purpose is to set out how the Council delivers consistent high-quality care and how the Council, with partners, support opportunities for Children in Care, Care Leavers, and supports them with progressing key priority areas including placement sufficiency and youth participation. This Annual Report also summarises progress by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board against the Corporate Parenting Strategy and sets out priorities for 2026.

Recommendations

1. That Improving Lives Select Commission note the progress made by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board in 2025.
2. That Improving Lives Select Commission note the areas of focus for 2026.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report 2025

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Corporate Parenting Panel – 24 March 2026

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report

1. Background

- 1.1 Children and Young People Services have produced the first annual report of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board which is shared alongside this report as an appendix.
- 1.2 The report aims to highlight the work of the board, the successes in 2025, the scrutiny function and governance of the Corporate Parenting Action Plan and the areas of focus for 2026.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined in legislation corporate parenting duties for local authorities. It noted that local authorities must act as the best parents possible for children in their care, ensuring stable, positive experiences, and support for care leavers, including published offers for their transition to adulthood.
- 2.2 The Corporate Parenting Duty places a legal obligation on public bodies to act as responsible parents for children in care and care leavers, ensuring their stability, well-being, and opportunities. Ensuring these children achieve similar outcomes as their peers, with a focus on education, health, and becoming independent adults, supported by specific duties under the Children Act 1989 and other acts.
- 2.3 During 2025 there was a redesign of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board. The motivation for this refresh was to enhance corporate ownership and give the board and improved presence. The revised model also ensured a dynamic approach to progressing the action plan and in turn outcomes for children and young people. Throughout 2025 there has been a consistent commitment from senior officers and members who have met regularly. Children and Young People Services would also like to place on record their gratitude to Democratic Services for their support.
- 2.4 Children's Social Care were subject to an inspection by Ofsted in November 2025. The outcome of this inspection was exceptionally positive with an overall judgement of 'Outstanding'. The published report notes "There is a strong and embedded commitment to corporate parenting and the rights of children and young people, underpinned by a strategic vision that translates into tangible action" in relation to corporate parenting.
- 2.5 The inspection also highlighted "The redesign of the corporate parenting partnership board creates meaningful opportunities for children to hold leaders to account alongside groups such as the 'In Care Voice' (children in care group) and 'Look Ahead' (care leavers group), young inspectors and young journalists, who also have real impact".
- 2.6 Children and Young People Services will have a continued dynamic approach to the action plan associated with the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board

to ensure that the actions and areas of focus align to the current needs of Children in Care and Care Leavers. This will be informed by quality assurance activity, feedback from children and young people and external review.

2.7 Areas of specific focus for 2026 include:

- Improve Pathway Plans for Care Leavers,
- Ensure Care Leavers have access to Health Passports,
- Continue to improve local sufficiency for Children in Care.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Members are asked to note the progress of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

3.2 Members are asked to note the areas of focus for 2026.

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 Not applicable.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 Not applicable.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Not applicable.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Not applicable.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Not applicable.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Not applicable.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There are clear risks associated to not delivering effective care and support to Children in Care and Care Leavers. This includes reputational risk and the associated individual implications for children and young people.

13.2 To ensure that the identified scheme of work is delivered there is strong governance and oversight system which includes monthly review by actions owners which is overseen by the Service Director. The action plan and exceptions report are also presented to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board at each meeting.

Accountable Officer(s)

Stuart Williams, Service Director

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Executive Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services	01/04/26
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	01/04/26

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

CORPORATE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2025



www.rotherham.gov.uk

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present Rotherham's first Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) Annual Report, which reflects our strengthened commitment to the children and young people who rely on our care, support, and advocacy.

The creation of the CPPB has been a significant milestone. Over the past year, the Board has amplified the voice and influence of children and young people, ensuring their insights drive improvements in health assessments, social work practice, education, and what a safe, nurturing home should feel like. We supported the Children in Care Pledge, the redesign of the Journey Hub, oversaw improvements to care leaver pathways, including strengthened housing prioritisation and expanded accommodation options, scrutinised the timeliness of health and dental assessments and promoted more integrated support for emotional wellbeing through closer multi agency working.

We continue to invest in in house residential and fostering services to increase local placement options. Our ambition remains clear: every child should grow up in a stable, loving home close to their community. Strong progress has been made, and our plans for 2026 build on this firm foundation. We have encouraged partner involvement and created meaningful opportunities for Rotherham's young people to shape decisions and strategic direction with their valuable accounts of lived experience.

Working collaboratively across the Council, its partners, and with our children and young people, we have strengthened our corporate parenting offer and embedded clearer governance, accountability, and shared ambition. The Board's governance ensured robust monitoring of priorities and contributed to wider system improvements that supported Rotherham's Outstanding Ofsted judgement for children in care services. Whilst we celebrate this achievement, we remain committed to further progress.

Being a Corporate Parent is one of our greatest responsibilities. This report acknowledges achievements, highlights areas for improvement, and reaffirms our commitment to always ask: ***"If this were my child, would this be good enough?"*** We will continue to remove barriers, strengthen support, and create the conditions for every child and young person to thrive.

Finally, I thank our children and young people for their trust and contributions, and recognise the dedication of our carers, staff, partners, and elected members who work tirelessly on their behalf.



Cllr Victoria Cusworth

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Chair, Corporate Parenting Partnership Board

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first annual report of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in relation to Corporate Parenting. It showcases the work completed to deliver our duty as a Corporate Parent. The purpose is to set out how the Council delivers consistent high-quality care and how the Council, with partners, support opportunities for Children in Care, Care Leavers, and supports them with progressing key priority areas including placement sufficiency and youth participation. This Annual Report also summarises progress by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board against the Corporate Parenting Strategy and sets out priorities for 2026.

Highlights from 2025:

- Established the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board with strengthened partner membership and clear lines of accountability.
- Expanded opportunities for children and young people to influence decisions, including refreshed Voice and Participation groups and the launch of 'The Journey'.
- Continued investment in the in-house residential estate and foster carer recruitment to improve local placement sufficiency for children in care.
- Aligned themed priorities to Corporate Parenting sub-groups (health, housing and education) to accelerate delivery against priorities.

Areas for continued focus in 2026. Delivering the enhanced offer for care leavers; embedding the CYP Pledge; continued implementation of sub-group action plans; regional work for care experienced young people with a focus on housing allocation policies; and further focus on the voice and participation of separated migrant children.

BACKGROUND

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined in legislation **corporate parenting duties** for local authorities, improving support for **children in care and care leavers**. It noted that local authorities must act as the best parents possible for children in their care, ensuring stable, positive experiences, and better support for care leavers, including published offers for their transition to adulthood.

The Corporate Parenting Duty places a legal as well as a moral obligation on public bodies to act as responsible parents for children in care and care leavers, ensuring their stability, well-being, and opportunities, making sure these children achieve similar outcomes as their peers, with a focus on education, health, and becoming independent adults, supported by specific duties under the Children Act 1989 and other acts.

Core Responsibilities:

- **Stability & Support:** Ensuring safe, stable homes, education, and relationships.
- **Aspirations:** Having the same high aspirations for children in care as for their own children (the “would this be good enough for my child?” test).
- **Preparation for Adulthood:** Helping young people develop independence, access opportunities, and achieve positive life outcomes.
- **Collaboration:** Working across agencies (health, education, justice) to provide a joined-up approach.
- **Monitoring:** Paying attention to key issues like missing episodes and ensuring children’s voices are heard.

Locally in Rotherham, The Corporate Parenting Partnership Board replaced the Corporate Parenting Panel to strengthen the voice and participation of Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers and to broaden membership across key partners. As a corporate parent, the Council asks at every stage: ‘If this were my child, would this be good enough?’.

The Board oversees service delivery and outcomes of children and young people in our care and care leavers, working with elected members, officers, partners and, crucially, children and young people themselves. Each of the six strategic priorities is sponsored by an elected member and supported by lead officers and partners, with an associated action plan. Significant progress has been made to date in terms of delivery whilst maintaining a strong governance mechanism ensuring continual oversight and scrutiny

THE CORPORATE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP BOARD

GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Board is co-chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People and the Service Director for Children's Social Care. Dedicated time is provided at each meeting to hear directly from children in care & care experienced children and young people via our Voice and Influence arrangements. This ensures authentic co-production of service development between members, officers, partners and most importantly young people.

The Lead Member has a wealth of experience from her role as former Scrutiny Chair for children and young people, Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Chair, and the joint vice chair of the regional LGA Board. In addition, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee elected members hold the Lead Member, the Strategic Leadership Team, and our partners to account.

Children in Care and Care Leavers benefit from strong Corporate Parents. Senior Political leaders, Officers and Partners work together to support our children and young people to thrive.

Children in Care and Care Leavers – Performance.

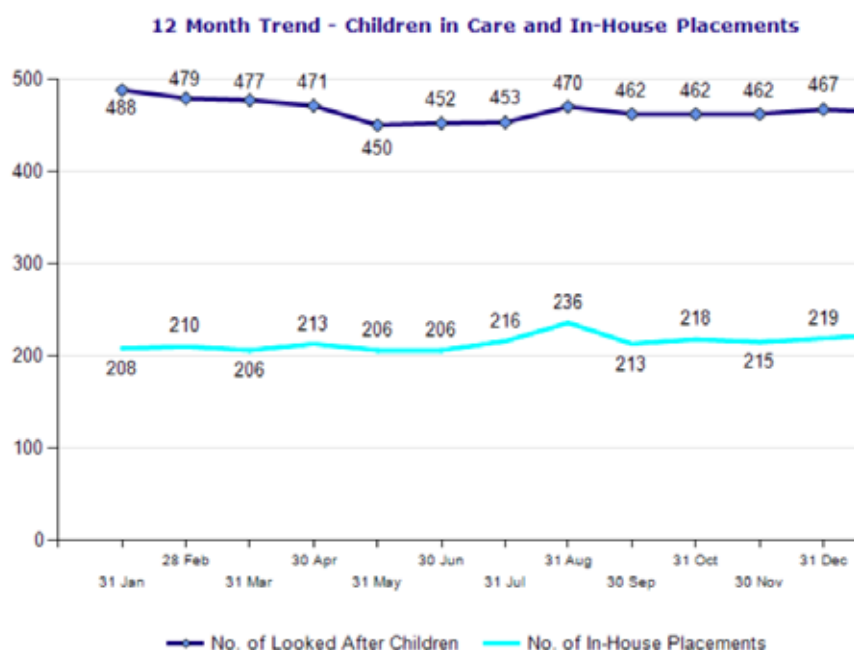
Working with children and young people rightly takes an individual approach and behind each number is a young person and their individual life experiences. Despite that, numbers are not unimportant, and these trends are a way of identifying the strength of our work and horizon scan to ensure resources are in place to meet the needs of children and young people now and in the future.

Performance reporting is advanced, comprehensive, and widely shared, demonstrating transparency in all aspects of children's services. This informs more nuanced reporting of specific issues into the Member arena. Regular detailed reports are an integral part of our Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, which allows challenge to all Corporate Parents.

To strengthen transparency and accountability (drawing on best practice from other authorities), the Council will continue to report a concise scorecard information to the Board. Headline indicators will include:

- Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers – numbers, entries, exits, UASC
- Placement type mix and stability (short- and long-term)
- In-borough placements and distance from home
- Initial and Review Health Assessments timeliness; dental checks
- SDQ completion and outcomes; CAMHS access and timeliness
- Education (attendance, exclusions, attainment) and Virtual School KPIs
- Care leavers: in touch, accommodation suitability, EET
- Advocacy uptake and issues raised/resolved

The chart below shows the Children in Care numbers over 2025.



The data shows that there has been a slight reduction in Children in Care numbers with a slight increase in those in house provision moving from 42% to 47%.

The table below shows movement of young people both entering and exiting care

Month	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025	Jun 2025	Jul 2025	Aug 2025	Sep 2025	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025
Month Start	488	479	477	471	450	452	453	470	462	462	462
Month End	479	477	471	450	452	453	470	462	462	462	467
Admissions	10	12	12	4	16	19	25	8	17	19	20
Ceased	19	14	18	25	14	18	8	16	17	19	15
Net +/-	-9	-2	-6	-21	2	1	17	-8	0	0	5

There were significant efforts made in year to support some children on a Care Order return home; this cohort accounted for a significant number of the children ceasing to be in our care. There were also some seasonal trends in relation to children and young people entering care. Review of the young people’s personal circumstances identifies their entry into care was suitable and appropriate.

CHILDREN IN CARE EDUCATION

Rotherham's Children in Care continue to show extraordinary resilience, courage, and growth in the face of adversity. As Corporate Parents, we are immensely proud of every child and young person we support. Their journeys are shaped not only by their determination but also by the inclusive, trauma informed environments we strive to create around them. We recognise the unwavering commitment of the professionals who work within the teams supporting each child.

Their compassion, creativity, and trauma aware approaches are vital in helping our children feel safe, valued, and empowered to succeed. The Virtual School provides high-level support to all stakeholders, with rigorous tracking of progress, attainment, and attendance. We ensure every child (0–18) receives a high-quality, termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting that reflects their individual needs, strengths, and aspirations. Our team offers bespoke, child-centered advice, guidance, and challenge to the professionals around each child.

We also provide training and development opportunities focused on inclusive practice and trauma-informed approaches, delivered by our Education Advisers (VSEA), Educational Psychologists (VSEP), Speech and Language Therapists (VSSALT), and Sensory Occupational Therapist (VSSOT). We work in close partnership with education settings, social care professionals, external agencies—and most importantly, with our children themselves.

Together, we aim to reduce barriers, promote healing and belonging, and support every child to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. We are incredibly proud of our Key Stage 2 children, who have performed exceptionally well, achieving outcomes above national comparators. This is a testament to their hard work, the dedication of our staff, and the strength of our curriculum.

There has also been a notable improvement in the Good Level of Development (GLD), reflecting the strong foundations laid in our Early Years provision. We are delighted that all of our 2, 3, and 4-year-olds are accessing high-quality Early Years education, ensuring every child gets the best possible start. Our mainstream secondary children have seen a decline in attainment, but was in relation to a specific group of children who experienced significant change around the end of year period. There has been an increase in the numbers of our Post 16 children accessing Higher education. There has been a slight decline in the percentage of our children in education, employment and training. Our children's attendance has remained stable and 2/3 of our children have attendance over 95%. There has been a slight increase in the percentage of children who are persistently absent.

The number and percentage of our children who have been suspended and the number of suspension incidents and days lost to suspensions have all increased this year. The percentage of suspended children with EHCPs has decreased. The Virtual School team work closely with schools to support intensive intervention work to reduce suspensions and support children at risk of suspension. Three children were permanently excluded, although one of these was rescinded, and eight children at risk of exclusion were maintained in school. In response to the challenges outlined above, Rotherham Virtual School has continued to adapt, develop, and strengthen the offer available to our children.

Further details relating to how we support our children in care with their education and the progress we have made can be seen in the Annual Report of the Virtual School 24/25.

CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS HEALTH

There were a number of initiatives in 2025 that were developed and implemented to support the health and wellbeing of Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Pathway to Primary Care

Work across South Yorkshire has included the development of review health assessments specifically aimed at care leavers and transitions. Inclusive of this work is the creation of a care experienced marker or 'flag' to add to GP records. This now enables the looked-after children's nursing team to ask for consent from young people to mark their health record with the care experienced flag. This will enable a seamless pathway to primary care, where GP services will understand if a young person is a care leaver, and be able to adopt a trauma informed response, such as enabling consistency with clinicians and offering longer appointment times. We have launched this pathway, working with the named GPs for Safeguarding across South Yorkshire and the pathway is being embedded within our primary care services in Rotherham.

Children in Care Privacy Card designed by TRFT Looked-after Children's Nursing Team

The Rotherham Foundation Trust Looked-after Nursing Team has designed a card to help protect the privacy of children in care and their carers. It was designed to reduce the risk of information breach, increase carers' sense of security and enhance awareness of the need for privacy and safeguards when interacting with children in care. This can be presented at routine appointments to indicate that the child being brought is a child in care. The Privacy Card is now in circulation gaining positive feedback.

Effective joint decision making via Dynamic Support Register (DST) for Children and young adults eligible for S117 and Joint Resource Panel for young adults who are continuing care eligible.

NHS South Yorkshire ICB have set up a working group to ensure children and young people in 38/52-week residential school settings are aligned to the DSR process. This is to build on the learning from the national panel review regarding children in residential settings with complex health needs.

Support in the community

A project has been established in Rotherham to support care leavers with independence by utilising drop-in sessions led by the looked after nursing team. After evaluating attendance, it was decided to pause the project, and re-launch with the learning gained from evaluation. This included the provision of more targeted support (about specific health themes) that may impact care leavers.

Sessions have been restarted and there are plans to offer an individual with a background of adoption and is a trained chef who would like to offer sessions to young people on shopping, budgeting, cooking and general life skills via the support from an adoption experienced Chef.

New Service Specification for looked-after Nursing Team to extend support up to the age of 25

A new service specification was developed and has been issued across South Yorkshire, that is intended for all children legally defined as a 'looked after child' based on statutory requirements to support Children in Care and Care Leavers up to the age of 25yrs based on an assessment of need. The service will work with partners to deliver care that focusses on the improvements it can make for Children in Care, Care leavers and their foster carers/adoptive parents/birth parents and relatives in terms of; clinical effectiveness, enhanced emotional and social benefits and health outcomes.

OUR PRIORITIES 2025

To ensure we continue to deliver the best standard of service to children and young people we developed a set of priorities to be themed areas of focus for the year. This was referred to as the Corporate Parenting Action Plan and was supported by wider project support from within CYPS.

Priority sponsors, leads and partners are set out below.

PRIORITY	SPONSORS / LEADS
<p>Promoting and celebrating success, ambition and aspiration for Children in Care and Care Leavers</p>	<p>Champion Member: Councillor Cusworth – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People</p> <p>Lead Officer: Monica Green – Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care (latterly Stuart Williams – Service Director Children’s Social Care)</p> <p>Supported by: Jane Wood – Head of Service for Children in Care Tony Morrissey – Head of Service for Safeguarding (latterly Chris MacDonald) Jo Hacking – Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance</p>
<p>Leaving Care / Transitions and Preparing for Adulthood (PFA)</p>	<p>Champion Member: Councillor Fisher</p> <p>Lead Officer: Kirsty Littlewood – Assistant Director for Adult Care and Integration</p> <p>Supported by: Jane Wood – Head of Service for Children in Care</p>
<p>Suitable accommodation and placement sufficiency for Children in Care and Care Leavers</p>	<p>Champion Member: Councillor Cusworth – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People</p> <p>Lead Officer: Julie Warren-Sykes – Deputy Designated Nurse Safeguarding</p> <p>Helen Sweatton – Joint Assistant Director, Commissioning, Quality and Performance</p>

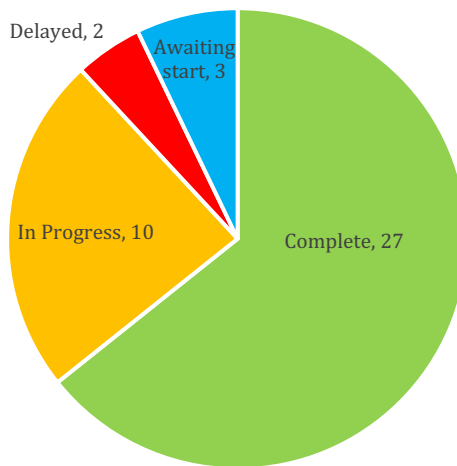
PRIORITY	SPONSORS / LEADS
<p>Education, Employment and Training</p>	<p>Champion Members: Councillor Brent – Vice Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission Councillor Knight – Wickersley North</p> <p>Lead Officer: Niall Devlin – Assistant Director Education and Inclusion</p> <p>Supported by: Tina Hohn – Virtual School Headteacher (Primary) Pete Douglas – Virtual School Headteacher (Secondary)</p>
<p>Fostering – Family Based Care</p>	<p>Champion Member: Councillor Ismail – Mayor</p> <p>Lead Officer: Stuart Williams – Head of Children’s Provider Services (latterly Jane Wood)</p> <p>Supported by: Jane Wood – Head of Service for Children in Care Vicky Chew – Service Manager – Fostering Service</p>

The Corporate Parenting Action Plan

The full plan is an Appendix to this report.

When considering the priorities of 2025 there has been significant progress made. There were 42 sub actions that were identified to support improving outcomes and services for children in care. Progress is summarised below:

PROGRESS OF ACTIONS



The three actions noted as 'awaiting start' were new actions following the ILACS inspection of November 2025.

Where there are actions that have been delayed, it can be seen from the action plan that there has been movement on this and there is a confidence that this will be completed in the early part of 2026.

CO-PRODUCTION AND VOICE

We have strengthened the voice and influence of children and young people through our Voice and Influence service. Young people act as Young Inspectors, support recruitment to key senior posts, co-chair agenda items, and help design and evaluate services.

In recent years we have reviewed our support to children in care and established our Voice and Influence Team, which brings together our advocates, Children in Care Council (Now called In Care Youth), Voice and Participation workers, Care Leaver Forum (now called Look Ahead) and Young Inspectors.

Consultation has taken place with our children and young people, and we continue to look at ways in which we can increase the engagement of our children and young people, including developing a virtual group to widen engagement. Both the In Care Youth and Look Ahead Groups play an active role in our Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and are influencing future agendas, based on their priorities. In addition, we have strengthened links with our separated migrant children; however, this remains a key priority moving forward.

In Care Youth and Look Ahead are represented on the Children and Young People's Partnership Board which provides an opportunity for design, scrutiny and oversight of partnership activity to achieve the strategic priorities set by the Rotherham Together Partnership.

The Voice and Influence Team work closely with the Children in Care service, along with our residential service to ensure that all young people in care understand their rights and entitlements.

In 2025 we refreshed our Voice and Participation groups and launched 'The Journey'—a safe space for those with care experience. Children and young people contribute to specific projects, training, regional and national events, and our programme of celebration events.

Key areas of involvement in 2025 included:

- Advisory group for mental health
- Foster carer recruitment and training
- Sharing experiences of Independent Visitors
- Refreshing our Corporate Parenting Pledge
- Improving the joint housing protocol for care leavers
- Input to the Leaving Care Local Offer
- Shaping local placement sufficiency and our new residential offer
- Workshops with social workers on 'what good looks like'
- Young people interview panels for key appointments

SUFFICIENCY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

We have continued to enhance and invest in our children's residential services, expanding the in-house estate and increasing the number of foster carers. This supports children to remain connected to their communities, friends, education and health services, and gives the Council greater influence over quality and outcomes.

The council has invested significantly in an ambitious residential development programme to create local homes for children. An additional £700k recurrent investment was provided by the Council in 2025 to ensure the residential workforce is equipped to provide the best possible care to our children and young people.

Where children cannot be placed within inhouse provision, we work closely with local private fostering agencies and residential settings to ensure children remain connected to their meaningful people and have the highest quality care, focused on supporting them to achieve their full potential. This is managed through a well established and mature commissioning and brokerage function within CYPS.

When children need to live away from the area social workers and the virtual school are tenacious in ensuring they have access to services that meet their needs.

The Council is committed to placing more children and young people in family-based settings. To achieve this the fostering service have delivered on ambitious plans to increase the number of approved foster carers. The performance should be considered in the national context of challenges in recruiting foster carers. We have commissioned an external partner to develop and implement a digital recruitment strategy and pathway, as part of the wider fostering recruitment plan. The digital approach uses industry leading online approaches to maximise the reach.

There has been a continued focus on the significant benefits of maintaining children in care within their wider family networks. Investment in the Family Group Conference Service has supported this further with a growing cohort of children in care remaining within their wider network when entering care and exiting care through permanence arrangements within their network by way of legal order.

THE YEAR AHEAD (2026)

The approach to Corporate Parenting is continuous, unwavering, and persistent. With that in mind, there is a need to ensure that there is a focused effort in the year ahead to continue to excel in our areas of strength but equally enhance areas of services which could be improved for some children in care.

Elements of care and support were identified as focus areas in the recent inspection in 2025. This identified specific work relating to Care Leavers which will be a focus of efforts in 2026, although some progress has already been made.

Specific elements of focus are set out below:

Area of focus	Actions to be taken	Impact
Improve Pathway Plans for Care Leavers.	Undertake a review of the current CYPS Pathway Plan for Care Leavers to identify the specific content required and implement an agreed revised approach that better supports Care Leavers and frontline practice. This will include production with care-experienced young adults.	Care Experienced Young People will have accessible plans that are unique to their own individual needs, without poor quality generated templates.
Ensure Care Leavers have access to Health Passports.	Undertake a review of Health Passports for Care Leavers via the Health and Wellbeing Board to identify and implement any required areas for improvement.	Care Experienced Young People have a comprehensive and consistent understanding of their health history when they leave care and progress into adulthood.
Improve local sufficiency for Children in Care.	Continue to recruit foster carers to care for children in our care. Continue to ensure robust commissioning arrangements for foster care placements within the Rotherham area. Complete the Residential Development Programme. Enhance our Supported Accommodation offer for Children aged 16+.	Children and Young People will have safe, suitable and local places to call home.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risks to delivering our strategy are overseen by the Board, with mitigating actions tracked through sub-group plans. Key risk themes include placement sufficiency, timeliness of health assessments and dental access, mental health support, engagement in education and EET, and access to suitable accommodation for care leavers. The action plan and priorities set out work underway to address these areas of risk and reports progress to the board.

IMPLICATIONS

There are no decisions sought within this report. Any financial, legal, workforce or equalities implications arising from specific actions will be considered through normal governance routes.

CONTACT DETAILS

Author	Stuart Williams – Service Director Children’s Social Care Children and Young People Services
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Appendix 1 (Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Priorities Action Plan)

OVERVIEW

This action plan provides the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board's 6 agreed areas of focus and agreed priorities. The plan supports the monitoring of progress in relation to the actions identified.

GOVERNANCE

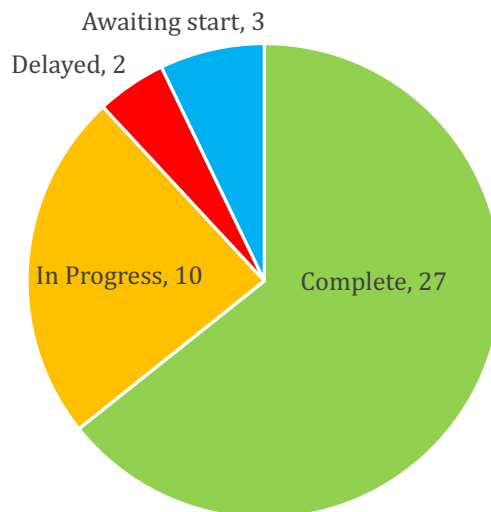
Progress against the timelines and expected outcomes outlined in this action plan will be reported and challenged at the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board every six weeks. Experts from the service are responsible for ensuring the timelines and outcomes of actions under their allocated priorities are met, overseen by 'Champions', consisting of a lead Councillor.

	Priorities	Champions
1	Promoting and celebrating success, ambition and aspiration for Children in Care and Care Leavers	Councillor Cusworth - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Stuart Williams - Service Director for Children's Social Care Jane Wood - Head of Service for Children in Care Chris MacDonald - Head of Service for Safeguarding Jo Hacking - Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Lauren Roe - Communication and Marketing Lead CYPs
2	Leaving Care, Transitions and Preparing for Adulthood (PFA)	Councillor Fisher - Sitwell Ward Kirsty-Louise Littlewood - Service Director for Adult Care and Integration Jane Wood - Head of Service for Children in Care Kim Wilson - Service Manager, Children in Care and Care Leavers James Chapman - Service Manager, Children with Disabilities Service
3	Suitable accommodation and placement sufficiency for Children in Care and Care Leavers	Councillor Clarke - Chair of Standards and Ethics Committee Jane Wood - Head of Service for Children in Care Vicky Chew - Service Manager, Fostering Service Richard Fisher - Service Manager, Residential Care Services
4	Good health and emotional wellbeing including Mental Health/ recognition of Neurodiversity	Councillor Cusworth - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Julie Warren-Sykes - Deputy Designated Nurse Safeguarding Helen Sweaton - Joint Service Director, Commissioning, Quality and Performance Kim Wilson - Service Manager, Children in Care and Care Leavers
5	Education, Employment and Training	Councillor Brent - Vice Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission Councillor Sutton - Maltby East Niall Devlin - Service Director Education and Inclusion Kim Wilson - Service Manager, Children in Care and Care Leavers Tina Hohn - Virtual School Headteacher Primary Pete Douglas - Virtual School Headteacher Secondary
6	Fostering – Family Based Care	Councillor Ismail - Mayor Jane Wood - Head of Children in Care Paul Stinson - Head of Children's Commissioning Vicky Chew - Service Manager, Fostering

RAG Status is shown against the actions which indicate whether sufficient progress is being made, i.e. the right amount of progress in the right direction at the right pace.

RAG STATUS
Action completed
Action in progress
Action delayed
Action awaiting start

PROGRESS OF ACTIONS



1. Priority 1 - Promoting and celebrating success, ambition and aspiration for Children in Care and Care Leavers

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
<p>Councillor Cusworth - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Stuart Williams - Assistant Director for Children's Social Care Jane Wood - Head of Service for Children in Care Chris MacDonald - Head of Service for Safeguarding Jo Hacking - Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Lauren Roe - Communication and Marketing Lead CYPS</p>					
1.1	Celebration events to be held, promoting the achievements of our Children in Care and Care Leavers. Cllrs to be involved in attending and celebrating alongside the children/care leavers.	There has been a celebration event at Wentworth Woodhouse on 11th August 2025. There was a further event on the 2nd of October 2025 to celebrate our young people.	Jo Hacking	October 2025	Complete
1.2	Promotion of the celebration events amongst the community to enable the events to be facilitated.	Ongoing promotional activity to ensure our children and young people are aware of all the events to maximise attendance and participation. The launch of the Journey took place on the 29th of May 2025. This will act as a hub as a promotion for all activities for care leavers.	Jo Hacking	May 2025	Complete
1.3	Promotion of the needs of care leavers and how the community can support/engage including: - Volunteers to lead The Big Christmas Dinner.	We are creating The Pledge and will ensure that the offer from RMBC and wider partners is included in this. The initial launch was at the August 2025 Celebration Event, and a QR code and petition-style list of signatories is being developed for January 2026 for our Staff Engagement Event. Through our Leaving Care Service and the Journey, we have established that few care leavers in Rotherham are alone at Christmas. We have two offers for Christmas Dinner for our care leavers – Arc Cinema has offered places at their Christmas Buffet on Christmas Day, and Hollowgate are offering Christmas Dinner to care leaving young people.	Jo Hacking	26th December 2025	Complete
1.4	Ensure mechanisms for service delivery to be reviewed by children and young people and ensure that opportunities for coproduction are considered.	Young Inspectors inspect areas of service across the organisation and influence service plans to ensure the voice and views of children and young people are considered as part of continuous improvement work. Young Inspectors have already inspected the IRO service and Liberty House, and an inspection of the disability service is planned for February 2026.	Jo Hacking	December 2025	Complete

2. Priority 2 – Leaving Care, Transitions and Preparing for Adulthood (PFA)

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
<p>Councillor Fisher - Sitwell Ward Kirsty-Louise Littlewood - Assistant Director for Adult Care and Integration Jane Wood - Head of Service for Children in Care Kim Wilson - Service Manager, Children in Care and Care Leavers James Chapman - Service Manager, Children with Disabilities Service</p>					
<p>2.1 To improve the quality and accessibility of Pathway Plans so they are young person-centred, outcome-focused and clearly evidence planning, review and impact.</p>					
2.1.1	<p>New Action following Ofsted Feedback: Redesign and simplify the existing Needs Assessment and Pathway Plan so it is concise, accessible, and meaningful to young people.</p>	<p>A Development Day with Leaving Care PAs has taken place. Advanced Practitioners (Leaving Care and CiC) have completed work on what a good Pathway Plan would look like. This now needs embedding in further work to improve Pathway Plans.</p>	Beccy Hinnet/ Sarah Vallance	End of May 2026	In progress
2.1.2	<p>New Action following Ofsted Feedback: Integrate the new templates, Practice Guidance, PWP on a page and standard feedback letter from the worker to the young person following each review into one single Needs Assessment and Pathway Plan framework and procedure that supports consistent and high-quality practice.</p>	<p>A Pathway Plan on a page has been drafted and will be incorporated into the work to update the pathway plan template and guidance. AP from Leaving Care will undertake a training session on Pathway Planning with locality managers/teams by the end of May 2026.</p>	Beccy Hinnet/ Sarah Vallance	End of May 2026	In progress
2.1.3	<p>New Action following Ofsted Feedback: A final Need Assessment and Pathway Plan template and procedure to be designed alongside care leavers Voice and Influence Group and reflecting their feedback.</p>		Beccy Hinnett/ Sarah Vallance/ Voice and Influence Lead	End of June 2026	Awaiting start

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
2.1.4	New Action following Ofsted Feedback: Workforce Implementation and Training across localities of the revised Needs Assessment and Pathway Plan practice guidance.		Beccy Hinnet/ Sarah Vallance/ AP and APs from Leaving Care and CiC.	August 2026	Awaiting start
21.5	New Action following Ofsted Feedback: Audit and Dip Sample to take place 3/6 months after implementation of the new Needs Assessment and Pathway Plans		Toni Traynor/ Tracie Setter/QA lead	Nov 2026	Awaiting start
2.2 Preparing for Adulthood (PfA)					
2.2.1	Start transition early/ allocation of PA/TA for care leavers.	Allocation of PA at 16 yrs (14 yrs for co-allocation of CSC and Adult Transition team). All 16 years olds are allocated to PAs. We are focussing on earlier work being completed in preparation for independence via PAs. 16+ panels track the progress of young people to ensure that the plan is focussed on destinations and stability for care leavers.	Kim Wilson	July 2025	Complete
2.2.2	Provide independence skill support to care leavers	The Local Offer for care leavers has been published on the Council's website and is continually reviewed and updated. Number of CLs accessing supported accommodation Hollowgate, 16plus, dispersed accommodation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hollowgate - 9 young people currently in dispersed, 4 under 18 years of age. Externally commissioned 16+ placements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under 18s - 25 in group living; 7 dispersed with floating support; 0 floating support only. Over 18s - 2 in group living; 40 dispersed with floating support; 2 floating support only. As part of the transition to adulthood, when appropriate, CLs are supported by their PAs to complete A Place of Your Own to help ensure they are tenancy ready. Tenancy support offer to foster carers and provider engagement will be tracked through permanency panel and the IRO service.	Kim Wilson	December 2025	Complete

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
2.2.3	Develop a digital offer to communicate support available for children and young people, ensuring it is inclusive and accessible to diverse groups, including those with SEN.	Helen has attended the IC Voice Group, the Look Ahead Group and the Guiding Voices Group to ask them what they would like to see from a digital offer to communicate support available to them. Feedback was overwhelmingly in favour of an App which provides a range of information. As the ask from young people was much broader than those who would move to adult social care, the PFA Board has proposed that this action transfer to the Local Offer for progressing. The Service Director will review this action with the relevant Heads of Service.	Helen Fisher	March 2026	In progress
2.2.4	Develop a model of engagement which ensures the voice of young people preparing for adulthood helps shape and improve services.	Meeting with Genuine Partnerships and RPCF to explore opportunities to collectively deliver the model through a partnership / consortium approach. A proposed model is being drafted for consideration in early 2026.	PFA Board /Kirsty-Louise Littlewo	March 2026	In progress
2.2.5	Launch a Transitions Guide which will support the young person, their family and carers, to prepare for the transition to Adult Services. The guide will be made available to young people, carers and families at the post-14 EHCP review.	Feb-26: A final draft of the Transitions Guide has been approved by the Preparation for Adulthood Board and provided to the Communications team on the 19th September 2025 for publication. The communications team have provided a draft template and continue to work on creating the on-line resource. No publication date has yet been confirmed. The guide will be available on the local offer page, with hard copies provided for services when necessary, so it can be amended and updated in response to feedback. Helen Fisher confirmed that the Look Ahead Group were pleased about the Transitions Guide, but that they often held different priorities, so the young people's version will needed to be developed with their input. Engagement with young people suggests their preferred method of accessing information is via an 'app' style site with fewer clicks required to get to key information. A meeting with ICT and Customer Services confirmed that once the content is available digitally this can be reviewed by young people to establish the priority information they would like to access and can them be presented in an 'app' style format.	Helen Fisher/ Helen Sweaton	Dec 2025	Delayed

3. Priority 3 – Suitable accommodation and placement sufficiency for Children in Care and Care Leavers

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
<p>Councillor Clarke - Chair of Standards and Ethics Committee Jane Wood - Head of Service for Children in Care Vicky Chew - Service Manager, Fostering Service Richard Fisher - Service Manager, Residential Care Services</p>					
3.1	Ensure that our care leavers have access to good accommodation options in good areas, where they can establish safe and secure homes /community connections.	<p>The local authority aims to ensure there are sufficient accommodation options for children in care and care leavers. This will involve enhancing the current in-house offer as well as continuing with effective commissioning arrangements. The local authority has their own in-house supported accommodation provision, which allows the placement of children in care (16+ with support needs) in either group living settings or in dispersed accommodation.</p> <p>There have been ongoing interactions from housing colleagues that ensure care experienced young people have suitable priority when seeking housing options in Rotherham. This aligns to a current local offer for care experienced young people and is reflected in the housing strategy.</p> <p>There is ongoing work across the region to consider reciprocal arrangements for housing priority status for care experienced young people.</p> <p>Dec 25: a cross-Council working group has been established to identify property options most suitable to meet current demand and includes work with external stakeholders. Options appraisals have been completed for all considered options and will be shared with the directorate leadership team.</p> <p>There is continuous support to foster carers to encourage staying put arrangements for children in foster care and this continues to be a priority.</p>	Richard Fisher/ Vicky Chew	January 2026	Complete
3.2	Provide access to a choice of accommodation options that suit the individual needs of our children in care and care leavers community – including those with additional needs, SEND, support needs and those ready for independence.	<p>Ensuring robust commissioning arrangements that provide children’s social care with placement options which include a combination of family based placements, supported accommodation and residential care options.</p> <p>Tracking of the use of unregulated accommodation. Weekly meetings take place to provide oversight and monitoring of any child in an unregulated provision and ensure swift movement of children and young people who are not placed in placement settings which are aligned to their individual assessed needs.</p> <p>Tracking of placement stability / breakdowns and placement moves.</p> <p>Significant priority given to kinship arrangements with resources available to support family decision making meetings which should include assurance that Family Group Conferencing and Family Network Meetings are happening as we would expect them to.</p> <p>There continues to be an ambitious programme of work to ensure the development of in-house residential care. This includes significant financial investment from the council. The local authority is taking the approach of developing a blended residential estate, which will equip us to offer placement opportunities for children and young people with a varying degree of need.</p>	Jane Wood/ Paul Stinson	August 2026	In progress

4. Priority 4 – Good health and emotional wellbeing including Mental Health and recognition of neurodiversity

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
<p>Councillor Cusworth - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Julie Warren-Sykes - Deputy Designated Nurse Safeguarding Helen Sweaton - Joint Assistant Director, Commissioning, Quality and Performance Kim Wilson - Service Manager, Children in Care and Care Leavers</p>					
<p>4.1 Provide information, including data to support and increase children’s and their carers’ understanding of the health assessment and need pathway and why it’s important to them.</p>					
4.1.1	Produce a letter or video which explains ‘what is a health assessment, and why is it important’ with a view to involving young people in its production. All children in care and are leavers will have a health passport.	<p>3/7/25 Spoken to Jo Hacking, lead of voice and influence to start initiating conversations. Early planning discussions have started, considering who might be involved and what external support we might need to complete.</p> <p>Jan-26: Evening meeting arranged for 20th Jan, where Looked-after Children’s Nurses will attend the IC Youth Group to establish with the group, and wider children in care not linked to the group, how they would want this to look, and what skills we have within the group to move this forward.</p> <p>Feb-26: Named Nurse attended IC Youth Group presented a video that Barnsley did, the YP felt they could produce better and had some suggestions. Given that the group is quite small they are also reaching out to YP from residential homes and UASC cohort to come with a plan. They have also had an offer from a young journalist to write the script for a video.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes	October 2025	Delayed
4.1.2	All our Care Leavers will have a specific leaving care health summary. We will develop an audit schedule to monitor compliance with this.	<p>3/7/25 updated templates in system one, so that reports can be generated. Lynda Briggs, Named Nurse, will discuss with system one business analyst lead to identify when these reports will commence. Anticipated start date August. Reports to be run quarterly, for the previous quarter. To consider options to enable young people to receive as a digital offer. 22.10.25. Discussion took place with the new System Analyst, reporting templates to be established Nov 2025.</p> <p>Template complete. Named Nurse to meet with data analyst 17.11.25 to determine the launch date.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes	Complete Nov 2025	Complete
4.1.3	Following each health assessment, ensure that a summary and outcomes and any plans are written and discussed with the child or young person. We will develop an audit schedule to monitor compliance with this.	<p>3/7/25 Every health assessment has a summary that is discussed with the young person. Looking into possibility of capturing reporting on when this summary is discussed with the child/ young person.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes		Complete

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
4.1.4	Ensure children in care are aware of their rights to refuse health interventions based on Gillick competence.	3/7/25 To be incorporated within the media production on what a health assessment is. The video will give details of child/young person's rights to decline a health assessment. On the day of assessment, the young person provides verbal consent to enable the assessment to take place. Declined RHA Assurance Document produced. Sept 2025	Julie Warren-Sykes		Complete
4.2 Enable carers, children and young people to have a positive relationship with health services so that they are able to access services when needed.					
4.2.1	Provide information that there are alternative options to access health care including the services provided by pharmacists and the GPs.	3/7/25 A resource that has been developed around accessing the right healthcare from the right agency/ service provider at the right time (unwell/choose well). This will be entered onto health summaries. Exploration is underway around adding to initial health assessment letter for carers to access and to share with young people in their care. TRFT have a Rotherham Children's Public Health Nursing App, which has up to date details on services. Looked after children are encouraged to download this App. Decliner Pathway to be reviewed at the Regional South Yorkshire Meeting. Also to consider actions that are followed up. 26/9/25 The local offer for care leavers has been developed by Toni Trainer in conjunction with partners, and health information in relation to accessing health services has been added.	Julie Warren-Sykes	October 2025	Complete
4.2.2	Ensure children in care and care leavers can access public health messages.	15/7/25 Promote the 0-19 TRFT App. Leaving Care Service - using WhatsApp as a method to share with care leavers. Due to update Local offer for care leavers September and can be an opportunity for public health messages. Consideration of how we have a compassionate and non-judgemental approach to public health messages, such as Vaping, sexual health etc. Now part of the Local Offer.	Julie Warren-Sykes	December 2025	Complete
4.3 Monitor access to emotional well-being support for mental health and barriers to access (especially CAMHS).					
4.3.1	Raise awareness re: community resources to Foster Carers, Social workers and PAs to access timely support for emotional wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing can be improved via healthy lifestyles, inclusive activity and non-statutory services.	15/7/25 Potential to establish a cooking group for children in care to develop life skills, a volunteer has been identified who is keen to be involved. Jane Wood to liaise with Kim about this. Local Authority are providing training for foster carers (Trauma informed, Thera play, bonding through play, foundations for attachment, transitions, therapeutic life story work, non-violent resistance training etc). 0-19 Oral Health Lead continues to offer training to foster carers and is taking the lead on 'introduction to solid food'. In recognition about Foster Carers own wellbeing - a fostering transformation board to be established as a separate action (applies to fostering CPPB priority). 26/09/2025 A meeting has been arranged for health professionals to attend foster carers sessions. Oct 2025 RMBC Foster Carer Conference attended by Looked-after Children Nurses. Nurses invited to attend the training offer to carers by RMBC and Empower Team. 03/11/25 Relaunch of the Care Leaver Health drop-in sessions, including PAs.	Julie Warren-Sykes	October 2025	Complete

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
4.3.2	<p>Raise awareness re: community resources to Foster Carers, Social workers and PAs to access timely support for emotional wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing can be improved via healthy lifestyles, inclusive activity and non-statutory services. Revise SDQ process to ensure consistent completion and learning.</p>	<p>3/7/25 There will be a SDQ sub-group, first meeting 9th July. 15/7/25 - Meeting on the 9th hasn't gone ahead - to meet with Jane, Lynda, Sarah and Natalie and business support to look at this action again, meeting arranged for 30/7/25. 30/7/25 meeting for SDQ gone ahead, and we have mapped out our current position, another meeting set up for September to bring further information from each agency to assure ourselves we are capturing SDQ's for every child/young person, and to map out a process for what we do when a child or young person scores high or very high on SDQ - and how we capture this in reporting</p> <p>Meeting held on the 27/09/2025, some issues identified with the SDQ process as above. Data would indicate that these are not being completed consistently. This issue needs addressing. It is also unclear what happens when the SDQs outcome scores high. Currently data sits at 67%. Full comprehensive plan made that includes a process map to be developed. Reminders to be set 6 weeks after first SDQ sent to chase a reminder, reminders also to be sent to team managers. A full list of actions to be recorded in September's Health and wellbeing meeting. Jane Wood to send out. 01.10.25 Training delivered to Looked-after Children's Nurses. Audit required Quarter 1 2026</p> <p>Jan-26: To re-run the numbers on the SDQ (audit) to monitor impact from changes made (more tracking through IROs required). This to be progressed by next Corporate Parenting Board.</p> <p>Feb-26: The SDQ process was revised. This change involved 6 weekly SDQ reminders to be sent to carers as opposed to the 3 monthly reminder timelines. High scoring results are now shared each month with relevant managers including the Empower team so that they can take appropriate action. In addition, outstanding SDQ details are escalated each month with the case holders / team managers so that they can support carers with completion of the form.</p> <p>In terms of the completed returns, we have had 208 to date which have been uploaded to LCS. We have completed the annual reminder for the outstanding SDQ forms with a deadline by the end of March for the annual DfE return. We expect to therefore have a better understanding of our position over the next month as returns are registered on the system.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes	End of March 2026 (for DfE annual return)	Complete
4.3.3	<p>Children in care have timely access to mental health services and where appropriate, referrals are expedited based on need. Monitor waiting lists for children in care who require this input or assessment and collate data.</p>	<p>3/7/25 This is in place for neuro assessment, but not as yet for post diagnosis support, this is an aspiration to be explored. The neuro assessment current wait list has been explored, and children have been expedited where appropriate. Further exploration on other services within RDaSH CAMHS will be undertaken through the SEMH sub-group. Discussed at length within Health & Wellbeing meetings. CAMHS representative to attend Dec CPPB.</p> <p>Children in care are now being prioritised on waiting lists as appropriate.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes	Commence by 30th June 2025 Dec 2025 complete	Complete. (Review where further issues are raised).

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
4.3.4	There is currently no trauma pathway that children in care can access in Rotherham. As Corporate Parents we will promote accessibility to services where the experience of trauma is determined as the primary concern and encourage the development of a specific trauma pathway.	<p>3/7/25 There is a SEMH sub-group working on this. First Meeting has occurred, next meeting to concentrate on mapping out current pathways for social, emotional and mental health support.</p> <p>20/10/2025 Mapping of services carried out, to also incorporate the offers of any third sector organisations and empowers new remit. There still seems to be an identified gap around supporting social, emotional and mental health where the primary cause is determined to be trauma, particularly those that end up in crisis and might not be in the remit of empower. ACTION 1 SEMH group to look at some cases and do a small thematic audit to gain any learning from cases where young people have been in crisis. ACTION 2 Consideration of a small panel of professionals for children in care presenting with behaviours that challenge and having an impact upon their SEMH to consider systemic response.</p> <p>Feb-26: Thematic multi-agency audit planned 17th March with Social care, Named Nurse and CAMHS, to evidence if there is a need for a trauma pathway or a vulnerability panel. As part of this deep dive, we are also looking at the current pathways to specialised commissioning through the joint resource panel, so if we are identifying that there is an unmet need (and there are no universal services to meet it) such as a trauma-based package of care, then we can commission specialist support.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes	Ongoing Monitoring Required	In progress
4.3.5	<p>NEW ACTION (follow on from 4.3.3):</p> <p>Quality Assurance and dip sampling with regard to the timely access of mental health support for children in care.</p>	Feb-26: Plans made for dip sampling between Kim Wilson and Lynda Briggs Named Nurse, this will coincide with the thematic audit in 4.3.2	Sarah Green and Kim Wilson	July 2026	In progress

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
4.4 Access to community-based health support and digital information. Interactive sessions (e.g. cooking)					
4.4.1	South Yorkshire ICB are looking at how to provide free prescriptions to care leavers, paper is currently sitting with Executive Directors. Awaiting a decision.	<p>7/25 in process, plan to present to exec board of the ICB 23/7/25. Paper was provided for discussion, but additional information requested to enable a further discussion, same provided.</p> <p>Oct/Nov 2025. Currently with Execs and awaiting outcome.</p> <p>Government announcement in relation to care leavers set to receive free prescriptions, dental and eyecare services up to age 25, assurance received via Chief Nurse to present at the next Corporate Parenting Partnership Board with an update.</p> <p>Feb-26: At this point the government has not yet published detailed operational guidance on how care leavers will claim the exemptions and when they will come into effect. NHS South Yorkshire executive chief nurse has been liaising with regional NHS England colleagues and NHSE have indicated that further guidance will arrive in the spring.</p> <p>Given this is a wider national approach, and we can see that progress is being made, Service Director agrees to the completion date moving to Spring 2026 from the initial date of Nov 2025.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes	Oct/Nov 2025 Spring 2026	In progress
4.4.2	Launch the 'Pathway to Primary Care' to promote the needs of children in care and care leavers.	<p>3/7/25 in process, primary care pathway shared with Rawmarsh Health Centre, with a plan to extend out to all Rotherham GPs. read code available and the CIC team are using the flags (with consent). 26/09/2025 Training plan and PowerPoint developed. To send out PP to all safeguarding leads to share within practice and attend a protected learning time session to deliver this training. 20/10/25 pathway to primary care information sent to all practices and training session to be delivered at a GP Protected learning time event in January.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes	January 2026	Complete
4.4.3	Ensure all children in care can access dentistry.	<p>15/7/25 903 results 91 % Flexible commissioning working well. Working closely with Leanne (oral health lead). There is a small concern that the practices offering flexible commissioning has decreased, so we will monitor and track impact.</p>	Julie Warren-Sykes	January 2026	Complete but ongoing monitoring required

Priority 5 - Education, Employment and Training

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
<p>Councillor Brent - Vice Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission Councillor Sutton - Maltby East Niall Devlin - Assistant Director Education and Inclusion Kim Wilson - Service Manager, Children in Care and Care Leavers Tina Hohn - Virtual School Headteacher Primary Pete Douglas - Virtual School Headteacher Secondary</p>					
<p>5.1 Full-Time Timetable and Within-Class Interventions To ensure Children in Care (CiC) follow a full-time timetable with minimal exceptions. This approach promotes within-class interventions and aims to improve overall attendance and outcomes.</p>					
5.1.1	Develop a Local Authority (LA) position statement regarding the withdrawal of children from lessons.	Presented at Corporate Parenting.	Pete Douglas/ Tina Hohn		Complete
5.1.2	Support schools with advice on how within-classroom interventions can be supported and developed.	Presented at Corporate Parenting.	Pete Douglas/ Tina Hohn		Complete
<p>5.2 Attendance and Suspensions Children in Care should have excellent attendance. It is crucial to ensure that CiC are attending full-time and decisions about attendance are focused on positive outcomes for children in care.</p>					
5.2.1	Understand the factors that increase the risk of suspension and exclusions, as well as the protective factors.	Analysis work completed and presented to performance board and SLT. Suspensions sample audit work to be completed Autumn term 2025. This will be completed Spring term 2026. Strategic leader task and finish group on suspensions of CiC to be completed end of spring term 2026 – on track will be organised after multiagency audit.	Pete Douglas/ Tina Hohn	End of spring term 2026	Complete
5.2.2	Develop a working protocol with social care on how to mitigate the causal factors and promote the protective factors.	This will be part of the task and finish group work completed by Spring 2026	Pete Douglas/ Tina Hohn/ Stuart Williams	End of spring term 2026	Complete
5.2.3	Provide advice to schools on the use of part-time timetables for Children in Care.	This is sent out annually from access to education. VSEA remind schools both in and OOA of our expectations around use, recording and reviewing of PTTT as required when being considered, or in place for a CiC.	Pete Douglas/ Tina Hohn/ Sarah Whitby		Complete

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
5.2.4	Provide training and advice to social workers on the legislative framework regarding part-time timetables.	Virtual School Heads to present at the All Service Managers' Event on 4th March 2026	Pete Douglas/ Tina Hohn	4th March 2026	In progress
5.3 Post-16 Provision					
Care Leavers need to be in education, employment, or training					
5.3.1	Improve attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, equipping students with the right skills to move forward.	This is covered within VSHT Annual report which should be through governance structures and to CPPB by Dec 25 or Jan 26. Calendared for CPPB on 24/03/26.	Pete Douglas/ (Tina Hohn)	January 2026	Complete
5.3.2	Promote Level Two apprenticeships and develop a post-18 pathway with a guaranteed offer to all Year 11 CiC.	We now have an offer from RNN that guarantees all Y11 CiC an offer of a place. There is a post-16 specialist within the virtual school team, who provides career advice and support with applications, CV writing, etc. This is offered as an extension to Post 18 care leavers at the fortnightly drop in at The Journey	Pete Douglas/ Christine Waugh		Complete
5.3.3	Improve the transition to post-16 education by providing post-16 settings with essential child-specific information.	Forms for Y11 CiC have gone out and returns are coming in. VSEA work closely to share appropriate information through the PP with post 16 settings to ensure high quality data is shared ahead of transition points.	Pete Douglas		Complete
5.3.4	Reconcile the data that family help and the virtual school hold about children who are NEET.	Data reconciliation has taken place.			Complete

Priority 6 – Fostering – Family Based Care

Ref	Action	Progress Update	Lead Officer	By When	RAG Status
Councillor Ismail - Mayor Jane Wood - Head of Children in Care Paul Stinson - Head of Children's Commissioning Vicky Chew - Service Manager, Fostering					
6.1	Improve our accommodation and placement options in order to meet the needs of our children in care and care leavers.	<p>The recruitment and assessment of new foster carers is a significant priority. The local authority is working hard to ensure RMBC is the agency of choice for those considering fostering. In doing so, we have engaged with sector experts to support our digital marketing campaign.</p> <p>Improved governance in relation to data capture; and intelligence relating to the number of approvals as well as the placement capacity this has created. This is now presented to the Directors Assurance Board.</p> <p>Ongoing engagement with commissioned providers within the region to ensure that there is a greater degree of placement option for children requiring foster care.</p> <p>Supported Accommodation development within the in-house estate to be an area of focus.</p>	<p>Vicky Chew – Service Manager Fostering</p> <p>Richard Fisher – Service Manager Residential Care Services.</p>	March 2026	In progress
6.2	Improve our sufficiency/ choice of placements in order to meet the demand for global majority children and asylum-seeking children.	<p>Improving sufficiency and choice of foster carers to meet the needs of children from the global majority and children seeking asylum remains a core priority for the service and an acknowledged ongoing challenge.</p> <p>The service has undertaken evidence-informed work to increase awareness of fostering among under-represented communities, including testing targeted digital approaches and refreshing fostering information in multiple languages. Alongside this, the service has begun strengthening links with local community and faith-based groups, recognising that meaningful engagement requires sustained relationship-building over time.</p> <p>While progress in increasing representation remains gradual, learning from this work is shaping future plans. Improving cultural representation within the foster carer cohort continues to be a long-term focus within the service's sufficiency strategy to better meet children's identity and belonging needs.</p>	Vicky Chew/Paul Stinson	December 2025	Complete – it has become BAU and will remain a focus as we go into any new arrangement post March 27.

Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report 2025

Improving Lives Select Commission – 28
April 2026

Purpose of the Report

- This is the first annual report of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board
- The purpose is to demonstrate and evidence how the partnership deliver on their Corporate Parenting duties
- Focus on Children in Care and Care Leavers
- Highlights progress in 2025 and priorities for 2026

What is Corporate Parenting?

- Legal duty under Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Council and partners must act as the best possible parent
- Promotes stability, wellbeing and life chances
- Supports transition to independent adulthood

Key Achievements in 2025

- Redesign of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board
- Stronger corporate ownership and governance
- Regular senior officer and member engagement
- Unwavering commitment to hearing the voice of children and young people

Ofsted Inspection – November 2025

- Overall judgement: Outstanding
- Strong and embedded commitment to corporate parenting
- Young people actively hold leaders to account

Priorities for 2026

- Improve Pathway Plans for Care Leavers
- Ensure access to Health Passports
- Continue to improve local placement sufficiency

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 28 April 2026

Report Title

Update on Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29

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

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

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

In July 2024, Cabinet approved the *Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29: A Vision for Managing Risk Outside The Home* published by Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership. This report outlines progress against the objectives in the Strategy at the conclusion of the second of the five years.

Recommendations

1. That Improving Lives Select Commission note the progress made against the Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29.

Background Papers

1. [Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29: A Vision for Managing Risk Outside The Home](#)
2. [Cabinet Report 29th July 2024 – Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29](#)

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

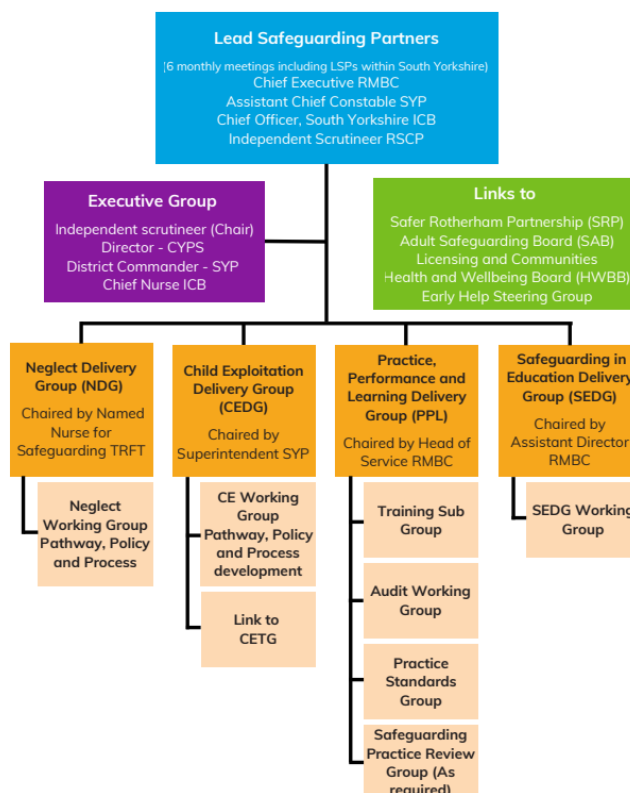
No

Update on Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29

1. Background

- 1.1 Exploitation of children is a pernicious crime and the Council's commitment to tackling it remains unwavering, as does our commitment to listen and learn from past mistakes. In July 2024, Cabinet approved the *Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29: A Vision for Managing Risk Outside The Home* published by Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership. This report outlines progress against the objectives in the Strategy at the conclusion of the second of the five years.
- 1.2 The Council has a duty to safeguard children and provide services to children and their families to promote their welfare. The Council also has a duty to work with partner agencies and partner agencies have a duty to work with the Council to keep children safe. These duties are found in primary legislation such as Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 and statutory guidance, the most prominent of which is Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. Local Safeguarding Children's Partnerships engage the three statutory partners – the Council, the Integrated Care Board and the Police – in developing multi-agency safeguarding arrangements which set out how this will happen. This provides the framework for the implementation of the Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29.
- 1.3 The Strategy advances the outcome on the Council Plan that children and young people achieve their potential.
- 1.4 Child exploitation is not easily defined. The Strategy explains that there are multiple forms of harm which are exploitative, including child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, radicalisation and trafficking. Definitions, some of which are statutory, can be found in the appendices to the Strategy. A common thread in all exploitation of children is using an imbalance of power to manipulate, coerce or control a child to make them behave in way which the exploitative adult wants, for their own benefit.
- 1.5 Our Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG) has responsibility for the progress against the four priorities. CEDG reports to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners, known as the Executive, and ultimate responsibility is held by the Lead Safeguarding Partners. The governance structure within the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership is outlined below. There is also a reciprocal connection between Child Exploitation Delivery Group and the Safer Rotherham Partnership. Delegated Safeguarding Partners scrutinise progress every two months and the Lead Safeguarding Partners twice annually. There is an annual review of the progress and direction of each Delivery Group conducted by the Independent Scrutineer.

RSCP Structure



- 1.6 CEDG is chaired by the Detective Superintendent for Rotherham in South Yorkshire Police. There is consistent and broad multi-agency representation, including Community Safety and Licensing. CEDG has working groups which ensure progress against the workplan and close links to Child Exploitation Tactical Group and Serious and Organised Crime Tactical Group, which are operational meetings where themes requiring a strategic response may emerge.
- 1.7 Within Rotherham Children and Young People's Services, children at risk of exploitation and/or radicalisation are allocated within our Evolve service, where specialist social workers and family support workers will work to increase their safety. Where children maintain their existing social worker, for example for children in our care, there will be the child's social worker jointly working with the Evolve worker.
- 1.8 We have developed an approach to working with 'extra-familial harm', which is harm that children, most often adolescents, experience outside their home and which traditional child protection models do not satisfactorily address. Our 'Harm Outside The Home' approach includes an alternative pathway to child protection for children who may be at risk of significant harm outside but not inside their home. In this approach, independent Chairs oversee a multi-agency plan with any parent as a partner. Working Together 2026, issued 31st March 2026, introduced a section on 'supporting children suffering or likely to suffer harm outside the home'.
- 1.9 On 2nd November 2025, Ofsted concluded their ILACS inspection of Rotherham Children and Young People's Services with an Outstanding

judgement. Within the report (p.11), the Council's approach to keeping children safe from exploitation was lauded: *Children at risk of going missing from home and being exploited receive a highly effective service from Evolve, the specialist exploitation team. Children are routinely offered timely return home interviews, enabling professionals to understand the reasons for children going missing, and to inform safety and trigger plans for children. When concerns are escalating, multi-agency child exploitation meetings are convened promptly to share intelligence and coordinate disruption strategies. Comprehensive exploitation risk assessments are completed by social workers and inform multi-agency interventions. Children receive support from knowledgeable, skilled practitioners who build trusting relationships through consistent, trauma-informed engagement. This relational approach increases children's confidence in trusted adults, enabling disclosure and strengthening protective factors.*

2. Key Issues

2.1 There are four priorities in our Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29, and these guide the delivery plan. These priorities are:

1. **Prepare** - To have an effective response to tackling exploitation in Rotherham.
2. **Prevent** – To reduce exploitation in Rotherham.
3. **Protect** – To disrupt exploitation and keep children and young people safe from harm through exploitation.
4. **Pursue** – To identify offenders and bring them to justice.

2.2 **Prepare:** progress against our objectives includes -

- Improved early intervention, as identified through partner agencies completing more of our Family Assessments of Need. This is the universal assessment template used at all stages of help and harm, which means that a family need only tell their story once.
- Regular multi-agency training programme for child exploitation, led by our specialist Evolve service, which considers wider 'Harm Outside The Home' approaches too.
- Rigorous approach to taxi licensing in Rotherham, which was commended in Baroness Casey's National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- An overarching Safeguarding Board Chairs meeting, led by Chief Superintendent Andy Wright, now coordinates the activity of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Safeguarding Adults Board and Safer Rotherham Partnership on cross-cutting issues such as child exploitation.
- Section 175 self-assessments, which are an annual audit undertaken by educational establishments, and our follow-up assurance visits explicitly consider how schools safeguard children from exploitation and online harm. RHSE (Relationships, Health and Sex Education) includes an understanding of the dynamics of grooming and exploitation.

2.3 **Prevent:** progress against our objectives includes -

- Using Operation Makesafe and Operation Keepsafe as tactics to disrupt and dissuade exploitation in the borough. Operation Makesafe is a national initiative where environments where exploitation can occur, like night-time economy venues and hotels, are engaged in understanding the signs, and Operation Keepsafe is a more localised initiative involving community patrols by safeguarding professionals at key times like evenings to engage young people who are in the community.
- *Fearless* campaign targeted young people aged 11 to 16 years old to empower them to report crime, including knife crime, drug dealing and exploitation, anonymously.
- South Yorkshire Police have attended a number of forums, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead forum where each school is represented, to promote intelligence sharing.
- Due to an emerging threat in the form of exploitation online, a comprehensive training programme was delivered by South Yorkshire Police and Children's Services to a wide range of professionals, totalling more than 250 attendees.

2.4 **Protect:** progress against our objectives includes -

- Robust multi-agency data which allows us to monitor trends. This includes a range of measures for the Police including intelligence, referrals and offences which relate to child exploitation.
- The Harm Outside The Home approach extends the role of an independent Chair to more young people, by including children who are found to be in need but not at risk of significant harm, and provides a clear route to coordination and accountability.

2.5 **Pursue:** progress against our objectives includes -

- Built strong links with Probation, who attend CETG consistently, which provides joined up management of risks from offenders.
- Weekly CETG provides a multi-agency environment to assess and manage risk, including legal powers to disrupt exploitation. Successful operation and criminal prosecutions have emerged from CETG.
- Service Manager for Evolve and Duty & Assessment in CYPS and the RSCP Business Manager attend Organised and Violent Crime Silver Group to ensure a robust multi-agency approach to the role of organised crime in child exploitation.
- There are commissioned services which support survivors of child sexual exploitation, child and adult, with recovery from their experiences.

2.6 Priorities in the next 12 months include:

- Developing the Harm Outside The Home approach to grow the focus on locations and 'hotspots', in conjunction with CETG and Neighbourhood Tasking Groups and Community Action Partnerships.
- Positioning the workplan to ensure a focus on what data demonstrates are the most prominent forms of harm.

- Improved interface for partners with the launch of the Children's Portal, which will allow partner agencies to submit their Family Assessment of Need directly onto Early Help and Children's Social Care systems.
- Sharpening the link between intelligence and the focus of Operation Keepsafe and Operation Makesafe.
- Developing improved child exploitation training packages for non-traditional partners from the leisure and hotel industries.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the progress made against the Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29.

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 Not applicable.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 Not applicable.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Not applicable.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 Not applicable.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 Not applicable.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The risks involved with the continued strategy are:

- Failing to meet objectives in the workplan.
- Changing profile of exploitation, particularly toward majority or hybrid online, making existing strategies less effective.
- Disrupted inter-agency relationships in specialist exploitation services through changes mandated by Families First Programme to create multi-agency child protection teams.

13.2 Mitigations to manage these risks include:

- Robust management of the workplan and clear governance.
- Pre-emptive shifting of emphasis to better explore risks from online harm and exploitation, which has begun across 2025.
- Focused implementation of Families First Programme, which is led by the Executive of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership, ensuring we preserve what works effectively already.

Accountable Officer(s)

Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding
Kelly White, Service Director, Family Help

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Executive Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services	31/03/26
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	13/04/26

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

Update on Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-2029

Improving Lives Select Commission 28th April 2026

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Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding, CYPS

Definition

- Child exploitation is not easily defined.
- Multiple forms of harm which are exploitative, including child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, radicalisation and trafficking.
- A common thread in all exploitation of children is using an imbalance of power to manipulate, coerce or control a child to make them behave in way which the exploitative adult wants, for their own benefit.

Duties

- The Council has a duty to safeguard children and provide services to children and their families to promote their welfare.
- The Council also has a duty to work with partner agencies and partner agencies have a duty to work with the Council to keep children safe.
- Exploitation of children is a pernicious crime and the Council's commitment to tackling it remains unwavering, as does our commitment to listen and learn from past mistakes.

Background

- July 2024 – Cabinet approved the *Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29: A Vision for Managing Risk Outside The Home*.
- The Strategy is delivered through the Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG), within Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
- CEDG is chaired by Detective Superintendent Anna Sedgwick. There are working groups which report into CEDG, and a link to the operational Child Exploitation Tactical Group.

Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership

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

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

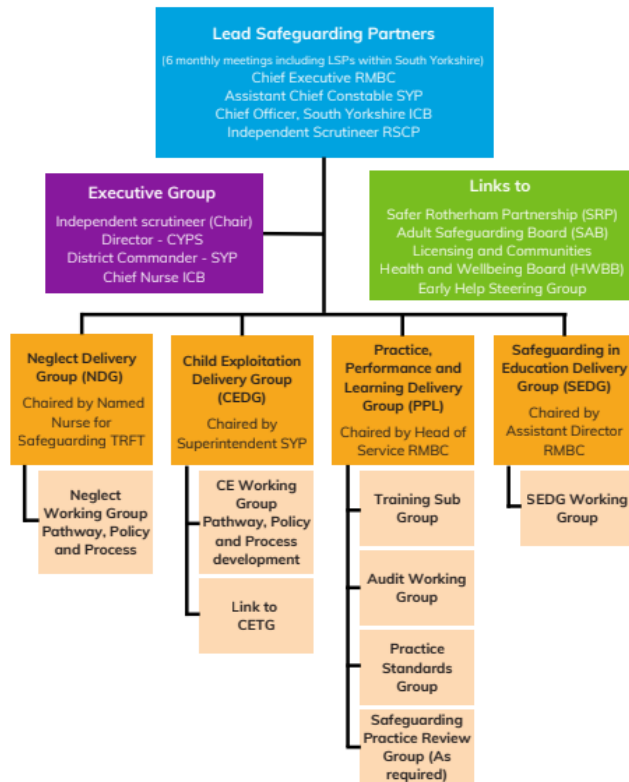
The Delegated Safeguarding Partners are:

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

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

Governance

RSCP Structure



Child Exploitation Delivery Group meets bimonthly, and reports into the Executive Group bimonthly.

There are four priorities:

1. Prepare
2. Prevent
3. Protect
4. Pursue

Prepare

- Rolling multi-agency training programme, led by our specialist Evolve service, which considers wider 'Harm Outside The Home' approaches too.
- Rigorous approach to taxi licensing in Rotherham, which was commended in Baroness Casey's National Audit.
- Section 175 self-assessments and our follow-up assurance visits explicitly consider how schools safeguard children from exploitation and online harm.
- Improved early intervention, as identified through partner agencies completing more of our Family Assessments of Need.

Prevent

- Using Operation Makesafe and Operation Keepsafe as tactics to disrupt and dissuade exploitation in the borough.
- *Fearless* campaign targeted young people aged 11 to 16 years old to empower them to report crime, including knife crime, drug dealing and exploitation, anonymously.
- South Yorkshire Police have attended a number of forums, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead forum where each school is represented, to promote intelligence sharing.

Protect

- Harm Outside the Home approach introduced, which extends the role of the independent Chair from young people at risk of significant harm to children in need as well.
- Robust multi-agency data which allows us to monitor trends. This includes a range of measures for the Police including intelligence, referrals and offences which relate to child exploitation.

Pursue

- Child Exploitation Tactical Group provides a weekly multi-agency environment to assess and manage risk, including legal powers to disrupt exploitation. Successful operation and criminal prosecutions have emerged from CETG.
- Strong links developed into Organised and Violent Crime Silver Group to ensure a robust multi-agency approach to the role of organised crime in child exploitation.
- There are commissioned services which support survivors of child sexual exploitation, child and adult, with recovery from their experiences.

Ofsted ILACS November 2025

Children at risk of going missing from home and being exploited receive a highly effective service from Evolve, the specialist exploitation team. Children are routinely offered timely return home interviews, enabling professionals to understand the reasons for children going missing, and to inform safety and trigger plans for children. When concerns are escalating, multi-agency child exploitation meetings are convened promptly to share intelligence and coordinate disruption strategies.

Comprehensive exploitation risk assessments are completed by social workers and inform multi-agency interventions. Children receive support from knowledgeable, skilled practitioners who build trusting relationships through consistent, trauma-informed engagement. This relational approach increases children's confidence in trusted adults, enabling disclosure and strengthening protective factors [p11].

Priorities in the next 12 months

- Developing the Harm Outside The Home approach to grow the focus on locations and ‘hotspots’, in conjunction with CETG, Neighbourhood Tasking Groups and Community Action Partnerships.
- Improved interface for partners with the launch of the Children’s Portal, which will allow partner agencies to submit their Family Assessment of Need directly onto Early Help and Children’s Social Care systems.
- Sharpening the link between intelligence and the focus of Operation Keepsafe and Operation Makesafe.
- Developing improved child exploitation training packages for non-traditional partners from the leisure and hotel industries.
- Positioning the workplan to ensure a focus on what data demonstrates are the most prominent forms of harm.

Thank you